



# **Connecting the Dots: Education and Religious Discrimination in Pakistan**

*A Study of Public Schools and Madrassas*



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON  
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

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**By Azhar Hussain (ICRD) and  
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**FRONT COVER:** In this April 16, 2011 photo, a Pakistani Christian student walks past a poster of slain Christian leader Shahbaz Bhatti placed on a school gate in Khushpur village near Faisalabad, Pakistan. (AP Photo/Anjum Naveed)

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The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 as an entity separate and distinct from the State Department. USCIRF's principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

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## **INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RELIGION & DIPLOMACY (ICRD)**



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The mission of ICRD is to address identity-based conflicts that exceed the reach of traditional diplomacy by incorporating religion as part of the solution.

Typically, these conflicts involve ethnic disputes, tribal warfare, or religious hostilities. Capitalizing on the positive role that religious or spiritual factors can play in facilitating trust and overcoming differences in order to deal with the causes underlying conflict is a trademark ingredient of the Center's approach.

The Center focuses on areas of strategic importance and partners with indigenous organizations in executing its mission. For the past seven years, in partnership with local Pakistani educators and religious leaders, ICRD has been working with Pakistani madrasa (private Islamic school) leaders to enhance madrasa education through teacher-training programs that promote educational and pedagogical enhancement, with an emphasis on critical thinking, religious tolerance, human rights, and conflict resolution skills. All programs are grounded in Islamic principles and honor the significant educational and social achievements accomplished by madrassas and Islamic societies throughout history. This program has grown to involve over 2700 madrasa leaders from more than 1600 madrassas throughout Pakistan to date.

Since its inception, the Center has also (1) helped end the 21-year civil war in Sudan; (2) eased religious tensions between Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist regions in Kashmir; (3) opened back-channel communications to promote improved relations with Iran; (4) helped secure the release of the 21 Korean hostages from the Taliban in Afghanistan; (5) worked with Middle Eastern and American religious leaders

to establish a religious framework for peace in the Middle East upon which political leaders can build; and (6) brought American Muslim leaders together with U.S. government officials to facilitate working together for the common good in addressing issues of mutual concern.

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SDPI is an independent Pakistani policy think tank which acts as a premier knowledge generator as well as disseminator on issues pertaining to sustainable development. SDPI has worked extensively on various facets of educational reforms in Pakistan. In 2002, along with partner organizations and educationalists, SDPI conducted a study called *“The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan.”* This study of the curriculum for Social/Pakistan Studies, Urdu, and English from Grade 1 to Grade 12 led to a number of recommendations related to distortions and omissions in Pakistan’s national history and material discriminating against ethnic and religious minorities, women, and other nations.

SDPI, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Education Fund, also conducted a “Citizens’ Review of the National Education Policy 1998-2010,” which examined the foundation of the education system including the objectives, aims, quality, and management of education. It also studied the examination system, private sector education, and higher education. The review included studies across the country and made concrete recommendations in each area. SDPI has also proposed alternative textbooks. In one such effort, SDPI’s researchers, in partnership with UK-based Minority Rights Group (MRG), developed alternative textbooks from Grades 1-10 which promote tolerance and peace between different religious groups. Through its studies and research, SDPI continues to be deeply committed to removing false notions related to extremism and misconceived views of Islam that promote violence and terrorism. The tendency to nurture these views in the education system is a major concern for SDPI, as is the challenge to create sensitivity to religious diversity in the country. SDPI believes that economic and social empowerment cannot be realized without individuals exploring their full potential.

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**Minorities, to whichever community they may belong, will be safeguarded. Their religion or faith or belief will be secure. There will be no interference of any kind with their freedom of worship. They will have their protection with regard to their religion, faith, their life, their culture. They will be, in all respects, the citizens of Pakistan without any distinction of caste or creed.**

**They will have their rights and privileges and no doubt, along with it goes the obligation of citizenship. Therefore, the minorities have their responsibilities also and they will play their part in the affairs of this state. As long as the minorities are loyal to the State and owe true allegiance and as long as I have any power, they need have no apprehension of any kind.**

”

—Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Founder of Pakistan* (1876-1948)



# Preface

Education is critical. This is especially true in Pakistan, an ethnically and religiously diverse nation of around 180 million people. Precisely because of this diversity, education plays a critical role in the fabric of Pakistani life, with the potential of bringing the society together or tearing it apart. Especially important are the roles that educators play: how and what they teach and the curricula they use deeply influence whether children appreciate and respect ethnic and religious diversity or view religious minorities negatively, as valueless and aliens in their own country. Once instilled early in life, negative attitudes often resist change and can factor into the disintegration of the social fabric of communities, discrimination, and even sectarian violence.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent and bipartisan U.S. government commission separate from the State Department, has actively monitored the troubling rise in violent religious extremism across Pakistan that targets religious minorities as well as members of the majority Muslim faith. USCIRF has concluded that promoting respect for freedom of religion or belief must be an integral part of U.S. strategy in South Asia. The conflict with violent religious extremists now taking place in Pakistan requires the United States to understand and factor into its policies an understanding of the roots of this extremism and actively bolster the position of those elements in society that respect democratic values, the rule of law, and international standards of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief. Education reform is a key part of this effort.

In our 2011 Annual Report, USCIRF found that textbooks used in Pakistani primary and secondary schools foster prejudice and intolerance of religious minorities, especially Hindus and Christians. Such intolerant references are not restricted to Islamic studies textbooks: they are found in both early elementary and more advanced social studies texts used by all public school students, including non-Muslims. Moreover, the textbooks contain stories, biographies, and poems with an Islamic religious character that students of minority faiths must study and be tested on.

In addition, a significant minority of Pakistan's thousands of religious schools, or madrassas, reportedly continue to provide ideological training and motivation to those who take part in religiously-inspired violence in Pakistan and abroad. A memorandum of understanding signed in October 2010 between the Ministry of Interior, which oversees the madrassa system, and the five main madrassa boards was an attempt to better regulate their curriculum and financing. However, further implementation has stalled and the curriculum remains unreformed. In its advisory role,

USCIRF recommended in 2011 that the U.S. government urge the government of Pakistan and appropriate provincial authorities to, *inter alia*:

- set national textbook and curricula standards that actively promote tolerance toward all persons, and establish appropriate review and enforcement mechanisms to guarantee that such standards are being met in government (public) schools;
- move quickly to implement improved guidelines for textbooks used in public schools and to replace current public school textbooks with ones that exclude messages of intolerance, hatred, or violence against any group of persons based on religious or other differences; and
- ensure that a madrasa oversight board is empowered to develop, implement, and train teachers in human rights standards, and to provide oversight of madrasa curricula and teaching standards.

Because of the enormity of the challenge and the importance of these concerns, and to provide more detailed recommendations to American policymakers, USCIRF funded a study by the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) to examine the social studies, Islamic studies, and Urdu textbooks and pedagogical methods in Pakistan's public school system and its madrasa system, and to interview teachers and students about their views towards religious minorities. The goal of this study was to explore what linkages, if any, exist between the portrayal of religious minorities in Pakistan's public schools and madrassas, biases that exist toward these minorities, and acts of discrimination or extremism resulting from such biases.

To these ends, ICRD examined: the portrayal of religious minorities in these textbooks, with an emphasis on determining the degree to which negative stereotypes and/or biased portrayals of religious minorities exist, as well as positive examples of teaching about tolerance and respecting differences; the degree to which biases against religious minorities result from how these minorities are portrayed in these educational systems; and the degree to which systemic biases towards other religious groups are ingrained in the administration of public schools and madrassas. Based on these findings, ICRD recommended how best to counter the negative stereotyping to which students are exposed in their schooling and education.

ICRD, with the independent Pakistani think tank Sustainable Development Policy Institute, reviewed more than 100 textbooks from grades 1-10 from all of Pakistan's four provinces. In addition, students and teachers from public schools and madrassas were interviewed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province), Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab. Thirty-seven middle and high schools were visited, with 277 students and teachers interviewed individually or in group settings. Two hundred and twenty-six madrasa students and teachers were interviewed from 19 madrassas.

The results are eye opening and concerning.

Public school textbooks used by all children often were found to have a strong Islamic orientation, while Pakistan's religious minorities were either referenced derogatorily or omitted all together. Hindus, one of Pakistan's religious minorities, were described in especially negative terms, and references to Christians were often inaccurate and offensive. Madrasa textbooks generally portrayed non-Muslims in one of three ways: (1) *kafirs* (infidels) or *mushrakeen* (pagans), (2) *dhimmis* (non-Muslims

living under Islamic rule), or (3) *murtids* (apostates, i.e. people who have turned away from Islam). Non-Muslims were never described as citizens with the constitutionally-protected rights which accompany citizenship. Tolerant references were found in both systems, often intermixed with neutral and intolerant references, leaving some room — albeit complicated — for improvement.

Interviews with public school and madrasa teachers demonstrated that they had limited awareness or understanding of religious minorities and their beliefs, and were divided on whether a religious minority was a citizen. Views expressed by teachers about Ahmadis, Christians, and Jews often were very negative. Interviews showed that these biased sentiments were transmitted and held by the students.

This is the first study of this scope, examining Pakistan's public school and madrasa textbooks, as well as the attitudes of students and teachers in all four provinces. As the reader will see, the findings of the study and the recommendations reinforce USCIRF's conclusion that education reform incorporating themes of religious tolerance is critical for the development of a tolerant Pakistani society that values religious freedom and religious diversity for all its citizens. This is in the interest of both the United States and all Pakistanis.



Leonard Leo  
USCIRF Chair

# Pakistan



# Executive Summary

## OVERVIEW

Pakistan is undergoing incredible stress in its capacity to govern. Relief efforts in response to the floods of 2010 and 2011 alone seem capable of overwhelming all other government priorities, as do the constant military campaigns and the deadly effects of ongoing terrorist attacks. The enormous investment in its armed forces, which has consumed much of Pakistan's GDP since its inception, has diverted vital resources from education, and the situation is only worsening with the need to deal with the rampant insecurities currently confronting the country. In the midst of this turmoil, and with an administration that faces strong political and religious opposition, the Pakistani government has nevertheless put forward recommendations for education reforms, building on efforts begun in 2006 which included revisions to the national curricula. With an eye to increasing the protection and social inclusion of religious minorities, these reforms would soften the strong Islamization of the curricula and textbooks that began in the late 1970s under General Zia-Ul Haq, who stated:

*"The highest priority would be given to the revision of the curricula with a view to reorganizing the entire content around Islamic thought and giving education an ideological orientation so that Islamic ideology permeates the thinking of the younger generation and helps them with the necessary conviction and ability to refashion society according to Islamic tenets."*<sup>1</sup>

The reforms have leaned on the 22nd article of the Constitution of 1973, which codifies the rights of religious minorities in education:

*"(1) No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own."*

Despite these efforts, in the nearly six years since the revised curricular guidelines were created, textbooks comprehensively incorporating the revisions prescribed by these 2006 guidelines have not been created. The existing textbooks have been reprinted since 2006 with only minor adjustments, but, as demonstrated in this study, have not addressed much of the problematic content.

The challenges to Pakistan's education system will require enormous efforts

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1 Saigol, R. "Boundaries of Consciousness: Interface between the Curriculum, Gender and Nationalism." Ed. R. S. Saigol and N. S. Khan. *Locating the Self: Reflections on Women and Multiple Identities*. Ed. A. S. Zia. Lahore, 1994. 41-76. Print.

**Attitudes  
toward religious  
minorities  
are decidedly  
mixed,  
with clear  
demonstrations  
of tolerance  
. . . and  
equally clear  
expressions of  
bigotry.**

to overcome. In 2009, Pakistan committed only 2.69% of its GDP to education.<sup>2</sup> Pakistan's prominent Dawn newspaper stated in a 2011 article that "50 percent [of school age students] cannot read a sentence."<sup>3</sup> On the UNDP World Development Report Education Index, Pakistan ranks 141st of 182 ranked countries.<sup>4</sup> Illiteracy and attendance compare unfavorably to similar countries, with a serious gap in gender representation. Literacy was just over 50%, with less than 50% literacy for females.<sup>5</sup> In such an environment, the capacity for teachers to have the appropriate training, texts and tools to convey basic ideas of religious tolerance faces a serious uphill battle.

The primary objective of the current study was to analyze the impact of textbooks and teaching practices on the attitudes of students towards religious minorities. Under a grant from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the research conducted by the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy in partnership with the Pakistan-based Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) uncovered a wide range of perceptions among teachers and students on the rights, practices, and character of religious minorities. It was unsurprising to find a strong correlation between Pakistani and Islamic identity, considering the religious make-up and strength of Islamic practice in the country. However, the attitudes toward religious minorities are decidedly mixed, with clear demonstrations of tolerance, understanding and acceptance in both public schools and religious schools (madrassas) on the one hand and equally clear expressions of bigotry, ignorance, and hostility in both on the other.

There are many public school students and teachers who advocate respect for religious minorities, but a large portion do not understand minority citizenship rights and are wary about them ever holding public office. A strong sentiment of antagonism was expressed across the board toward the enemies of Islam, but there is widespread confusion about who constitutes an enemy by virtue of their non-Muslim or foreign status. Similarly, a great deal of the anger expressed toward religious minorities often stems from a feeling that they do not respect Islam and Muslims.

Although this chaos of opinion creates challenges for the full social inclusion of religious minorities, it also provides certain opportunities. A large percentage of public school teachers teach their students to be tolerant of faiths other than the dominant Sunni Islam, with much of that tolerance driven by a desire to inspire conversions to Islam (much like the Christian concept of "witnessing by example"). At the same time, while largely resistant to non-Muslims and their role in society, madrasa teachers and students were aware of Qur'anic passages encouraging them to treat non-Muslims with kindness and understanding.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### **Textbook Analysis**

An integrated curriculum is frequently used for early grades with no clear separation between dominant religious content and non-religious content in materials given to

2 World Bank (WB). World Bank Education Expenditure Project (Edstats). Washington, DC, United States: World Bank (WB). 2011.

3 "Education Emergency Pakistan." *Dawn.com*. 9 Mar. 2011. Web. <<http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/09/education-emergency-pakistan.html>>.

4 "Human Development Report 2009 - Education Index." *International Human Development Indicators - UNDP*. Web. <<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/93.html>>.

5 Pakistan Economic Survey 2010-2011, Government of Pakistan Ministry of Finance <[http://finance.gov.pk/survey\\_1011.html](http://finance.gov.pk/survey_1011.html)>



religious minorities. This is perhaps the most apparent violation of minorities' rights as enshrined in Article 22 of the Constitution. A review of ostensibly non-religious textbooks, some of which are compulsory for students from religious minorities, found significant Islamic content.

Dominant religious values, cultural values, and national aspirations are an integral part of the textbooks. For example, a review of compulsory Urdu language textbooks for all students up to Grade 10, published by the Punjab Textbook Board, found that 96 chapters and poems out of 362 had a strong Islamic orientation, without any mention of Pakistan's religious minorities or their beliefs. An examination of the first grade textbook used for the integrated curriculum, titled *Meri Kitab*<sup>6</sup> or "My Book," which is required for the majority of public school students, revealed that seven of the 16 total chapters contained Islamic sermons. In the accompanying instructions, teachers are instructed to underscore its Islamic content. The Ethics Course, which was intended to fulfill the Article 22 requirement for religious minorities in later grades, is still inaccessible to students in many parts of the country for a variety of reasons.

Pakistan and Social Studies textbooks are rife with negative comments regarding India and Great Britain, but Hindus are often singled out for particular criticism in texts and in interview responses, together with Ahmadis, who consider themselves Muslims but are not considered so by the Pakistani constitution. Although an unbiased review of history would show that Hindus and Muslims enjoyed centuries of harmonious co-existence, Hindus are repeatedly described as extremists and eternal enemies of Islam. Hindu culture and society are portrayed as unjust and cruel, while Islam is portrayed as just and peaceful.

According to the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) report:

*"Government issued textbooks teach students that Hindus are backward and superstitious, and given a chance, they would assert their power over the weak, especially, Muslims, depriving them of education by pouring molten lead in their ears..."*<sup>7</sup>

Ultimately, while citizenship is mentioned in textbooks without religious qualification, and a few references to universal religious freedom can be found, textbooks generally emphasize the fundamental Islamic identity of Pakistan and the need for unity within the Muslim community. The defense of Pakistan is equated with the defense of Islam. The Islamic identity of Pakistan is established throughout the Social Studies and Pakistan Studies textbooks, to the exclusion of religious minorities. The following textbook excerpt suggests why:

*"The foreign cultures are leaving deep influence over the Islamic values because of the electronic media. There is every danger that we may lose our cultural identities. In such circumstances and because of the vast changing cultural and religious situations, it is necessary for us that we must fully defend our political borders, take care of our basic views with love and devotion for Islam. This can ensure the safety of our country. The anti-Islamic forces are always trying to finish the Islamic domination of the world. This*

**Hindus are often singled out for particular criticism in texts and in interview responses, together with Ahmadis.**

6 'My Book' (Integrated Curriculum). This book was published by "Chaudhary Ghulam Rasool and Sons," a private publisher. However, it was distributed by the Government of Punjab for the academic year 2010-11. The book states, "This book is prepared as per international standards under the National Curriculum 2006 and National Textbook and Learning Materials Policy 2007."

7 National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP) report 2008

*can cause danger for the very existence of Islam. Today, the defense of Pakistan and Islam is very much in need.”<sup>8</sup>*

### Teacher Interviews

Extensive interviews revealed that public school teachers have a limited or contradictory understanding of religious minorities and their beliefs. The same confusion was demonstrated in the responses of their students. Madrassa representatives demonstrated some clarity about the legal status of religious minorities in Pakistan, but were in various ways less tolerant toward them, most likely because of their lack of exposure to them due to the homogenous nature of the madrassas. Wide-scale confusion about the role of religious minorities in Pakistani society and history inevitably produces distortion and discrimination.

Public school teachers often advocated respectful treatment of religious minorities. However, this respect was understandably conditional upon the attitudes of religious minorities towards Islam, which seemed to be in question. Reflective of the teachings in the Qur’an, teachers are generally more favorably predisposed towards “People of the Book” (i.e. Jews and Christians) than they are toward the non-monotheistic traditions. There was a notable dislike and distrust expressed for Hindus that was equally evident in the textbooks. Public school teachers seemed equally divided between those who considered Islamic sectarian differences to be inconsequential and those who found them to be highly significant. Many described Ahmadis as non-Muslims and expressed a particular distaste for them.

All of the public school teachers interviewed believed the concept of jihad to refer to violent struggle, compulsory for Muslims to engage in against the enemies of Islam. Only a small number of teachers extended the meaning to include both violent and nonviolent struggle. Aside from the generalized belief that “enemies of Islam” should be targeted, the overwhelming majority of public school teachers held the view that an individual decides when and against whom jihad is appropriate. It is important to note that upwards of 80% of the public school teachers viewed non-Muslims as “enemies of Islam” in some form or another, despite contradictory views expressed in other parts of the interviews. The majority of public school teachers cited blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammed as a significant cause of anger towards religious minorities. The killing of Muslims in the Global War on Terror and the use of alcohol were also cited. It was also revealing that teachers repeatedly expressed a feeling that non-Muslims did not understand or respect Muslims, suggesting a sense of reverse persecution.

There was a broader view of jihad expressed among madrassa teachers than was found among public school teachers, which included a stronger sense of the concept of internal jihad. This included religiously prescribed self-control and, in isolated cases, madrassa teachers even specified a religiously-based rejection of suicide bombing and other violent techniques. Madrassa teachers also demonstrated a stronger sense than their public counterparts that other “Religions of the Book” were acceptable, albeit perverted in their modern practice. Regarding internal sectarian differences among Muslim practitioners, there was a broadly expressed desire for reconciliation. However, this was largely conditioned on the adoption of the teacher’s own belief system.

<sup>8</sup> Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Punjab Textbook Board, p.7

Predictably, most madrasa teachers viewed religious education to be more important than worldly education, which they tended to view as vocational training. They also cited the role of madrassas as a positive social justice mechanism, particularly in the education of poor children. All of the madrasa teachers interviewed correctly identified religious minorities as citizens of Pakistan. This contrasts markedly from their public school counterparts, of whom only 60% understood this. Broadly, the recognition of citizenship of religious minorities in Pakistan was tempered by the opinion that, in order to protect Pakistan and Muslims, religious minorities must not be allowed to hold positions of power.

### Student Interviews

The attitudes towards religious minorities expressed by public school students in interviews and focus group discussions were often as contradictory as the responses of their teachers. Some overarching themes included the view that the Pakistani national identity and Islamic religious identity are correlated. This is a similar emphasis on “Islamic Pakistan” to that found in most textbooks. Over the course of the interviews, it became clear that while students advocated respecting religious minorities in the abstract, they found much to criticize in their practices and contributions to Pakistani society.

Some public school students expressed some of the more enlightened and tolerant views towards religious minorities that could be found throughout the study. However, when probed on other issues, many students expressed discomfort or disdain for the practices of other traditions. A large portion of public school students could not correctly identify religious minorities as citizens, and many were skeptical about the potential for religious minorities to assist in the development of Pakistan. Like their teachers, the majority of public school students also viewed non-Muslims as the enemies of Islam.

Students from both public and madrasa education systems reported being encouraged in many ways to respect non-Muslims, but both subscribed to misinformation regarding non-Muslim beliefs and practices. While public school students held more complex views of religious minorities based on their actual exposure to them, most madrasa students could only opine in the abstract. An overwhelming majority of the public school respondents stated that their teachers teach them to respect all religions and their places of worship, beliefs, personalities, rituals, and books. The motivation to do so in many instances was driven by the respondent’s desire to impress minority students with Islam and encourage their conversion.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The core findings of this report point to challenges as well as opportunities. In texts and curricula supplements there are demonstrable beginnings of reform. However, it has moved slowly and is rife with inconsistencies and contradictions. Social hostility toward religious minorities in Pakistan, as reflected in recent onerous interpretations of the Blasphemy Law, is extremely high. According to a recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life,<sup>9</sup> Pakistan is the third least tolerant country in the world in terms of social acceptance of religious diversity. As experience has shown, any significant effort to combat religious discrimination,

**A large portion of public school students could not correctly identify religious minorities as citizens.**

9 Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life, *Rising Restrictions on Religion*, August 2011

especially in education, will likely face strong opposition. The textbook evaluation boards do not adhere to the mandated guidelines for the National Curriculum while reviewing and approving textbooks.

If a way can be found to inspire collaboration between madrasa teachers with their greater grasp of the nuances of Islamic teachings and public teachers with their inherently closer relationship to religious minorities, it might be possible to expand each group's general awareness to mutual advantage. Further, if civil society, government and teachers could be inspired to work together not only to deepen understanding, but to improve the basic infrastructure for education, everyone would benefit. Student and teacher awareness should also be given the appropriate support when it comes to behavior in educational settings. The government should develop stronger standards and provide authentic and functioning mechanisms to ensure compliance with educational regulations and for the reporting and investigation of acts of intolerance toward religious minorities.

Foreign aid could be used to build schools with teacher training centers on campuses to promote and implement less exclusionary ideas. Finally, pedagogy reform that promotes critical thinking would undoubtedly prove beneficial in arresting the derogatory portrayal of religious minorities.

Specific reforms that could prove beneficial include:

### **Public Schools**

1. Promote the full implementation of the 2006 curricular reforms, especially the:
  - a. Consolidation of all content related to Islamic Studies into the Islamiyat course;
  - b. Inclusion of content relating to the contributions of religious minorities to Pakistan;
  - c. Removal of gratuitously derogatory content, especially against Hindus.
2. Create an effective and confidential reporting mechanism for incidents of religious discrimination against minority students as part of the newly-formed National Harmony Ministry and:
  - a. Empower the National Harmony Ministry to take disciplinary action;
  - b. Train public school leadership, faculty, and administration officials to adhere to anti-discrimination policies.
3. Make the course “Ethics for Non-Muslims” compulsory for all students;
4. Develop teacher-training programs to focus on the constitutional rights of religious minorities, critical thinking, and the importance of promoting tolerance for diversity in classroom pedagogy;
5. Initiate interfaith dialogue and joint academic and extracurricular activities with faculty and students of other religions where possible;
6. Remove pejorative content from the Constitution of 1973 (e.g. Articles 41(2), 91(3) and 260(3)(b));

7. Develop public-private partnerships with diverse religious representation to enhance public school physical infrastructure and to increase cooperation.

### **Madrassas**

1. Facilitate official engagement and cooperation on madrassa educational enhancement between the madrassa boards and the government of Pakistan (GOP);
2. Develop and promote pedagogical training programs;
3. Put in place a system of madrassa accreditation and teacher certification programs to ensure that madrassas meet mutually accepted educational standards;
4. Encourage and make public curricular reforms, with a particular focus on religious tolerance and modernizing textbooks.

## SECTION 1

# Introduction and Background

### EDUCATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONFLICT

As education continues to improve globally, literacy and enrollment rates have climbed around the world as countries strive to reach the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Simultaneously, researcher, non-profit, and government development agency priorities have shifted to those who have been systematically excluded, either because of discrimination or lack of resources, as is evidenced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s Global Monitoring Report (2010), entitled *Reaching the Marginalized*.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the UN goals to increase both quantity and quality of education is the concern for the role that education plays in socializing individuals. In Bush and Saltarelli's seminal survey, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*,<sup>11</sup> education is identified as an important source for not only facilitating positive social change—its better face—but also reflecting and perpetuating conflict, bias, and discrimination. Because of this dual role that education plays in society and conflict, as well as the growing need to tackle the issue of those marginalized in society in reaching MDGs, a successful education system must be able to positively address issues of diversity, including the role of religious minorities in society.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Pakistan is significant on the geopolitical stage not only because of its geographical location, but also because it is the world's second largest Muslim state with a fast-growing youth population. With only a small percentage of the GDP spent on education in the country, the Pakistani education system has faced challenges for decades. Pakistan has also faced the challenge of growing violent extremism in the country, particularly in the last decade, which has significantly impacted religious minorities. This study, conducted by the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD) in partnership with the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), under a grant from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), was undertaken to explore whether the portrayal of religious minorities in the Pakistani education system is linked with attitudes of bias or acts of discrimination

10 *Reaching the Marginalized*. Paris: UNESCO, 2010. Web. <<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/efareport/reports/2010-marginalization/>>

11 Bush, Kenneth D., and Diana Saltarelli. *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict: towards a Peacebuilding Education for Children*. Florence, Italy: UNICEF, United Nations Children's Fund, Innocenti Research Centre, 2000. Web. <<http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/269>>



or extremism against such minorities. In this regard, the study reviewed textbooks and interviewed students and teachers in both the public school and the madrasa (private Islamic school) education systems. By illuminating current realities and challenges in the Pakistani educational system and proposing recommendations for steps that can be taken to address them, this study aims to provide policymakers and other stakeholders with critical insights needed to prepare a concrete action plan for increasing religious tolerance.

## CURRENT CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION AND MINORITIES

### Overview of Current Educational Challenges

Current challenges to Pakistan's education system will require enormous efforts to overcome. In 2009, Pakistan committed only 2.69% of its GDP to education.<sup>12</sup> Pakistan's prominent Dawn newspaper stated in a 2011 article that "50 percent [of school age students] cannot read a sentence."<sup>13</sup> On the UNDP World Development Report Education Index, Pakistan ranks 141st of 182 ranked countries.<sup>14</sup> Illiteracy and attendance compare unfavorably to countries of close geographic and economic proximity. In 2010, literacy rates remained very poor.

### Literacy Rates in Pakistan<sup>15</sup>

| LITERACY RATE | 2009 | 2010 |
|---------------|------|------|
| TOTAL         | 57.4 | 57.7 |
| Male          | 69.3 | 69.5 |
| Female        | 44.7 | 45.2 |
| Urban         | 73.3 | 73.2 |
| Rural         | 48.6 | 49.2 |

Pervez Hoodbhoy, a leading Pakistani scholar writing for *Foreign Affairs*, stated that the "greatest threat to Pakistan's future may be its abysmal education system."<sup>16</sup>

### Challenges from Historical Islamization of Education

A largely secular Pakistani education system that was historically burdened by poor quality education and decrepit physical infrastructure began to see some improvements as part of an education reform movement in the late 1970s. However, this was coupled with a significant Islamization of the curriculum. General Zia-Ul Haq's regime infused the education system with rigid Islamic content as part of the National Education Policy and Implementation Program of 1979, together with a complete textbook and curricular revision.<sup>17</sup> General Zia's policy stated:

**General Zia-Ul Haq's regime infused the education system with rigid Islamic content.**

12 World Bank (WB). World Bank Education Expenditure Project (Edstats). Washington, DC, United States: World Bank (WB). 2011.

13 "Education Emergency Pakistan." *Dawn.com*. 9 Mar. 2011. Web. <<http://www.dawn.com/2011/03/09/education-emergency-pakistan.html>>.

14 "Human Development Report 2009 - Education Index." *International Human Development Indicators - UNDP*. Web. <<http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/93.html>>.

15 Pakistan Economic Survey 2010-2011, Government of Pakistan Ministry of Finance <[http://finance.gov.pk/survey\\_1011.html](http://finance.gov.pk/survey_1011.html)>

16 Hoodbhoy, Pervez. "Can Pakistan Work? A Country in Search of Itself." *Foreign Affairs*(2004). Nov.-Dec. 2004. Web. <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/60285/pervez-hoodbhoy/can-pakistan-work-a-country-in-search-of-itself?page=show>>. 129.

17 Aly, Javed Hasan. *Education In Pakistan: Document To Debate And Finalize The National Education Policy*. Rep. National Education Policy Review Team, Feb. 2007. Web. <<http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Pakistan/Pakistan%20National%20Education%20Policy%20Review%20WhitePaper.pdf>>.

*“The highest priority would be given to the revision of the curricula with a view to reorganizing the entire content around Islamic thought and giving education an ideological orientation so that Islamic ideology permeates the thinking of the younger generation and helps them with the necessary conviction and ability to refashion society according to Islamic tenets.”*<sup>18</sup>

Dr. Nasim Ashraf, Executive Director for Pakistani Studies at the Middle East Institute, has called the decade of 1979-1989 “the turning point for Pakistan’s educational system... the bedrock on which militant extremism was founded.”<sup>19</sup> It may be no coincidence that the twenty-six year-old assassin of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, one of his own bodyguards, was a member of a generation that came to age during that period.

### Recent Reform Efforts

In 2006, the government of Pakistan took serious steps toward reform of the country’s educational curricula, including with regard to the reversal of educational Islamization. There seems to be a conscious move toward educational standards and indicators, as well as teaching tolerance and respect for diversity both within and across borders. Some measures have also been proposed to reduce the imposition of Islamic instruction on religious minorities, such as folding much of the religious content into focused religion courses, rather than having it infused in subjects such as Social Studies, Civics, Urdu, and English.

The reforms have leaned on the 22nd article of the Constitution of 1973, predating General Zia’s reforms, which codifies the rights of religious minorities in education:

*“(1) No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own.”*

However, implementation has proven difficult, and much has been left unfinished on the subject of tolerance. The current Zardari administration has been actively pursuing implementation of these reforms, but they may be too unpopular to overcome the resistance of the powerful Islamist lobby.

### Remaining Educational Challenges

The government-established Pakistan Education Task Force (PETF) contends that major educational improvements can be made within two years. Although the political discourse has improved with respect to education, it does not appear that the government is giving the issue sufficient priority to make a strong impact. The challenges faced by Pakistan in recovering from the floods of 2010 and 2011, conducting the ongoing military campaigns, and coping with the sustained surge in terrorism and religious violence are overwhelming the energies of Pakistani politicians. The uproar following the killing of two Pakistanis by CIA contractor Raymond Davis, angst over the bin Laden raid, political assassinations, and the controversy over blasphemy law

<sup>18</sup> Saigol, R. “Boundaries of Consciousness: Interface between the Curriculum, Gender and Nationalism.” Ed. R. S. Saigol and N. S. Khan. *Locating the Self: Reflections on Women and Multiple Identities*. Ed. A. S. Zia. Lahore, 1994. 41-76. Print.

<sup>19</sup> Ashraf, Nasim. *The Islamization of Pakistan’s Educational System: 1979-1989*. Publication no. 16. Middle East Institute, July 2009. Web. <[http://www.mei.edu/Portals/0/Publications/Nasim\\_the\\_islamization\\_of\\_Pakistans\\_educational\\_system.pdf](http://www.mei.edu/Portals/0/Publications/Nasim_the_islamization_of_Pakistans_educational_system.pdf)>.

cases are also contributing to political instability and deep-seated resistance to what are often seen as Western-driven calls for reform.

In many cases earlier gains have been reversed. Certain districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where successful programs were implemented to increase school attendance through the beginning of the last decade, actually witnessed a decline starting around 2006-07 after conflict intensified, causing large numbers of people to emigrate from areas of program implementation.<sup>20</sup>

### Challenges Faced by Minorities

While the depth of the correlation between Islamic faith and Pakistani identity among Muslims is expected, it presents a challenge to the full implementation of protections for religious minorities, and in some cases has even been linked to physical violence against them. According to the Minorities Concern of Pakistan (MCOP), students are encountering problems because of their minority status and faith. They are forced to study from textbooks and curricula that are biased against them and routinely face discrimination and intimidation from Muslim students and teachers. On May 28, 2010, for example, a dozen heavily armed men attacked a Christian religious leader, Pastor Mubarak Masih, and his family. The incident occurred when the pastor's nephew Shaid, 13, declined to recite the Qur'an in a government school in the city of Smundri in Punjab province.<sup>21</sup>

According to a recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life,<sup>22</sup> Pakistan is the third least tolerant country in the world in terms of social acceptance of religious diversity. Ongoing disputes involving the country's controversial Blasphemy Law have particularly heightened religious tensions. In 1998, when a high ranking member of the Sharif cabinet hinted at reform of the Blasphemy Law, a Justice of the High Court of Lahore vocalized a public call for his murder.<sup>23</sup> Though he eventually withdrew the charge, his statement raised doubts about the access to justice for the religious minorities in his court. The assassination of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer by his own bodyguard was motivated by the Governor's public support of Aasia Bibi, the Christian mother of three condemned to death for alleged criticism of the Prophet. In August 2011, Taseer's son went missing and had not been found at the time of this writing. While the assassination of Governor Taseer was widely condemned by prominent members of both the Islamic and religious minority community, the three days of mourning announced by President Zardari were boycotted by powerful religious organizations. Eight weeks later, the Christian Minister for Minority Affairs Shahbaz Bhatti was assassinated (purportedly by the Pakistani Taliban) for heading a government committee which is reviewing the Blasphemy Law.

**Students are encountering problems because of their minority status and faith.**

20 Syll, Ben. *The Effect of Violent Conflict on the Primary Education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan*. Rep. Education Policy and Data Center, 2010. Web. <<http://ddp-ext.worldbank.org/EdStats/PAKgmrpap10.pdf>>.

21 Reynolds, Jeremy. "Plight of Christian Students in Pakistan." *ASSIST News Service*. 10 July 2010. Web. <<http://www.assistnews.net/Stories/2010/s10070050.htm>>.

22 Grim, Brian J. *Rising Restrictions on Religion: One-third of the World's Population Experiences an Increase*. Rep. The Forum on Religion & Public Life, Pew Research Center, Aug. 2011. Web. <<http://pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Issues/Government/RisingRestrictions-web.pdf>>.

23 Malik, Iftekhar Haider. *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*. London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002. p.24.

## FOCUS OF THE STUDY

### Dual Educational Systems—Public Schools and Madrassas

While the largest part of this study has focused on the public education system in each of Pakistan's four provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), it also looked at the madrassa sector—i.e., the private Islamic educational system which to date has been largely outside of government control. While the current size of the madrassa system is a subject of considerable controversy, a conservative estimate places the number at 20,000 schools. The function of madrassa education has historically served a dual role in Pakistan, as it: (1) trains the next generation of Islamic scholars and clergy and (2) often functions as a safety net for impoverished children or orphans by providing free room and board, along with religious education. The overwhelming majority of madrassas in Pakistan are affiliated, often loosely, with one of the five sectarian<sup>24</sup> governing boards.<sup>25</sup> These boards set, to some extent, academic policy for their madrassa affiliates, while madrassa education consists of different levels and curricula across the board. The collective student body of Pakistani madrassas has been estimated at 2-3 million, which is a fraction of total school enrollment; however, when part-time madrassa students are taken into account, as well the fact that madrassa teachers and graduates preach weekly to thousands of worshippers across numerous mosques, the impact of the madrassa system on the society is far greater than it may outwardly appear.

### Major Groups Identified as Religious Minorities in Pakistan

In its 2002 report, *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*, the Minority Rights Group International describes the dimensions of the religious minority community:

*“Some 10–13 million Pakistanis belong to minority communities, with Christians, Hindus and Sikhs among the most prominent. It should be remembered that this number does not include several Muslim denominations, which do not wish to be identified as minorities. These include Shias, among whom are Ismailis, and Zikris — Muslim communities that are deeply disturbed by Sunni demands that they be designated as minorities. Moreover, the Ahmadis — officially declared a minority — refuse to be categorized as non-Muslims.”*<sup>26</sup>

Under Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's civilian government, an amendment to the constitution was put into effect on September 6, 1974 that explicitly deprived Ahmadis of their identity as Muslims. From that point on, the precedent was set by the dominant Sunni population that people with different interpretation from Sunni mainstream thought could be declared non-Muslim. The evidence from ICRD's expert working in Pakistan, Mr. Azhar Hussain, shows that once Ahmadis were declared non-Muslims various Islamist groups within Pakistan began to launch a campaign to have Shia Muslims, about 15% of the population, also declared non-Muslims. Most recently, the Barelvis (Sufi), a moderate Sunni group, is also under attack from various Islamist organizations attempting to have them legally classified as

<sup>24</sup> One madrassa board, Rabta-tul-Madaris Al-Islamia, is controlled by the Jamat-e-Islami political party, which is Sunni in ideology, but not a recognized sect.

<sup>25</sup> The five madrassas boards are: Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia (Deobandi sect), Rabta-tul-Madaris Al-Islamia (Jamat-e-Islami sect), Wafaq-ul-Madaris Shia Pakistan (Shia sect), Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Salafia (Ahle-Hadith/Wahhabi in the West) sect), and Tanzim-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnah wa Jama'a (Barelvi sect).

<sup>26</sup> Malik, Iftikhar Haider. *Religious Minorities in Pakistan*. London: Minority Rights Group International, 2002. Print.

*Kafirs* or *Musriks*. Shia and Barelvi shrines are now a frequent target of terrorist attacks. There is compelling evidence that the non-Muslim law, created for Ahmadis, is being used to discriminate against other minorities in Pakistan. By these acts, Pakistani political leadership has undermined the tolerance once enjoyed amongst the various sects and religious minorities in Pakistan in order to appease a few politically powerful religious parties.

## SECTION 2

# Literature Review

### PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In preparation for and during the course of this study, several previous research studies regarding the state of Pakistani curricula as they relate to Islam and religious minorities were reviewed.

**A.H. Nayyar and Ahmed Salim**

***The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan (2003)***<sup>27</sup>

In their 2003 landmark study, A.H. Nayyar and Ahmed Salim conclude that the rights of religious minorities—while partially codified in the Constitution of 1973—are not protected by the state, while Islam, by being promoted as a dominating force, is often made to encroach upon their lives. According to the study, the curricula of the public school system reflect this reality, exhibiting many points of concern. In particular, Nayyar and Salim’s research found the following: insensitivity to the existing religious diversity of the nation; incitement to militancy and violence; encouragement of prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination towards religious minorities; glorification of war and use of war against non-Muslims; blaming other religions for repression and cruelty; factual inaccuracies; omissions of historical events; and lack of positive values of other religions. Additionally, their research also found that the importance of Islamic teaching as well as the Islamic nature of Pakistan was emphasized, while hatred was espoused towards Hindus and Indians. It was noted that these themes were especially prevalent in the subjects of Urdu and Social Studies, as well as English. While this study focuses in detail on the content being taught in the public school curriculum and textbooks, it focuses less on the link between such rhetoric and the actual behavior of Pakistanis who go through the education system.

**Tariq Rahman**

***Denizens of Alien Worlds: A Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan (2005)***<sup>28</sup>

This study examined education in the three major sectors of Pakistan—Urdu-medium schools, English-medium schools, and madrassas. The study was a comprehensive

<sup>27</sup> Ahmed, N.H. ‘The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan’, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan. 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Rahman, Tariq. *Denizens of Alien Worlds: a Study of Education, Inequality and Polarization in Pakistan*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004. Print.



overview of Pakistan's different education communities and a ground-breaking survey of teacher and student opinion.

Rahman's findings portrayed a deeply polarized community with madrassa education on one end of the spectrum and English-language private schools on the other. Probing the worldviews of both teacher and student, he found the madrassa students to be the most aggressive and intolerant members towards religious minorities of the collective student body. His survey gauged support for various means of resolving the conflict in Kashmir (open war, supporting violent jihadi groups, peaceful means) as well as opinions on religious minorities.

The tables below were compiled from Rahman's findings. The data suggests a generation gap in the opinions of students and teachers where the rights of religious minorities are concerned. It is very interesting to note that madrassa students buck the trend regarding the equal rights of Christians and were slightly less likely to favor equal rights than teachers.

| IN FAVOR OF<br>EQUAL RIGHTS<br>FOR... | MADRASSAS |         | URDU-MEDIUM |         | ENGLISH-MEDIUM |         |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------------|---------|----------------|---------|
|                                       | Teacher   | Student | Teacher     | Student | Teacher        | Student |
| Ahmadis                               | 4%        | 13%     | 27%         | 47%     | 43%            | 65.5%   |
| Hindus                                | 15%       | 17%     | 37%         | 47%     | 61.5%          | 78.5%   |
| Christians                            | 18.5%     | 18%     | 52%         | 66%     | 81.5%          | 84%     |

The following table shows that madrassa students and teachers both favored open war and supporting jihadi organizations in the Kashmir conflict, but the teacher-student gap seemed to indicate a shift towards a peaceful solution. Interesting to note here is that while Urdu-medium school teachers displayed the most peaceful tendencies, their students were the only sample that had become more militant.

| RECLAIM KASHMIR<br>THROUGH... | MADRASSAS |         | URDU-MEDIUM |         | ENGLISH-MEDIUM |         |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------------|---------|----------------|---------|
|                               | Teacher   | Student | Teacher     | Student | Teacher        | Student |
| Open War                      | 70%       | 60%     | 20%         | 40%     | 26%            | 26%     |
| Supporting Jihadi<br>Groups   | 59%       | 53%     | 19%         | 33%     | 38.5%          | 22%     |
| Peaceful Means                | 30%       | 34%     | 85%         | 76%     | 60%            | 72%     |

This study also examined various aspects of madrassa education, including the role of *radd*—Islamic refutation texts—in sectarian tensions. According to Rahman, although refutation has historically been a part of religious education, it is a recent phenomenon that it is being blamed for sectarian violence in the country. While he rejects the perception that the teachings of refutation texts are responsible for militancy in sectarian conflicts, he is nonetheless of the view that they create the potential for negative bias against people of other beliefs. In his research, he found that no madrassa confesses to teaching the refutation of the beliefs of other texts. However, the classrooms and libraries almost always contain such books. There is also the possibility of passing on these teachings informally along with other lessons or giving them as supplementary readings.

**Saleem Ali*****Islam and Education, Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs (2009)***<sup>29</sup>

In 2009, Saleem Ali reported on an empirical study he conducted of the linkage between madrassas and conflict/violence by comparing a rural site, Ahmed Pur East (APE), and an urban site, Islamabad. APE is a sub-division in the district of Bahawalpur which has recently seen serious conflict and violence. The study aimed at questioning the perceived linkages between madrassas and sectarian violence in Pakistan. Madrassas involved in sectarian violence were identified by using proxy indicators, such as:

1. The school had been visited by any leading sectarian leaders whose documented speeches have clearly incited violence towards other sects.
2. Students or administrators participated in sectarian processions or gatherings as documented by police authorities.
3. Administrators lobbied for or provide leadership on sectarian issues.
4. Students or administrators are involved in reported violent sectarian crimes.

The information was gathered from district administration and law enforcement agencies. The results of this study against this indicator are given in the table below:

| SECT         | TOTAL MADRASSAS | INVOLVED IN SECTARIANISM | NOT INVOLVED IN SECTARIANISM | PERCENTAGE INVOLVED |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Deobandi     | 166             | 133                      | 33                           | 80                  |
| Barelvi      | 166             | 42                       | 124                          | 25                  |
| Ahle-Hadith  | 21              | 03                       | 18                           | 14                  |
| Shia         | 10              | 07                       | 03                           | 70                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>363</b>      | <b>185</b>               | <b>178</b>                   | <b>51</b>           |

As is depicted in the above table, more than 50% of the total madrassas in APE were found to be involved in sectarianism. Deobandi madrassas were found to have the highest percentage involvement in sectarianism followed by Shia, Barelvi, and then Ahle-Hadith madrassas.

Ali was unable to find comparable information on involvement in sectarian violence from the Islamabad administration due to security concerns. However, he conducted a content analysis of the newspapers for the previous five years and found several incidents of civil unrest in the city linked to madrassas. He presented several major events when affiliates of these madrassas burned down properties or burned down shrines of other sects, challenging the writ of the state and causing casualties.

This study provides great insight into the views of madrassa students, but not where those views came from.

<sup>29</sup> Ali, Saleem H. *Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan's Madrassahs*. Karachi: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

**Saleem Ali****"What role for Islam today? The Political Islamisation of Pakistani Society," *Shaping a Nation* (2010)<sup>30</sup>**

Another survey reported by Ali, conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), concludes that while many madrasa students are tolerant, there are still some alarming statistics. For example, 82 percent of Deobandi students favoured using the Taliban as a model for Islamizing Pakistan, and 95 percent of Shias favoured Iran as a model for Islamizing Pakistan.

**Christine Fair*****The Madrasa Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan* (2008)<sup>31</sup>**

In 2008, Christine Faith published a book on the connection between madrasa education and militancy in Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. She argued that although madrasa students tend to be less tolerant of non-Muslims than their public and private school counterparts, contrary to popular belief they are not producing large numbers of militants. She does note, however, the possibility that the increased intolerance of madrasa graduates promotes the culture within which Pakistani militancy thrives. Her findings are highly regarded and illustrative, but lack analysis of the actual madrasa texts and whether they are promoting the observed intolerance and potentially influencing the small numbers of madrasa graduates engaged in violence.

**Marie Lall*****Educate to hate: the use of education in the creation of antagonistic national identities in India and Pakistan* (2008)<sup>32</sup>**

In Dr. Marie Lall's 2008 study of Pakistani and Indian public school textbooks, she concludes that "*History [has] been selectively interpreted result[ing] in two largely politicized nations who had been instructed about their own exclusive national identity, which inevitably led to conflict with the other country.*"<sup>33</sup> In Pakistan she traces the Islamization of the public school curriculum and the corresponding removal of much of Pakistan's history with Hindus and India. This article makes direct link between the education system and the student's identity and the corresponding effect on conflict in the region. It does not, however, detail how this language impacts Hindus and other minorities within Pakistan.

**UK Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)*****Transforming religious education: Religious education in schools 2006-09, Report Reference no. 090215* (2010)<sup>34</sup>**

While this study did not take place in Pakistan, it explored the relationship between how religion is taught in schools and students' attitudes towards other religious

30 Ali, Saleem H. "What role for Islam today? The Political Islamisation of Pakistani Society" *Shaping a Nation: an Examination of Education in Pakistan*. By Stephen M. Lyon. Oxford, Oxford University. 2010. Print.

31 Fair, C. Christine. *The Madrasah Challenge: Militancy and Religious Education in Pakistan*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2008. Print.

32 Lall, M. 'Educate to hate: the use of education in the creation of antagonistic national identities in India and Pakistan', Compare Volume 38, Number 1. January 2008.

33 Ibid.

34 *Transforming Religious Education: Religious Education in Schools 2006-09*. Rep. no. 090215. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, Government of the United Kingdom, June 2010. Web. <<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/transforming-religious-education>>.

groups. This report is a review of the compulsory Religious Education (RE) classes in 94 primary and 89 secondary schools across the UK. RE in the UK consists of secular historical and social overviews of six religious traditions, namely Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (the possible addition of Humanism is being debated). One of the main aims of these courses, according to the report, is “community cohesion.” Relevant to this study is the establishment of a link between the quality of religious education taught in the classroom and the attitudes that students maintain concerning tolerance and other religious groups.

The OFSTED report concluded that RE provision was inadequate where it lacked (1) a student-focused, inquiry-based approach; (2) “hands on” interaction with practices, artifacts, and scriptures; and (3) an in-depth survey of other religions and ways of life. In these schools students expressed more negative attitudes towards diversity. Schools that maintained higher-quality RE classes which integrated the above were recognized as playing a role in community cohesion and developing in students an understanding and respect of others’ beliefs and cultures.

It can be concluded from this study that representations of other religions in the classroom are, while not the only influence, a major influence in the development of a student’s perspective and understanding of tolerance and other religious groups.

## CONCLUSION

Various studies have focused on either Pakistan’s public schools or its madrassas, but not both. They have also tended to focus on either the content of the nation’s curricula and textbooks or attitudes and actions of intolerance or violence, but rarely on the link between them.

In light of studies such as the above, the ICRD-SDPI study was undertaken to explore what linkages, if any, exist between the portrayal of religious minorities in the textbooks of Pakistan’s public schools and madrassas, biases that exist toward these minorities, and acts of discrimination or extremism resulting from such biases.

## SECTION 3

# Methodology

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Through a review of the Social/Pakistan Studies, Islamic Studies, and Urdu textbooks and pedagogical methods in Pakistan’s public school system and its madrassa system, along with interviews with teachers and students in both these schools systems and various relevant experts, the objectives of this study are to analyze the following:

1. How religious minorities are portrayed in these schools, with an emphasis on determining the degree to which negative stereotypes and/or biased portrayals of religious minorities exist.
2. The degree to which biases against religious minorities among the population result from how these minorities are portrayed in these educational systems.
3. The degree to which biases that have resulted from the educational systems have led to discriminatory or extremist actions against religious minorities in Pakistan.
4. The degree to which systemic biases towards other religious groups are ingrained in the administration of public schools and madrassas.
5. How best to counter the negative behavior that flows from negative stereotyping to which students are exposed in their schooling and education.

### METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS AND PRACTICES

Our study covered a broad range of topics, from the curriculum taught at primary and secondary levels to perceptions of minorities of teachers and students at different school levels in Pakistan. The present section will explain the methodological tools used in this study and our research practices, including sampling undertaken. To understand the curricular and pedagogical representations of minorities and their influences on students, the following methods were used:

- A review of textbooks used in public schools and madrassas;
- Semi-structured interviews with both teachers and students in public schools and madrassas;
- Focus group discussions (FGDs) with both teachers and students in public schools and madrassas;

**The analysis particularly focused on identifying positive and biased material referencing religious minorities (i.e. Christians, Ahmadis, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews).**

- Semi-structured interviews with experts in the field of education and religious diversity;
- A review of case studies involving discrimination against minorities or issues of extremism.

### **Review of Textbooks**

While previous studies have researched some issues concerning Pakistani textbooks, there is a need for focused studies of the portrayal of religious minorities in these textbooks and curriculum. This study represents a content analysis of these textbooks to analyze systematic representations of religious minorities and instances of promotion of intolerance. Provincial and federal policies which included pedagogical principles adopted by public schools were analyzed at provincial levels, with documents furnished from the Ministry of Education and the provincial education departments.

The analysis particularly focused on identifying positive and biased material referencing religious minorities (i.e. Christians, Ahmadis, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews) and how they are portrayed in the curricula and textbooks.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

The manner in which teachers portray religious minorities in the classroom is greatly influenced by their own perceptions and beliefs. Ideally, pedagogical research involves extended classroom observation in order to thoroughly examine the teaching process. However, given the short timeframe of this study, its broad geographic focus, and restrictions on access to classroom settings, it was impossible to conduct comprehensive classroom observations. In this study, pedagogy was thus analyzed through exploring the values, attitudes, and perceptions of teachers and students about religious diversity through interviews. Teachers, for example, were asked about the messages they communicate to their students about different religions and followers of these religions. Students, for example, were also asked about the moral stories told by their teachers, various religious messages given by their teachers, and whether respect for other religions and followers of other religions were included in the classroom.

Semi-structured interviews consist of a list of specific questions often referred to as an “interview guide.” Specific questions with a narrow range of choices are not used and there is no compulsion on the subject to answer in a certain way. However, neither is the interview an open discussion that moves wherever the interviewer and interviewee are inclined. A middle path is taken instead. The set of questions contained in the guide is determined before the data collection process, but space is designed to allow room for follow-ups and for making appropriate adjustments to the questions at the discretion of the interviewer.

Different themes were developed under which specific types of questions were asked to establish the interviewee’s understanding of other religions, perception of minorities, and related issues. In this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and students in public schools and madrassas in each of Pakistan’s four provinces. In order to implement the semi-structured interviews, questionnaires were developed in accordance with respondent types. Separate interview guides had to be developed for public schools and madrassas and for students and teachers, making a total of four different questionnaires containing relevant introductory, follow-up, direct, and probing questions.

Also important to the study were the views of experienced professionals in the field of education and religious diversity. In order to explore the dimensions of perceptions of religious minorities and any biases in the educational system that may exist, various experts were consulted and interviewed. A specific questionnaire was developed for these expert interviews, which were also recorded and transcribed.

All draft interview guides were then reviewed by both the ICRD and the SDPI teams. After joint review, these interview guides were pilot tested to improve the guides and to familiarize the research staff with the questionnaires. After the pilot test, the questionnaires were translated into Urdu for the local field research teams by professional translation services. Most translations of transcripts were completed by field researchers themselves fluent in Urdu and local languages, with the remaining professionally translated by local services.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

The focus group discussion (FGD) is a semi-structured data collection technique conducted with a group of participants. Participants are encouraged to answer, remain silent, or respond to each other as the conversation is guided by one or more interviewers or moderators. The technical team decided to conduct FGDs with key respondents of the study to gain deeper insights that may not emerge in a one-to-one conversation with a single interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, separate sessions with students and teachers in public schools and madrassas were required in addition to the interview schedule described above.

Separate checklists and guides were developed for the moderators to help focus the discussion and were jointly reviewed by ICRD and SDPI. Discussion guides provided guidelines to the moderator and assistant moderator for the facilitation of the FGDs. The checklists covered the objectives of the study.

All the discussions held were recorded with the help of an audio recorder and backed up by limited notes by a moderator and more detailed notes by an assistant moderator. These notes formed the basis for the transcription. Piloting and translating procedures followed for interviews with teachers, students, and relevant experts were also maintained during the FGD design and data collection.

### **Review of Case Studies**

To give a larger context to the interviews, FGDs, and textbook analysis that was conducted, further research was done to explore several case studies. These case studies explored incidents of discriminatory behavior or extremism that resulted in physical or other abuse. Such cases within the sampled districts were identified and explored by the field team.

### **INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FIELD WORK**

Once all interview guides were drafted and piloted, the field teams were given English and Urdu questionnaires to familiarize them with the different themes of the study, and were instructed to send any technical questions to the SDPI team for more clarity.

The teams arrived in the respective provinces on February 10, 2011 and discussed the field plans with the partner organizations. The reliability of each field researcher's common understanding and interpretation of each question is essential to maintaining consistent data between provinces. Therefore, trainings were considered an important element for quality data collection, ensuring that the field teams were

**The study endeavored to examine and analyze textbooks from the four provincial public school textbook boards as well as selected madrassa texts.**

equipped to carry out the data collection with sufficient and consistent understanding of the interview questions and objectives of the research.

Each member of the technical team held a day-long interactive training session with the field teams. The training was divided into three different sessions focused on: (1) interviewing and probing techniques, (2) public school education, and (3) madrassa education. Mock interviews with field researchers and SDPI staff were conducted to guarantee that each researcher understood the questions in a similar manner.

The sessions were arranged to provide maximum information and conceptual clarity to the field team. The sensitivity of the questions was well understood by the technical team and any concerns were passed along to the field team. Issues of sensitivity are discussed below in the “Limitations of this Study” section (page 38).

The SDPI team also traveled to the respective regions to supervise the data collection process and ensure the quality of the data. Monitoring and evaluation was built into the project design to ensure data accuracy. The technical team traveled with the monitoring team so that data quality would not be compromised. SDPI notes during interviews were later compared to field researcher notes to guarantee consistency between field researchers.

Fieldwork in Punjab, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was conducted from February 11-25, 2011. Due to the fact that the school year in Balochistan starts later than in other provinces as well as security issues, the data collection in this province took place in March and early April, 2011. Data collection that was originally planned for the district of Zhob was canceled due to security reasons; data collection in Quetta was likewise delayed but ultimately completed as planned. Issues with field research and other obstacles are described further in the section titled “Limitations of this Study.”

## **SAMPLING**

### **Sampling of Textbooks**

The scope of textbook analysis in this study was ambitiously broad as the study endeavored to examine and analyze textbooks from the four provincial public school textbook boards as well as selected madrassa texts. Building on the findings of previous studies, textbooks of subjects that include religious content and include portrayals of religious minorities—i.e., Urdu, Islamic Studies, and Social Studies—were collected. Within these subjects, public school textbooks ranging from Grades 1 through 10 were sampled. Four textbooks taught at madrassas affiliated with four of the five Islamic schools of thought were also sampled.

Unfortunately no textbooks from Shia madrassas could be sampled in this study. Access to such textbooks was available to the SDPI team. However, experts both willing and able to review the books were not. Several relevant Sunni and Shia authorities on Islamic textbooks were approached. In each case they were not familiar enough, by their own standards or SDPI’s, with either the content or context of the books or with Shia doctrine in order to be able to carry out the review

### **Sampling for Interviews and Focus Group Discussions**

Utmost care was exercised in choosing both the schools and the participants for the individual interviews and FGDs. The study was conducted in all four provinces of Pakistan: Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Sindh, and Punjab. Two districts



were selected for study in the provinces of KPK, Punjab, and Sindh, and one district was selected in Balochistan (due to security and logistical challenges).<sup>35</sup> These districts were as follows:

Balochistan: Quetta

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Peshawar and Swat

Punjab: Khanewal and Lahore

Sindh: Hyderabad and Karachi

Choosing schools in each province was a challenge. Some obstacles faced in selecting and gaining access to schools are discussed in the “Limitations of this Study” section below. Fieldwork in all four provinces was facilitated by regional partners who had previous work experience with public schools and madrassas in their respective provinces. In the first stage, SDPI collected the baseline information from the Ministry of Education regarding the number of public schools and madrassas in each province and district. Districts having a large number of public schools and madrassas as well as the presence of religious minorities were selected for the study. In the second stage, partner organizations having previous information about schools and connections with school administrations selected the schools. The balance of high schools and middle schools as well as girls’ and boys’ schools was determined by the sample size.

Selection of individual madrassas was primarily determined by the priority to interview teachers and students from madrassas of each of the five schools of thought. This does not necessarily mean that all five schools of thought were represented in samples from each district or province. However, all five schools of thoughts were represented at the collective level.

After the selection of schools, the field teams spoke to the head teachers, shared the objectives of the study, and requested permission for interviews of students and teachers. The criteria for selecting teachers were that they must be teaching Urdu, Islamic Studies, Social Studies, and/or Pakistan Studies. In Pakistan, most of the teachers teach a range of subjects and sometimes to a range of grades. We tried to achieve a balance of teachers with respect to the subjects and grades they taught.

Similarly, the students were also selected from the middle (Grades 6-8) and secondary (Grades 9-10) levels. All students therefore had gone through the existing curricula for at least five years. The headmaster or administrator of the school provided the names of the students, out of which we selected students. The age and education profile of the individual student participants were major considerations for participant selection. On a few occasions in madrassas, the administrators tried to include older students due to the perceived sensitivity of the study.

While a typical FGD consisted of eight participants, the number of participants in each FGD ranged from three to twelve. Each FGD involved a homogenous group, either all teachers or all students, all from public schools or all from madrassas, and all male or all female.

Six individual interviews were conducted with experts having expertise related to textbooks, curricula, and the treatment of religious minorities in the Pakistani education system. After initial contact with various experts, those who agreed were interviewed by the SDPI team.

<sup>35</sup> Data collection was originally planned for Zhob as well, but ultimately had to be canceled for security reasons. This is further discussion in the Limitations of this Study section.

### Description of Sample

The following tables display the demographics of the sample surveyed in the interviews and focus group discussions of both teachers and students in public schools and madrassas. The sample also displays the locations of the schools sampled in this study, the school levels, and, in the case of madrassas, the Islamic schools of thought to which the schools ascribe.

### Public Schools, Locations, and Levels

| PROVINCE           | DISTRICT  | SCHOOLS   | LEVELS OF SCHOOLS | GRADES          |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Sindh              | Karachi   | 6         | Middle & High     | 8th, 9th & 10th |
|                    | Hyderabad | 14        | Middle & High     | 8th, 9th & 10th |
| Punjab             | Lahore    | 4         | Middle & High     | 8th, 9th & 10th |
|                    | Khanewal  | 4         | Middle & High     | 8th, 9th & 10th |
| Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | Peshawar  | 3         | Middle & High     | 8th, 9th & 10th |
|                    | Swat      | 3         | Middle & High     | 8th, 9th & 10th |
| Balochistan        | Quetta    | 3         | Middle & High     | 8th, 9th & 10th |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       |           | <b>37</b> |                   |                 |

### Madrassas, Locations, and Sects/Schools of Thought

| PROVINCE     | DISTRICT  | MADRASSAS | SCHOOL OF THOUGHT         |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Sindh        | Karachi   | 3         | Deobandi & Jamat-e-Islami |
|              | Hyderabad | 4         | Deobandi & Jamat-e-Islami |
| Punjab       | Lahore    | 3         | Shia, Bareilvi & Deobandi |
|              | Khanewal  | 2         | Ahle-Hadith & Deobandi    |
| KPK          | Peshawar  | 3         | Deobandi & Jamat-e-Islami |
|              | Swat      | 2         | Deobandi & Jamat-e-Islami |
| Balochistan  | Quetta    | 2         | Deobandi                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |           | <b>19</b> |                           |

### Individual Interviews — Public School Students

| PROVINCE     | DISTRICT  | MALE      | FEMALE    | TOTAL     |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Balochistan  | Quetta    | 6         | 4         | 10        |
| KPK          | Peshawar  | 6         | 4         | 10        |
|              | Swat      | 6         | 4         | 10        |
| Punjab       | Khanewal  | 6         | 4         | 10        |
|              | Lahore    | 6         | 4         | 10        |
| Sindh        | Hyderabad | 6         | 4         | 10        |
|              | Karachi   | 6         | 4         | 10        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |           | <b>42</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>70</b> |

**Individual Interviews — Public School Teachers**

| PROVINCE     | DISTRICT  | MALE      | FEMALE    | TOTAL     |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Balochistan  | Quetta    | 3         | 2         | 5         |
| KPK          | Peshawar  | 2         | 5         | 7         |
|              | Swat      | 9         | 1         | 10        |
| Punjab       | Khanewal  | 3         | 2         | 5         |
|              | Lahore    | 4         | 2         | 6         |
| Sind         | Hyderabad | 2         | 2         | 4         |
|              | Karachi   | 2         | 8         | 10        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |           | <b>25</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>47</b> |

**Focus Group Discussions — Public School Students**

| PROVINCE     | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (MALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (FEMALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL NO. OF GROUPS | TOTAL NO. OF PARTICIPANTS |
|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Balochistan  | 1                          | 5                   | -                            | -                   | 1                   | 5                         |
| KPK          | -                          | -                   | 2                            | 9                   | 2                   | 9                         |
| Punjab       | 2                          | 16                  | -                            | -                   | 2                   | 16                        |
| Sindh        | 3                          | 24                  | 4                            | 33                  | 7                   | 57                        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>6</b>                   | <b>45</b>           | <b>6</b>                     | <b>42</b>           | <b>12</b>           | <b>87</b>                 |

**Focus Group Discussions — Public School Teachers**

| PROVINCE     | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (MALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (FEMALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL NO. OF GROUPS | TOTAL NO. OF PARTICIPANTS |
|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Balochistan  | 1                          | 5                   | -                            | -                   | 1                   | 5                         |
| KPK          | 2                          | 14                  | 2                            | 7                   | 4                   | 11                        |
| Punjab       | 2                          | 18                  | -                            | -                   | 2                   | 18                        |
| Sindh        | 2                          | 15                  | 3                            | 24                  | 5                   | 39                        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>7</b>                   | <b>52</b>           | <b>5</b>                     | <b>31</b>           | <b>12</b>           | <b>73</b>                 |

**Individual Interviews — Madrasa Students**

| PROVINCE     | DISTRICT  | MALE      | FEMALE   | TOTAL     |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Balochistan  | Quetta    | 4         | -        | 4         |
| KPK          | Peshawar  | 5         | -        | 5         |
|              | Swat      | 4         | -        | 4         |
| Punjab       | Khanewal  | 4         | -        | 4         |
|              | Lahore    | 6         | -        | 6         |
| Sindh        | Hyderabad | 8         | -        | 8         |
|              | Karachi   | 2         | -        | 2         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |           | <b>33</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>33</b> |

**Individual Interviews — Madrasa Teachers**

| PROVINCE     | DISTRICT  | MALE      | FEMALE   | TOTAL     |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Balochistan  | Quetta    | 4         | -        | 4         |
| KPK          | Peshawar  | 4         | -        | 4         |
|              | Swat      | 1         | -        | 1         |
| Punjab       | Khanewal  | 4         | -        | 4         |
|              | Lahore    | 4         | -        | 4         |
| Sindh        | Hyderabad | 3         | -        | 3         |
|              | Karachi   | 2         | -        | 2         |
| <b>TOTAL</b> |           | <b>22</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>22</b> |

**Focus Group Discussions — Madrasa Students**

| PROVINCE     | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (MALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (FEMALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL NO. OF GROUPS | TOTAL NO. OF PARTICIPANTS |
|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Balochistan  | 1                          | 6                   | -                            | -                   | 1                   | 6                         |
| KPK          | 2                          | 12                  | -                            | -                   | 2                   | 12                        |
| Punjab       | 4                          | 38                  | -                            | -                   | 4                   | 38                        |
| Sindh        | 6                          | 49                  | -                            | -                   | 6                   | 49                        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>13</b>                  | <b>105</b>          | <b>-</b>                     | <b>-</b>            | <b>13</b>           | <b>105</b>                |

**Focus Group Discussions — Madrasa Teachers**

| PROVINCE     | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (MALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | NO. OF FOCUS GROUPS (FEMALE) | NO. OF PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL NO. OF GROUPS | TOTAL NO. OF PARTICIPANTS |
|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Balochistan  | 1                          | 6                   | -                            | -                   | 1                   | 6                         |
| KPK          | 2                          | 11                  | 2                            | 23                  | 4                   | 34                        |
| Punjab       | 3                          | 27                  | -                            | -                   | 3                   | 27                        |
| Sindh        | 7                          | 54                  | -                            | -                   | 7                   | 54                        |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>13</b>                  | <b>98</b>           | <b>2</b>                     | <b>23</b>           | <b>15</b>           | <b>121</b>                |

**LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

Fieldwork was led by SDPI. The technical team, along with the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Unit, prepared the field plan for data collection. Prior to the field plan, the technical team, with the support of the M&E Unit, decided to engage local organizations and individual consultants for the data collection exercise using utmost sensitivity in their selection. The sensitive nature of this study created some obstacles. Ultimately local partners such as BETHAK,<sup>36</sup> Management and Development Consultant (MDC), National Integrated & Development Association (NIDA) Pakistan, and various individual consultants collaborated in carrying out the field work and addressing these issues.

<sup>36</sup> BETHAK is an acronym for “Be Empowered Through Awareness & Knowledge.”

### Limitations of Methodological Tools

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, significant difficulties in conducting field work were presupposed by the planning team and prepared for. The sensitivity of the research topic and type of respondents to be interviewed determined the risk associated with the data collection. Military operations in KPK and Balochistan added to the existing difficulties for the team, especially for data collection in the madrassas.

The interview questions required a great deal of sensitivity; even in the public school interviews, subjects were sometimes reluctant to answer questions regarding religion, sectarian differences, and their attitudes towards religious minorities. Predictably, the teachers were more reluctant than students to answer sensitive questions.

Two methods were used to elicit valid and reliable responses from participants and to decrease tension built by such sensitive topics. First, the introduction of focus group discussions where multiple peers were able to interact with two interviewers decreased the pressure that an individual interviewee may experience when expected to give individual answers to every question. With the support of peers, individuals may be more likely to express opinions held in common or challenge individuals who they are familiar with. Second, the field team applied probing techniques to gain insights into these questions. Probing questions consisted primarily of rephrasing the questions in the form of abstracted scenarios. When interviewers understood participants as perceiving a direct question as sensitive in nature, interviewers were trained to put the direct question into the abstract and reformulate it to be more indirect. Discussing stories of “others” and their situations or views instead of placing the focus on the participants helped to relieve some pressure that participants were being individually judged or singled out.

The individual interviews were conducted in a comfortable environment with the aim of preventing the sensitivity of the questions from adversely affecting the respondents’ behavior. Locations were negotiated with individual participants.

### Limitations of Sampling

Inaccessibility of public schools was also encountered in a few of the districts. Field work in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also extended due to public school closures in one of the sampled districts. Access to the madrassas was a greater challenge. ICRD’s experience of more than seven years working with the madrassa community on educational enhancement initiatives—and particularly the personal influence of ICRD Senior Vice President Azhar Hussain—proved crucial in gaining needed access for the field teams.

Still, suspicions on the part of the madrassa community about “outsiders” and the United States in particular posed additional challenges. Concerns such as this and other security issues made the originally-planned data collection in Zhob impossible. ICRD had to intervene often to personally call the madrassa administrators before they would allow the interviews.

The madrassa teachers and students were found to be very sensitive about several religious issues. The issue of Muslim attitudes towards religious minorities and sectarian differences were particularly difficult for many. These sensitivities sometimes created difficulties for the field team in identifying subjects to be interviewed and gaining their consent. On one of the visits to a prominent madrassa in Punjab, the field team held discussions with the top officials and was asked to provide both

**Subjects were sometimes reluctant to answer questions regarding religion, sectarian differences, and their attitudes towards religious minorities.**

the student and teacher questionnaire to the administration, so that the students and teachers were prepared for those questionnaires. The field team declined and postponed further data collection exercises in that specific madrassa until they were allowed to conduct their research so as to be consistent with data collection methods practiced in other madrassas.

The research study was intended to interview madrassa students of selected ages so as not to disturb the age bracket of the study. However, the field team encountered challenges in this area as the students studying in some madrassas were admitted only after the age of fifteen or sixteen after passing matriculation exams. In the KPK, for example, the field team was unable to engage students of the desired age bracket. Despite these challenges, in most cases the field team was ultimately able to find a sufficient number of students within the same age bracket as the students covered in the public schools.

## **ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Voluntary and Informed Consent**

Voluntary and informed consent is a mechanism for ensuring that participants understand the nature of the research and can decide in an informed, non-coercive, and deliberate way whether to participate. The study received informed and voluntary consent from respondents at different stages of the project cycle.

The administrations of public schools and madrassas were informed through a letter of invitation elaborating the objectives of the study, and informal consents were given through negotiations. The degree of participation and involvement varied due to various levels of consent received from the participants. Once the team arrived for the field data collection, verbal consents were again taken from students and teachers for their participation in individual interviews and focus group discussions.

### **Confidentiality**

The study is conversational by nature, so it was of paramount importance to record and maintain data in a confidential manner. Participants often expressed that they enjoyed talking with researchers and through the course of an interview tended to freely share personal observations and real life experiences. It was helpful to build trust with the participants so that opinions and information could be freely expressed. It was of critical importance not to pass on the information of one participant to another to avoid betrayal of trust or the possibility of coercion or cross-contamination during or after the research process.

Due to the sensitivity of the study, it was essential that the names of the participants be held in confidence when presenting the data and findings of the research; absolute anonymity was demanded.

## SECTION 4

# Results of the Study

## PART A REPRESENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN THE TEXTBOOKS

### FINDINGS PUBLIC SCHOOL TEXTBOOK REVIEW

The following is an overview of key findings and issues observed in the public school textbook review. A list of the textbooks reviewed is included in the appendix.

#### Islam Out of Context/Forced on Religious Minorities

While non-Muslims are technically allowed to study alternatives to Islamic Studies courses after third grade, including an Ethics course (though it is not guaranteed that such courses or textbooks and teachers to teach them will be available), the curriculum and textbooks for Grades 1-3 often integrate Urdu, Social Studies, and Islamic Studies into one integrated textbook. A careful examination of the first grade textbook used for the integrated curriculum, titled *Meri Kitab*<sup>37</sup> or “My Book,” which is compulsory for students, revealed that seven of the 16 total chapters contained Islamic sermons. The instructions for teachers in this book underscore its Islamic content.

| HEADING                               | TEACHERS' INSTRUCTION  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Naat (Poems in Praise of the Prophet) | <i>Tell every child to say "Sal-Allah-o-Alaih-e-Wasallm [Peace be upon the Holy Prophet]" five times.</i><br><i>Tell children whenever they hear, read, speak, or write the name of the Holy Prophet, [they] must recite Darood, "Sal-Allah-o-Alaih-e-Wasallm [Peace be upon the Holy Prophet]."</i> |
| Kindness with Children                | <i>Keep the Islamic perspective in mind during exercises and activities.</i>   |
| Importance of Cleanliness             | <i>Tell children that in Islam cleanliness is half of the faith.</i>   |
| Good Child                            | <i>Tell children that in the Holy Qur'an it is advised to adopt good habits and qualities.</i>   |
| Speak Truth                           | <i>Tell children that Islam has given much importance to speak the truth.</i>  |
| Manners of Conversation               | <i>Tell children what manners the Holy Qur'an said about good and meaningful conversation.</i>   |

37 'My Book' (Integrated Curriculum). This book was published by "Chaudhary Ghulam Rasool and Sons", a private publisher. However, it was distributed by the Government of Punjab for the academic year 2010-11. The book states, "This book is prepared as per international standards under the National Curriculum 2006 and National Textbook and Learning Materials Policy 2007."

It has not been made clear how religious minorities who would also be studying from the integrated curriculum, a practice justified by the concept of using language instruction as a vehicle for all education at this level in order to buttress literacy, would have an alternative to learning Islamic concepts.

Our review of Social Studies (called Pakistan Studies at later grades) and Urdu textbooks after Grade 3 found that both subjects, compulsory for religious minority students, contained significant Islamic content.

### Islamic Content in Urdu Lessons from Selected Textbooks

| BOARD  | GRADE | LESSONS WITH ISLAMIC CONTENT | TOTAL CHAPTERS |
|--|-------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Balochistan <sup>1</sup>   | 3     | 10                           | 40             |
| Sindh <sup>2</sup>   | 4     | 10                           | 36             |
| Balochistan <sup>3</sup>   | 5     | 8                            | 38             |
| Sindh <sup>4</sup>   | 6     | 9                            | 33             |
| 1 Urdu Textbook, Grade 3, Balochistan Textbook Board<br>2 Urdu Textbook, Grade 4, Sindh Textbook Board<br>3 Urdu Textbook, Grade 5, Balochistan Textbook Board<br>4 Urdu Textbook, Grade 6, Sindh Textbook Board |       |                              |                |

A review of compulsory Urdu language textbooks for all students up to Grade 10, published by the Punjab Textbook Board, found that 96 chapters and poems out of 362 had a strong Islamic orientation, without any mention of Pakistan's religious minorities or their beliefs.

**Religious minorities are often portrayed as inferior or second-class citizens.**

### Minorities' Overall Portrayal

The portrayal of religious minorities in textbooks is generally either derogatory or omitted entirely, with some exceptions, which will be described in a subsequent section. Religious minorities are often portrayed as inferior or second-class citizens who have been granted limited rights and privileges by generous Pakistani Muslims, for which they should be grateful, and to whom religious minorities should be subservient. The contributions of religious minorities towards the formation, development, and protection of Pakistan are largely absent.

### Depiction of Hindus

Overall, Hindus are portrayed as enemies of Pakistan and Muslims in Urdu and Social and Pakistan Studies textbooks. There are a few exceptions as will be described subsequently. Social and Pakistan Studies textbooks express hatred towards India and Great Britain, but Hindus are often singled out as particularly inferior or evil.

While an exhaustive list of anti-Hindu content observed in the textbook review is impractical, the following excerpts from books at various grade levels give an idea as to the level of bigotry contained in the textbooks:



| GRADE   | SUBJECT          | CONTENT   |
|---|------------------|---|
| 4   | Social Studies   | "Muslims treated Hindus in [a] very good manner despite that Hindus used to main[tain] deep animosity against Muslims." <sup>1</sup>  |
| 5   | Social Studies   | ".... But Hindus never cooperated with Muslims. They were not ready to accept the existence of Muslims in the sub-continent. Due to this, the social, religious and political differences between Muslims and Hindus persisted and there was a growing concern towards partition." <sup>2</sup>   |
| 6   | Social Studies   | "Before the Arab conquest the people were fed up with the teachings of Buddhists and Hindus." <sup>3</sup><br><br>"The foundation of [the] Hindu set up was based on injustice and cruelty. The system of Islam, which was based on justice, equality and brotherhood as described earlier, impressed a lot to the Hindu culture and set up." <sup>4</sup>  |
| 8   | Social Studies   | "All those who created the Two Nations Theory were primarily the supporters of Hindu-Muslim unity. However, what made them to take first steps towards the preservation of a separate Muslim identity was the racist mentality of Hindus." <sup>5</sup><br><br>"... Hindus and Sikhs had started [a] massacre in the Muslim settlements in Bharat (the new name of India after partition). In order to protect their lives, property and honor, 12.5 million Muslims started migrating to Pakistan." <sup>6</sup> |
| 10  | Pakistan Studies | "Hindus were against the creation of Pakistan. Despite their utmost opposition, when Pakistan was created, they used all means to weaken and harm Pakistan. Hindus in the 'East Pakistan' started mobilizing their fellow citizens against the 'West Pakistan.'" <sup>7</sup>   |
| <p>1 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 4, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, p.16</p> <p>2 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, p. 6</p> <p>3 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 6, Punjab Textbook Board, p. 97</p> <p>4 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 6, Punjab Textbook Board, p. 100-101</p> <p>5 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 8, Balochistan Textbook Board, p. 111</p> <p>6 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 8, Balochistan Textbook Board, p. 119</p> <p>7 Pakistan Studies Textbook, Grade 9/10, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, p. 31</p> |                  |   |

Hindus are repeatedly described as extremists and eternal enemies of Islam whose culture and society is based on injustice and cruelty, while Islam delivers a message of peace and brotherhood, concepts portrayed as alien to the Hindu. Thus, negative depictions of Hindus are manifested through both historical distortions and the framing of concepts through religious language that promotes the superiority of Islam over Hinduism, as in the following examples:

*"The religious beliefs of the Muslims and Hindus are absolutely different. The Hindus worship many Idols. They have many Gods and Goddesses. The Muslims believe in one Allah who is Almighty and who is Creator of the universe. The Muslims worship Allah. In the Hindu religion the men are divided into different classes by their system of caste and creed, whereas in Islam all the Muslims are equal and are brotherly with one another. In Hindu religion the women are given a low status. Whereas Islam teaches to give due respect to the women."*<sup>38</sup>

38 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Punjab Textbook Board, p.2

*“The social equality and justice to all freed the cast ridden Hindu society and paved the way for spread of Islam, we know that the low caste Hindus suffered due to the low caste system, The Hindus belonging to lower casts were tortured, insulted and disgraced. [sic]”<sup>39</sup>*

*“Hindu leadership has not only shown their religious hatred but also expressed their political hatred by opposing to celebrate their independence day on the same day. They proposed 15th August 1947, as their independence day because they never wanted to celebrate with Pakistan on the same day and this shows their psyche of narrow-mindedness.”<sup>40</sup>*

While much of the content found reflected Hindus in a negative light, there were also instances in which the textbooks seemed to be presenting facts from the Islamic perspective, but with a neutral voice.

*“Muslims bury their dead while Hindus burn them.”<sup>41</sup>*

*“In Islam there is no cast system while Hind[u] society is divided into casts systems. [sic]”<sup>42</sup>*

While such content is particularly prevalent in the Social and Pakistan Studies texts, particularly for Grade 5, it can also be found in Islamic Studies texts, as in the following example.

*“Hindus have tried all their means to harm Muslims of Indian Sub-continent and killed millions of Muslims. They were deprived of their assets and properties.”<sup>43</sup>*

#### Depiction of Christians

The textbooks do not contain many references to Christians specifically. The few references that do exist seem generally negative, painting an incomplete picture of the largest religious minority in Pakistan.

*“Christian Missionaries took full advantage of the British occupation of Asia and under their patronage started converting people of different religions to Christianity.”<sup>44</sup>*

*“Under Muslim reign in Jerusalem, Muslim ruler’s [sic] treatment with non-Muslims, including Christians and Jews was very fair and just. They have always provided Christian’s [sic] full protection and had granted them all rights they deserved, but Christians never appreciated nor liked Muslim rule on Jerusalem... They provoked Christian to fight against the Muslims by inciting that, those who will die in a battle against Muslim will have reward and their all sins will be forgiven. [sic]”<sup>45</sup>*

Not mentioned in the Pakistani textbooks are the contributions of Christians to the defense of Pakistan. Despite repeated references to the Indo-Pakistan wars, the textbooks generally omit the sacrifices of decorated war heroes from the Christian community such as Air Vice Marshalls Eric Gordon Hall and Michael John O’Brian

39 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 6, Sindh Textbook Board, p. 81

40 Pakistan Studies Textbook, Grade 9/10, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, p. 9

41 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Balochistan Textbook Board, p.6-7

42 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Balochistan Textbook Board, p.6-7

43 Islamic Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Sindh Textbook Board, p.59

44 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 8, Sindh Textbook Board, p. 96

45 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 7, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, p. 14

**The few references [to Christians] seem generally negative, painting an incomplete picture of the largest religious minority in Pakistan.**

(Indo-Pakistani Wars of 1947, 1965, and 1971); or Group Captain (Colonel) Cecil Chaudhry, Wing Commander (Lt. Col.) Mervyn Leslie Middlecoat (KIA), Squadron Leader (Major) Peter Christy (KIA), and Air Commodore (Brigadier-General) Nazir Latif (Indo-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971). Also omitted from the textbooks is the career of Chief Justice Alvin Robert Cornelius of the Pakistani Supreme Court (1960-1968).

### Depiction of Sikhs

While the instance of derogatory portrayals of Sikhs was relatively low, when they were mentioned, they were depicted in a negative light.

*“The British and Sikh soldiers insulted the Muslim women and killed the children. Great numbers of Muslims were forced to vacate Delhi and only one-fourth of the total Muslim population remained in the city.”<sup>46</sup>*

*“... Hindus and Sikhs had started [a] massacre in the Muslim settlements in Bharat (the new name of India after partition). In order to protect their lives, property and honor, 12.5 million Muslims started migrating to Pakistan.”<sup>47</sup>*

### Depiction of Jews

Jews were not mentioned often in the textbooks, aside from short references to them as predatory moneylenders.

*“Some Jewish tribes also lived in Arabia. They lent money to workers and peasants on high rates of interest and usurped their earnings. They held the whole society in their tight grip because of the ever-increasing compound interest... In short, there was no sympathy for humanity. People were selfish and cruel. The rich lived in luxury and nobody bothered about the needy or those in sufferings.”<sup>48</sup>*

### Positive and Neutral Depictions

Amongst the negative passages about non-Muslims and their associated religious communities, there are also some passages that include either positive or neutral representations. Although they are not as frequent as the negative ones within the textbooks reviewed, it is important to note that there are also large portions of the textbooks in which no mention of non-Muslims or Islamic superiority is made at all.

The positive or neutral representations can be divided into the following four categories:

1. Promoting tolerance within Islam,
2. Recognition of past historical harmonious relationships,
3. Description of equality under the law, and
4. Accurate representations of non-Muslim religions.

<sup>46</sup> Social Studies Textbook, Grade 8, Sindh Textbook Board, p. 98

<sup>47</sup> Social Studies Textbook, Grade 8, Balochistan Textbook Board, p. 119

<sup>48</sup> Social Studies Textbook, Grade 7, Punjab Textbook Board 2010, p.13

The promotion of tolerance within Islam is one of the most common forms of these positive passages, although it most often occurs at the expense of Hinduism and the caste system.

In many sections profiling specific religious leaders including the Prophet Muhammad, Omar,<sup>49</sup> Maulana Zafar Ali Khan,<sup>50</sup> and Saladin,<sup>51</sup> their kindness and mercy towards non-believers is often highlighted as a virtue in and of itself as well as a mechanism for conversion. For example, in the Urdu textbook for Grade 6, Saladin's conquest of modern-day Israel is described as follows:

*“Upon conquering the holy land in October 1187, his fair treatment of his enemies is historic. In stark contrast to this is Prince Godfrey's treatment of Muslims where the bloodshed caused the victorious army's horses to slip. Saladin not only let all Christians leave with all their property intact, but also paid for the freedom of several prisoners from his own pocket.”*<sup>52</sup>

This type of representation describing how one should treat non-Muslims is important, though it often still sets them up as a distinct group in need of special treatment.

There are a number of other examples that recognize earlier harmony and cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslims. For example,

*“Muhammad Bin Qasim respected the Hindu Pandits and they had full freedom to worship in their own ways. Much of the Muslim Governments' works were handed over to the Hindus, who carried them out nicely.”*<sup>53</sup>

Sometimes, however, these positive depictions are paired with less positive depictions. For example, a Social Studies textbook for Grade 5 explains that *“the war of Independence of 1857 was jointly fought by the Muslims and the Hindus;”* however, the description continues to say that

*“in the beginning, the Hindus and the Muslims jointly started a struggle to get freedom from the British. When this movement became popular, the Hindus started asking for an independent Government by the Indian National Congress all over India after freedom from British. In this way they wanted to govern all over India.”*<sup>54</sup>

Examples of the next type of positive or neutral statements included in the textbooks are much more straightforward-statements about the equality of minorities under the law. There are many passages explaining the legal status of minorities including: *“non-Muslims have religious freedom [in Pakistan]”*<sup>55</sup> and *“every body [sic] enjoys the same status in the eyes of the law and holds a pivotal position in Islamic society.”*<sup>56</sup>

Lastly, there are accurate representations of non-Muslims and their presence within society in some of the textbooks. For example, a Grade 2 textbook states that: *“Pakistan is an Islamic nation. Although there are non-Muslims living here, their population is fewer. On the flag, the white signifies non-Muslims, while the green signifies Muslims.”*<sup>57</sup> Within

49 'My Book' (Integrated Course) Textbook, Grade 3, Punjab Textbook Board, p.50

50 Urdu Textbook, Grade 6, Punjab Textbook Board, p. 21

51 Urdu Textbook, Grade 6, Punjab Textbook Board, p. 31

52 Urdu Textbook, Grade 6, Punjab Textbook Board, p. 31

53 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Punjab Textbook Board, p.88

54 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Punjab Textbook Board, p.2-3

55 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Punjab Textbook Board, p.57

56 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 7, Punjab Textbook Board, p.17

57 'My Book' (Integrated Course) Textbook, Grade 2, Punjab Textbook Board, p.7

the Grade 6 Social Studies textbook, there is a large section dedicated to the countries of South Asia where the religious diversity is described in an unbiased and largely accurate way.<sup>58</sup>

Overall, there are some representations of non-Muslims within the textbooks that encourage good behavior towards them on the part of Muslims from a religious perspective, as well as a generally accurate idea of how many non-Muslims are in Pakistan and the region. However, this information often comes within sections that describe the superiority of Islam or the political tensions that have existed between Muslims and Hindus (as in the case of Indian independence) and with Christians (as in the case of British colonization).

### **Distortion of History and Omissions**

The majority of pejorative content came in the form of omissions and distortion of history. The textbooks include the art and poetry of Pakistani Muslims, but writers and poets from Pakistan's religious minority community receive little mention. A young minority student will thus not find many examples of educated religious minorities in their own textbooks. Textbooks have also downplayed, through omission, significant contributions of some minority groups and failed to recognize the existence of others. Pakistani textbooks tend to be remarkably shorter than their Western counterparts; it could also be hypothesized that in some cases omitted material was simply the result of having too much material to cover.

The textbooks that were reviewed frequently omit references to the Hindu and Buddhist dynasties that once presided over modern-day Pakistan, or in cases when they do make such references, tend to focus on the negative aspects of non-Muslim societies or overemphasize the conditions that led to their downfall. When describing the transition from a non-Muslim civilization to Islamic rule, textbooks frequently make gratuitous assumptions regarding the benevolence of the new Muslim rulers. In most cases historic revisionism seems designed to exonerate or glorify Islamic civilization, or to denigrate the civilizations of religious minorities. Basic changes to the texts would be needed to present a history free of false or unsubstantiated claims which convey religious bias, but an additional effort would be needed to also include historic events that sharpen the analytical skills of students and re-enforce values such as equality, social justice, fairness, diversity, and tolerance.

### **Sense of Threat to Islamic National Identity**

The textbook content would seem to give students the sense that: (1) the defining characteristic of Pakistan is its Islamic identity and (2) defense of Pakistan is equivalent to the defense of Islam. The Islamic identity of Pakistan is established throughout the Social Studies and Pakistan Studies textbooks, often to the exclusion of religious minorities. Some textbook passages imply or directly state that Pakistan's Islamic identity or Islam itself is under threat, which creates the possibility that the reader could come to view the influence of religious minorities as threatening.

*"Pakistan is an Islamic country and Muslim citizens are brothers to one another."*<sup>59</sup>

**The majority of pejorative content came in the form of omissions and distortion of history.**

<sup>58</sup> Social Studies Textbook, Grade 6, Punjab Textbook Board, p.54-57

<sup>59</sup> Social Studies Textbook, Grade 4, Punjab Textbook Board, p.51

*“To keep the Islamic identity and existence it is necessary for our country to safeguard religion and its values. Pakistan is the only country which came into being in the name of Islam.”<sup>60</sup>*

*“The foreign cultures are leaving deep influence over the Islamic values because of the electronic media. There is every danger that we may lose our cultural identities. In such circumstances and because of the vast changing cultural and religious situations, it is necessary for us that we must fully defend our political borders, take care of our basic views with love and devotion for Islam. This can ensure the safety of our country. The anti-Islamic forces are always trying to finish the Islamic domination of the world. This can cause danger for the very existence of Islam. Today, the defense of Pakistan and Islam is very much in need. It is more needed today because Pakistan is the only Islamic country which is an atomic power. Some people call this atomic power of Pakistan as Islamic bomb. Today, all the anti-Islamic powers look at Pakistan in such a way that we may remain away and aloof from the leadership of the Islamic world... The spirit of jihad may be inculcated among the people and Islamic viewpoints may be propagated.”<sup>61</sup>*

*“Islamic society was devoid of every kind of evil, but gradually the Muslims began turning away from the Islamic principles and un-Islamic ways popularized, which became one of the reasons of Muslim downfall.”<sup>62</sup>*

*“There were many reasons for the downfall of Muslims [in South Asia]. The most important reason was the internal conflicts which resulted in the division of their state in several small states. The second important reason was the end of the spirit of Jihad among Muslims.”<sup>63</sup>*

### **Curricular and Textbook Reform Efforts**

Education reforms of 2006 dramatically altered the curricula for Pakistan’s public school system. While some problems remain, the 2006 revised curricular guidelines made significant progress towards eliminating biases, historical revisionism, and religious exclusivity. For example, revisions to the national curriculum for Social Studies for Grades 4-5 have moved toward greater incorporation of the teaching of tolerance and respect for diversity both within and across borders.

For Grades 6-8, the 2006 reformed curricular guidelines substituted History for Social Studies and added two chapters (out of a total of 15) on pre-Islamic history of the sub-continent. (One chapter is dedicated to the Indus Valley civilization of 2500 BC and provides geographical, religious, cultural, and economic accounts over various periods of ancient history. The second chapter provides a detailed account of the Aryan era, covering the religious beliefs.) These History guidelines have even included “Discuss the role played by the minorities in the creation of Pakistan” as a priority.<sup>64</sup> (Unfortunately, a similar objective does not appear to be included in the curricular guidelines for Social Studies for Grades 4-5.)

In the revisions to the national curriculum for Pakistan Studies for Grades 9-10,

60 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Punjab Textbook Board, p.6

61 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 5, Punjab Textbook Board, p.7

62 Pakistan Studies Textbook, Grades 9/10, Punjab Textbook Board, p.4

63 Social Studies Textbook, Grade 6, Balochistan Textbook Board, p.107

64 National Curriculum for History, Grades 6-8, 2006



concepts of tolerance and respect for diversity are also included, gratuitous criticism of India has been reduced, and effort appears to have been made to reduce material prejudicial towards the non-Muslims of pre-partition India. Perhaps most significantly, Chapter 8 of these curricular guidelines for Pakistan Studies includes “Role of Minorities in Pakistan” among the prescribed contents and includes the following learning outcome: “Trace the role of minorities in Pakistan with specific reference to Quad-i-Azam’s speech of 11 August 1947, defining their status.”<sup>65</sup>

Measures have also been taken to reduce the imposition of Islamic instruction on religious minorities by moving such content out of courses such as Social and Pakistan Studies and Urdu and into the specifically religious courses. While the 2006 curricular guidelines for Urdu for Grades 1-12 still retain a strong Islamic orientation with integral Islamic content, some contributions from the classical literature of non-Muslim authors such as Rattan Nath Sarshar and Prem Chand have been included in Grade 10 and higher grades.

Despite these encouraging reforms, in the nearly six years since the revised curricular guidelines were created, textbooks incorporating these revisions in line with the 2006 guidelines have not been created. The existing textbooks have been reprinted since 2006 with minor adjustments, but, as demonstrated in the above review, have not addressed much of the problematic content or made all of the prescribed changes.

In some cases conditions have even worsened. For example, according to Afnan Khan in *The Guardian*, writing in 2009, “English textbooks, which until as recently as three years ago contained information on minority festivals and practises, had all details removed during a mysterious revision, which left the rest of their content unchanged.”<sup>66</sup> As an example, Khan notes a paragraph removed from a chapter about the festivals of Pakistan in an “English Language textbook” which said:

*“Minorities also have their festivals. The Hindus celebrate Divali, Doshera and Holi. They pray in temples and enjoy their festivities. The Christians celebrate Christmas on 25 December. It is the birthday of Jesus Christ. They decorate Christmas trees, churches and their homes. Special prayers are offered in churches, and after that there is a great deal of festivity.”*<sup>67</sup>

In addition, there have been recent initiatives to re-introduce content into the curriculum that could counteract improvements put forth in the 2006 reforms. For example, the National Education Policy 2009 places the chapter on Islamic education prior to the core operational chapters on access and quality as a foundation for the entire policy, and seems to maintain the same spirit of the 1998-2010 National Education Policy, stating among its objectives:

*“To play a fundamental role in the preservation of the ideals, which led to the creation of Pakistan and strengthen the concept of the basic ideology within the Islamic ethos enshrined in the 1973 Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.”*<sup>68</sup>

Following the 2006 reforms, as per the implementation schedule of the Federal Ministry of Education (MOE) for the new curriculum, the Provincial Textbook

**Despite these encouraging reforms . . . textbooks incorporating these revisions in line with the 2006 guidelines have not been created.**

<sup>65</sup> National Curriculum for Pakistan Studies, Grades 9-10, 2006

<sup>66</sup> Khan, Afnan. “The Threat of Pakistan’s Revisionist Texts.” *The Guardian*. 18 May 2009. Web. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/may/18/pakistan-textbooks-religious-extremism>>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> National Education Policy, 2009, p.10

Boards, with the assistance of private sector publishers, were required to prepare quality textbooks in various subjects for Grades 1, 6, 9 and 11 by the start of the new academic session in August 2007 where possible, as the new national curriculum for 17 subjects had already been sent to provinces for the development of new textbooks. However, provincial education boards were authorized to delay the production and distribution of textbooks, and as of the time of this writing, textbooks reflecting the new guidelines have not been produced. The books being approved by the textbook evaluation boards do not adhere to the mandated guidelines for the National Curriculum, which might suggest that the textbook evaluators, writers, and publishers have not understood the new curricular criteria.

In 2012, additional educational reforms are planned, which, among other efforts, are expected to include the implementation of the 2006 revised curricular guidelines, including the production of revised textbooks. It remains to be seen how closely these new textbooks, if they are produced, will adhere to the 2006 curricular guidelines.

## FINDINGS MADRASSA TEXTBOOK REVIEW

The following is an overview of key findings and issues observed in the madrasa textbook review (conducted on a smaller scale than the public school textbook review). A list of the textbooks reviewed is included in the appendix.

### Brief Background Note on Context

It is important to note that individual madrassas generally decide autonomously what to teach and emphasize, with only nominal governance from the five madrasa boards. Thus, while the books selected for this review are commonly used within madrassas, the precise number or percentage of madrassas which use these specific texts is unknown. While more and more madrassas today are teaching “secular” or “contemporary” subjects in some fashion, many madrassas still teach mainly or exclusively religious subjects to their students. Thus, the textbooks selected for review were all books religious studies textbooks, with half of the books focusing on *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and half focusing on *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence).

Most of the textbooks used in the madrasa curricula are extremely old. Books used in philosophy and logic, for example, were written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Medical textbooks from the eleventh-century are still considered an authentic study of human anatomy and pathology. Books used for religious studies generally date back to the seventeenth century at the latest and the eleventh century at the earliest. In some cases books prescribed for astronomy, mathematics, and grammar are replications of texts originally created five to seven hundred years ago. All of the textbooks reviewed for this study were originally written between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries.

### Minorities’ Overall Portrayal

Non-Muslims are generally portrayed in the madrasa textbooks reviewed in one of three ways: (1) *kafirs* (infidels) or *mushrakeen* (pagans), (2) *dhimmis* (non-Muslims living under Islamic rule), or (3) *murtids* (apostates, i.e. people who have turned away



from Islam). Non-Muslims are never described as citizens with the constitutionally-protected rights which accompany citizenship.

### Kafirs and Mushrakeen (Infidels and Pagans)

This first category of non-Muslims found in the madrasa textbooks is a traditional designation for those living in non-Muslim or “hostile” countries (*dar-al-harb*) without any treaty with Muslims. They are treated as enemies, and there are clear, recurring orders to fight against them until they submit or convert to Islam.

### Dhimmis

The category of *dhimmis* refers to non-Muslims who have either been conquered by or have entered into an agreement with the Islamic state and pay a special tax in exchange for limited rights and safety. *Dhimmi*s can also be those who live in a separate non-Muslim state if their country has entered into an agreement with the Muslim state to pay the special tax or *jizya*.

The literal meaning of the word *dhimmi* actually denotes a special protected status, whereby the Islamic rulers, having received payment of the tax, are then duty-bound to protect and care for the safety and security of the *dhimmi*'s life and property. While this practice traditionally gave religious minorities living under Muslim rule some rights and social status, it does not grant him/her citizenship equal to Muslims.

One of the madrasa textbooks on *fiqh* reviewed, *Kanz-ul-Daqa'iq (The Treasure of Difficult Problems)*—a textbook used in Hanafi madrassas particularly of the Bareilvi sect—establishes that *dhimmis* are not equal to Muslims as citizens.<sup>69</sup> The text goes on to say, for example, that if a non-Muslim lives in a Muslim state and has a status of *dhimmi*, he cannot offer asylum to another, while Muslims on the other hand can offer asylum to anyone. This message is reiterated in another textbook on *fiqh*, *Al-Hadaya (The Guidance)*, which says that if a non-Muslim is offering asylum to another non-Muslim, he/she could potentially be protecting a spy or saboteur. This calls into question the non-Muslim's patriotism and trustworthiness.

*Al-Hadaya*, written by Burhan-ud-Din Abi-al-Hassan Ali in the twelfth century, is a textbook widely recommended by madrassas with the exception of those of the Ahle-Hadith sect, and is particularly popular in Deobandi madrassas for Grades 5 and 6. This textbook provides more detailed instructions to students on how to treat *dhimmis*.

For example, segregation is encouraged:

*“It is mandatory for the dhimmis who are under the protection of a Muslim state not to appear similar to Muslims. They should rather be different in every aspect including their outlooks and their animals for riding. They will also wear different hats and will not ride on horses. Likewise, they wouldn't keep ammunition.”*<sup>70</sup>

The text goes on to elaborate on the reason for this kind of treatment:

*“This will make their humiliation evident and hide the weaknesses of the Muslims because a Muslim is venerated and a dhimmi is disdained. They shouldn't be greeted first. Hurdles need to be created on the ways they pass through. If they don't have*

**Non-Muslims are never described as citizens with the constitutionally-protected rights which accompany citizenship.**

<sup>69</sup> *Kanz-ul-Daqa'iq (The Treasure of Difficult Problems)*, p.230

<sup>70</sup> *Al-Hadaya (The Guidance)*, p.258

**Such messages pose potential dangers in the current climate of inter-sectarian tensions in Pakistan, where followers of certain sects may be declared as non-Muslim.**

*distinguishing symbols, they might be treated equal to Muslims which is illegitimate. They need to put a rough robe around their bellies and not the silk belts as the latter case would be unfair with Muslims. Their women need to be different from the women of Muslims when seen outside or at public places. Their homes also need to contain special symbols so that no (Muslim) beggar should stand at their doors and start praying for them. It is considered more appropriate to not let them ride on animals unless it is extremely necessary. Even in the instances when it is necessary, they would need to step down while passing through the settlements of Muslims. They should be forbidden to wear the dress meant for [the] knowledgeable and notables.”<sup>71</sup>*

The same spirit can be found in *Riaz-ul-Saleheen* (*The Garden of Pious People*), a textbook on *hadith* originally written some 900 years ago and used frequently in the madrassas of the Ahle-Hadith sect. According to this textbook, it is illegitimate to greet non-Muslims such as Christians and Jews with the greeting of “*Salam*” (“Peace”).<sup>72</sup> Where Christians and Jews are found, the textbook instructs the reader to make them uncomfortable.<sup>73</sup>

### **Murtids (Apostates)**

The third category by which non-Muslims are depicted in the madrasa textbooks reviewed is with regard to *irtidad*, or the manner in which students are instructed to treat a *murtid* (an apostate or person who has turned away from Islam). *Kanz-ul-Daqaq* instructs the reader that such a person must be arrested and taken into the custody of the Muslim state, where he/she is given three days to return to Islam on pain of death.<sup>74</sup> The person who puts this *murtid* to death, even if it be during the three days of reflection (i.e., an extra-judicial execution), is not to be subject to prosecution. This three-day “grace period” advocated by *Kanz-ul-Daqaq* could be considered generous, as the *Al-Hadaya* textbook advocates that the *murtid* should be killed on the spot.<sup>75</sup> Such messages pose potential dangers in the current climate of inter-sectarian tensions in Pakistan, where followers of certain sects may be declared as non-Muslim by others.

### **Jihad and the Role of the Individual vs. the State**

In every madrasa textbook reviewed, the concept of jihad has been reduced from its wider meaning of personal development to violent conflict in the name of Islam, considered to be the duty of every Muslim. The Qur’anic verse commanding the believer to “*kill the pagans [or infidels or unbelievers] wherever you find them*”<sup>76</sup> is often cited with no context. Without the provision of context, students may be left to interpret the verse themselves, and could potentially take it as an order from God simply to kill non-Muslims wherever they are found.

Similarly, another textbook on *hadith*, *Mashkwat-ul-Masabeh* (*The Lamp of the Lamps*), says that until *Qayamat* (the last day), Muslims will wage violent jihad, as this is mandatory for all Muslims.<sup>77</sup> At no time is it suggested that decisions regarding

<sup>71</sup> *Al-Hadaya* (*The Guidance*), p.258-259

<sup>72</sup> *Riaz-ul-Saleheen* (*The Garden of Pious People*), p.231

<sup>73</sup> *Riaz-ul-Saleheen* (*The Garden of Pious People*), p.231

<sup>74</sup> *Kanz-ul-Daqaq* (*The Treasure of Difficult Problems*), p.242

<sup>75</sup> *Al-Hadaya* (*The Guidance*), p.260

<sup>76</sup> Qur’anic verse 9:5.

<sup>77</sup> *Mashkwat-ul-Masabeh* (*The Lamp of the Lamps*), p.341

warfare should be left to the state, creating the possibility that the reader could consider it his or her individual responsibility to fight.

In all the textbooks analyzed, the student is presented a world where concepts such as nation, constitution, legality, standing armies, or multi-lateral organizations—except where they are prescribed by Islamic doctrine or sharia law—do not exist. The commandments are direct for individuals, with seeming absence of a governmental authority or central decision-making body, institutional arrangements, or courts of law. Such a depiction provides possibilities for selective interpretation of religious text and for the challenging of the authority of the state in perceived accordance with religious doctrine.

### Reform Efforts

The government of Pakistan has made various attempts to reform the madrassa education system over the years, including: the creation in 2001 of a Pakistan Madrassa Education Board and three government-supported “model madrassas;” an unenforced 2002 ordinance on guidelines for madrassa registration and the prohibition of the teaching of radicalism; a 2002 five-year, \$113 million plan to bring the teaching of secular subjects to 8,000 madrassas through provision of teacher training, textbooks, and other resources; and a 2005 amendment on registration and the prohibition of teaching that promotes militancy or spreads sectarianism or religious hatred, which was subsequently revised following protest from the madrassa-run National Madrassa Oversight Board (ITMD, now the ITMP or *Ittihad Tanzeemat Madaris Pakistan*).

More recently, on October 7, 2010, the ITMP and the government of Pakistan signed an agreement to facilitate a number of enhancements to the madrassa education system, including uniform curriculum standards and inclusion of contemporary subjects, registration of madrassas, and standards for the awarding of madrassa degrees. In July 2011, the province of Khyber Pakhtankhwa took measures to reform madrassas within the province, in consultation with each of the schools of thought which run madrassas. These reforms would require foreign students to have government documentation in order to study at madrassas and would institute sections for contemporary education in fields such as math and science. Numerous madrassas have also taken the initiative in recent years to incorporate “contemporary” subjects such as math and science into their curriculums in some fashion.

While some progress has thus been made in recent years with regard to enhancement of the madrassa curricula, curricular reform efforts have generally focused on incorporating “contemporary” or “secular” subjects such as math and science into the madrassa curricula, rather than attempting to change the curricula for the religious subjects themselves or encourage the use of updated textbooks in these subjects. This tends to put the pressure on the madrassa teachers themselves to interpret or adapt these textbooks to the modern environment, a challenge compounded by the fact that there are five different governing madrassa boards and no universal curriculum.

### Conclusion

Some efforts are being made to reform the curricula of both the public schools and the madrassas, including plans to publish new public school textbooks in accordance with newer, more progressive guidelines. However, as it stands today, textbooks in both educational systems include an abundance of content pejorative against religious

minorities. In the public school textbooks, this most often takes the form of inclusion of negative generalizations about religious minorities, omissions of positive facts, and distortions of history, while in the madrassa texts, unequal status and treatment for non-Muslims are prescribed.

Hindus appear to be the primary target of bias. Two plausible reasons for this may be that (1) Muslims tend to consider Hinduism a man-made religion, as opposed to Christianity and Judaism which are believed to have been revealed by God, and (2) in the public school system the historic rivalry with India is typically presented in religious terms.

In the public school texts and curriculum, the imposition of Islam on religious minorities through its inclusion in non-religious subjects and the perpetuation of a sense of threat to Islam, presented as corresponding to a threat to Pakistan, are additional concerns. That the madrassa textbooks tend to be hundreds of years old poses a challenge for equipping students to participate in the broader global environment. In both sectors, the supremacy of Islam is a key theme, to the detriment of religious minorities and their beliefs.

## PART B INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### INTRODUCTION

The position of authority held by teachers over their students in Pakistan makes them a primary vehicle for influencing students' ideas and attitudes. In order to better understand how textbook content related to religious minorities was presented to students, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with both public school and madrassa teachers and students from various districts throughout Pakistan.

Over 250 teachers and nearly 300 students were asked for their views on issues directly affecting religious minorities in order to develop insight into the impact of teacher attitudes on students. Taking into account sensitivities specific to each sector (i.e., public school teacher, madrassa teacher, public school student, madrassa student), a slightly different approach was taken with regard to questions asked and follow-up probing for each sector, and not all participants within each sample were asked or responded to each question. For each sector, a summary of main findings is presented first, followed by a more detailed breakdown and description of the data.

To perform comprehensive classroom observations would have required capacity beyond that of even the Pakistani Ministry of Education (MOE) and the madrassa boards. There is also no fully standardized mechanism in the Pakistani educational system for teacher training, oversight, and reporting of discriminatory behavior. This makes it difficult to ascertain exactly to what extent and in what manner teacher opinions are being transmitted in the classroom. Interviews and FGDs were used as an alternative means of investigating pedagogy and attempting to correlate teacher attitudes with how they might be transmitted to students.

### FINDINGS PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

#### SAMPLE SIZE

Interviews and FGDs were conducted with public school teachers in each of the four provinces as detailed below.

#### Individual Interviews

| PROVINCE      | MALE      | FEMALE    | TOTAL     |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Balochistan   | 3         | 2         | 5         |
| KPK           | 11        | 6         | 17        |
| Punjab        | 7         | 4         | 11        |
| Sindh         | 4         | 10        | 14        |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>47</b> |

## Focus Group Discussions

| PROVINCE      | GROUPS (MALE) | PARTICIPANTS | GROUPS (FEMALE) | PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL GROUPS | TOTAL PARTICIPANTS |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Balochistan   | 1             | 5            | -               | -            | 1            | 5                  |
| KPK           | 2             | 14           | 2               | 7            | 4            | 21                 |
| Punjab        | 2             | 18           | -               | -            | 2            | 18                 |
| Sindh         | 2             | 15           | 3               | 24           | 5            | 39                 |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>7</b>      | <b>52</b>    | <b>5</b>        | <b>31</b>    | <b>12</b>    | <b>73</b>          |

## MAIN FINDINGS

The teacher interviews and FGDs betrayed attitudes towards religious minorities that often seemed contradictory. Analysis of information gathered during field research revealed that public school teachers involved in this study, in general:

■ **Have limited awareness and understanding of religious minorities and their beliefs.**

Teachers involved in this study acknowledged the existence of religious minority communities in Pakistan and expressed some understanding of their beliefs, which they tended to view in a pejorative light, through their own personal Islamic perspective.

■ **Tend to believe that religious minorities themselves, if not their beliefs, should be respected, albeit conditionally.**

Public school teachers generally advocated respectful treatment of religious minorities. This respect was often conditional upon the attitudes of religious minorities towards Islam, which seemed to be in question. The desire to proselytize was cited as one of the primary motivations for kind treatment of religious minorities.

■ **Were divided on whether a religious minority was a citizen.**

More than half the public school teachers involved in the study acknowledged the citizenship of religious minorities, and some stated that they should be given equal rights. While some considered religious minorities to be “good citizens,” others did not. A majority of teachers, however, expressed the opinion that religious minorities must not be allowed to hold positions of power, in order to protect Pakistan and Muslims.

■ **Were more favorably disposed towards “People of the Book” (i.e., Jews and Christians).**

Teachers broadly distinguished between “People of the Book”—i.e., those following “revealed religions” such as Christians and Jews—and “other religions” such as Hindus, Sikhs, and Ahmadis. They gave some preference to the “People of the Book” over others in social relations.

■ **Were equally divided on sectarian issues.**

Half of the public school teachers considered the sectarian differences to be small, while the rest found them to be vast. Most of the teachers engaged expressed a strong sense of self-righteousness regarding sectarian issues. Adherents to the

Ahmadi practice were widely seen in a pejorative and discriminatory light, and often considered non-Muslims.

■ **Perceive jihad as obligatory, violent, and personal.**

All of the teachers believed the concept of jihad to refer to a violent struggle, compulsory for Muslims against the enemies of Islam. Approximately 90% mentioned only violent struggle when referring to jihad, while the remaining teachers extended the understanding of jihad to encompass both violent and nonviolent struggle. The overwhelming majority of public school teachers appeared to hold the view that the call to jihad falls directly upon the individual, as do decisions regarding when and against whom jihad is appropriate, aside from the generalized belief that the “enemies of Islam” should be targeted. It is important to note that while many expressed the importance of respecting the practices of religious minorities, simultaneously 80% of teachers viewed non-Muslims, in some form or another, as the “enemies of Islam.” The role of the state, legal system, or military in the declaration or prosecution of warfare was not mentioned.

■ **Have various complaints against the religious minority community.**

The majority of public school teachers cited blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad as a significant cause of anger towards religious minorities. This is potentially problematic due to the potential for young religious minorities to unknowingly commit blasphemy when faced with a religiously charged learning environment. Other causes of irritation such as the killing of Muslims in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and the use of alcohol were also cited.

■ **Often proselytize in the classroom.**

The majority of teachers accepted the fact that comparative religion was not included in the public school curriculum, but included it in classroom discussions anyway. Probing revealed that many were motivated by the desire to establish the supremacy of Islam over other religions.



## DETAILED FINDINGS

### AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF OTHER RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

#### Awareness

In the FGDs and interviews, all public school teachers were aware that religious minorities lived in Pakistan, although degrees of understanding varied in some cases.

*“Christians, Hindus and Sikhs are minority groups residing along with Muslims in Pakistan. They...[reside] in regions such as Mirpur, Hyderabad, Karachi, Tharparkar, Sanghar Mingora, Peshawar, and Lahore.” — Female Public School Teacher (Punjab)*

#### Opinion of Religious Minorities in General

Teachers held diverse views of religious minorities living in Pakistan; respectful attitudes were occasionally expressed, but often contradicted.

One female teacher from Punjab appeared to hold a favorable attitude towards other religions:

*“People from all religions are offspring of Adam. I am Muslim and I believe in Allah and his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). But I believe whatever religion is followed by an individual, his/her respect is worthy for me.”*

As we found in other cases throughout the study, however, the respect demonstrated by the teacher for other religions was conditioned by the supremacy of Islam. The same teacher continued to say:

*“...however, if anyone disgraces my religion I will kill him/her. In [the] case [that] non-Muslims do not intend to intermingle with Islam by disrespecting the teachings of Islam, they have an equal right to live peacefully.”*

Other teachers demonstrated very tolerant opinions, with some minor qualifiers:

*“The respect of other religions and their followers depends upon their own attitude towards Islam.” — Male Public School Teacher (Balochistan)*

*“I never met non-Muslims so I can’t say anything. But, I have heard from others that they try to convert people into their religion using their religious literature.” — Public School Teacher (KPK)*

*“Non-Muslims are wrong in their faith because of polytheism. Christians have [a] very sweet tongue, they never hurt one’s heart. They are followers of [the] Prophet Jesus and place him as son of God. In general Christians are good people. They pay special attention to Muslims and their practices during Ramadan. We appreciate...heartily [their] attitude.” — Female Public School Teacher (Sindh)*

#### Views of Other Religions in Pakistan

Public school teachers were asked their opinion and understanding of religions other than Islam. While many teachers reported having little or no knowledge regarding other religions, some had a functional understanding, though often corrupted through various myths.

#### Views on Religious Minorities and Their Beliefs

##### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

All public school teachers were aware of religious minorities living in Pakistan.

Teachers reported preference for “People of the Book” (i.e., Jews and Christians)

Teachers were generally respectful of other religious beliefs, though this was often conditional.

##### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Teachers showed some unfamiliarity with others’ beliefs.

Criticism seemed to be focused on Ahmadis, Hindus, and Jews.



| RELIGION     | TEACHERS' GENERAL VIEWS   |
|--------------|---|
| Christianity | It was reported that Christianity is based on the teachings of Jesus as described in the gospels and other testament writings. Most believed the doctrine had been changed from its original form.  |
| Hinduism     | Hindus, according to teachers, worship idols and believe in more than one god. The teachers also opined that Hindus study from sacred books not revealed by God.  |
| Sikhism      | Teachers were of the opinion that Sikhism refers to the teachings and practices of Guru Nanak. Some of were unsure about the Sikh concept of the caste system.  |
| Ahmadi       | Teachers thought that Ahmadi deny of the finality of prophet-hood and held them in general contempt.  |
| Judaism      | According to teachers, Jews believe in one creator God and the Torah which was revealed to Moses by God. Many thought Jews believe themselves to be God's chosen people and thus superior.  |
| Buddhism     | Teachers stated that Buddhism refers to teachings and practices of Gothum Buddha. Many teachers thought his teachings were correct, but were not practiced by all Buddhists. Some teachers indicated that Buddhists believed that the Buddha was a god, and others were of the view that Buddhism was polytheistic. |

### Opinions on the Members of Specific Minority Religions

In FGDs and throughout the interviews, many teachers alluded to the distinction made between “People of the Book” (i.e., Jews and Christians) and other religious groups, the former being considered preferable from a religious perspective, though further discussion would seem to contradict this special status in the case of Jews.

There was also evidence that the views of teachers regarding the beliefs of religious minorities were being influenced by the textbooks, as a teacher from the KPK sample directly quoted an eighth grade textbook during an interview:

*“Some Jewish tribes resided in Arabia and as a source of income generation they used to lend money to workers and peasants on high rates of interest. This gave them hold over society because of the ever-increasing compound interest.”*

There were also instances of negative views towards the Ahmadi sect that were seemingly influenced by the discriminatory constitutional prohibitions:

*“They are non-Muslims as per constitutional measures; therefore, no space can be granted to discuss this religion or its followers. If anyone will claim or pronounce to be a Prophet after Muhammad (PBUH) in the future, [he/she] will be treated as an outlier of Islam.”*

— Female Public School Teacher (Sindh)

## Public School Teachers' Opinions on Citizenship and Rights of Religious Minorities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Just over half of the public school teachers engaged identified religious minorities as citizens.

Some teachers appeared sympathetic to religious minorities with regard to equal rights.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Of the teachers who did not view religious minorities as equal citizens, many cited actual constitutional restrictions while others seemed to express bigoted views.

Many teachers appeared to support the constitutional prohibition on religious minorities becoming President or Prime Minister.

## CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Only slightly more than half of the public school teachers engaged (approximately 60%) believed that religious minorities were Pakistani citizens, in some cases even “good citizens” who were being deprived of their constitutional rights.

*“...they [religious minorities] are citizens of Pakistan and they are good citizens. They live in their ways and celebrate their festivals according to their own traditions.”*

— Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“On Eid occasions, Muslims are granted holidays as well as bonuses, but non-Muslims are deprived of such leverages on their respective religious celebrations. Such acts create biases at the society level and highlight their lower social class.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

There was a sizable minority, however, who did not view religious minorities as “equal” citizens:

*“Non-Muslims are also Pakistani citizens; however, their citizenship is not equivalent to Muslims and this is why they are referred to as ‘minority’.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“Non-Muslims should not be allowed to participate in politics and not be able to attain influential positions at state level. Otherwise, they will start benefiting their own community. This is why our constitution limits them from exercising their political rights. As according to the constitution, no non-Muslim can become President or Prime Minister of Pakistan.”* — Public School Teacher

Some teachers, though fewer in number, appeared to condition the citizenship of religious minorities on certain factors such as the actions of other countries:

*“Non-Muslims should be given equal rights only if the Western [non-Muslim] countries provide equal rights to Muslims in their own countries.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

Since citizenship is directly tied to one’s rights and responsibilities in a society, and the citizenship of religious minorities is codified in the Pakistani Constitution of 1973 (though they are prohibited from holding the office of President or Prime Minister), the fact that nearly half of the responding public school teachers did not identify religious minorities as citizens is troubling.

## INTERACTION WITH RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Given the geographic focus of our study in provincial capitals and urban centers, the majority of the teachers’ interactions with religious minorities involved Hindus or Christians who lived in neighboring communities. Despite the close proximity of religious minority communities, relatively few teachers reported inviting minorities to social gatherings. In some cases teachers seemed to advocate for limited interaction with minorities, with the occasional exception of “People of the Book.”

*“From [an] Islamic point of view Muslims should invite ‘People of the Book’ to social events and celebrations. However, they should not invite those minorities who are not ‘People of the Book’ such as Hindus and Ahmadis.”* — Public School Teacher (Punjab)

*“There are non-Muslims in our school, they clean the school but they are not invited in social activities.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

With regard to behavior demonstrated towards religious minorities, teachers saw social interaction as a vehicle for the spread of Islam. While some of the responses seemed pejorative in nature, the following excerpts, in the context of the environment, appear to demonstrate an overall positive attitude:

*“We, being Muslims and followers of Islam, should behave politely with non-Muslims. Islam teaches brotherhood and good treatment with all members of society regardless of any discrimination. Our good behavior might influence the non-Muslims and act as a catalyst to convert them to Islam.”* — Public School Teacher (Balochistan)

Though few in number, some cited Islamic principles as the basis for equal treatment of all:

*“They [non-Muslims] should be treated with brotherhood. Our Prophet (PBUH), after conquering Mecca, said that all are free and [the] same protection and rights should be provided to all.”* — Public School Teacher (Punjab)

*“We should treat them nicely and we should be there with them in their sorrows because our Prophet also used to behave well with them.”* — Public School Teacher (Balochistan)

### Eating with Religious Minorities

When asked about eating with religious minorities, teachers were almost equally divided on the issue, but many expressed having no issues sharing food with religious minorities. As was found with other issues, a distinction was occasionally made for “People of the Book.”

*“Hindus are living in Pir Goth which is close to our [Muslims’] area. We all live, eat and drink together. Hindus are invited in social gatherings, weddings and other occasions and we do the same. We have never discriminated in eating with them.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“It [eating with non-Muslims] is not forbidden in Islam. If they take care of cleanliness or dirt in the utensils then it is fine but if they do not care about cleanliness then it is not allowed. Because, it is important for Muslims to take extra care of cleanliness as it is the part of our faith.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“Islam allows eating with People of the Book only,”* — Public School Teacher (KPK)

*“Anything given by the People of the Book could be eaten; otherwise, with other religions utensils should be used after washing.”* — Public School Teacher (Balochistan)

Some teachers believed that eating with non-Muslims was prohibited under Islam, while others expressed concerns regarding the food and eating habits of religious minorities. This issue is not purely based on prejudice, as Islamic concepts of *halal* (pure and edible as per Islamic teachings) and *haram* (impure and inedible as per Islamic teachings) appeared to be the major reason deterring them from eating with non-Muslims. Those not sharing food with non-Muslims often considered their food and utensils as *haram*.

*“Like Hindus, they use urine of cow in their cooking, which is strictly prohibited in Islam and unhygienic as well. Maybe Hindus are making you eat with those utensils, you never know, so these things you have to care about.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

### Interaction with Religious Minorities

#### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Some teachers indicated a desire to invite religious minorities to social events.

Some teachers cited Islamic principles as the basis for the equal treatment of religious minorities.

#### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Good behavior often served the purpose of portraying Islam in the best light to non-Muslims, with the intention to convert.

Half of the teachers shared a reluctance to eat with religious minorities, with many expressing real concerns (*halal*) and others bigotry (*cleanliness*).

As social interaction and eating are part of the school experience, there is an additional risk of this behavior being transmitted to students.

## SECTARIAN ISSUES

The majority of the teachers interviewed belonged to the Barelvi sect, followed by Ahle-Hadith, Deobandi, Jamat-e-Islami, and Shia. A very few considered themselves non-denominational Muslims, and considered sectarian division in Islam as inappropriate. Some of the teachers thought that sectarian differences had widened in the last 150 years when an overwhelming amount of literature was produced by scholars of various sects. Many teachers indicated distaste for sectarianism and attributed it either to specific or generalized conspiracies:

*“I do not believe in any sect and strictly believe in Allah... The innocent followers blindly trust scholars and start fighting on minor and worldly issues. All these practices are against Islamic teachings and a conspiracy to divide the Muslims.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

While public school teachers generally expressed a preference for their own sect, and a great deal of hostility was directed at the Shia, teachers did not seem eager to introduce such biases into the classroom:

*“There are big differences among the sects, but we should not propagate them. It is a trap we shouldn’t fall into.”* — Public School Teacher (Punjab)

## JIHAD

As many as 90% of the teachers interviewed for this study had a reductionist understanding of jihad, referring only to killing or fighting in the name of Allah or for Islam.

When describing jihad, few public school teachers were aware of its broader meanings of struggle, doing good deeds, and condemning bad ones. Nonetheless, all teachers stated that jihad is obligatory for all Muslims in order to protect Islam.

A wide majority of teachers considered acts of oppression by non-Muslim countries against Muslim countries as a pre-condition for jihad:

*“Jihad is obligatory in Islam against the oppressions of non-Muslim nations and countries.”* — Public School Teacher (KPK)

*“Jihad is obligatory upon all Muslims and specifically against Americans in Afghanistan where Muslims are under the oppression of kafirs (disbelievers).”* — Public School Teacher (KPK)

There was evidence of hostility against Hinduism in some of the responses to the questions about jihad, while other answers were vague:

*“If Islam is in danger then Muslims can unite and fight against non-Muslims [and] Hindus for the survival of Islam.”* — Male Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“If one thinks that somebody is troubling or acting against the religion [Islam] such as drawing images of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) or on his (PBUH) name, jihad is needed. Why would one allow others to do this when one doesn’t do such things? We don’t do anything to [their] Prophet Moses, neither have we teased them [Christians] about [the] Prophet Jesus, not even to Hindus or Qadiyanis, or any other minority. We never make*

## Views on Jihad

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

A few teachers stated that jihad must only be declared by a collective body, another said that religious minorities in Pakistan could not be targeted.

### NEUTRAL TENDENCIES

A wide majority of teachers mentioned aggression or oppression of Muslim countries as a pre-condition.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

90% of public school teachers viewed jihad only as a violent struggle.

Most teachers referred to non-Muslims as their adversary without clarification; some were vague in describing when jihad becomes appropriate.

*fun of them. We never bother them, then why [do] they do like that?” — Public School Teacher (Sindh)*

Implicit in the views of an overwhelming majority of public school teachers involved in this study is the belief that the call for jihad is direct to individuals; decisions regarding when and against whom jihad is obligatory are also taken by individuals without regard for the state, its laws, or its institutions. Only a small number of teachers felt that the state should be responsible for declaration of jihad.

*“Jihad is compulsory for Muslims, but the state decides about it and not individuals. We have to decide about it collectively rather than individually.” — Male School Teacher (Punjab)*

While discussing jihad, most teachers referred to non-Muslims as their adversary without clarification. There was only one teacher who clarified that jihad did not mean to fight against non-Muslims living in Pakistan:

*“If any non-Muslim wants to occupy the country, jihad becomes obligatory as it happened in Afghanistan. However there is no need for jihad against religious minorities living in our country; they are our own citizens.” — Public School Teacher (KPK)*

### Enemies of Islam

As many as 80% of the respondents considered non-Muslims to be enemies of Islam. These views can further be classified into two categories with an almost equal number of responses: a) when the reference is made explicitly or implicitly to the non-Muslims living in other, predominantly non-Muslim countries; and b) when non-Muslims are mentioned generally which may also include those living in Pakistan.

From the responses of the teachers who gave just brief answers, Jews were by and large considered as the “worst” enemies of Islam. It is important to mention here that few Jews live in Pakistan, so the reference is being made to those living in other countries. Many teachers considered the “West” and Hindus as enemies of Islam with very few of the teachers mentioning India, leaving it open for interpretation as to whether or not Hindus living in Pakistan are the enemies of Islam. Other teachers had more complex answers:

*“They [Americans]... create insurgencies in Muslim countries. Like Americans are attacking North Waziristan by drones which not only martyr innocent Muslims but also unite Muslims against Americans.” — Public School Teacher (KPK)*

*“[The] West, media, and India are the enemies of Islam.” — Public School Teacher (Punjab)*

*“The Qur’an says the Jews and Christians are our enemy.” — Public School Teacher*

Another teacher in KPK went to the length of explicitly declaring all non-Muslims, including those living in Pakistan, as enemies of Islam:

*Interviewer: Are there any enemies of Islam?*

*Teacher: Yes.*

*Interviewer: Who are these?*

*Teacher: All the non-Muslims are enemies of Islam who propagate against Islam.*

*Interviewer: Do you think non-Muslims who live in Pakistan are also enemies of Islam?*

*Teacher: Yes, it is commonly noticed that they change the Islamic literature.*

### Enemies of Islam

#### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**80% considered non-Muslims enemies of Islam; Jews, India, Christians, the media, America, and the West were often mentioned.**

**Many more teachers indicated Hindus as an enemy of Islam, as opposed to India, seeming to indicate that Pakistani Hindus are enemies.**

Some teachers had an even broader notion of the enemies of Islam which might well include whosoever is interpreted not to be mindful of Islamic values and norms. One male teacher from Punjab, for example, said: *“All those who don’t take into consideration norms and values of Islam are enemies of Islam.”*

### Causes of Anger

Teachers were asked for their opinions about the behavior of religious minorities which caused anger and frustration. An overwhelming majority of the teachers referred to acts of blasphemy as causing anger and frustration among them; in an FGD in KPK, for example, teachers stated that the *“act of blasphemy taking place either inside or outside the country is not tolerable.”*

Incidents of blasphemy tended to infuriate teachers. One teacher in Punjab was personally celebrating the assassination of Governor Taseer, the governor of Punjab who was killed by his young bodyguard after expressing sympathy for a Christian woman charged with blasphemy. He said, *“We got Salman Taseer assassinated; we cannot bear anything against our religion.”*

Some teachers also viewed religious minorities, particularly Christians, as responsible for the increasing availability and consumption of alcohol in Pakistan:<sup>78</sup>

*“Muslim society provides sufficient space to non-Muslims to practice their rituals and traditions in a tolerable way. Christians are spreading the evil of alcohol in Muslim society, which is legitimate in their religion but not in Islam. The evil can be controlled with imposition of law. But Christians should not promote such things in our culture and this is, we believe, intolerable.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“What makes me angry is that they eat meat of pig and drink alcohol.”* — Public School Teacher

Several teachers saw the war on terror in a religious context and considered the killing of Pakistanis by American drones as a source of anger, while others cited the Qur’an burning incident in Florida, French veil restrictions, and global conspiracies:

*“Killings of innocent Muslim citizens through missiles of American drones make me feel very angry.”* — Public School Teacher (Balochistan)

*“The Raymond Davis case and the Dr. Aafia Siddiqi<sup>79</sup> cases, [and] burning the Holy Qur’an by an American Christian leader are the incidents that cause extreme anger among us.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“What happened in France, the banning of veils and the scarf which is being followed in other European countries, makes me feel bad. They should be accommodative on these issues.”* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

<sup>78</sup> Under the laws of Pakistan, a Muslim can’t possess and use alcohol. Alcohol is allowed to non-Muslims only; hence, the alcohol industry in the country is exclusively owned by non-Muslims. The illegal consumption of alcohol, nonetheless, prevails in certain parts of the society. It is this illegal consumption of alcohol by Muslims which is being referred to by the teachers.

<sup>79</sup> A Pakistani scientist convicted of attempted murder of her American interrogators in Afghanistan and sentenced to 86 years in prison.



## TRANSMISSION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TO THE STUDENTS

### Respect for Other Religions

While a majority of teachers said that lessons on respecting the beliefs of religious minorities are not part of the syllabus, most of them said they still teach their students to respect other religions. A few said that since it is not part of the curricula, it was not taught.

*"I don't think so [that] we should respect their [non-Muslims'] matters. Being a Muslim we should not respect them. Of course, none teaches students to insult them. We only teach whatever is in the course outline. Since it is not in the course outline, we shouldn't be worried about it."* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

Teachers drew upon the teachings of Islam while teaching students about having respect for other religions:

*"It is essential to respect other religions, faiths, practices, because followers of any religion have an emotional attachment with their religion. If we destroy their symbols, it would hurt them."* — Public School Teacher (KPK)

*"Yes, I do teach them to respect the belongings of the other religious minorities as we respect our own."* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*"You have to respect the people of other religions to create the harmony in the society. It is also endorsed in the Qur'an and hadith."* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

For most of the teachers, respecting others' religions appeared important in and of itself; however, for some it had instrumental importance for inspiring non-Muslims to embrace Islam:

*"...yes it is very important to teach students to respect others. Our prophet taught us that we should respect other people and their religion. Our religion doesn't allow disrespect of other religions. We can't criticize their religion. We just have the responsibility that we should interpret our religion whenever we sit with them. It's a jihad in itself. We are not allowed to force them. As a teacher of Islamic Studies, I always teach a non-Muslim to accept Islam."* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

### Comparative Religion

Teaching comparative religion is not part of public school curricula and teaching manuals. In response to the question of whether a comparative picture of religions is presented to students, more than half of the teachers said they do give lessons on comparative religion; the others said they do not:

*"It is not part of the syllabus. We shouldn't tell them these things because they wouldn't understand. They are just kids."* — Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*"This is not relevant to the curriculum. We only teach whatever is in the curriculum. Such topics are never discussed in the class."* — Public School Teacher (KPK)

Among those who teach students about comparative religion, a few said the motivation is to promote respect for other religions:

*"We should respect the religions of others. We explain this to our students again and again."* — Public School Teacher (Punjab)

## Teaching Respect for Other Religions

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Many indicated that respect for others' beliefs was not in the syllabus, but that they taught it anyway.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

While most teachers reported a sincere desire to impart a message of respect for other religious beliefs, some used the opportunity to encourage conversion.

## Teaching Comparative Religion

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Of those teaching comparative religion, some placed an earnest emphasis on respect and tolerance.

### NEUTRAL TENDENCIES

Half of the teachers reported teaching comparative religion though not part of curricula.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Most teachers who taught comparative religion emphasized the supremacy of Islam, sometimes denigrating other beliefs.

*“Yes, I teach comparative religion for the sake of humanity with examples and references from all religions.” — Public School Teacher (Punjab)*

However, a majority of teachers giving lessons on comparative religion, despite not making it explicit in their responses to this question, appeared to be establishing the superiority of Islam over other religions in their lessons. There was a tendency to provide Islamic interpretation of other religions, even as it seemed to implicitly or covertly denigrate or distort other religious beliefs:

*“In our eyes Allah’s command is above all and Islam is eternal.” — Public School Teacher (Sindh)*

*“We never say that we don’t teach about Jews and Christians. Both Christians and Jews are each other’s allies and not our friends. We teach these things very tactfully. We tell them that the opponents of Islam can never be our friends. These things are, however, told in a very pleasant manner so that nobody feels hurt and everyone has one’s religious freedom.” — Public School Teacher (Sindh)*

## Classroom Activities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

**The few teachers who reported having religious minorities in their class expressed generally positive opinions about them.**

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**Some overt religious activities appeared mandatory for religious minority students, in violation of Article 22 of the Constitution.**

## Classroom Activities

According to the teachers interviewed, religious activities are a regular part of the classroom experience. The most common religious activities taking place in classrooms are the recitation of the Qur’an, discussion of the lives of Prophets, recitation of *hamd* (poems in the praise of Allah) and *naat* (poems in the praise of Prophet), and telling moral stories which are often religious.

In the KPK, the first session of the day is recitation of the Qur’an for 15 minutes. Almost all the teachers (who had minority students) said that all students participate in these activities, including religious minorities. Some teachers said that while it is not mandatory for non-Muslim students, they regularly attend these activities. There was also evidence of teachers conducting activities aimed at preaching to religious minority students:

*“Our first period of 15 minutes is recitation of Qur’an. Then attendance is marked and then there are periods according to syllabus.” — Public School Teacher (KPK)*

*“Recitation from the Holy Qur’an competition is the regular religious activity. It is necessary for all the students.” — Public School Teacher (Sindh)*

*“We conduct role plays—between Hindus and Muslims—to bring them to the preaching of Islam. Minority students should also be included in all the programs at schools.” — Female Public School Teacher (Sindh)*

There were only a few instances when teachers said they don’t hold any religious activities in their classes.

*“No religious activities take place in the classroom. Only textbooks are taught in the schools.” — Public School Teacher (Balochistan)*

## OPINIONS ABOUT RELIGIOUS MINORITY STUDENTS

Very few teachers in KPK and Balochistan had religious minority students in their classes, while most of the teachers in Punjab and Sindh had religious minority students in their class—often Christians, Hindus, and Ahmadis. Only some teachers



expressed their views about their religious minority students; these teachers had generally positive opinions of the non-Muslim students.

*“There is one Christian student in my class. I do not bother her with my hands or words. I never speak badly about their Prophet as I also believe in her Prophet. She is good at studies and never misses her class.”* — Female Public School Teacher (Sindh)

*“There are four students in my class who are Christians. Their way of living is like ours. They play with Muslim students. Only their beliefs are different.”* — Male Public School Teacher (KPK)

However, evidence of teachers’ negativity toward religious minority students was also observed. A female teacher from Sindh stated: *“I have a Christian student; however, her way of prayer doesn’t make me feel comfortable.”*

## CONCLUSIONS

While the interviews and FGDs uncovered some troubling findings, it should be noted that even within the small sample of teachers, teachers were found who:

- Expressed sympathy for the plight of religious minorities.
- Saw no difference, aside from personal beliefs, between religious minorities and Muslim students.
- Drew upon deeply religious principles to promote proper treatment of religious minorities.

From the public teacher interviews and FGDs it would appear that religious minorities face a good possibility of encountering a culture of prejudice while in the education system. While some public school teachers expressed some very favorable attitudes towards religious minorities and the so-called revealed religions, they also expressed the desire to convert students and force non-Muslims to participate in Islamic activities. In other cases outright prejudice was evident.

The opinions given regarding jihad and the enemies of Islam were particularly strong. All of the teachers viewed jihad as an obligation of all Muslims and approximately 90% of respondents understood jihad only in a narrow context, as a violent struggle against the enemies of Islam. While many teachers expressed the importance of respecting the practices of religious minorities, 80% of teachers viewed non-Muslims as the “enemies of Islam.”

That the citizenship status of religious minorities was denied by nearly half of public school teachers is particularly troubling due to the role of the government education system in educating students on civil rights and obligations. There could be ambiguity as to whether or not certain topics of this study should be included in the public school curriculum, but it is the responsibility of government schools to education children about the meaning of citizenship and its corresponding rights and responsibilities. Failure to properly identify religious minorities as citizens would seem to betray either a notable lack of civic awareness in middle and high school teachers or bigotry.

## FINDINGS MADRASSA TEACHER INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### SAMPLE SIZE

Interviews and FGDs were conducted with madrasa teachers in each of the four provinces as detailed below.

#### Individual Interviews

| PROVINCE    | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|-------------|------|--------|-------|
| Balochistan | 4    | -      | 4     |
| KPK         | 5    | -      | 5     |
| Punjab      | 8    | -      | 8     |
| Sindh       | 5    | -      | 5     |
| TOTALS      | 22   | -      | 22    |

#### Focus Group Discussions

| PROVINCE    | GROUPS (MALE) | PARTICIPANTS | GROUPS (FEMALE) | PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL GROUPS | TOTAL PARTICIPANTS |
|-------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Balochistan | 1             | 6            | -               | -            | 1            | 6                  |
| KPK         | 2             | 11           | 2               | 23           | 4            | 34                 |
| Punjab      | 3             | 27           | -               | -            | 3            | 37                 |
| Sindh       | 7             | 54           | -               | -            | 7            | 54                 |
| TOTALS      | 13            | 98           | 2               | 23           | 15           | 121                |

### MAIN FINDINGS

According to the findings of the study, the madrasa teachers, in general:

- **Had some respect for other religions, especially "revealed religions," but this was conditional.**

Almost all teachers expressed the view that non-Muslims and their religious practices should be respected, and Islamic injunctions to respect other religions were mentioned. Madrasa teachers expressed appreciation for "revealed religions," but felt that their doctrines had been perverted. Other religions were regarded very poorly. A majority expressed an interest in developing limited friendships with non-Muslims given the opportunity; however, qualifications and limitations were often placed on the type of relationships with non-Muslims deemed desirable or acceptable. A majority said that they present a comparative view of religions often as a means of demonstrating the superiority of Islam; the beliefs and practices of other religions appeared to be taught through the perspective of Islamic principles and prohibitions.

- **Expressed hostilities towards members of other religions.**

Madrasa teachers expressed hostility for the followers of most religions, which was not as pronounced towards Christians. Hostile views of minority religions were sometimes associated with conspiracy theories. (*"Ahmadis are the result of a grim*

*conspiracy of Christians and Jews, and they are just like them; they have turned away from their religion [Islam] and are liable to be killed.” — Madrassa Teacher (Balochistan))*

■ **Believed sectarian differences to be deep; expressed hope for reconciliation, hatred for Shias.**

Most madrassa teachers indicated that sectarian differences were profound and directed a great deal of scorn toward Shias. Yet however great the differences between the sects, madrassa teachers were hopeful that reconciliation could occur. This was often conditional on other sects coming closer to the teacher’s own sect.

■ **Held a broader view of jihad, while still viewing it as an individual obligation and sometimes to be directed violently against religious minorities.**

While nearly all madrassa teachers expressed the view that jihad was obligatory and acknowledged a role for violence in its application, the majority extended the concept of jihad to include non-violent concepts such as self-control. Some teachers specifically rejected the practice of suicide bombing and sectarian violence. However, Christians, Jews, and Hindus were specifically mentioned as targets of violent jihad. Madrassa teachers were almost uniformly in agreement the idea that jihad is an obligation of every Muslim, often leaving it up to individuals to decide when to wage jihad and against whom.

■ **Had a better understanding of the citizenship and rights of religious minorities, while still believing that such minorities should not hold political power.**

All of the madrassa teachers stated that religious minorities were citizens of Pakistan. While the differences in the samples and sample sizes make a direct comparison between the public school respondents and the madrassa respondents difficult, it is interesting to note that only 60% of government school teachers understood this. All the madrassa teachers, however, believed that religious minorities should not be given political power.

■ **Felt threatened by conspiracies.**

Madrassa teachers identified a number of conspiracies against Islam and Pakistan. Some attributed sectarianism to colonization or Jews, and one teacher believed that the Ahmadi sect was a result of a Jewish and Christian conspiracy. They also indicated a belief that religious minorities, if given greater political rights, would threaten Islam in Pakistan.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### MADRASSA TEACHER SAMPLE PROFILE

The average age of the madrassa teachers interviewed was 35 years (ranging from 20 to 50 years). The madrassa teachers in the sample largely came from under-privileged backgrounds and were graduates themselves of madrassa education. A few had received only the madrassa education. Most of the teachers had acquired additional high levels of educational qualification such as Shahdite Aalmia, Hifz-e-Quran, and Masters in Islamic Studies and Arabic. Many had also acquired the qualifications of *Alim*/scholar from their respective boards.

## Perception of Other Religions and Religious Minorities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Almost all teachers were of the view that non-Muslims and their religious practices should be respected.

Madrassa teachers expressed respect for "Revealed Religions" or "Religious of the Book" (i.e., Christianity, Judaism).

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Of those who expressed limited respect for "Religions of the Book," most accused them of amending their doctrines; other religions were simply dismissed.

Several teachers advocated violence or expressed hatred towards members of other religions.

Madrassa teachers in our sample revealed a significant sense of and concern regarding the influence of religious minorities on Muslims in Pakistan, through the integration of beliefs, culture, and lifestyle.

Some teachers indicated suspicion regarding the role of religious minorities in fomenting sectarian discord or encouraging conversion from Islam.

## AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF OTHER RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

### Views of Other Religions in Pakistan

Madrassa teachers were asked for their opinions regarding religions other than Islam. All considered Islam to be the only correct religion. Some accepted a limited legitimacy for other "Religions of the Book," which are accused of amending their doctrines, but other religions were simply dismissed.

*"It is clearly written in the Qur'an that Islam is the only true religion. The rest of the religions are not true."* — Madrassa Teacher (KPK)

*"There are several religions in the world which are essentially based upon traditions. Such religions are not the real religions. They 'emerge' in certain circumstances and people start following them. They are essentially based upon either personal gains or ignorance."* — Madrassa Teacher

### Respect for Minority Religions

Almost all teachers were of the view that non-Muslims and their religious practices should be respected. As one teacher from Sindh stated in an FGD:

*"The respect of non-Muslims' places of worships is not forbidden in the teachings of Qur'an and hadith. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had never disgraced non-Muslims, their religion and their places of worship. He always behaved nicely with them."*

Similarly, another teacher said:

*"All the religions should be treated with respect and dignity. It is also in hadith that we should not say anything bad about the Gods of other religions."*

There were, however, a small number for whom the objective of respecting others' religions was to inspire them to embrace Islam. One teacher, for example, said: *"We should respect them more so that they get impressed and convert to Islam."*

### Influence of Minority Religions and Practices on Muslims

Madrassa teachers in our sample revealed a significant sense of concern regarding the influence of religious minorities on Muslims in Pakistan, through the integration of beliefs, culture, and lifestyle. Some teachers even indicated suspicion regarding the role of religious minorities in fomenting sectarian discord or encouraging conversion from Islam.

*"Alcohol is banned in Islam but it is allowed in other religions of Christianity and Hinduism. In Pakistan, only non-Muslims are allowed to use alcohol. As they also provide alcohol to Muslims, it affects Muslims."* — Madrassa Teacher (KPK)

*"Over the centuries, the non-Islamic religions and civilizations have influenced Muslims resulting in the division of the Muslims into various sects, and led to disunity and discord within the religion."* — Madrassa Teacher (KPK)

*"[A] community's social environment has serious impact on Muslim communities. Muslims having weak faith in Allah are sometimes attracted by the actions of*

*non-Muslim communities. They leave Islam and start practicing other religions.”*

— Madrasa Teacher (Punjab)

*“There is a great influence of non-Muslims on Muslims. For example, at weddings, Hindu rituals are still continued even when they have left Sindh. You see fire crackers at the weddings; these are their influences. Nowadays, Muslims don’t say ‘Salam.’ They just say ‘How are you’ — or have adopted other greetings.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

| RELIGION     | TEACHERS' GENERAL VIEWS  |
|--------------|--|
| Christianity | Teachers considered Christianity as a “revealed religion.” The majority of them referred to the concept of the Trinity in Christianity while talking about the religion. Some of them considered the concept of the Trinity as a form of polytheism. Teachers also considered the Bible as a revealed book; however, they thought this book is not present in its original form and has been amended by its followers.<br><i>“Christianity is an Abrahamic religion and God gave the revealed book, the Bible, upon them. However, they have edited their book.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)<br><i>“They (Christians) believe in the Trinity. They believe there are three Gods; the God, Mary, and Christ.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh) |
| Hinduism     | Teachers considered Hinduism as an ancient but not divine religion. They considered it a man-made religion. The majority of the teachers considered Hindus as idol worshippers and polytheists.<br><i>“I know they are idol worshippers. They worship fire and [the] cow. They also worship [the] monkey.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)   |
| Sikhism      | Teachers considered Sikhism as another man-made religion. They considered it as a religion of infidels who don’t believe in Allah and the Prophet Muhammad.  |
| Ahmadi       | They were considered by teachers interviewed as those who do not believe in the finality of the prophet. Teachers frequently expressed extremist attitudes towards Ahmadis.<br><i>“Ahmadis are the result of a grim conspiracy of Christians and Jews, and they are just like them; they have turned away from their religion [Islam] and are liable to be killed.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Balochistan)  |
| Judaism      | Teachers said Judaism is a revealed religion and based upon the teachings and practices of the Prophet Moses, but distrust and animosity towards Jews themselves was common. Some teachers considered them to be disobedient of Allah, thought Jews consider themselves superior to everyone else, and thought they are disliked by Allah because of their arrogance.<br><i>“Allah says Jews can’t be your friends. We can befriend them only to convert them to Islam.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)   |

## CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

All the teachers asked responded that non-Muslims living in Pakistan are Pakistani citizens, and half also considered them as “good citizens,” according to the behavior of individual minorities. Other teachers simply stated that religious minorities were not good citizens.

*“They [religious minorities] are not good citizens. There is a lot of difference between Muslims and non-Muslims. Allah has said Muslims are pure and non-Muslims are impure. From the point of view of their religious beliefs and practices, they are not good.”*

— Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

The opinions of madrasa teachers regarding the citizenship and equality of religious minorities appeared strongly influenced by the restrictive Islamic concept of *dhimm-itude* (as explained in the textbook review section).

*“According to sharia law, non-Muslims are regarded as dhimmis. This implies that they have to pay special tax to the state and the state in turn would take them as its*

## Citizenship and Equal Rights

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

**All the teachers responded that non-Muslims living in Pakistan are Pakistani citizens, and half also considered them as "good citizens."**

**Nearly all madrasa teachers agreed in principle that most religious minorities should be given basic human rights.**

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**All teachers agreed that religious minorities should not be given political power, as re-enforced by the constitutional mandate that the President and Prime Minister must be practicing Muslims.**

*responsibility; nobody could cause them any harm. Any Muslim living in the society would treat them very well so that they can be attracted towards Islam.*" — Madrasa Teacher (Balochistan)

While nearly all madrasa teachers agreed in principle that most religious minorities should be given basic human rights, all teachers agreed that religious minorities should not be given political power, as re-enforced by the constitutional mandate that the President and Prime Minister must be practicing Muslims.

The attitudes of madrasa teachers towards religious minorities and their rights are reflected in the following excerpts from the FGDs and interviews. (It is important to note that despite the broad prohibitions attributed to the constitution by some madrasa teachers, in actuality the constitution does not extend restrictions on religious minorities holding positions of power beyond the offices of the President and Prime Minister.)

*"Non-Muslims should not only be protected but also be given equal opportunities in education, politics, and social spheres. But they can't be allowed to rule Pakistan."* — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

*"As the constitution of Pakistan says, non-Muslims can't be allowed to become President, Prime Minister, Chief Justice or even Chief of the Army. It is because they would interfere in our religious practices. As we are in majority, there is little possibility that they would qualify for such positions."* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

*"Under the constitution of Pakistan, any non-Muslim can't occupy an important position. If they are given important positions, they will bring their own values and laws into our system. They would treat us as slaves and impose their own education and learning."* — Madrasa Teacher

*"Non-Muslims can't be given the position of head of any institution. Heading an institution is just like imamat [the leadership of prayer, in literal sense]. How could a non-Muslim be 'imam' [leader] of Muslims?"* — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

## INTERACTION WITH RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

### Personal Interaction

An overwhelming majority of madrasa teachers reported not having any religious minority friends, often due to the amount of time spent in the madrasa and the lack of religious minorities living nearby. A majority of teachers expressed an interest in developing limited friendships with religious minorities if given the opportunity; however, this was often accompanied by qualifications on the relationships as demonstrated in the excerpts below:

*"We can befriend non-Muslims but we can't love them because Islam doesn't allow us."* — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

*"We can't have hearty relationships with them but we have to behave well with them."* — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

Some teachers rejected the idea of having friendships with non-Muslims:

*"We wouldn't like to befriend non-Muslim teachers due to various reasons such as [that] Christians are not trustworthy."* — Madrasa Teacher (Punjab)



According to one madrasa teacher, another reason for the lack of interaction with religious minorities was reluctance on the part of the minorities:

*“Non-Muslims here avoid us and our madrasa so we don’t have any relationship with them. However, if we meet them, we try to convince them to convert into Islam. They avoid us.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

Some teachers advocated for polite treatment of non-Muslims in every circumstance with the intention to promote acceptance of Islam.

*“If a non-Muslim behaves in a bad manner and hurts us, we have to forgive him and be patient so that he is impressed and enters into Islam.”* — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

### Eating with Religious Minorities

A majority of madrasa teachers were favorably inclined to sharing food with non-Muslims, while a few teachers expressed dissention on religious grounds:

*“They usually have the haram food with them which is not properly slaughtered and is not permitted in Islam.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

*“I don’t like to share food items with non-Muslims because they belong to a different religion and Islam forbids such acts.”* — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

### Community Interaction

On the community level a majority of teachers indicated a desire for stronger relations with religious minorities without mention of proselytization.

*“Minorities are not only invited in Muslims’ gatherings, they also invite us to participate in their social events. The most usual events in this regards are wedding ceremonies.”*  
— Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

*“It is urged to behave cordially with non-Muslims because of the fact that they are also human beings. It will not only strengthen brotherhood but also ensure harmonious mutual coexistence in the society”* — Madrasa Teacher

In some instances madrasa teachers made community interaction contingent on the social status of religious minorities (who rarely hold high social status), or viewed interaction solely as a means to proselytize.

*“Those Hindus who are businessmen and are doing well in their business are usually invited in social activities.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

*“Community interaction through social gatherings is [a] modern way of preaching...”*  
— Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

### SECTARIAN ISSUES

The following findings regarding attitudes towards sectarian issues should be understood within the context of the sectarian breakdown of the sample—a majority of madrasa teachers in this sample belonged to the Ahle-Hadith school of thought, followed by Deobandi, Bareilvi, and Jamat-e-Islami schools of thought. A relatively small proportion of teachers belonged to Shia school.

### Sectarian Issues

#### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Despite an apparent state of heightened sectarianism amongst madrasa teachers, the possibility of reconciliation was often mentioned, though this typically involved some level of sectarian dominance.

Despite the prevalence of inter-sect rivalries such as between Shias and Sunnis and between Ahle-Hadith and Bareilvis, some teachers felt that the revival of amicable relationships is plausible if the principles of peaceful co-existence are adopted.

#### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

There was a strong sense of sectarianism among teachers; nearly all believed that their own sect is right in its way as it is based on the true principles of Islam—i.e., the Qur’an and hadith—in contrast to other sects.

There was a great deal of prejudice and intolerance towards Shias in particular.

### Sectarian Superiority and Reconciliation

There was a strong sense of sectarianism among teachers; nearly all believed that their own sect is right in its way as it is based on the true principles of Islam—i.e., the Qur'an and *hadith*—in contrast to other sects. A large number of teachers in our samples were quite adamant in their views and highlighted several issues of sectarian contention. Despite an apparent state of heightened sectarianism amongst madrasa teachers, the possibility of reconciliation was often mentioned, though this typically involved some level of sectarian dominance.

During a FGD in Abbottabad, a small fraction of the teachers said that subjects being taught in the madrasas are a catalyst to inculcate discrimination in the minds of madrasa teachers as well as students. It was opined: *“As a first step, a uniform curriculum should be introduced while limiting the use of reference books.”*

### Madrasa Teacher Views on the Various Sects

| RELIGION       | TEACHERS' GENERAL VIEWS  |
|----------------|--|
| Ahle-Hadith    | Since the majority of madrasa teachers interviewed happened to be Ahle-Hadith, their general opinion about this sect was predictably very positive. The general impression was that Ahle-Hadith do not believe in sects of Islam, but rather believe in the Qur'an and the <i>hadith</i> ; they also respect Islamic practices and the deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. The majority of the Barelvis and Shias declined to express any views about the Ahle-Hadith.  |
| Deobandi       | Given that the majority of teachers in our sample were Ahle-Hadith followed by Deobandis (and both sects have several things common), the overall opinion about them was also favorable. A majority of teachers thought that they believe in the Qur'an and <i>hadith</i> and nothing else. Some teachers, particularly from Barelvi sect, accused Deobandis of being irreverent toward the Prophet and his companions, while others considered them to be non-Muslims: <i>“Barelvis and Deobandis are non-Muslims.”</i>   |
| Barelvi        | Broadly speaking, teachers were critical of this sect and a majority considered Barelvis to have been a primary driver of sectarianism in Pakistan.<br><i>“They have different beliefs but we are not allowed to kill them. We have to resolve differences with them. The Qur'an has given us the belief that the Prophet was a human being but they think he was a Divine Light. The Qur'an says the Prophet doesn't know about the divine realities but Barelvis think he knows.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)<br><i>“A few things which were not customary now have been made part of Islam. These things have been associated with actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These actions are not proven by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In fact, these are Bidats [illegitimate extension in the religion]—mostly coined by the Barelvi school of thought.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Balochistan) |
| Jamat-e-Islami | The Jamat-e-Islami (JI) sect was considered to be more political than sectarian. Some viewed JI very favorably, as a group consisting of almost all sects, while others seemed to attribute a great deal of extremism to JI.<br><i>“They unite all sections of Islam. They involve scholars from all sects and bring them to one table.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)<br><i>“There are few religions (sects) who have extremist thoughts such as Jamat-e-Islami.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Punjab)  |
| Shia           | Shias were the targets of a great deal of bigotry and disdain. Some madrasa teachers even considered them to be non-Muslims. A majority of the teachers expressed negative views about them.<br><i>“Shias are infidels and they are not innocent.”</i> — Deobandi Madrasa Teacher (Punjab)<br><i>“Colonialism brought sectarianism to Pakistan which does not exist in Saudi Arabia. Due to this fact, Shias are called non-Muslims—they have altered definitions of Tawheed [oneness] and <i>hadith</i>.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)<br><i>“Their [Shias'] prayer ... and kalma [Islamic profession of faith] are different. However, only the government can decide whether or not they are non-Muslims.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)<br><i>“If Shias accept the pure faith of Islam then they are Muslim, otherwise they are infidel.”</i> — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)                       |



Other teachers such as those below expressed hope and constructive theories regarding the easing of sectarian tension:

*“Sectarian differences are provoked by the ulema [scholars] of the present day. Nonetheless, it is likely that these ulema can remove misunderstandings and promote commonalities in different schools of thoughts.” — Madrassa Teacher (KPK)*

*“Promotion of commonalities is deemed to be possible if adjoined with principles of the Qur’an and hadith. It is not possible by killing each other.” — Madrassa Teacher (Sindh)*

## JIHAD

Madrassa teachers were almost uniformly in agreement with the idea that jihad is an obligation of every Muslim, often leaving it up to individuals to decide when to wage jihad and whom to wage it against. With the exception of one teacher,<sup>80</sup> the madrassa teachers didn’t mention any role of a central authority such as the head of the state or state institutions such as the military. Madrassa teachers occasionally described provocations for jihad and rules for conduct that could be seen as limiting the vague and universal call to jihad, but with the exception of some distaste for the recent rise in suicide bombings, restrictions on jihad were rare. Christians, Jews, and Hindus were specifically mentioned as targets. The excerpts below offer insights into the madrassa teachers’ views of jihad.

*“If non-Muslims invade Muslim territory, then for the protection of Islam, it is necessary to do jihad against them if they are not ready to negotiate.” — Madrassa Teacher (KPK)*

*“Jews are infidels, deniers of Allah’s messengers, and enemies of Islam due to their anti-Muslim plans. Everyone in Israel is Ahl al Qital (to be fought against) who spreads war throughout the face of the earth.” — Madrassa Teacher (Sindh)*

*“...[an] extremist Hindu organization demolished the Babri Mosque in the Indian city of Ayodhya. This brutal act from Hindus can never be tolerated. If a Hindu extremist organization perpetrated an act of extremism in India, it did not imply such acts cannot be avenged in Pakistan.” — Madrassa Teacher (Balochistan)*

*“Jihad against infidels will continue until the day of judgment if the teachings of Islam are disrespected.” — Madrassa Teacher (Sindh)*

While the madrassa teachers made references to violent jihad, most of the teachers also viewed jihad in a broader perspective to include struggle through pen and speech. As a madrassa teacher from Punjab stated: *“We have to do jihad against those who are against Islam. Jihad can be done with pen as well as through speech.”*

There was also a tendency among teachers to declare the wave of suicidal killings as unlawful. One teacher from Punjab, for example, stated, *“In the recent past, the definition of jihad has changed in the backdrop of suicidal killings. In fact, jihad is often joined with these incidences, which is not according to Islam.”*

## Disputes between Muslims and Religious Minorities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

**An overwhelming majority of the teachers said they would settle disputes without prejudice.**

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**There was at least one instance where the madrassa teacher replied that he would kill a non-Muslim if he started a fight with a Muslim.**

<sup>80</sup> This teacher, from Peshawar, said: *“Jihad is a personal duty (fard’ain) for each and every Muslim under all circumstances or a collective duty (fard kifayya), but it can be performed ONLY under the direction of a leader of all Muslims.”*

## Causes of Anger

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

A few teachers appeared to sympathize with religious minorities in cases of blasphemy.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

A wide majority cited acts of blasphemy as a primary cause of anger.

Some teachers simply viewed the existence of religious minorities in Pakistan as a major cause for anger in the Islamic community.

## Causes of Anger

Teachers were asked to indicate specific actions or events that caused anger or anxiety in the madrassa community.

A wide majority of madrassa teachers cited acts of blasphemy, whether committed in Pakistan or in the West, as a primary cause of anger. Most of the teachers were aware of incidences such as the burning of a Qur'an by American pastor Terry Jones and the publishing of caricatures of the Prophet in some Western countries, and reported extreme anger associated with these events.

*"Blasphemous acts such as burning of the Qur'an and publishing of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad are intolerable in any form."* — Madrassa Teacher (Sindh)

In addition to these views, there was also awareness that the blasphemy law in Pakistan may be used unfairly against non-Muslims. A few madrassa teachers from the Sindh FGD, for example, appear to sympathize with religious minorities in cases of blasphemy:

*"In blasphemy cases, non-Muslims are victimized on the basis of evidence provided by Muslims. In such cases, Muslims also get support from others and the transparent investigation is avoided."* — Madrassa Teacher (Sindh)

Many teachers cited current events related to the Global War on Terror as significant causes of anger in the Islamic community, specifically mentioning Raymond Davis, Aafia Siddiqi (a Pakistani woman jailed for assault with intent to murder her American interrogators in Afghanistan), and the Afghan war.

*"The America-imposed war in which innocent Pakistanis are killed instills hatred against non-Muslims living in Pakistan and outside."* — Madrassa Teacher (Balochistan)

*"They [Americans] are pressuring the government to release Raymond Davis, who is a murderer. They have put the innocent Aafia Siddiqi in jail. These things cause anger among us."* — Madrassa Teacher (Sindh)

Apart from these events, some teachers simply felt anger over the practices and lifestyles of religious minorities, such as eating pork and drinking alcohol. Madrassa teachers from the KPK and Balochistan cited, in some cases, extremely broad causes for anger such as the prevalence of anything prohibited by Islam, or as one teacher from KPK stated, *"bowing down in front of idols, asking for help, practicing rituals through dancing are all annoying causes of creating hatred for Hindus and Christians."*

## Disputes between Muslims and Religious Minorities

Madrassa teachers were asked what they would do in the incidence of violence between a Muslim and a member of a religious minority. An overwhelming majority of the teachers said they would settle the dispute without prejudice. Some even reported a willingness to allow the legal system to assume jurisdiction as stated below:

*"In case of the arising of any dispute between Muslim and non-Muslim, I will settle the dispute by myself, and if it is not possible then law enforcement agencies will be approached, because rights of Muslims and non-Muslims are equal."* — Madrassa Teacher (KPK)

Some teachers, however, made a distinction with regard to the nature of the dispute, mentioning that equality holds if the dispute is of worldly nature, but that religious

disputes should be treated differently. As a madrasa teacher from KPK stated: *“If the dispute is on worldly matters it should be resolved amicably. However, if it is a religious one, it would aggravate the feelings of Muslims.”*

There was, however, at least one instance where a madrasa teacher revealed a violent extremist worldview. During a FGD, a teacher from KPK stated firmly: *“If a non-Muslim student fights with a Muslim student and it is found that the non-Muslim is indicted, I will kill him.”*

## TRANSMISSION OF TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS TO THE STUDENTS

### Comparative Religion

Most of the teachers said that teaching comparative religion is not part of the curriculum of their particular madrasa. However, a majority said that they present a comparative view of religions often as a means of demonstrating the superiority of Islam; the beliefs and practices of other religions appear to be taught through the perspective of Islamic principles and prohibitions. One could infer that the often pejorative views of minority religions described above would likely be part of this teaching. However, Islamic injunctions to respect other religions were also mentioned.

*“We usually share knowledge about other religions with our students when a relevant topic appears in the course, or when Qur’an or hadith refers to them. When we discuss about the non-Muslims, we talk about the beliefs and practices they follow.”* — Madrasa Teacher (KPK)

*“Islam teaches us about respecting and treating others nicely. Islam teaches... that we must respect and honor the beliefs and practices of religious minorities.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

*“Only selected hadith are taught to students for a comparative view of religion with regards to Islam and at the beginning classes of the madrasa.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

*“Yes, we do teach this; we have a separate subject on it, and we teach our students about Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism. We present a comparative viewpoint in light of Qur’anic verses.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Sindh)

In teaching about practices of other religions, the most common sources of references were the Qur’an and *hadith*. In addition, books of other Muslim speakers and scholars are also shared as references to teach about the practices of other religions.

There were some madrasa teachers, though few in number, who disapproved of teaching students about other religions in the madrasa classroom.

*“No, we don’t impart knowledge about comparative religion; the children are too young and cannot grasp the complex ideas. However, when relevant points arise, we try to inculcate the knowledge of basic differences among them.”* — Madrasa Teacher (Punjab)

## CONCLUSION

The opinions expressed by madrasa teachers should be understood in the context of their environment. As opposed to public school teachers, madrasa teachers teach (and often live) in an environment without religious diversity. The madrasa community is guided by Islamic concepts, and religious tolerance can be found in many areas in general terms. For example, this study found madrasa teachers who:

### Comparative Religion

#### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

**Islamic injunctions to respect other religions were mentioned.**

#### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**A majority said that they present a comparative view of religions often as a means of demonstrating the superiority of Islam; the beliefs and practices of other religions appear to be taught through the perspective of Islamic principles and prohibitions.**

- Leaned on the examples of religious tolerance attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.
- Were expectedly eager to encourage conversion, but often through righteous behavior.
- Desired stronger relations with religious minorities to promote religious harmony.
- Decried sectarian violence and were hopeful for reconciliation.

The modern-day Pakistani madrassa often exists at the nexus of modern worldly issues and centuries-old religious beliefs. The attitudes and perceptions of the madrassa teachers in this study seemed caught between the two.

On one hand, all madrassa teachers correctly identified religious minorities as citizens of Pakistan, with basic human, though limited political, rights. This concept fits into the Islamic principle of *dhimmitude*, the second-class citizenship of non-Muslims paying tax in Muslim-ruled countries. In the *dhimmi* system, the state is obligated to protect the rights and privileges of religious minorities, who could never be allowed to assume high positions of political power. The Constitution of 1973 appears to reflect this notion as religious minorities are eligible for full citizenship, but may not assume the offices of President or Prime Minister.

While citing Islamic injunctions to respect other religions and expressing the desire for limited relationships with religious minorities, madrassa teachers expressed negative attitudes toward and interpretations of other faith which could encourage intolerance in students. The teachers often cited Islamic ideals of religious tolerance, at least for “revealed religions,” but even in these cases it was often stated that Christians and Jews had amended their doctrines. Hindus and Ahmadis, as well as Shias, were the targets of a great deal of scorn and hostility.

From the opinions expressed, it appears that madrassa teachers feel very threatened. Conspiracy theories seem prevalent, as reflected in comments from such the teacher from Balochistan who described the Ahmadi sect as the “result of a grim conspiracy of Christians and Jews” and one from Sindh who described the “evil plans” of Jews as a reason for perpetual jihad. There was also significant concern regarding the influence of religious minorities, often viewed as a channel for non-Islamic culture to invade Pakistan, on the Islamic identity of Pakistan.

On the issue of jihad, all madrassa teachers viewed jihad as an obligation of all Muslims, but most understood it in the broader concept. According to madrassa teachers, jihad includes violent as well as non-violent means of resisting oppression—such as the “jihad of the pen”—and personal issues such as self-control and righteous behavior. Many madrassa teachers took issue with the legitimacy of suicide bombing and mentioned that the practice has been widely scrutinized and rejected as a form of jihad.

Unfortunately, due to the extremely sensitive nature of the study particularly in this sector, there were some questions that could not be asked in the madrassa environment. Madrassa teachers were not probed deeply on issues of sectarian violence or asked to identify the enemies of Islam.

## FINDINGS PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### SAMPLE SIZE

Interviews and FGDs were conducted with public school students in each of the four provinces as detailed below.

#### Individual Interviews

| PROVINCE      | MALE      | FEMALE    | TOTAL     |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Balochistan   | 6         | 4         | 10        |
| KPK           | 12        | 8         | 20        |
| Punjab        | 12        | 8         | 20        |
| Sindh         | 12        | 8         | 20        |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>70</b> |

#### Focus Group Discussions

| PROVINCE      | GROUPS (MALE) | PARTICIPANTS | GROUPS (FEMALE) | PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL GROUPS | TOTAL PARTICIPANTS |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Balochistan   | 1             | 5            | -               | -            | 1            | 5                  |
| KPK           | 2             | 14           | 2               | 7            | 4            | 11                 |
| Punjab        | 2             | 18           | -               | -            | 2            | 18                 |
| Sindh         | 2             | 15           | 3               | 24           | 5            | 39                 |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>7</b>      | <b>52</b>    | <b>5</b>        | <b>31</b>    | <b>12</b>    | <b>73</b>          |

### MAIN FINDINGS

According to the findings of the study, the public school students, in general:

#### ■ View the national identity of Pakistan in religious terms.

Pakistan is a nation of many cultures, ethnicities, languages, and tribes, but public school students rarely mentioned these aspects. In this sense students' perceptions were directly in line with the textbook emphasis on the "Islamic Pakistan" and the tendency of the textbooks to reduce conflicts with neighboring India and colonialism to their religious dimensions, which tends to suggest a great deal of influence of these books. Some students even broke down the religious identity of Islam into sects.

#### ■ Hold contradictory views regarding other religions and religious minorities.

Most public school students indicated that both Islam and their school teachers encouraged them to respect religious minorities, at least nominally or in order to encourage the acceptance of Islam. This respect was underscored in general questions as public school students expressed some of the most enlightened and tolerant views towards religious minorities that could be found throughout the study, and a majority of the students who had religious minorities in their class seemed to have good opinions of them. However, when probed on other issues, the respect in many instances seemed vacant. Students often expressed negative views of followers

of other religions, particularly Hindus, Jews, and Ahmadis. Overall the perception of Christians was better, but students associated them with the low social class and often used derogatory terms to describe them. While many students indicated a desire to see relations with religious minorities improve, some rejected having relationships of equality with non-Muslims. Most troubling, most students viewed non-Muslims as the enemies of Islam.

■ **Supported respectful and peaceful sectarian relations, while holding strong sectarian views.**

While the majority of the students interviewed appeared to hold strong sectarian views, many students emphasized the need for peaceful sectarian relations. Students often highlighted the need for respecting each other, granting freedom to all for exercising their religious rights, accepting all sects as equal, and realizing that all are right in their own way. Students also underscored the existence of commonalities among sects which, according to them, outweighed the differences.

■ **Had a narrow view of jihad.**

Public school students rarely appreciated the broader concept of jihad in its both non-violent and violent forms, as is presented in the Qur'an. They were generally of the view that jihad referred only to a violent struggle against the enemies of Islam, which seems to be in line with the attitudes of their teachers.

■ **Were sometimes being taught comparative religion in the classroom, but usually from the perspective of Islamic dominance.**

Public school students were split almost evenly when asked whether they were given any lessons on comparative religion by teachers. In nearly every case where they were being given, the lessons on comparative religion, formal or otherwise, were given from the perspective of Islam being dominant or true, and every other religion being submissive or false.

■ **Were not being taught to correctly identify religious minorities as citizens.**

Only about 60% of public school students could identify religious minorities as citizens (the same percentage as in the public school teacher sample), and many were skeptical about the potential for religious minorities to assist in the development of Pakistan. It is plausible that both the attitudes of their teachers and the scant mention of contributions of religious minorities to the development of Pakistan in the textbooks are contributing to these views.

## What Does Islam Teach about Other Religions?

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Most students agreed that Islam prescribes good behavior towards religious minorities.

Many students emphasized that non-Muslims are human beings and suggested they shouldn't be forced to do anything.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Often the motivation for good behavior appeared to be to inspire conversion.

Some students believed that Islam taught them to limit interaction with religious minorities.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF OTHER RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

#### General Views

Students were probed for their understanding of religions other than Islam. Some students in Punjab, KPK, and Sindh reported no understanding of other religions, as did nearly all students in Balochistan. A very small portion of students in Sindh made reference to different sects of Islam while describing other religions, possibly



suggesting that they consider the different sects of Islam to be different religions. It is important to mention that, as opposed to teachers who tended to describe the beliefs of other religions, students primarily gave their opinions of the followers of various religions.

Students, in general, were aware of some of the apparent differences between other religions and Islam, but held some negative views, particularly of Hindus, Jews, and Ahmadis. Overall the perception of Christians was better, but students associated them with the low social class and often used derogatory terms to describe them.

There was an apparent tendency of looking down upon non-Muslims. Students seemed to be establishing the superiority of their “Allah” over the god(s) of Hindus (who believe in many gods) and of Christians (who worship the same God of Abraham).

*“Our religion is greater than others so we should preach them our religion as much as we can.”* — Public School Student (Punjab)

| RELIGION     | STUDENTS’ GENERAL VIEWS  |
|--------------|--|
| Christianity | <p>The majority viewed Christians as those who believe in Jesus as the son of God, believe in the Bible as their sacred book, go to church, and celebrate Christmas. Some students also referred to the concept of the Trinity in Christianity as the distinguishing feature of this religion. It is important to note that students have a relatively better perception of Christians than of Hindus. Some students falsely attributed certain views to Christianity:</p> <p><i>“They don’t believe in eternal life.”</i> — Public School Student (Sindh)</p> <p>While most focused upon the differences, some also pointed to commonalities between Muslims and Christians:</p> <p><i>“Christians live a normal life and they have a similar type of living as we have and there are commonalities between Christians and Muslims.”</i> — Female Student (Punjab)</p> <p><i>“They are also Muslims, but they just believe in Christ only and no other prophets.”</i> — Student (Sindh)</p> |
| Hinduism     | <p>Students generally understood Hindus to be polytheistic in contrast to their own monotheistic religion, and often stated that Hindus do not believe in Allah or respect Muslim prayer. Some students had very negative perceptions of Hindus:</p> <p><i>“Hindus worship many idols; they also worship the cow and consider her urine sacred.”</i> — Male Student (Punjab)</p> <p><i>“Hindus believe that the cow is their mother and consider the elephant their God. They also believe in monkeys.”</i> — Student (Sindh)</p>  |
| Ahmadis      | <p>Ahmadis were unanimously considered non-Muslims, and a majority of the students interviewed referred to them in terms of their views on the finality of the prophet. Students in general had very negative images of Ahmadis:</p> <p><i>“Ahmadis try to convert members of other religions to their religion by casting magic. They don’t believe in prophethood and they deny the last prophet. We should behave badly with them.”</i> — Male Student (Punjab)</p>   |

### What does Islam teach about other religions?

A wide majority of students agreed that Islam teaches about other religions, and most said that Islam prescribes good behavior towards religious minorities. One male student in Punjab reported, *“[Islam] promotes the commonalities among all the religions and our prophet (PBUH) taught us to do well with them.”*

Nonetheless, in many instances the motivation behind treating non-Muslims with good behavior is to inspire them to convert to Islam, as the following excerpts suggest:

*“We shouldn’t even call any non-Muslim as infidel [kafir]. In Islam, calling anyone infidel is not legitimate as we don’t know when someone’s heart is enlightened with*

## Opinions of Other Religions and Lifestyles

### POSITIVE STATEMENTS

Some students reported that non-Muslim lifestyles were the same, or highlighted positive attributes.

Some students expressed admiration of certain traits that they attributed to religious minorities such as communal and family cohesion, manners, education, and attitudes.

### NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

In regard to what students liked about other religions, many of them suggested they don't like anything about them as they are not Muslim.

According to one student from Punjab, religious minorities were "shameless people."

Students mentioned that they dislike many things about non-Muslims such as: not believing in Allah, worshipping idols, and believing in the Jesus as the son of God.

Some students accused members of other religions of being intolerant or aggressive towards Muslims.

Students accused religious minorities of poor hygiene.

*the light of Islam. We shouldn't be critical and say negative things about anyone."*

— Student (Punjab)

*"Islam tells us to deal with them in a good manner so that they convert to Islam. Islam gives us the message of peace."* — Student (KPK)

*"We need to treat them very well. We need to make a good presentation of ourselves so that we can impress non-Muslims and they embrace Islam."* — Student (Punjab)

Unlike in KPK and Punjab, most of the students in Sindh and Balochistan appeared more tolerant when it came to their understanding of the teachings of Islam regarding other religions. Many students emphasized that non-Muslims are also human beings and suggested they shouldn't be forced to do anything.

A small number among our respondents thought that Islam teaches one to have limited interaction with non-Muslims. As one student from Punjab suggested, *"We should not share our secrets with them. We should also restrict ourselves and keep relationships to a limit."*

### Opinion of Other Religions

Students were asked what they liked and disliked about other religions. In regard to what students liked about other religions, many of them suggested they don't like anything about them as they are not Muslim, as the following responses from female students in Sindh illustrate:

*"I don't like anything about them because nothing good is there in their religion."*

*"I don't like people from other religions as they are different from Muslims."*

Some students, however, did express admiration of certain traits that they attributed to religious minorities. Of the students who identified positive qualities of religious minorities, the communal and family cohesion, manners, education, and attitudes were praised.

Some of the students (in Sindh) pointed towards the high education levels and good moral character of non-Muslims as the qualities they like; however, they called their good qualities Islamic: *"They are far more educated and follow almost all the teachings and rules of Islam."* Many students appreciated the friendly and helpful behavior of non-Muslims towards Muslims. A male student in Sindh reported; *"They show good attitude, they have unity, and they are cooperative with us."*

Some students also applauded the honesty of non-Muslims, particularly of Hindus. One male student in Sindh said, *"Hindus are peace lovers, they are honest in their businesses, and they do not pose harm to anyone..."*, while another male student from Balochistan said, *"I like their honesty, sincerity with their business, and the human values in them."*

When students were asked about what they dislike in other religions, most of them expressed their distaste of their beliefs, faiths, and religious practices. Students mentioned many things to dislike about non-Muslims, such as: not believing in Allah, worshipping idols, and believing in the Jesus as the son of God. One male student from Sindh said, *"What I dislike in them is [that] they worship idols, they do not believe in one Allah, and [they] do not follow the Holy Book and the Prophet (PBUH) of Muslims."* A female student from Sindh said, *"[I dislike] the way they worship the idols; Christians think of Hazrat Isa (the Prophet Jesus) as son of God."*



Some students also accused non-Muslims of being people who think negatively about Muslims. A male student from KPK, for example, said: *“They worship idols, they think negatively about Muslims, and don’t believe in the Prophet (PBUH). I dislike this very much.”*

Non-Muslims not embracing Islam is also viewed as one of the reasons students dislike them. A female student in Sindh, for example, said, *“They do not offer prayers, do not recite Qur’an, and do not accept Islam.”*

Similarly, rituals of non-Muslims such as burning dead bodies (attributed to Hindus in the textbooks), use of *sandoor*<sup>81</sup> and *mangal sootar*<sup>82</sup> by Hindus, and the wearing of crosses by Christians were also disliked by students. Some students also disliked the perceived “lifestyle” of non-Muslims, their wedding traditions, and manner of dress. Students also said they dislike non-Muslims because they eat food that is non-*halal*.

They also associated drinking alcohol with non-Muslims and expressed it as one reason to dislike them. According to a male student in KPK, *“They laugh at Muslims, I mean the Hindus. They don’t observe purdah and drink alcohol.”*

Some students declared Jews as the enemies of Islam, thus being disliked: *“Hindus burn their dead bodies, they worship the idols, and Jews are the enemies of Islam. They do not believe in one God. They stop Muslims from offering their prayers in mosques and they punish Muslims for nothing.”*

### Non-Muslim Lifestyle

A majority of the students in KPK and Balochistan, and half of the students in Punjab, said they don’t know about the lifestyle of non-Muslims, while a majority of students in the Sindh sample claimed that they did. Among those who expressed familiarity, there were a few who said that religious minorities are *“like us and have a lifestyle like ours.”* A male student in Punjab, for example, said: *“non-Muslims are also human like us and they live as we do.”*

Other students also highlighted positive images of religious minorities, such as another male student in Punjab who claimed that religious minorities *“have good behavior and they have simplicity in their attitude.”*

However, a majority shared their perception of differences in the lifestyles. For example, a male student from Sindh said: *“They are totally different from us.”*

One female student from KPK referred to the differences in family life, stating that the joint family<sup>83</sup> lifestyle is Islamic only and non-Muslims don’t live in joint families.

Others had strong negative views about what they perceive as the lifestyles of religious minorities. Many students questioned their “hygiene practices.” One female student from KPK said that *“non-Muslims don’t offer prayer. They don’t take care of their personal hygiene. Their eating habits are different.”*

One male student in Punjab gave an extreme opinion; when asked about the lifestyle of religious minorities, he simply said that *“they are shameless people.”*

<sup>81</sup> A red-orange colored cosmetic powder, used on the head by married Hindu women.

<sup>82</sup> A symbol of a Hindu marriage union.

<sup>83</sup> Extended family living together, usually in one house, consisting of parents, children, and their spouses and off-spring.

## Religious Minorities and Citizenship

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

**More than 60% of the students interviewed considered religious minorities in Pakistan as citizens, and many considered them good citizens.**

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**Most students ignored the ethnic diversity of Pakistan and focused on the duality between Muslims and non-Muslims.**

**Roughly 40% considered religious minorities not to be citizens, and among those who did, many did not see them as equal citizens.**

**Of those who did not consider religious minorities as citizens, the primary reason was the belief that only Muslims could or should be considered citizens.**

## CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

### Who lives in Pakistan?

Responses to this question suggested strong religious undertones in perceptions of the Pakistani national identity. An overwhelming majority of students made reference to religion, and the most recurring response was that Muslims and non-Muslims live in Pakistan, revealing an awareness of the religious diversity of Pakistan. When describing non-Muslims most students identified Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs, while other students spoke of sectarian diversity within the Islamic community and mentioned that Deobandis, Barelvis, Wahhabis (Ahle-Hadith), and Shias live in Pakistan. Some also treated Shias as a religious category different from Muslims. As one student said, *“Muslim, Shia, Sikh, and Hindus live in Pakistan.”*

While students of the provinces of Punjab, KPK, and Sindh tended to see diversity in Pakistan in religious terms, students from Balochistan frequently referred to both the ethnic and religious diversity of Pakistanis. Nonetheless, the overall number of students referring to cultural or ethnic identity was very small.

It is important to note that the emphasis on religio-nationalism in the educational discourse of the Pakistani textbooks is highly evident in the responses of students. They tend to view themselves and others in Pakistan primarily through their respective religious identities, as Muslims and non-Muslims, Shias and Sunnis, or Deobandis and Barelvis.

### Citizenship

More than 60% of the students interviewed considered religious minorities in Pakistan as citizens, and many considered them good citizens. Respondents from this group made statements such as, *“Yes they are good citizens, they are loyal to their country”* and, *“Yes, they love Pakistan and consider it as their own land.”*

Among some of the students who consider non-Muslims as Pakistanis, some did not consider religious minorities to be good or equal citizens.

*“No, they are not good citizens, because they are not doing anything for us [Pakistanis].”*

— Male Student (Punjab)

*“No, they are not equal. We shall respect them but can’t have extended and equal relationships with them as they belong to ‘other’ religions.”* — Public School Student (KPK)

Among the group that did not consider religious minorities to be Pakistani citizens, the primary reason was the belief that only Muslims could or should be considered citizens.

*“When they don’t believe in our Allah then why [should] we accept them as Pakistani?”*

— Female Student (Punjab)

*“Although non-Muslims are living in Pakistan, I don’t accept them as Pakistani because they don’t believe in Islam.”* — Female Student (Punjab)

While there are several possible sources of this kind of mentality in Pakistan, it is plausible that the way that the national identity of Pakistan is often described as Islamic in the textbooks and curriculum could be encouraging these sentiments. The responses given below seemed to reflect the views expressed in the textbooks:

*“No, there are separate countries for separate religions where they can spend their life with freedom. So they should go there.” — Male Student (Punjab)*

*“No, they are outsiders. When their children are born, they teach them their religion and their language. In my view, if the child is born in Pakistan, he/she should be Muslim.”*

— Student (KPK)

It is also important to note that the percentage of public school students who considered religious minorities to be Pakistani citizens (about 60%) corresponds to the percentage of public school teachers who felt the same (also roughly 60%), suggesting a strong likelihood that the views of the teachers were influencing the views of their students.

### Role of Minorities in the Development of Pakistan

Most of the students engaged in the study believed that religious minorities could play a positive role in the development of Pakistan through education and hard work. Some of the students, in response to this question, mentioned that they considered religious minorities to be citizens of Pakistan. Some students were also aware of the lack of opportunities available to religious minorities to assist in the development of Pakistan.

*“Minorities can benefit Pakistan by their honesty and their knowledge.” — Female Student (Punjab)*

*“As far as minorities are concerned, if they do hard work, and if they have been [given] the opportunities, then they can be beneficial for Pakistan.” — Female Student (Punjab)*

A significant number of students, however, were skeptical of the positive role religious minorities could play in the development of Pakistan. Most of those students, especially in KPK, were dismissive of the possibility of any positive role for minorities for the development of Pakistan, primarily due to concerns regarding the patriotism or loyalty of religious minorities.

*“No, they can’t play any role. All they would do is to work for their personal gain; however, they won’t work to make the country safe or lead it towards progress. I know this because they are non-Muslim.” — Public School Student (KPK)*

*“They can’t do that as they are jealous from Pakistan and they can’t play their role; they are just living in Pakistan.” — Female Student (Punjab)*

### INTERACTION WITH RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

#### Do you have any fellow [peer] who belongs to a minority religion in your locality/school?

Slightly more than half of the students interviewed reported having religious minority schoolmates or neighbors, with the most frequently mentioned being Christians, followed by Hindus and a very few Ahmadis. In some cases, students appeared happy or proud that religious minorities did not go to their schools.

*“By the grace of Allah, we have all Muslim students in the class and school. It leaves us with liberty to recite our religious verses (Qur’an & hadith). Since I am the monitor of the class, when our teacher left the class, I started reciting Qur’anic verses and hadith and all my peers listened carefully.” — Public School Student (KPK)*

### Religious Minorities in the Development of Pakistan

#### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Most students believed that religious minorities could play a positive role through education and hard work.

Some students were also aware of the lack of opportunities available to religious minorities to assist in the development of Pakistan.

#### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

A significant number of students were skeptical of the role that religious minorities could play, as they did not belong in Pakistan.

## Interaction with Religious Minorities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

A majority of the students who had religious minorities in their class seemed to have good opinions of them, and some expressed tolerance of their religions, admired the manners of non-Muslim students, or considered them to be “good people,” worthy of good relations.

Most students who had religious minorities in their schools acknowledged playing with them, and many reported having religious minorities as friends.

Of the students who reported not having religious minorities in their class or locality, nearly half said they would have non-Muslim friends given the opportunity.

### NEUTRAL

Slightly more than half of the students had religious minorities in their school or community.

Some students who would not eat with non-Muslims cited practical concerns about non-halal food or pork.

## What do you think about them?

It was encouraging to see that some of the students considered religious minority students just like themselves and countered any sense of discrimination against them on the basis of their religious identity. There were several positive and neutral statements from students:

*“They are just like Muslims and there are no differences.”* — Male Student (Sindh)

*“We are all friends and we don’t distinguish.”* — Male Student (Sindh)

*“Non-Muslim students have their own religion and set of principles to follow; we have nothing to do with that.”* — Female Student (Sindh)

*“They are like our brothers.”* — Public School Student (Punjab)

*“They are good people; they live together with Muslims.”* — Public School Student (Punjab)

A majority of the students who had religious minorities in their class seemed to have good opinions of them, and some expressed tolerance of their religions, admired the manners of non-Muslim students, or considered them to be “good people,” worthy of good relations.

Students praised religious minority students by stating that they have a good behavior and attitude towards the people of other religions, including Muslims. In response to this question, some students additionally expressed their view that Islam teaches the lesson of equality and respecting other religions and their followers, so they have to respect their non-Muslim fellow students. Similarly, students also noted that religious minority students are respectful to Islam. One student from Sindh said explicitly; *“Non-Muslims give immense respect to our holy prophet (PBUH).”*

Nonetheless, there were also several instances when the attitudes of students towards religious minorities in their schools were not based on equality and respect. Students voiced irritation that religious minorities did not participate in Islamic activities within the classroom, or that they simply were not Muslims, despite having good character.

*“There is a Christian student studying in our class. She bears very good character and behaves well with others. But, I do not like her act of leaving the classroom when the recitation of Qur’an starts.”* — Female Student (KPK)

*“They are good in nature but they are not right believers and do infidelity.”*  
— Female Student (Sindh)

Other students simply stated bigotry towards religious minorities in their school.

*“Their religion is wrong”* — Male Student (Sindh)

*“They are mad because they worship idols.”* — Male Student (Sindh)

*“They are not good people as they believe Jesus Christ is their God.”* — Female Student (Sindh)

## Do you play with them?

Most of the students who have interacted with religious minority children either in the classroom or their localities play with them and do not feel any harm in doing so.

*“Yes, we play with them as there is no harm in it. No matter whatever religion we practice. We still have close ties with them and while they don’t abuse our religion at the same time we also should respect their religion—we should respect their religion a lot because it means a lot to them.”* — Public School Student (KPK)

Students in an FGD in a school in Punjab reported that all students, including non-Muslims, take part in extra-curricular activities like games and debates. Their school arranges religious speech competitions at their school that help them learn each other’s religions. Out of the students who had interacted with religious minorities, only a few responded that they do not like to play with them due to their religion.

### Do you eat with them?

Most of the students asked reported that it was not preferable to share food with religious minorities, citing many of the same reasons offered by their teachers. It is interesting to note that while almost no female students in Sindh said that they would not eat with religious minorities, only half of the male student shared this view.

A few students said that non-Muslims belong to a different religion and it is prohibited in Islam to share the table with them, while others mentioned the common practical concern that the food of religious minorities was *haram* under Islamic law, the common pejorative concern that religious minorities were too dirty, or that the Qur’an forbade sharing meals with non-Muslims.

*“I don’t like to share food items with them because they belong to a different religion.”*  
— Student (Sindh)

*“I eat with them things such as fruit; however, I don’t eat anything cooked from their home because I can’t eat with their napak [impure] utensils.”* — Student (KPK)

*“I don’t feel good eating with non-Muslims.”* — Student (Punjab)

Nonetheless, there were a few students who mentioned that social pressures and family restrict from eating with non-Muslims, as two students mentioned in the excerpts below;

*“Society forbids [us] from eating with non Muslims.”* — Student (Sindh)

*“...family members wouldn’t allow eating with non-Muslims.”* — Student (KPK)

However, there were many students who didn’t see any harm in sharing their food with minority students. Students in an FGD in KPK, for example, said:

*“There is nothing wrong in eating or playing with them. We easily share food with them and we don’t interfere with each other’s religions.”* — Student (KPK)

*“We play with them as we play with Muslims, share food with them. Our families are also aware of this and they never stop us from this.”* — Student (KPK)

Similarly, several students in Sindh and Punjab said that non-Muslim fellow students are also human beings and there is no harm in eating together. It is also important to note that, sometimes, eating with non-Muslim fellow students is motivated by the desire to convert them to Islam. Some male students in an FGD in KPK said, *“There is no harm in eating with them. We can also extend our relationships with them and can impress them through our character to embrace Islam.”*

## Interaction with Religious Minorities (continued)

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**Some students expressed pride that there were no religious minorities in their school.**

**Some students voiced irritation that religious minorities did not participate in Islamic activities within the classroom, or that they simply were not Muslims, despite having good character.**

**Many students would not eat with religious minorities.**

**While having religious minorities at Muslim events was occasionally tolerated, Muslim students had little desire to accept invitations.**



**Have you any non-Muslim friend? If not, then why?**

More than half of the students in our sample indicated that they did not have any non-Muslim friends. The primary reason for this was the absence of non-Muslim classmates or neighbors, while some students opted not to befriend religious minorities for religious reasons, or due to family or social pressure.

*“I don’t befriend non-Muslims because they belong to other religions.” — Male Student (Punjab)*

*“I don’t want any friendship with non-Muslims.” — Male Student (Punjab)*

*“I don’t have any non-Muslim friend as my parents don’t like it.” — Female Student (Sindh)*

In some instances friendship is inspired by the motivation to influence religious minorities to embrace Islam.

*“There was one friend but not anymore. We tried to convert him to Islam so that Allah is pleased. As a friend he was very good but he didn’t convert.” — Male Public School Student*

*“I don’t have any non-Muslim classmate; otherwise I would have spent time with her so that she wouldn’t feel herself alone in the society. Such behavior can impact on their lives and they might convert to Islam.” — Female Student (Punjab)*

Of the students that reported not having religious minorities in their class or locality, nearly half said they would have non-Muslim friends given the opportunity as indicated below:

*“I would like to befriend non-Muslim students if they have a good attitude.” — Male Student (Sindh)*

*“I would love to befriend Christians as they are good people.” — Male Student (Punjab)*

Nonetheless, several students indicated that they would not befriend religious minority students due to various degrees of intolerant attitudes as described below:

*“They are different from us in every sphere of life.” — Male Student (Sindh)*

*“I wouldn’t befriend them as they are not trustworthy.” — Male Student (Sindh)*

*“No, because I and my parents have doubts that they [religious minorities] attract [Muslims] towards their religion.” — Female Student (Sindh)*

**Do you invite them to social get-togethers?**

Almost half of the students indicated either that they invite or receive invitations from religious minorities to social events, with funerals and weddings being the most often-cited events that religious minorities would attend. There was a sense during these interviews and FGDs that while having religious minorities at Muslim events was occasionally tolerated, Muslim students had little desire to accept invitations from religious minorities.

*“Muslims don’t invite them. Non-Muslims invite Muslims but Muslims don’t. I won’t mind if they come by themselves.” — Male Student (KPK)*

*“Christians do attend our social celebrations, but we never attended their social events.” — Male Student (Punjab)*

There is, nonetheless, a sense of sharing joy in religious festivities in some cases despite not attending social events.

*“When they have Christmas in December, we extend good wishes to Christians and they wish us the Eid celebrations. But, we do not attend their marriage events because Muslims’ marriages are different from them.”* — Public School Student (KPK)

## SECTARIAN ISSUES

### Students’ Own Sect

Only a small proportion of students belonged to the Barelvi and Shia schools of thought; in this sample the Deobandi school was the dominant sect in nearly all provinces, followed by Jamat-e-Islami, with some students indicating an affiliation with the Ahle-Hadith sect. There were also some students who regard themselves simply as “Muslims.”

*“We are all Muslims and all Muslims are the same.”* — Student (KPK)

### Opinion about the Differences Among Sects

The majority of the students in Sindh and Punjab acknowledged that there are fundamental differences between sects, while most in KPK did not express opinions about sects in Islam. Students explained sectarian differences and stated that there are disagreements among the sects over a number of essential matters. These included: ways of calling for prayer (*Azan*), saying prayers, status of the Prophet as a human being or a superior and omnipotent being, status of the companions of the Prophet, giving alms, visiting shrines, and celebrating some events such as *Eid-milad-un-nabi*<sup>84</sup> and *Muharram*.

*“They have different ways of saying Azan, offering prayers and the way of processing funerals.”* — Student (Sindh)

A male student of 9th grade from Punjab summarized sectarian differences as follows:

*“Sunnis follow teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Ahle-Hadith only follow the hadith. Barelvis recite Darood<sup>85</sup> and celebrate Melad.<sup>86</sup> Wahhabis exercise Rafayadain<sup>87</sup> and say Ameen<sup>88</sup> with full voice during prayer and they do not like to eat food on which khatam<sup>89</sup> is recited. Shias commemorate the Karbla in large processions where they bring horses and beat their chests in the name of Matam.”<sup>90</sup>*

Similarly, a majority of students in Balochistan also appeared to be mindful of the differences between various sects; however, they preferred not to elaborate on these differences. While discussing these differences, some of the students appeared to look down on the followers of sects other than their own, at times declaring them non-Muslims or infidels.

84 Celebration of the birthday of the Prophet.

85 An invocation where Muslims recite specific phrases to compliment the Prophet.

86 Celebration of the birthday of the Prophet.

87 An act during the saying of prayers.

88 A word uttered during the prayer so that the prayer will be accepted.

89 Prayer for the forgiveness of sins of those who died.

90 An act of self-flagellation during Shia remembrance of Muharram.

## Enemies of Islam

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Some students believed that Islam had no enemies.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

The majority of the students simply identified non-Muslims as the enemies of Islam.

A wide majority of students, in all provinces, considered Jews as strong enemies, followed by Hindus.

Several students named certain countries as enemies of Islam; in these responses Israel, America, India, and England were cited.

*“Shias believe in horses and allams [flags]; then what is the difference between them and kafirs [infidels]?” — Male Student (Punjab)*

*“Shias don’t believe in Khulfa-e-Rashideen [four caliphs]. These types of sects should be eliminated from the earth.” — 10th Grade Female Student (KPK)*

*“They [Deobandis] don’t offer charity meals in the way of Allah. However, if someone offers these charity meals, they reach there and eat that.” — Male Student (Sindh)*

The majority of the students interviewed appeared to hold strong sectarian views; for example, as some of the female students in Sindh said, *“only we are right”* and *“we don’t like them [other sects]. We only like our own sect.”* There were nonetheless some students who did not find a great deal of sectarian differences, or did not feel beholden to any sect.

*“They [followers of different sects] are all Muslims and all Muslims are the same.” — Female Student (KPK)*

*“I don’t have any sect. My religion is Islam.” — Male Student (KPK)*

Several students who did acknowledge the differences between the sects appeared to be critical of sectarianism.

*“There was no sectarianism in the past. According to my father, this Shia-Sunni conflict has never been there. Instead this is a recent phenomenon in our society.” — Male Student (Balochistan)*

Many students, especially in Punjab, emphasized the need for peaceful sectarian relations. Students often highlighted the need for respecting each other, granting freedom to all for exercising their religious rights, accepting all sects as equal, and realizing that all are right in their own way. Students also underscored the existence of commonalities among sects which, according to them, outweighed the differences.

*“There should be a cordial relationship among all the sects. We should talk about the commonalities rather than differences.” — Female Student (Punjab)*

*“I think we should respect other sects; otherwise it will create differences and hence, violence among the sects.” — Female student (Punjab)*

*“Similarities, among sects, are more than their difference. If there are more and more dialogues among them, it is possible to put an end to the conflicts.” — Public School Student (Sindh)*

## JIHAD AND ENEMIES OF ISLAM

### Does Islam have any enemies? If so who are they?

While there were students in all provinces who believed that Islam had no enemies, the majority of students simply identified non-Muslims as the enemies of Islam.

*“Non-Muslims are the enemies of Islam.” — Public School Student (KPK)*

*“Ones who don’t believe in Islam are the enemies of Islam.” — Public School Student (KPK)*

*“All the infidels are the enemies of Islam.” — Public School Student (Sindh)*



There were also students from every province who went further and declared followers of certain religions as enemies of Islam. A wide majority of the students, in all provinces, considered Jews as strong enemies, followed by Hindus.

*“Yes, Jews, they have always been the enemies of Islam.”* — Public School Student (Sindh)

*“Non-Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews are the enemies of Islam.”* — Public School Student (Punjab)

Some students also stated that *Yahood-o-Nasara* (Jews and Christians) were the combined enemies of Islam.

Several students named certain countries as enemies of Islam; in these responses Israel and America were most often cited, as well as India and England, who according to some students, *“want to erase the name of Pakistan.”*

Some students actually seemed to identify nearly everything outside of the Islamic world as enemies, such as the student from KPK who responded that, *“Yes, there are many enemies of Islam. America and non-Muslims are enemies of Islam. Hindu, Sikhs, they are all against Islam. They should be responded [to] appropriately.”*

### What does jihad mean to you?

During the discussions public school students were asked what jihad meant to them. The overwhelming majority stated that jihad is a duty for Muslims, and most defined jihad as warfare in the name of Allah and to preserve Islam. Several students also specified against whom to do jihad. While most students said jihad meant to fight against the enemies of Islam, a less prevalent view was that the meaning of jihad is to fight against non-Muslims without any mention of animosity.

*“Jihad is to fight against non-Muslims in the name of Allah.”* — Female Student (KPK)

*“Jihad is a war between Muslims and non-Muslims.”* — Female Student (Sindh)

*“If non-Muslims tease us about our religion, we should fight against them.”* — Male Student (KPK)

Some students in Punjab considered sacrificing one’s life in the name of or to please Allah as jihad.

The on-going conflict in various parts of KPK and its surroundings also seemed to influence the students’ understanding of jihad, giving it an international dimension. One 10th grade student in KPK appeared to be very aggressive regarding the conflict. Although his responses are atypical amongst the students interviewed, they are nonetheless informative. An excerpt of his interview is given below:

*Interviewer: What do you know about jihad?*

*Student: Jihad is obligatory to protect Islam.*

*Interviewer: Where to go for jihad?*

*Student: Wherever Muslims are oppressed, such as Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Waziristan.*

*Interviewer: Whom would you fight against in Waziristan?*

*Student: America.*

*Interviewer: Is there any American army in Waziristan?*

*Student: Yes, too many of them. There are also mujahids [fighters] in Waziristan who are fighting against the enemy.*

### What is Jihad?

#### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Though few in number, some students understood jihad to include non-violent actions such as controlling oneself and doing good deeds.

#### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

The overwhelming majority stated that jihad is a duty for Muslims, and most defined jihad as warfare in the name of Allah and to preserve Islam.

While most said jihad meant to fight against the enemies of Islam, a less prevalent view was that jihad simply meant is to fight against non-Muslims.

Some students defined jihad as something to be waged against Muslims or religious minorities who commit acts such as blasphemy.

Some students viewed jihad as a violent and aggressive method of spreading Islam.

## Religious Education in the Classroom

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Some of the more positive statements bore a trace of prejudice, but overall seemed benign.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents stated that their teachers teach them to respect all the religions and their places of worship, beliefs, personalities, rituals, and books.

### NEUTRAL TENDENCIES

Public school students were split almost evenly when asked whether they were given any lessons on comparative religion by teachers.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

In nearly every case, the lesson on comparative religion was given from the perspective of Islam being dominant or true, and every other religion being submissive or false.

Some students indicated that the motive for respecting non-Muslims' religious affiliations was to motivate them to embrace Islam.

*Interviewer: If we leave for jihad, to whom would we contact?*

*Student: They have their own leader, we shall join him and tell them that we want to do jihad.*

Some students defined jihad as something to be waged against Muslims or religious minorities who commit acts such as blasphemy.

*"War, against those who show disrespect for the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)."*

— Female Student (Punjab)

Some students favored an aggressive form of jihad, such as the male student from Punjab who stated that, *"jihad is a war and means to spread Islam."*

Informed by the religio-nationalist discourse which occupies significance in the curricula and textbooks, the concept of jihad for some students overlaps with nationalism.

*"Jihad is to fight for Islam and [the] Islamic country."* — Male Student (Sindh)

A very small number of students expressed an appreciation of the broader meanings of jihad as making efforts in various spheres of life.

*"Following Islam in the right way is like doing jihad."* — Male Student (Sindh)

*"...jihad is to seek control over oneself."* — Student (Sindh)

*"Jihad is of several kinds—it means to promote education and health. It also means to seek control over oneself. And it also means to protect one's country."* — Male Student (KPK)

One female student linked her notion of jihad with the lessons in the school textbooks.

*"Jihad is one which is in the form of a group and they fight. We read this in our textbook. Our Prophet (PBUH) also took part in jihad."* — Public School Student (Punjab)

## TRANSMISSION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TO THE STUDENTS

### Teaching Comparative Religion

Public school students were split almost evenly when asked whether they were given any lessons on comparative religion by teachers. One student from Punjab offered that teachers do teach comparative religion by themselves, but it wasn't part of the syllabus.

In nearly every case where they were being given, the lessons on comparative religion, formal or otherwise, were given from the perspective of Islam being dominant or true, and every other religion being submissive or false.

*"Yes, we were taught what Islam says about other religions."* — Male Student (KPK)

*"Yes they say Islam is right by comparing the other religions."* — Female Student (Sindh)

*"Yes they do tell us that Islam is the best in all."* — Male Student (Sindh)

*"Yes the teacher did the comparison of various religions in class. The teacher told us about the injustice done by other religions."* — Female Student (Punjab)

Some of the more positive statements bore a trace of prejudice, but overall seemed relatively benign, such as the sentiment expressed by this student:

*“They tell us about Islam and other religions. They also teach us to respect all.”*

— Male Student

## TEACHING RESPECT FOR OTHER RELIGIONS, BELIEFS, PRACTICES AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

An overwhelming majority of the respondents stated that their teachers teach them to respect all the religions and their places of worship, beliefs, personalities, rituals, and books, with only a few dissensions.

*“Teachers tell us stories about them and say that we should respect the beliefs, actions, and worship places of other religions.”* — Student (Sindh)

*“Yes, teachers taught us to respect all. We have to do justice with them; as we spend our lives they also have the same right to spend their life according to their faith.”*

— Male Student (Punjab)

*“Our teachers teach about how to behave with others and how to understand others.”*

— Female Student

*“We are often taught that people from other religions should be treated well. They shouldn’t be misbehaved [toward].”* — Public School Student (KPK)

Nonetheless, in some instances students express the motive for respecting non-Muslims’ religious affiliations as to motivate them to embrace Islam.

*“We should behave well with them so that they [are] inspire[d] and embrace Islam.”*

— Female Student (Punjab)

*“Yes we are taught not to talk about them. Allah will bring them to the right path.”*

— Male Student (Punjab)

In Punjab a very small number of students said they were not taught anything about respecting other religions by their teachers, while a large number of the students from the KPK did not respond to the question. A few students in both KPK and Punjab said that they are being taught to respect the people from religious minorities.

The general response to this question demonstrates that students feel they are being taught to respect religious minorities; these messages seem to be strongly contradicted, however, during responses to other questions.

## CONCLUSION

The interviews and FGDs uncovered a great deal of discriminatory attitudes, but it should be noted that even within this small sample there were students who expressed tolerance and understanding of religious minorities, as expressed in how they:

- Were being taught to respect religious minorities as equals.
- Understood the broader concept of jihad.
- Were hopeful to see an end to sectarian conflict.
- Desired friendships with religious minorities.
- Demonstrated no hostility at all towards religious minorities.
- Held positive views of religious minorities.

The responses from public students were very mixed and often contradictory, but attitudes of bias definitely appeared prevalent. The majority of students seemed somewhat tolerant of religious minorities' basic right to exist, but seemed preoccupied with the potential to proselytize or establish the supremacy of Islam. While most students indicated that both Islam and their teachers encouraged them to respect religious minorities, students often expressed negative views of followers of other religions, particularly Hindus, Jews, and Ahmadis.

A majority of the students who had religious minorities in their class seemed to have good opinions of them. Most students who had religious minorities in their schools acknowledged playing with them, and many reported having religious minorities as friends. At the same time, some students rejected having relationships of equality with non-Muslims, and a majority of students viewed non-Muslims as the enemies of Islam. This is particularly troubling in light of the fact that nearly all students considered jihad to be obligatory, most said jihad meant to fight against the enemies of Islam, and only a few students mentioned any aspect of jihad that didn't involve violence.

It is significant that students' views of non-Muslims as enemies of Islam, of jihad as predominantly violent and to be directed against enemies of Islam, and of the citizenship (or lack thereof) of religious minorities seem to be directly in line with the views expressed by their teachers. At the same time, the students also share their teachers' paradoxical views that non-Muslims and their religions should be respected.

## FINDINGS MADRASSA STUDENT INTERVIEWS/FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### SAMPLE SIZE

Interviews and FGDs were conducted with madrasa students in each of the four provinces as detailed below.

#### Individual Interviews

| PROVINCE      | MALE      | FEMALE   | TOTAL     |
|---------------|-----------|----------|-----------|
| Balochistan   | 4         | -        | 4         |
| KPK           | 9         | -        | 9         |
| Punjab        | 10        | -        | 10        |
| Sindh         | 10        | -        | 10        |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>33</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>33</b> |

#### Focus Group Discussions

| PROVINCE      | GROUPS (MALE) | PARTICIPANTS | GROUPS (FEMALE) | PARTICIPANTS | TOTAL GROUPS | TOTAL PARTICIPANTS |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Balochistan   | 1             | 6            | -               | -            | 1            | 6                  |
| KPK           | 2             | 12           | -               | -            | 2            | 12                 |
| Punjab        | 4             | 38           | -               | -            | 4            | 38                 |
| Sindh         | 6             | 49           | -               | -            | 6            | 49                 |
| <b>TOTALS</b> | <b>13</b>     | <b>105</b>   | <b>-</b>        | <b>-</b>     | <b>13</b>    | <b>105</b>         |

### MAIN FINDINGS

According to the findings of the study, the madrasa students, in general:

#### ■ Held views of religious minorities that were tolerant in some cases, but not in others.

Most madrasa students did not have much exposure to religious minorities, but more often than their public school counterparts, viewed religious minorities to be citizens and guaranteed of certain basic rights, though many were against them holding positions of power. The desire to proselytize was the primary driver behind good treatment or social relations with religious minorities, and their beliefs were denigrated. Less than half of the students expressed any desire to befriend religious minorities if given the opportunity, and most of the students felt religious minorities should not be invited to social events and were of the view that non-Muslims should not intermingle with Muslims. Paradoxically, while students reported that they are taught to respect non-Muslims and their faiths, a majority of them considered non-Muslims as enemies of Islam, with some considering members of other Muslim sects to be enemies.

#### ■ Held very hostile views towards some religions/sects.

Madrasa students' views towards Shias, Jews, Hindus, and Ahmadis (and sometimes non-Muslims in general) were often hostile, though preference was shown for "People of the Book." When specific about who they considered to be enemies

of Islam, madrasa students indicated that Jews and Hindus, and to some extent Christians, were considered as the biggest enemies of Islam. Many students also mentioned specific nations such as America, Israel, and India as enemies of Islam.

#### ■ Had a more nuanced understanding of jihad.

While the predominant meaning of jihad for the students was to fight—to protect oneself, in the name of Allah, and to spread Islam—the religious education of madrasa students regarding areas like jihad, at face value, created a broader and less violent understanding of jihad than was often found in public schools. More madrasa students were able to identify the need for self-control, for instance, as an example of jihad.

### DETAILED FINDINGS

#### Opinions of Religious Minorities and Their Beliefs

Students largely showed a preference for “revealed religions,” but believed that Jews and Christians had amended their doctrines.

Students expressed hostility towards Hindus and Ahmadis and held derogatory views regarding their beliefs.

Jews were also viewed as enemies, conspirators, and arrogant.

#### AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION OF OTHER RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES IN PAKISTAN

##### Awareness

As in the case of public school students, there is a powerful sense of religious identity among madrasa students. They see their fellow citizens according to their religious affiliations and say that the majority of Pakistanis are Muslims but that non-Muslims are also living in Pakistan. The most frequent responses to the question of who lives in Pakistan were: “*Muslims and non-Muslims live in Pakistan*” and “*people from different religions live in Pakistan.*”

There were some ideas voiced about the creation of Pakistan being associated primarily with Islam. Students from KPK said “*Pakistan was established in the name of Islam. Muslims live in majority but non-Muslims are also living here*” and “*Muslims and non-Muslims both live in Pakistan although the country is for Muslims.*”

Among non-Muslims living in Pakistan, students frequently mentioned Hindus, Christians, and Sikhs. Some also mentioned Jews and Ahmadis. Most of the students said that non-Muslims live across the country, mainly in cities.

##### Opinions about Religious Minorities

Madrasa students were expressive of their opinions about other religions and their followers while acknowledging knowing very little about them.

*“There is not much talk about other religions in madrassas. We are only taught about other religions that are mentioned in Qur’an.”* — Madrasa Student (Balochistan)

*“They don’t have any prophet; they don’t ask [anything] from Allah. They have many gods. They live for the world but the Muslims live for the last judgment.”* — Madrasa Student (KPK)

*“Jews believe in the Prophet Moses and Christians are different; they believe in the Prophet Jesus, and Jews are the followers of Prophet Moses, not the Prophet Jesus.”* — Madrasa Student (KPK)



| RELIGION     | STUDENTS' GENERAL VIEWS  |
|--------------|--|
| Christianity | <p>Most of the students indicated that Christians were "People of the Book" and follow Jesus as their prophet. Some students from Punjab referred to them as peace-loving, and some students mentioned that Muslims were allowed to marry them. Students were also critical of the Christian faith, mentioning that Christians consider Jesus as son of God or equal to God. Students also had a sense of belonging to a superior faith. Some students, while talking about other religions such as Christianity, tried to establish the superiority of Islam. Many madrasa students also voiced an opinion that Christians had made changes to their doctrine:</p> <p><i>"Christians consider Christ equal to God. Only Muslims worship the true God. Only Muslim children can memorize their holy book. No Christian memorizes their Bible."</i> — Madrasa Student (Punjab)</p> <p><i>"They are not on the right path. They follow the right path only if they follow the authentic book which was revealed to them in the lifetime of Christ."</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p>  |
| Hinduism     | <p>Hindus were generally considered by madrasa students to be idol-worshippers. Some said Hinduism is not a religion and unlike the books of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, the Hindu doctrine is not revealed by God, but rather man-made. Since Hindus are not "People of the Book," they are not considered equal to Christians and Jews by madrasa students and according to some cannot marry a Muslim. Students associate many myths with Hinduism.</p> <p><i>"Hindus are bigger kafirs [infidels] than Christians or Jews."</i> — Madrasa Student</p> <p><i>"Hindus are idol-worshippers; some worship trees, some worship fire, and some of them worship their own made Bhagwans and some of them worship the cow. They have many gods."</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p> <p><i>"In Hinduism there are many gods. They have made human beings their holy gods. They have insulted God by making merely humans as gods. They make every beautiful person their god. They talk about snakes and elephants they get impressed by and make them their god."</i> — Madrasa Student</p> <p><i>"It's also given in the hadith and the Qur'an that Hindus are a crazy nation; they are cowards."</i> — Madrasa Student</p>   |
| Ahmadi       | <p>Students generally held very negative views about Ahmadis. In Punjab many students viewed Ahmadis as those who don't believe in the last prophethood, while another student from Sindh said that Ahmadis spent money on converting people to their religion.</p> <p><i>"Ahmadis are also kafir [infidels]. Our constitution has declared them non-Muslims. They are the ones who were Muslim but then turned kafir or non-Muslim by changing Islam. They are more or bigger kafir than the Christians, Jews, and Hindus. They have no rights in Islam and if there is an Islamic government it will give the death penalty to Ahmadis."</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p>   |
| Judaism      | <p>Some of the madrasa students we interviewed said they don't know about Jews. Many students, however, said that Jews follow a revealed religion, are "People of the Book," and are followers of Moses. Students said Jews follow the revealed book, the Torah. However, they frequently said that Jews have made many amendments in their book. There were also some myths attributed to the Jewish faith, and many felt that Jews were enemies of Islam.</p> <p><i>"Jews are the murderers of Moses, and they do not believe in the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)."</i> — Madrasa Student (Punjab)</p> <p><i>"Jews think themselves the most superior. They think they are also the most superior in the eyes of God. They consider Muslims worth nothing and don't give them any place."</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p> <p><i>"I don't know anything specific or much about Jews. This nation is also [one of] personality worshipers. It has also come in the Qur'an that [you should] never make them your friends; they can't be our friend. In fact they are our biggest enemies. Clearly Allah has mentioned that they are our enemies and people of conspiracies who conspire against us always like Israel. It's also given in the Qur'an that they don't have any particular foundation; they are stumbling everywhere and conspire."</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p> |

## TREATMENT OF NON-MUSLIMS

Students' responses to the question of how to treat religious minorities appeared to contradict the views presented in the section above. The most recurring response from all provinces was, *"Islam teaches us to respect and show good behavior towards people of other religions."* A student from Sindh stated more directly, *"In Islam, there is respect for other religions, Christians, Hindus, Jews. We have to respect, whatever religions are there."*

## Treatment of Religious Minorities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

The majority of students stated that Islam taught them to respect and behave well towards religious minorities.

Students also emphasized the importance of respecting the faith, symbols, and places of worship of other religions, and some indicated that comparative religion was taught by their teachers.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

The motivation to respect and show kindness to religious minorities was in some instances very limited and was often intended to influence conversion to Islam.

At least one student appeared unable to distinguish religious minorities from the West and perceived them as a threat.

Some, relating to the discourses on *dhimmis* (also discussed in the textbooks), also mentioned that Islam teaches “*respect, protection of their lives and wealth, and peace.*” Similarly, students in an FGD in Punjab said, “*if non-Muslims are living in a Muslim country, it is the responsibility of the government to protect their life and property.*”

Students also emphasized the importance of respecting the faith, symbols, and places of worship of other religions, and some indicated that comparative religion was taught by their teachers.

*“In the ehkaam [obligations in religion] class usually the teachers tell us about the worship places of other religions.” — Madrassa Student (Punjab)*

Nonetheless, the motivation to respect and show kindness to religious minorities in some instances was very limited and was often intended to influence conversion to Islam.

*“Muslims should love them. We should give their rights which could make them Muslims.” — Madrassa Student (KPK)*

*“It [Islam] teaches us to preach to them [non-Muslims] about Islam and to encourage them to accept Islam and offer prayers.” — Madrassa Student (Sindh)*

*“We should respect them. We should only respect their worship places, not their way of worships or beliefs or concepts. Actually they themselves are wrong and their practices, their beliefs are not right.” — Madrassa Student (Sindh)*

This last comment indicates an inability to distinguish between “respecting” another faith and its beliefs and “accepting” that faith and beliefs as correct. This confusion was evident in informal discussions with the madrassa teachers as well.

Unable to differentiate the United States from Christianity, a student from Balochistan seemed to perceive both as a threat. There was a sense of confrontation between religious education and the West.

*“As far the followers of other religions are concerned, they will attract us towards their religion. While doing so they will weaken our faith. They befriend us just for their own purposes. The entire focus of United States of America and the Christian world is to eliminate the Islamic education forever, whereas our clergy and madrassas want to flourish the Islamic education. That’s why our clergy says that we should live separate and we can’t befriend them.”*

## CITIZENSHIP AND RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

In contrast to the views expressed in previous sections, a wide majority of madrassa students interviewed considered religious minorities to be Pakistani citizens, and some even considered non-Muslims to have rights equal to Muslims and thought that ensuring their rights was the responsibility of the government.

*“Non-Muslims should be given educational and employment opportunities and social and political rights equal to Muslims. After all, they pay taxes on everything as we do. They should also get employment and other opportunities. They should be cooperated with and given their due rights.” — Madrassa Student (Punjab)*

Some considered the citizenship of religious minorities conditional upon them abiding by the law and constitution, like other citizens, and a very few said that while



religious minorities are not “proper” Pakistanis, they are good citizens. A “proper” Pakistani, according to madrasa students, likely means to be a Pakistani Muslim. Some students said that Islam gives non-Muslims equal rights but they are not aware whether or not these rights are realized by the government.

*“The population of non-Muslim minorities is very less in Pakistan; that’s why they cannot get their rights on an equal basis.”* — Madrasa Student (Balochistan)

Seemingly deriving from the discourse on *dhimmis* in the textbooks, some madrasa students also reported that they considered non-Muslims living in Pakistan as *dhimmis*. One student from KPK said, *“They have their rights and they are also paying the tax in Islam which is called jizya.”*

While most of the students said minorities should be given equal rights, some of them did not favor the idea of giving them political rights such as positions of power.

*“They [non-Muslims] have their rights according to Islam. But they shouldn’t be given the positions of power or positions in government. They can’t hold the positions of President or Prime Minister of the country. If a non-Muslim is made the President, he would take decisions deviant from Islamic law, inevitably pushing Muslims towards humiliation.”* — Madrasa Student (KPK)

Students in an FGD in Punjab, while identifying religious minorities as *dhimmis*, expressed a more intolerant view toward the rights of non-Muslims: *“All non-Muslims living in Pakistan shouldn’t be given educational, employment, social, and political rights equal to Muslims. Our Prophet (PBUH) said non-Muslims should be given such jobs that always put them under the influence of Muslims. They shouldn’t rise to the level to rule Muslims. If non-Muslims say anything against the Prophet (PBUH) or Allah they should be waged war against.”*

As discussed in the textbook review section, the textbooks do not consider religious minorities to be citizens equal to Muslims and recommend discriminatory treatment. While a majority of students apparently agree that non-Muslims are Pakistani citizens and should have equal rights, the influence of textbook messages seems evident from their responses.

## INTERACTION WITH RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

### Interaction

Madrasa students didn’t have non-Muslims at their madrassas, and very few reported having any religious minorities living nearby. Of the students who had non-Muslims living in their locality, Christians and Hindus were the dominant minorities covered in the sample.

### Eating and Drinking with Non-Muslims

Most of the students were of the view that eating and drinking with “People of the Book” is permitted in Islam, and some students said there is no restriction on eating with non-Muslims. There were some students, however, who referred to the hygiene of non-Muslims as a precondition to eat with them, perhaps referring to the Islamic concept of eating *halal* or revealing their assumption that non-Muslims are less likely to be hygienic.

In several instances, eating with non-Muslims was intended to encourage them to convert to Islam. Students during an FGD in Punjab, for example, said that Muslims

## Citizenship of Religious Minorities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

A wide majority of madrasa students interviewed considered religious minorities to be Pakistani citizens, and some even considered non-Muslims to have rights equal to Muslims and thought that ensuring their rights was the responsibility of the government.

### NEUTRAL TENDENCIES

Some students said that Islam gives non-Muslims equal rights but they are not aware whether or not these rights are realized by the government.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Some students were against non-Muslims holding positions of power, and some were more broadly very intolerant toward the rights of religious minorities.

## Interaction with Religious Minorities

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

Most of the students were of the view that eating and drinking with “People of the Book” is permitted in Islam, and some said there is no restriction on eating with non-Muslims.

Some students reported a desire to make friends with religious minorities.

### NEUTRAL TENDENCIES

Madrassa students didn’t have non-Muslims at their madrassas, and very few reported having any religious minorities living nearby.

As few students reported having non-Muslims living in their locality, instances of religious minorities being invited to events were rare.

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Some students referred to hygiene of non-Muslims as a precondition to sharing food or felt that eating with non-Muslims was forbidden in Islam.

Less than half of the students expressed any desire to befriend religious minorities if given the opportunity; some would only do so in order to encourage conversion.

Most of the students categorically stated that religious minorities should not be invited to any social events in the society and were of the view that non-Muslims should not intermingle with Muslims.

should eat with non-Muslims so that Allah might enlighten their heart and they might convert to Islam.

A few students claimed that eating with non-Muslims is forbidden in Islam.

*“In the worldly matters, we should have contacts with non-Muslims but should not eat with them. They do not come to prayer when it is called through Azan. Eating [with non-Muslims] is strictly prohibited in Islam as told by our teacher in the madrassa”*

— Madrassa Student (Sindh)

## Non-Muslim Friends

A wide majority of the students in KPK, Sindh, and Balochistan reported having no friends from the religious minority community; in Punjab half of the students reported having non-Muslim friends. Among those who did not have any religious minority friends, the main reason appeared to be a lack of religious minority classmates or neighbors.

Less than half of the students interviewed expressed any desire to befriend religious minorities if given the opportunity; in Punjab, however, a majority of students appeared to be more open for friendship with non-Muslims. One student said; *“If I would find one, I will certainly befriend with him,”* and another student from Punjab said, *“Yes, we will get to know about each other’s religions.”*

In Sindh, while half of the students interviewed appeared to be open to friendships with religious minorities, the other half expressed their reluctance to do so.

Some students simply opposed making friends with non-Muslims.

*One student said, “No, I haven’t made any friendship with non-Muslims. There are Hindus in my school but my heart doesn’t like them. If they accept our religion then it will be good.”*

*Another student simply said, “No I hate them.”*

*A student from Punjab said, “No, the Prophet (PBUH) has said that they can’t be our friends.”*

In some instances the motivation to befriend non-Muslims is to preach them about Islam.

*“I don’t have close friendships with them but morally we have good terms. They are good. I even preached to them or gave them the invitation of Islam but they didn’t mind that.”*

— Madrassa Student (Sindh)

## Inviting Non-Muslims to Social events

As few students reported having non-Muslims living in their locality, the instances of religious minorities being invited to social events were very rare. Death events and marriages were the common social gatherings in which relatives and locals often participated; in some cases inviting religious minorities to such events appeared dependent upon the nature of the relationship with them.

*“No, we don’t invite them. People who live around us may invite them but we never [do]. There is no specific reason; we have no familiarity or friendship, that’s why we don’t invite them, where we have friendship we invite [them]. In school [if] we have*

*teachers of other castes or religions then we invite them, because we know them; otherwise not.*” — Madrasa Student (Sindh)

Most of the students who do not have any interaction with non-Muslims categorically stated that religious minorities should not be invited to any social events in the society. They were of the view that non-Muslims have different traditions and values and should not intermingle with Muslims, or else the culture will be destroyed. Some of the students, however, were of the view that religious minorities may be invited, and that attending their celebrations may provide an opportunity to preach the teachings of Islam and hence convert them to Islam.

### Behavior Towards Non-Muslims in the Community

The majority of the students said religious minorities should be well-treated, with some students considering social and economic relations or the possibility of conversion as important motivations.

*“As we have business and social links with people of other religions, we should treat them well. They are good in business ethics.”* — Madrasa Student (Balochistan)

*“We should treat them with good behavior; as a result they would become Muslims.”* — Madrasa Student (Balochistan)

*“They should be preached to about Islam so that they could be on the right path.”* — Madrasa Student (Punjab)

There were, however, some students who suggested that religious minorities should only be treated well to a limited extent or that their treatment is conditional upon their behavior or disposition towards Islam.

Some students also saw the American CIA contractor Raymond Davis, who killed Pakistanis in Lahore whom he said were trying to rob him, as a Christian, and making reference to him said: *“If they respect Muslims, they should be treated well, but exceptions should be there for people like Raymond Davis.”*

Most of the students in an FGD in Punjab thought that the Qur’an prohibited establishing relationships with non-Muslims. In this group it was mentioned: *“We should just meet them and keep good behavior, but should not extend any relationships which may develop in friendship.”*

A sense of hostility was also observed in some students; for example, a student in Sindh said, *“They should be treated as enemies.”*

Thus, there was a tendency among the madrasa students to limit or want to limit interaction with non-Muslims. Where they interacted or expressed desire to interact with non-Muslims, share food, befriend them, or invite them to social events, a prime motivation often tended to be to inspire them to change their religion, which students consider to be inferior to their own religion.

### SECTARIAN ISSUES

The sample covered students belonging to the five schools of thoughts within the four provinces. However, the Ahle-Hadith emerged as the dominant sect covered during the field work, followed by the Deobandi, then Jamat-e-Islami, then Bareilvi, then Shia sects.

### Interaction with Religious Minorities

#### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

The majority of the students said religious minorities should be well-treated.

#### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

Students in general tended or wanted to limit interaction with non-Muslims.

Where students interact or want to interact with non-Muslims, share food, befriend them, or invite them to social events, a prime motivation was to inspire them to change their religion, which they consider to be inferior to their own religion.

Some students expressed hostility towards religious minorities.

Some students suggested that treatment of religious minorities was conditional upon their behavior or disposition towards Islam.

## Sectarian Differences — Madrasa Student Views

| RELIGION    | STUDENTS' GENERAL VIEWS  |
|-------------|--|
| Ahle-Hadith | <p>Most students in the sample belonged to the Ahle-Hadith sect, and opinions expressed were accordingly very positive. Some students from other sects expressed distaste for the Ahle-Hadith, but the Shia students refused to offer their view. Most of the complaints were mild in comparison.</p> <p><i>"They do not believe in the teachings of the Qur'an and give high importance to the sayings of the prophet (PBUH). They do not believe in recitation of Qur'an on eatables [food permitted to be eaten] and dead bodies. They never say 'Fateha' [prayer for the deceased] on their elders as they believe that 'Mar Gaya Mardood Na Khatam Na Darood' [an expression indicating the belief that it is not necessary to do prayers/remembrance for the person who has died]. While saying prayers, they call 'Ameen' in a louder voice which we do not practice."</i> — Madrasa Student (Punjab)</p> <p><i>"They believe Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) to be a common person like ours. They also argue that Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) did many mistakes during his life and their companions helped him to amend those. They show disrespect to our holy Prophet (PBUH). They also do not believe in the 12 Imam[s]."</i> — Madrasa Student (Punjab)</p>  |
| Deobandi    | <p>It was felt that Deobandis are closer to Ahle-Hadith, but their origin dates back to the last century and their elders belong to the city of Deoband in India. It was felt Deobandis do not perform "Rafa Yadeen" during prayer, unlike the Ahle-Hadith, and that they believe in the imamates of the four Sunni imams but do not follow their teachings.</p> <p>Students in an FGD in Punjab said, <i>"Deobandis are irreverent to the Holy Prophet. [Being] [i]rreverent to the companions [of the Prophet (PBUH)] is not good either. We think one should not be irreverent to the Holy Prophet."</i> Students from a Shia madrasa said Deobandis are also Muslims as they recite <i>Kalma [Islamic profession of faith]</i>.</p>  |
| Barelvi     | <p>Students were aware that this sect follows the teachings of Ahmad Raza Barelvi, who lived in the Indian city of Bareilly. The majority of the students in individual interviews in Punjab said they are good people, and they were often respected in other provinces, but some accused them of false beliefs.</p> <p><i>"We have many differences with them. We don't agree with some of their practices. However, on the basis of these we can't issue a fatwa that they are infidels. After all, they are also Muslims despite that we have some differences."</i> — Madrasa Student (KPK)</p> <p>The Barelvi were not universally respected, however. While students generally did not declare Barelvis to be infidels, some accused them of having committed <i>shirk</i> (idolatry or polytheism)— considered a greater sin in Islam than infidelity. The statements below are representative of a minority of students.</p> <p><i>"They bow down to the graves which is haram. They do shirk, which is a great sin. They do khatam [prayer for the deceased] for their people who die. Allah never forgives those who do shirk. Both Barelvis and Shias are mushrik [pagan] of extreme level. They ask graves for forgiveness."</i> — Madrasa Student (Punjab)</p> <p><i>"They consider that the Holy Prophet is light. He is aware of the hidden. They also think that the Prophet is omnipresent and watches us everywhere."</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p> |
| Ji          | <p>Most of the students who were not Ji themselves reported very limited knowledge about those who are. Those reporting some knowledge generally considered them as a political organization rather than a sect.</p>   |
| Shia        | <p>Perceptions of the Shia sect were often derogatory, but not all critics denied that they were Islamic. The following excerpts outline general student opinions ranging from disdain to allegations that Shias are infidels.</p> <p><i>"We don't have much interaction with Shias so we don't know much about them. However, they are also Muslims; we can't issue a fatwa of infidelity against them, although but we have some differences with them."</i> — Madrasa Student (KPK)</p> <p><i>"They are also Muslims but most of their beliefs are wrong."</i> — Madrasa Student (KPK)</p> <p><i>"They follow the jurists of Islam. They are the deniers of Sahaba [the disciples of the Prophet]."</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p> <p><i>"They all are narrow-minded people; they extraordinarily increase the status of personalities to the level of Allah. We see many books and other contents in which they have put allegations on Sahaba-e-Karam. They even abuse them. Can we still call them Muslims when they have many beliefs and concepts which are against Qur'an and hadith?"</i> — Madrasa Student (Sindh)</p> <p><i>"They murdered Hazrat Imam Hussain and now beat their own chests in grief because Hazrat Ayesha cursed them. They will keep beating their chests till doomsday. They consider Hazrat Ali their God and abuse the companions of the Prophet so they are infidels."</i> — Madrasa Student (Punjab)</p>                            |

## Sectarian Differences

A majority of the students sampled said that, in general, sectarian differences are slight and that the fundamental beliefs are the same. While they indicated that ideological differences exist, students often said that the commonalities among sects are greater than the differences and that followers of different sects can't be declared non-Muslims on the basis of small differences. With the exception of a few students who felt the beliefs of various sects to be conflicting ones, the majority said various sects respect each other.

## JIHAD

While students occasionally made references to controlling one's desires as jihad, the predominant meaning of jihad, for students, is to fight—to protect oneself, in the name of Allah, and to spread Islam. Some of the students also expanded jihad from fighting against non-Muslims to include anyone whom they consider is working against Islam, but opinions expressed by students were sometimes unsettlingly vague:

*"The meaning of jihad is to fight in the path of God. If the enemy has wrong intentions about Muslims then jihad is obligatory."* — Madrasa Student (KPK)

## Enemies of Islam

Some of the students stated that anything that is against Islam or attacks Muslims is the enemy of Islam. Paradoxically, while students reported that they are taught to respect non-Muslims, a majority of them simply identified non-Muslims/infidels as enemies of Islam.<sup>91</sup> When specific, madrasa students indicated that Jews and Hindus and to some extent Christians are considered as the biggest enemies of Islam. Many students also mentioned specific nations such as America, Israel, and India as enemies of Islam. Several students also provided explanations for why they consider non-Muslims to be enemies of Islam.

*"They don't want to see Muslims as developed countries."* — Madrasa Student (Sindh)

*"They make bad movies, pictures, and images and seduce the people, turn[ing] them away from religion."* — Madrasa Student (Sindh)

Other students considered Muslims from other sects as bigger enemies than non-Muslims; still, they often attributed the condition of sectarian tension in Pakistan to other religions, like the following madrasa student who blamed Jews for sectarian conflict:

*"Enemies are there like Jews, etc., conspirators; they are conspiracy people, they conspire against Islam. In Pakistan, due to these conspiracies, one sect is made to fight with others, by saying such things that one becomes the enemy of the other. They do so to demolish Islam and to bring their religion [to be] superior/dominating."*

## What causes anger?

Many students simply stated that blasphemy was the greatest cause for anger among madrasa students, but some students, as stated below, also considered the

<sup>91</sup> There were also instances when students, while responding to the question on enemies, appeared to be making reference to those non-Muslims who live in non-Muslim countries. This is evident from the frequent reference made to Jews, as few Jews live in Pakistan.

## Jihad, Enemies, and Anger

### TOLERANT TENDENCIES

**Students occasionally made references to the broader, nonviolent understanding of jihad.**

### INTOLERANT TENDENCIES

**The predominant meaning of jihad, for students, is to fight—to protect oneself, in the name of Allah, and to spread Islam.**

**Some students expand violent jihad to include anyone whom they feel is working against Islam, with some stating that anything that is against Islam or attacks Muslims is the enemy of Islam.**

**A majority of students simply identified non-Muslims/infidels as enemies of Islam.**

**When specific, madrasa students indicated that Jews and Hindus, and to some extent Christians, are considered as the biggest enemies of Islam, and many students also mentioned specific nations such as America, Israel, and India as enemies of Islam.**

**Some students also considered Muslims of other sects to be enemies.**

**Many students cited blasphemy as the greatest cause for anger, while others cited issues such as the consumption of alcohol by religious minorities.**



consumption of alcohol or other actions by religious minorities as a secondary concern.

*“They [non-Muslims] are not clean and they consume alcohol; this makes me angry.”*

— Madrasa Student (Sindh)

*“Shirk, saying bad words about Muslims and their beliefs and intentionally doing those things which make us angry.”* — Madrasa Student (KPK)

Other students viewed the Global War on Terror and related actions (i.e., by foreign countries) as being significant causes of anger.

*“Their [non Muslim] ideology about Muslims[is] that Muslims are terrorists. They intangibly harm Muslims. As they say something and do something else against Islam/Muslims.”* — Madrasa Student (Sindh)

*“Raymond Davis killed two innocent people; due to that we were very angry.”*

— Madrasa Student (Sindh)

## TRANSMISSION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TO THE STUDENTS

### What do teachers teach about non-Muslims?

Almost half of the students said their teachers teach them about other religions, while half of them said they are never taught about other religions.

*“They [teachers] never teach us comparative religion; they just teach their own lessons and never talk about other religions.”* — Madrasa Student (Sindh)

*“Teachers teach us to respect the beliefs and practices of other religions.”*

— Madrasa Student (Sindh)

Students refer to subjects such as *fiqh*, *Qur'an*, and *hadith* as those where some discussion is provided about comparative religion. A student from Sindh said, “Yes, in general *fiqh* books have the contents of comparative religion. For example, the book of *Nikah* (marriage) and the book of prayer. These tell us how a non-Muslim should live in a Muslim society and the same about a Muslim living in a non-Muslim society and what are the roles that they can play in their societies.”

Some students also mentioned informal discussions where other religions were discussed. One student from KPK, for example, said: “It is not included in the curricula but we debate on it sometime.”

## CONCLUSION

While most students could cite Islamic principles of tolerance towards other religions, few in the sample seemed to appreciate the concept of respect in practical terms. However, despite the fact that a great deal of prejudice against religious minorities was observed in the responses of madrasa students, within the small sample there were still students who:

- Were taught to respect other religions.
- Did not see sectarian differences as a cause for conflict.
- Sought to befriend religious minorities in order to better understand their faith.
- Championed the rights of religious minorities.

Madrassa students generally had extremely limited or no interaction with religious minorities, and the hostility expressed should be viewed in that context. Where interaction occurred or was desired, a prime motivation often tended to be to inspire non-Muslims to change their religion, which students considered to be inferior to their own religion. Similar tendencies were found among teachers. As there are also strong messages of leading non-Muslims to convert to Islam in the madrasa textbooks, it seems plausible that both the teachers' attitudes and the textbooks' messages are influencing the attitudes and values of students.

While many of the students appeared to understand the non-violent dimensions of jihad, the predominance of the view of jihad in its violent form, coupled with the majority view of non-Muslims as enemies of Islam, was troubling. Also unsettling was the personal nature of anger towards religious minorities and Western countries. Respondents from the other sectors were slightly more general and seemed more likely cite issues that caused anger in the broader Muslim community, while madrasa students often expressed personal rage.

The understanding of citizenship is problematic for madrasa students; while they generally considered religious minorities to be citizens, this view was in reference to *dhimmitude*, or the second-class citizenship described in the textbooks.

## FINDINGS OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The interviews and focus group discussions illuminated some potential links between teacher perceptions and student attitudes towards religious minorities. While it is not possible to conclusively determine whether student views were a direct result of teacher attitudes and pedagogy and what other factors may have played a role in shaping student perceptions of minorities, similarities between teacher and students views are apparent in many areas. The tables on the following pages highlight some of these areas.

## Public Schools

| VIEWS OF MINORITIES                 |                 | PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS   | PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS  |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Citizenship                         | General Opinion | Only slightly more than half (about 60%) believed that religious minorities were Pakistani citizens.   | About 60% considered religious minorities to be Pakistani citizens.   |
|                                     | Anecdote        | <i>"Non-Muslims should not be allowed to participate in politics and not be able to attain influential positions at state level. Otherwise, they will start benefiting their own community."</i> | <i>"Although non-Muslims are living in Pakistan, I don't accept them as Pakistani because they don't believe in Islam."</i>                                 |
| Sharing Food                        | General Opinion | When asked about the acceptability of eating with religious minorities, teachers were almost equally divided.  | Most of the students asked reported that it was not preferable to share food with religious minorities.   |
|                                     | Anecdote        | <i>"Like Hindus, they use urine of cow in their cooking, which is strictly prohibited in Islam and unhygienic as well. Maybe Hindus are making you eat with those utensils..."</i>               | <i>"I eat with them things such as fruit; however, I don't eat anything cooked from their home because I can't eat with their napak [impure] utensils."</i> |
| OPINIONS ON JIHAD AND ENEMIES       |                 | PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS   | PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS  |
| The Nature of Jihad                 | General Opinion | Nearly all believed jihad to be obligatory and violent.  | Most believed jihad to be obligatory and violent.   |
|                                     | Anecdote        | <i>"Jihad is obligatory in Islam against the oppressions of non-Muslim nations and countries."</i>   | <i>"Jihad is to fight against non-Muslims in the name of Allah."</i>  |
| Enemies of Islam                    | General Opinion | 80% viewed non-Muslims as the enemies of Islam.  | The majority viewed non-Muslims as the enemies of Islam.  |
|                                     | Anecdote        | <i>"All the non-Muslims are enemies of Islam."</i>   | <i>"Non-Muslims are the enemies of Islam."</i>  |
| RELIGION IN THE CLASSROOM           |                 | PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS   | PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS  |
| Respect for Other Religious Beliefs | General Opinion | Most said they teach students to respect other religions.  | The overwhelming majority said that teachers teach them to respect all religions.   |
|                                     | Anecdote        | <i>"We should respect the religions of others. We explain this to our students again and again."</i>   | <i>"Teachers tell us stories about them and say that we should respect the beliefs, actions, and worship places of other religions."</i>                    |
| Teaching Comparative Religion       | General Opinion | More than half of the teachers said they do give lessons on comparative religion.  | Split almost evenly when asked whether they were given any lessons on comparative religion by teachers.   |
|                                     | Anecdote        | <i>"Yes, I teach comparative religion for the sake of humanity with examples and references from all religions."</i>   | <i>"We were taught what Islam says about other religions."</i>  |



## Madrassas

| OPINION OF OTHER RELIGIONS |                 | MADRASSA TEACHERS  | MADRASSA STUDENTS   |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Christianity               | General Opinion | Considered Christianity to be a "Revealed Religion" and Christians to be "People of the Book," but accused them of amending the doctrine.  | Considered Christianity to be a "Revealed Religion" and Christians to be "People of the Book," but accused them of amending the doctrine.   |
|                            | Anecdote        | <i>"Christianity is an Abrahamic religion and God gave the revealed book, the Bible, upon them. However, they have edited their book."</i>   | <i>"They are not on the right path. They follow the right path only if they follow the authentic book which was revealed to them in the lifetime of Christ."</i>  |
| Hinduism                   | General Opinion | Considered Hinduism to be a man-made, rather than divine religion. Believed Hindus to be idol-worshippers.   | Considered Hinduism to be a man-made, rather than divine religion. Believed Hindus to be idol-worshippers.  |
|                            | Anecdote        | <i>"I know they are idol worshippers. They worship fire and [the] cow. They also worship [the] monkey."</i>  | <i>"Hindus are idol-worshippers; some worship trees, some worship fire, and some of them worship their own made Bhagwans and some of them worship the cow."</i>   |
| Judaism                    | General Opinion | Teachers considered Judaism a "Revealed Religion," but animosity toward Jews was common. Perceptions that Jews are against Islam and consider themselves superior were highlighted.                                    | Students considered Judaism a "Revealed Religion," but many considered Jews to be enemies of Islam. The perception that Jews consider themselves superior was highlighted.  |
|                            | Anecdote        | <i>"Allah says Jews can't be your friends. We can befriend them only to convert them to Islam."</i><br><i>"Jews are infidels, deniers of Allah's messengers, and enemies of Islam due to their anti-Muslim plans."</i> | <i>"It has also come in the Qur'an that [you should] never make them [Jews] your friends; they can't be our friend. In fact they are our biggest enemies. Clearly Allah has mentioned that they are our enemies..."</i> |
| Ahmadis                    | General Opinion | Negative opinion, expressed extremist views.   | Negative opinion, expressed extremist views.  |
|                            | Anecdote        | <i>"Ahmadis are the result of a grim conspiracy of Christians and Jews, and they are just like them; they have turned away from their religion [Islam] and are liable to be killed."</i>                               | <i>"They are more or bigger kafir than the Christians, Jews, and Hindus. They have no rights in Islam and if there is an Islamic government it will give the death penalty to Ahmadis."</i>                             |
| Respect for Non-Muslims    | General Opinion | Almost all teachers expressed the view that non-Muslims and their religious practices should be respected.   | Most students stated that Islam prescribed respect for non-Muslims.   |
|                            | Anecdote        | <i>"All the religions should be treated with respect and dignity. It is also in hadith that we should not say anything bad about the Gods of other religions."</i>   | <i>"In Islam, there is respect for other religions, Christians, Hindus, Jews. We have to respect, whatever religions are there."</i>  |

## Madrassas, continued

| SECTARIAN OPINIONS  |                 | MADRASSA TEACHERS  | MADRASSA STUDENTS   |
|---------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Shia                | General Opinion | Shias were the targets of a great deal of bigotry and disdain. Some madrassa teachers even considered them to be non-Muslims.  | Perceptions were very derogatory; some considered them to be non-Muslims.   |
|                     | Anecdote        | "Shias are infidels and they are not innocent."  | "They consider Hazrat Ali their God and abuse the companions of the Prophet so they are infidels."  |
| Barelvi             | General Opinion | Broadly speaking, teachers were critical of this sect and a majority considered Barelvis to have been a primary driver of sectarianism.  | Students were split on opinions, but Barelvis were often respected.   |
|                     | Anecdote        | "They have different beliefs but we are not allowed to kill them. We have to resolve differences with them. The Qur'an has given us the belief that the Prophet was a human being but they think he was a Divine Light." | "We have many differences with them. We don't agree with some of their practices. However, on the basis of these we can't issue a fatwa that they are infidels."                                    |
| OPINIONS ON JIHAD   |                 | MADRASSA TEACHERS  | MADRASSA STUDENTS   |
| The Nature of Jihad | General Opinion | The majority viewed jihad as obligatory and linked it to violence, but also extended the concept of jihad to include non-violent concepts such as self-control.  | While the predominant meaning of jihad for the students was to fight—to protect oneself, in the name of Allah, and to spread Islam—madrassa students also identified non-violent examples of jihad. |
|                     | Anecdote        | "Jihad against infidels will continue until the day of judgment if the teachings of Islam are disrespected."   | "The meaning of jihad is to fight in the path of God. If the enemy has wrong intentions about Muslims then jihad is obligatory."  |

It is noteworthy that most teachers and most students in both public school and madrassa sectors expressed that belief that other religions and/or followers of other religions should be respected, with students in some cases specifically stating that they had been taught this by their teachers. At the same time, trends of disrespectful attitudes are also observed, including, at their extreme, the belief by the majority of the public school teachers, public school students, and madrassa students that non-Muslims are the enemies of Islam. While madrassa teachers were not asked who they considered to be enemies of Islam, they expressed hostility for the followers of most religions. These findings highlight the potential benefit of further exploration and reflection on what “respect” means to the respondents in each sector and the relationship between such respect on a theoretical and a practical level.

## PART C CASE STUDIES

*(To protect the safety of all involved, pseudonyms have been used in the following case studies, and certain identifying information such as names of schools, towns, and organizational representatives has been removed.)*

### INTRODUCTION

This section presents five case studies of discrimination being faced by religious minority students at school. Through these case studies, an attempt is made to explore causes, manifestations, and impacts of such discrimination, as well as how incidents of discrimination are dealt with.

These case studies illustrate multiple forms of discrimination, ranging from the availability of appropriate subjects to content of textbooks to discriminatory behavior from both students and teachers, including frequent attempts to convert minority students to Islam and physical abuse by teachers. This section also explores the issue of whether effective self-correcting mechanisms exist within the education system to address grievances of religious minority students.

#### CASE STUDY 1

#### **Son Beaten, Father's Job Threatened**

*In October 2010, the following news story was published about a Christian boy of a local high school, beaten severely by his class teacher. A representative of BETHAK-Khanewal (an NGO working for the rights of minorities) went to inquire into the matter and visited the aggrieved family with his team in Khanewal.*

Jamil is a Christian student of Grade 4 in the local school. The teacher forced Jamil to clean and sweep the classroom every morning and prevented his Muslim peers from helping. Jamil's siblings have had similar experiences: his elder brother was sent by his teacher to clean his gutter at home, and his sister was also asked by her teacher to clean and sweep the classroom. She added that the Muslim students are prohibited from eating with her or making friends with her, which caused her to leave the school.

One day, Jamil could not complete his homework, along with a few other Muslim students. His teacher inflicted corporal punishment on him—but not the Muslim students—so severely that the signs of lashes were visible on Jamil's body.

Nazir, his father, who works in the education department as a janitor, submitted a complaint to the Executive District Officer (EDO) of Education of Khanewal about the brutal punishment inflicted on his son by his class teacher. However, Nazir was pressured by the education office staff to withdraw his complaint against the teacher or risk losing his job. As a result, he refused to let his son record the incident. Only after he was assured of outside help for the protection of his job did he begin discussing the incident publicly. SOURCE: BETHAK-Khanewal

This case study highlights at least three patterns of discrimination that religious minority students and their families encounter:

1. Association of Christian students with sanitary professions;

2. Discrimination that, at times, leads to more extreme physical punishment; and
3. Inability of the families to raise their voices against discrimination.

Christians in Pakistan, by and large, are associated with sanitary professions such as cleaning and sweeping. In this case study, Jamil and his two siblings are selected by their teachers to clean their classrooms and other spaces under the teachers' control. Jamil's teacher actually prevented other Muslim students from helping him complete his cleaning duties, possibly reflecting a belief by the teacher that such work was a task that should be completed by non-Muslims.

This burden being placed on Jamil undoubtedly decreases his energy and affects his academic achievement, thus likely solidifying the impression that non-Muslims are intellectually inferior. In addition, it likely affects his ability to interact with his peers, since he starts class tired and likely dirty from the morning's work. A social hierarchy is being established within the classroom that parallels the culture across Pakistan.

The case study also shows that the teacher treats Jamil differently and more harshly than his Muslim peers. On the day described in the case study on which Jamil was unable to complete his homework, the punishment was significantly worse for him than that given to his Muslim peers who also did not complete the assignment. The punishment is troubling in and of itself, in addition to setting yet again the precedent that non-Muslims can or should be treated more harshly than Muslims.

Lastly, Jamil's father's inability to speak up at first because his job was threatened is a dramatic indication of how institutionalized some of this discrimination is. Instead of his affiliation with the EDO of Education being of value in getting his concerns addressed through the system, it ended up being a handicap. It was only after a private, Christian NGO stepped in that he allowed his son to give his statement to the appropriate authorities and let the story be known publicly.

## CASE STUDY 2

### **Discriminatory Teacher in a Girls' Christian School**

*During our visit to a girls' public high school in Khanewal for an interview with a Muslim teacher at that school, we learned of an incident of religious prejudice from the students. We inquired into the matter from students in the 9th grade. This is what they told us:*

A Muslim teacher named Miss Farima was appointed to teach science in the school in the last days of August 2010. The very first day she entered the class, she started asking questions about Christianity. She told the students that their religion was not a true religion and that all Christian beliefs were false. She then forbade the Christian students from coming to school wearing crosses around their necks. She further told the students that Hazrat Issa (Jesus) will come back to this world as a Muslim. After her lecture against Christianity, she started asking questions related to science, the course she was hired to teach. A Christian girl named Nadia told the teacher that the students had not been taught science before because there had not been a science teacher. This prompted the teacher to beat Nadia.

The students reported this incident to their parents, who reported the matter to the Headmistress as well as to the District Education Officer (DEO). The Muslim teacher was removed and temporary arrangements were made for a male science teacher from another public high school to teach instead. SOURCE: BETHAK-Khanewal

This case study highlights three factors related to discrimination against religious minority students:

1. The power held by teachers;
2. The lack of review/oversight in hiring teachers; and
3. The power of a larger community acting together.

Teachers hold immense power within the classroom. Although this teacher was hired to instruct the students in science, she chose to criticize the religion of most (perhaps all) of the students, Christianity. She recognized the control she has within the classroom and took advantage of that.

The question can be raised as to why she was hired to teach at a Christian school in a predominantly Christian village in the first place. She must have been aware of the fact that most of her students were going to be Christian, and so it is possible that she intentionally applied to teach at the school in order to attack their faith. However, one might expect such a school to have a review process for hiring teachers in which individuals insensitive or aggressive towards non-Muslims could be identified in advance and avoided, especially at a primarily minority school.

The location of this story is a predominantly Christian village, making it easier for students and parents to organize and take action against the discriminatory behavior of the teacher. The successful response of the students' parents shows how powerful numbers can be, and conversely, how potentially vulnerable minorities such as Jamil are when they are one of a very few non-Muslims at their schools. In addition, the education department was likely more able to take seriously their complaint in a minority Christian community.

### CASE STUDY 3

## How Could All the Christian Girls Be Failing?

*A group of Christian parents from a girls' public high school came to a representative of BETHAK in April 2009 with the following complaint.*

**All the Christian girls studying at a girls' public high school in Khanewal failed their annual examinations one year. Based on their grades from previous examinations, it was clear that this was not because the girls were all poor students and likely to fail.**

**The BETHAK representative took the parents to the District Education Officer in Khanewal and expressed their concerns. The DEO called the Headmistress to his office with the papers of all the Christian girls from her school. The Principal of another public high school in Khanewal was asked to check the grading. The very first paper that was re-graded had received much lower marks than were deserved.**

**The Headmistress was warned by the DEO that such prejudices on the part of her teachers could not be tolerated and was ordered to report the teachers who had graded the papers of these Christian students. The Headmistress was given the papers to be re-graded and was asked to bring the correct results to his office the next day, which she did.**

**In the end, 13 out of the 16 students had passed the annual examination. The DEO promised to visit the school and appoint an inquiry officer to identify those responsible for this incident. REPORTED BY: BETHAK-Khanewal**

This case study illustrates one major factor of discrimination against religious minority students, which is the control teachers hold over their students' academic achievement and thus future opportunity.

There are two levels at which the school system failed these Christian students. First, it appears the teacher used grading to try to limit the future opportunities available to these students. Similar to the first case study with Jamil, this teacher seemingly had an interest in preventing the Christian students from succeeding academically, which would give them the opportunity to seek employment in sectors not often associated with minorities. The second level of failure was the lack of oversight on the part of the Headmistress. It is possible that she supported such behavior and thus did not prevent it from occurring, or perhaps she simply was unaware of what was happening. Either way, she failed to ensure that every student in her school was receiving the best education it could provide.

Similar to the situation at the primarily Christian school in the second case study, there is a bright side to this story. The education system did in fact respond to the complaints of the parents and the NGO. Where such biases are present in the education system, it is also likely that there may be individuals in positions of authority willing to step up for the rights of minority students when the need is brought to their attention. It is clear, though, that parents need to pay attention and alert anyone able to help when such discriminatory behaviors occur.

#### CASE STUDY 4

### Convert or Eat Alone

*This case study is told in first-person by a Christian student named Shabeeh in Faisalabad:*

My name is Shabeeh and I am 13 years old and a student of the eighth grade at a government school in Lahore. I am Christian. When I came to the government school in class 4, my classmates and teachers insisted that I convert to Islam. They repeatedly ask me to say *Kalima* (the word of Islam or profession of faith).

I was told by my father that everyone likes the bright children. I worked hard and stood second in fifth grade in the board examination. However, instead of appreciating me, my teachers didn't even tell me about my result. In sixth grade, everyone used to study Arabic but I chose an alternative course on Drawing. Nobody ever taught me drawing so I had to learn it by myself. On the day of examination I was asked to write a question by myself and then to answer it.

There are many things in the textbooks against my religion. When the girls read these things, they also tell me to see what is written in the books about my religion. I wish changes in the books were made so that people would not talk badly about our religion.

Previously, when I was studying in a private school, I was also discriminated against. Teachers and my fellow students refused to eat and drink with me. I also wish there was equal treatment of non-Muslim students by their teachers and classmates.

**SOURCE:** *Pakistan Minorities Teachers' Association*

Shabeeh's story is not an unusual one. It reflects multiple forms of discrimination a non-Muslim child may face at school which include:

1. Being invited frequently to convert to Islam by teachers and peers;
2. If alternative courses exist for non-Muslim students, they are often under-prepared for; and
3. Teachers and students may treat non-Muslim students differently within social contexts.

The pressure of being asked to convert as a young child can be overwhelming, whether it comes from peers or people in positions of authority. Such an environment places a lot of pressure on non-Muslim students when students should feel safe, comfortable, and able to focus on their studies.

In addition, this case study is an example of failure within the education system to provide alternative subjects for non-Muslim students while the Muslim students learn about their faith. There is a lack of teachers for the alternative courses. Shabeeh chooses to study Drawing instead of Arabic but did not have a teacher to actually structure that time and make it a productive academic experience. Often times, non-Muslim students are not even given that opportunity and must study Islam, Arabic, and other courses that contradict their own religious beliefs.

Shabeeh also notes the religious and predominantly Islamic curricula throughout the textbooks that contradict her faith. She points out that the representation of minorities in the textbooks creates a negative image of her religion among her fellow Muslim students which influences their behavior towards her.

Lastly, Shabeeh explains that her differential treatment due to religious identity is not confined to the government-run schools. Rather, she was also discriminated against at the private school she had previously attended. Moreover, the discrimination is not limited to the classroom, teaching, and textbooks only. Her fellow students and teachers were excluding her entirely from social activity by refusing to eat or drink with her.

#### CASE STUDY 5

### Pressure to Convert to Islam

*Sabir is a student of the sixth grade and studies at a government school in Lahore.*

Sabir said that he was treated harshly by the teacher at the government-run primary school he previously attended. His teacher used abusive language towards him, calling him "dirty" and "dirty Christian" (*Choorhay Easi*). He also used to beat him more than any other student in his class. In his current school, there are several students who ask Sabir to convert to Islam and say that if he becomes Muslim, they will provide him with money and care. He refused by saying that his elders take care of him already.

Sabir said he wants to learn about Christianity, not Islam, in school. His teacher said everyone should study Islamic Studies, but he was given a choice between Arabic and Computer Science (he opted for the latter). In primary school, he did not want to study Arabic, but was forced to by his teacher. Sabir wishes to be treated as a human being equal to everyone else and not discriminated against for not being Muslim. He also wants teachers and students to stop hurting his feelings or trying to convert him to Islam. **SOURCE:** *Pakistan Minorities Teachers' Association*



As in the previous case study, this story highlights multiple forms of prejudice faced by a Christian student in a predominantly Muslim context. Such prejudicial behavior early on normalizes the discriminatory treatment towards non-Muslims, serving as a bad example for the students' Muslim peers. In addition, the treatment is very discouraging for the non-Muslim student, and is likely to negatively impact his/her academic achievement and aspirations in the future.

Like some of the other Christian students in the other case studies, Sabir is also frequently urged to convert to Islam. He is offered financial incentives and good treatment for such a conversion. This frequent encouragement to convert can make young students doubt themselves, their religion, their position in the school, and possibly their place in Pakistani society.

This case study also reiterates the finding that non-Muslim students are often forced to study Islamic subjects despite a law to the contrary. Sometimes there are no teachers available for alternative courses, and sometimes teachers compel their non-Muslim students to study Islamic subjects even when the course is technically optional.

## CONCLUSION

There are a number of themes which present themselves in many of the case studies described above, including the following:

- Teachers often appear insensitive towards the religious diversity within their classrooms and school;
- Teachers often appear to have a high degree of prejudice against non-Muslim students;
- Even the academically bright non-Muslim students, despite high achievements, fail to receive appreciation and encouragement from their Muslim teachers;
- Teachers send covert and overt messages to non-Muslim student to convert to Islam;
- Teachers perpetuate and enforce stereotypes about non-Muslim students such as that they are dirty and associated with cleaning and sweeping;
- In some cases teachers use abusive language and physical punishment against non-Muslim students more than Muslim students;
- Muslim students often treat their non-Muslim peers poorly and refuse to befriend them;
- Muslim students sometimes encourage non-Muslim students to convert to Islam;
- The mechanisms within the school system for protecting students do not always work; and
- Non-Muslim students are often compelled to take Islamic Studies—even though it is not required—either by the teacher or by the lack of an alternative.

As the case studies illustrate, non-Muslim students face discrimination ranging from social neglect from peers, encouragement to convert, and coursework on Islam to more life-threatening physical punishments. This discrimination often negatively

affects students in terms of their personal wellbeing and their academic standing. In every case study described, the school system itself, whether it is represented by teachers or administration, fails the minority students at some point. One case study specifically mentions the influence of the textbooks, as a Christian student not only feels offense at the way her faith is portrayed in the books, but her Muslim classmates reference them in denigrating her faith. However, in a number of the case studies, upon complaints the system actually corrects its errors and takes steps to minimize the harm done. These stories thus represent the challenges being faced by students, but also examples of effective options that students, their families, and communities can take to protect some of their rights in the schools.

## PART D EXPERT INTERVIEWS

### INTRODUCTION

A final important element of this study was a series of expert interviews held in order to better establish the context for the study's findings. Six education experts with particular expertise in areas of religion and religious minorities within Pakistan were interviewed. The experts were asked questions related to following issues:

- Major deficiencies in the public school curricula;
- Representation of religious minorities in public school curricula;
- Nature of biases against religious minorities;
- Impact of educational biases on religious minorities;
- Educational and sectarian diversity within Islam;
- The role of policy makers; and
- Recommendations going forward.

The following relays the main ideas put forth by the experts during those interviews.

### DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION SYSTEM IDENTIFIED AND LINKED TO DISCRIMINATION IN LARGER SOCIETY

There was widespread agreement amongst the experts that there are problems within the current education system with regard to the representation of minorities, and that these are linked to societal discrimination. Interwoven throughout the conversations about discrimination in the education system was a sense that discrimination is pervasive throughout Pakistani society, influencing and being influenced by the formal education system. According to Shah Jahan Baloch (Shah Jahan), Manager of the Balochistan Education Program at Save the Children, *"Biases created in schools at the early age have an effect in the long run and we can see them. It is not only in schools; cultural perception and practice also contribute to discrimination. Schools do fail to create a more pluralistic worldview in children. Rather, they reinforce the existing prejudices against religious minorities, which are evident in our mainstream life."*

Peter Jacob, Executive Director of the National Commission for Peace and Justice, further describes the situation as follows: *"These biases create a big chain of discrimination in all walks of life; for instance, in academic institutions minority students face large discrimination and experience ill-treatment as they are badly ignored in the curricula. Seeking jobs and managing businesses they face curricula-created discriminations..."*

Dr. Khalid Masood, Islamic scholar and former Chairman of the Council of Islamic Ideology in Pakistan, identifies the problem of false justification of discrimination on religious grounds, arguing that the *"problem is [that] religious differences are not merely religious in nature, but also about culture and caste. We consider everyone other than ourselves as impure. All these things are not necessarily present in Islam. But somehow we have justified these through Islam by bringing references from Qur'an and hadith."*

Masood further expands on what he sees as the subtle and deeply-rooted discrimination in Pakistani society. According to him, the attitudes developed through the

education system continue discriminating against religious minorities at the wider community level:

*“We say that there is no discrimination against non-Muslims. This only means that they are legally protected. However, discrimination takes place at the community level. As long as this discrimination is present in our education and culture, this problem is not going to be sorted out....”*

*We could have solved these problems through education. But we couldn’t raise our concerns, [over issues] like that of the two-nation theory,<sup>92</sup> in education. We have kept on avoiding that. As a result, we [Muslims] not only avoid Christians and Hindus but we behave the same way towards members of other sects. Shia thinks Sunni is impure, Sunni thinks Shia is impure.”*

Jahan further notes the multi-faceted marginalization faced by minorities as a result of these discriminatory attitudes with an example from Balochistan where “as in many parts of the country, the status of Christian minorities has not been changed. They are mostly (and historically) working as sanitary workers. They are often denied their basic rights as equal citizens in every sphere of life.”

Masood notes that it is important to recognize that this discriminatory language is based on a very particular social, political, and historical context in which the so-called “Ideology of Pakistan” developed:

*“Followers of all religions, living in what is known as Pakistan today, took equal part in the making of Pakistan. There were Parsis, Hindus, and many others in the Parliament of Pakistan. However, this political representation of non-Muslims was systematically brought to an end. Pakistan was created; however, many questions were left unanswered. How would we define Pakistan? How is the Two Nation Theory going to work after Pakistan is created? It gave opportunity to the clergy to provide answers to these and other fundamental questions. Consequently, it became a popular understanding that Pakistan is the country for Muslims. This understanding implied that sharia as Islamic law [should be] the only law of the land. On these grounds our constitution was developed. To Islamize the constitution, readily available fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence] was relied upon. That existing fiqh, due to the lack of Ijtihad,<sup>93</sup> was not necessarily ready to deal with complex political challenges of the day...”*

*The existing fiqh defines the position of a non-Muslim in an Islamic country by either of the only two conditions [by which] he [traditionally] entered into the society: a) he was conquered; or b) made a peace deal with the Islamic government. It doesn’t provide guidance about the non-Muslims living in Pakistan who were neither conquered, nor made any peace deal with the government. They were instead people of this region and took part in the creation of this country.”*

92 The Two Nation Theory was the basis for the creation of Pakistan. It envisioned two major nations, formed along religious lines, one Hindu and the other Muslim, quite different from each other in language, civilization, history, and culture. Thus, Pakistan was formed as a separate homeland for all Muslims of the subcontinent where they could lead their lives in accordance with the teachings of Islam, free of social and economic exploitation under the Raj. Despite these realities, Pakistani textbooks often present this exclusively in religious terms—i.e., Hindus versus Muslims—with no economic, historical, social, or political causes given, and the history of mutual co-existence denied.

93 *Ijtihad* is an Islamic concept that may be thought of as “individual reasoning,” or (re)interpreting concepts in light of current realities.

**“As long as this discrimination is present in our education and culture, this problem is not going to be sorted out.”**

## CURRICULUM, TEXTBOOKS, AND PEDAGOGY

### General Problems Identified

Challenges faced by the curriculum, as discussed by the experts, include omission of minority contributions to Pakistani society, discriminatory language, inaccuracies, and a strong promotion of Islam over all other faiths. Instances of perpetuation of a sense of threat against Islam were also highlighted, along with the implication for religious minorities.

Since textbooks carry great significance as a source of knowledge and information, the messages delivered through them have far reaching impacts. Jacob observed that *“after religious or Holy Books, academic curricula are considered the most certified source of information across the world. In the case of Pakistan, it silently damages the religious tolerance because people who read such concepts cannot have acceptance for other beliefs.”*

### Inaccurate Depictions of Minority Religions

When non-Islamic traditions are described in textbooks, it is often with significant inaccuracies. Romana Basheer at the Christian Study Center, who has worked extensively for the educational and other rights of religious minorities in Pakistan, notes the following experience with a factual error:

*“I was shocked when I read in the paper that the Christians believe in three Gods. Before writing this one should consult with a Christian. In reality we believe in one God and it is the same in Islam. It means that there are commonalities but the people who want to promote the commonalities do not have knowledge and they do not want to read and implement.”*

Jacob explains an important reason for why this happens—*“probably because non-Muslim authors and writers are not being consulted in preparation of textbooks.”* He adds that:

*“Philosophy and religious personalities other than Islam are taught with an Islamic view-point. For instance, the Islamic concept about Christ’s birth, crucifixion, and descending are different from those in Christianity. Curricula present [the] Islamic concepts which create confusion among Christian students regarding their faith.”*

### Omission and Segregation of Religious Minorities

According to Jacob, *“religious minorities are often treated as outsiders or aliens in the curricula.”* According to many of the experts interviewed, the purpose of derogatory, discriminatory, or otherwise unequal representation of minorities in textbooks is to minimize the role of non-Muslims in society.

This status as “outsider” is established in a number of different ways. According to Jacob, *“minority students are treated as refugees. Many times minorities are declared as sacred holding (Muqaddas Amanat) in the curricula, forgetting that minorities are living beings, not goods which can be held by someone.”* Masood likewise argued that under Islam in Pakistan, non-Muslims are treated like people who were either conquered or who made a peace deal with Muslim Pakistanis. This undermines their ability to be seen as equal participants in Pakistani society.

Jacob further explains that *“the role of minorities...is completely ignored in the history curriculum, which causes a misunderstanding about the nation.”* By omitting minorities from this historical narrative, not only is an opportunity missed for the promotion of

pluralism, but the true creation story of Pakistan becomes clouded. Basheer describes an example of this type of omission:

*“Bhagat Singh [a brave Sikh who fought against colonial rulers] is a common personality in [Pakistani] history. We never teach our students about him. We disown him because he belongs to a minority. Jang-e-Azadi (war of freedom) is the common struggle of the people of India against the English people. However, our history books portray this in a different way altogether [by leaving Singh out].”*

The attitude that Pakistan is a country of Muslims pervades the education system and is thus perpetuated by it. As Basheer describes it, *“those who write the textbooks don’t keep in mind the multi-religion composition of our society. When they portray Pakistan as a Muslim country, made for Muslims, the rest of the population becomes isolated.”*

### **Perpetuation of Sense of Threat to Islam by Non-Muslims**

Jahan pointed out that an additional mechanism for making minorities outsiders within Pakistani society is that of perpetuating conspiracy theories about their desire to undermine Islam or Pakistan. Jahan explains that *“these [biases] are built around so-called theories of conspiracies against Muslims and are representing that the other religious groups in the sub-continent were violent and discriminated against Muslims in every walk of life, even they had no representation in political and economic spheres of life.”*

Tied to the notion that Pakistan is a Muslim nation is a pervasive fear of India, often represented by Hindus and Hinduism. Textbooks are quite explicit about and hostile towards Hindus, both pre-partition as well as those living in India today. Shah Jahan stated as follows:

*“The curriculum is designed to create dominant negative perceptions about the Hindu community and present them as enemies of Muslims on the sub-continent, which led to the violent separation... [from] India and the Hindu community who were allies with other religious groups in opposition to Muslims. This reinforces the impression of other religious groups being against Muslims and creates thoughts of intolerance in a new generation directed towards other religious minorities in the country.”*

According to Dr. Tariq Rahman, noted scholar and director and professor at the National Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS) at Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) in Islamabad, it is likely that the Hindus mentioned in textbooks are symbols of non-Muslims more generally, hence affecting the attitudes of young students towards all non-Muslims. Minority religions are often associated with foreign powers, which are presented as hostile to Muslims and Pakistan:

*“At least 7 years back I conducted a research on this. There are no Pakistani books saying something out rightly against the Christians and Pakistani Hindus. However there are some books that talk about the Hindus in India within the context of enmity. Perhaps these things can be said in a way that does not hurt the feelings of the Hindus in Pakistan. There are some terms like the “Christian powers,” etc. that may hurt the Christians of Pakistan. Certainly, they mention the European powers, not the Pakistani Christians. However, it turns the atmosphere against them. Minorities are already finding it hard to live in a country in which there is a general fear generated by the religious parties and some others. This fear has shaken their confidence to live here.”*

**Textbooks are quite explicit about and hostile towards Hindus.**



### **Influence of Constitutional Discrimination**

It is important to note that some of the discriminatory elements of the curricula are actually accurate descriptions of Pakistani law that discriminates against minorities. Basheer explained that *“we teach in civics that a non-Muslim cannot be the president of Pakistan. What will a child will learn if he is extra intelligent? You constitutionally increase the discrimination and say that we talk of equality. Any key position cannot be held by non-Muslims.”*

### **Imposition of Islamic Teachings on Religious Minorities and Impact on Identity**

Islamic content has also been used as a tool for discrimination against minorities within the educational system by establishing Islam as the norm for Pakistani citizens. Jacob claims that *“As much as 40 to 60 % of the curricula for almost all subjects consist of religious matter [Islam] and in the case of Social Studies Grade 7 (English medium), this percentage reaches up to 90.”* Basheer elaborates on the dominance of Islamic education and its impact on non-Muslim students as follows:

*“In textbooks, we say that this is a Muslim country for Muslims and the rest of the population is isolated. Non-Muslim students understand they have to memorize this text to pass the exam...[even though] it is not speaking to them and the teacher is not speaking to them. He is talking to Muslim students and not considering the others...[and thus the non-Muslim student will] think that ‘only they are Pakistanis and am I not included among them?’ He will grow up with a confused mind, so what else can we produce with this kind of education system? Can we create the unity with this? In my opinion, if the concept of a multi-religious society was taught with courage, the situation may change.*

*When a textbook says that this mosque is the house of Allah and Muslims offer prayers here, it automatically excludes those who are non-Muslims from its audience. Can’t authors of the textbook write that masjid, mandar, church, and gurdawara all are the houses of God? All the people worship God according to their own religions. Will not this appear good to all the children regardless of their religion?”*

Islamic Studies is a compulsory subject at schools, but the curriculum has an alternative course for non-Muslim students. However, textbooks and qualified teachers for these subjects are often unavailable at many schools. According to Rahman, the situation is amplified in rural areas.

### **Importance of the Role of the Teacher**

Part of the problem, according to Masood, is the lack of regulation and guidance with regard to Islamic education being incorporated into the curriculum, leaving the particular Islamic examples and lessons up to individual schools and teachers:

*“Curricula are generally developed with a specific frame of mind to address some specific issues. While designing all lessons, in each chapter we keep in mind the curricular and extracurricular activities around those issues. Regarding religious education no clarity is provided on the contents to be included and the issues to be discussed. Even in the book that the HEC [Higher Education Commission] has developed, they just give us the topics and the subjects but do not go in the detail of the curriculum. So the religious education remains the most neglected component in public schools.”*



Rahman expands on the role of teachers specifically within the context of teaching Islam, saying that *“there is a large quantity of religious content present in subjects like Urdu, Civics, and Pakistan Studies, and it depends on teachers how they teach this content. Some teachers teach in a manner that it seems they are looking down upon religious minorities.”*

Dr. Muhammad Memon, Hamidudin Alkirmani Professor and Director of Programs at the Institute of Educational Development at Agha Khan University in Karachi, feels that the failure of the education system to acknowledge diversity and teach values of tolerance is more a problem of teachers than of curricula:

*“On the whole education has failed to acknowledge religious/ethnic diversity in the society. Islam has a universal message of brotherhood, tolerance, social justice, and respect. The national curriculum [2006] has taken care of these values. However, the teaching and practice of these values depend on teachers’ efficacy and sense of professionalism.”*

### **Sectarianism within Islam**

Jacob adds that issues of diversity do not only have to do with non-Muslims but the way in which Islamic sectarian diversity is taught:

*“The Shia relevant chapters have been decreased gradually. Presently if there is some material, it is composed in such a way that gives a sense of Sunni Islam only. Islamic Studies for Shia students is separate at the secondary level. Thus curricula promote sectarian consciousness. Among Sunni sects, the Barelvi school of thought is dominant and chapters regarding festivals and shrines are included according to their sect.”*

## **IMPACT — LINKS BETWEEN BIASES IN EDUCATION AND ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION/EXTREMISM**

### **Public Perceptions**

Experts had a lot to say with regard to the link between biases in the education and the incidences of extremism, hatred, and violence in the country. According to Memon, the lack of religious diversity acknowledged in the education system and society more broadly has serious consequences on religious and inter-sectarian harmony. According to Jahan, *“it has a huge effect on religious harmony because it promotes misperceptions about sectarian diversity promoted by various interest groups. They [authors of textbooks] exploit the public ignorance and spread their own biases which serve their negative interest rather than creating awareness or promoting harmony.”*

### **Violence**

Basheer linked societal inaction towards systemic discrimination, including among educationists, to incidents of violence and extremism:

*“We came to this level by not playing our role. Neither did politicians, nor educationists play their role, and those who were dealing with education, were not educationists in reality. We [as a society] started killing the intellectuals. We killed Dr. Farooq even when he was advocating the rights of minorities from the Qur’an. When he said that no group or citizen can announce jihad they killed him. The right to announce jihad is of the state only. He tried to teach them in a proper way. We have given the place of intellectuals to the ignorant people [so] then the things are certain to go in a wrong way. ...*

**"Ignoring the positive aspects of central messages of religions—such as promoting humanity—also leads to violence."**

*Minorities are so afraid in this country that they are afraid to ask for their own basic rights. With such a sense of fear, what is it that they can do for their country? How will they cope with the problems in their life?"*

Jahan listed a number of topics which cause extremism and propagate violence in the society, many of which can be identified in elements of the educational system:

*"The glorification of wars, misinterpretation of history while teaching children about the violence that happened during the separation of India, along with promoting the concepts of jihad which support violence against non-Muslims. Moreover, ignoring the positive aspects of central messages of religions—such as promoting humanity—also leads to violence."*

### **Debilitating Fear**

To the degree that this violence has led to a culture of fear among minorities in Pakistan, it impacts the choices and opportunities available to those minorities.

Rahman describes how this fear has led to conversion to Islam:

*"There is lot of sectarianism and killing of Shias and Christians. Extremism is very high here in Pakistan. There is a lack of security and people do not feel safe even in their own localities as they are being threatened there. ... There have been property disputes; personal enmity has arisen against them which took the shape of religious disputes.... A number of people are converted to Islam and in some cases this conversion is because of the fear. Non-Muslims and the non-Sunnis are at risk in this country."*

According to Jahan, this fear and discrimination is one of the reasons for non-Muslims not pursuing higher education and dropping out of school at early years:

*"The people I met, mostly in Balochistan, shared with me that they feel discriminated against and they are not a part of mainstream public life. Therefore, they don't seek higher or professional education. Then, their first choice is to start a small business of their own so schooling just helps them to become literate and gain a basic education."*

Jacob emphasized his belief that minorities cannot receive equal rights, neither from the parliament nor from their peer groups.

### **Prospects for Improvements—Responsibility, Awareness, and Implementation**

Experts were asked whether they have observed any positive change in education, in the given context, in recent years. Only one expert, Memon, had a positive response to this question and expressed his optimism saying improvements have been made *"in a piecemeal way which needs to be further nurtured and flourished."*

Jahan thought the absence of political will behind the movement has been a major hindrance of positive change and that *"without sincere and practical efforts, how can we expect positive change to occur in our society?"* Jacob found the situation to be deteriorating. *"The plans that we made in the early fifties were fantastic. However, we do not have the continuity in our planning and implementation. The new ones hastily replace the old ones and it [this practice] continues. The policymakers now know that their policies are for 3 or 4 years only. All the policies are based on politics and there are no long term policies."*

The experts largely blamed government institutions for not taking leadership and implementing the type of changes needed. As Rahman explains, *"policy makers...*

*haven't taken initiatives to solve these problems. Consequently, texts are developed that discriminate Muslims from the non-Muslims."*

There was disagreement, however, over how much the policymakers actually understood the discrimination present in the education systems and throughout society. Masood thought policymakers, due to their own backgrounds, are not well aware of the issues being faced by minorities.

*"Most of them are not from an educational background, they are rather from a political background. We do not teach these things or how to address these issues on the educational level.... Hence politicians, like anyone else, are largely unaware."*

On the other hand, Jahan, Jacob, and Rahman all felt that policymakers must understand what is going on within Pakistani society with regard to discrimination. According to Jacob, *"policymakers are aware of curricula as well as teaching methodology. There are a large number of organizations including the National Commission for Justice and Peace who have published several research studies and written to the relevant authorities."*

Memon agreed that the policymakers are aware of the issues. Nonetheless, he differed from most of the views expressed above, arguing that policymakers have actually taken initiatives to change the system through the new national curriculum reforms of 2006. He felt these reforms have addressed all the concerns about biases in the curricula, and that the problems lie in other aspects of the educational system.

*"There are two kinds of deficiencies, perceived and factual. A group of so-called educationists and experts claims that the school curriculum is full of biases and prejudices which is not completely true. This has destroyed our nation's image. We should avoid making irresponsible statements about such sensitive matters. The national school curriculum-2006 has removed such biases; however, textbooks have not yet been prepared in line with the new curriculum. Hence, it is not just curriculum but textbooks, instructional material, teacher guides, etc. that play a critical role."*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the experts felt that changes need to be made throughout the education system. According to Masood, *"Education in Pakistan needs complete renewal. The prevailing circumstances show that we are far behind the rest of the world. We are providing our youth outdated theoretical training with flawed ideas, having no relevance to the needs of society."*

Rahman also emphasized that the reforms need to deal with many different factors that influence and perpetuate discrimination within the education system, and especially highlighted the importance of the role of the teacher:

*"The change needs to be broad-based. There is problematic material on the radio, TV, and in newspapers that has to be changed. However, the real question is how to bring about this change? Nonetheless, if the government changes all the things, the curricula and textbooks, laws and rules, and the popular discourse becomes more liberal, it may help..."*

*There is a report 'The Subtle Subversion' produced by the researchers of SDPI. The recommendations of this report can be a good starting point to reform education. What needs to be kept in mind is that the person who can really bring any change in education is the school teacher through the way he/she teaches. It is the most fundamental issue and all*

*the reports are silent on that. How can we change the minds of school teachers — [this] is one difficult question.*

*There is frustration associated with poverty and deprivation [which] also contributes to the extreme attitudes and discriminatory behaviors. For any long-term change, we need to improve the overall living standards of our citizens and eliminate poverty. We have to bring the life as it is in the countries called ‘welfare states,’ to change the minds of common men. This whole obviously requires great effort.”*

In addition, Jahan stressed the need for changing curricula and textbooks from their focus on religion towards providing more skills required for good jobs upon graduation:

*“The existing curricula and textbooks need to be reviewed because they are mainly more religiously oriented, ideologically motivated, and driven by hatred and prejudice against other religious minorities. Education needs to be brought in line with the country’s economy [as] to produce skillful and productive human resources with a holistic view of the world.”*

Memon, however, thought all necessary changes are already made in the national curriculum of 2006 and thus that all that needs to be done is “*effective implementation of curriculum through unbiased textbooks, materials, and teachers’ pedagogies.*”

Jacob highlighted the need for reducing religious content in non-religious subjects, eliminating distorted representations of history, and including writings of non-Muslims and information on the contributions of religious minorities to Pakistan in reforming the educational system. He also placed a strong emphasis on the need for proper training of teachers, to include the promotion of “*pluralism*” and “*harmony*,” as well as development of a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation of teaching practices.

## CONCLUSION

These experts have an overall negative outlook with regard to the current portrayal of religious minorities within the school textbooks, biases the teachers relay in class, and the imposition of religious content throughout required, non-religious coursework. To most of them, biases within the education system are both a symptom and promoter of a larger culture of discrimination against religious minorities—namely non-Muslims and Shias. This discrimination has a real effect on the opportunities available to these minorities with regard to employment, higher education, and safety. Ultimately the experts feel that the crisis is real and the solutions are out there, but the Pakistani citizens and politicians are not pushing hard enough or in the right direction. However, one expert presented a slightly more positive outlook by highlighting the merits of the 2006 curricular reforms and the potential positive impact if they were effectively implemented.

## SECTION 5

# Findings and Recommendations

## FINDINGS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

During the course of this study we found that there were significant issues with regard to:

1. The negative portrayal of minorities in the textbooks or omission of their contribution to Pakistan's formation, development, and defense;
2. The prevalence of bigotry in the attitudes of public school teachers and the transmission of negative perceptions and stereotypes in the education system;
3. The failure of textbooks published after the curricular reforms of 2006 to adhere to the mandated guidelines;
4. The prevalence of misinformed or pejorative attitudes in students, which often imitate the textbook content or teacher opinions;
5. Instances of discrimination or abuse of religious minorities within the public school system.

## PUBLIC SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are intended to overcome these challenges:

### 1. Promote the full implementation of the 2006 curricular reforms.

The 2006 reforms, while imperfect, represent a major step towards the elimination of biases against religious minorities in the textbooks. Efforts should be focused on ensuring that textbooks, teacher aids, and other learning materials reflective of the new guidelines are developed, approved, and distributed to public schools. While the more recent textbooks appear to contain gradual improvements, they still fall well short of the curricular guidelines as presented on the Ministry of Education website.<sup>94</sup> Implementation of the most pressing aspects should take priority, with a focus on including—or expanding guidelines to include—the following: (a) content relating to Islamic studies should be consolidated into the Islamiyat (Islamic

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.moe.gov.pk/Curriculum.htm>

Studies) course, and should be completely removed from integrated textbooks in earlier grades where religious minorities are currently required to study Islam; (b) revised History, Social Studies, and Pakistan Studies textbooks should be available to all school children, and a prohibition on the old pre-2006 textbooks books should be implemented; (c) the constitutional rights and contributions of religious minorities should be highlighted; and (d) gratuitously derogatory content, especially against Hindus, should be removed.

## **2. Create a reporting mechanism for cases of discrimination against religious minorities.**

To offer religious minorities a safeguard against discrimination or abuse in schools, an official agency should be formed within the newly-formed National Harmony Ministry to provide a safe and confidential method of filing discrimination complaints. The agency must have the ability to take any steps that it deems necessary to discipline educational leadership, faculty, and administration members found to have violated the rights of religious minorities without any interference or influence. Public school educational leadership, faculty, and administration officials should be trained to adhere to anti-discrimination policies and informed of the penalties for disobedience. This agency should have the following minimum mandate: (a) oversee institutions that protect the rights of minorities and ensure a mandate for anti-bias education and awareness-raising across Pakistan; (b) audit of textbooks, teacher training programs, and educational practices regarding anti-minority biases in any publically-funded educational institution; (c) prosecution of any violator of minority rights guaranteed by the constitution; (d) protection of victims of minority bias and strict guidelines that provide safeguards to whistle blowers.

## **3. Make the course "Ethics for Non-Muslims" compulsory for all students.<sup>95</sup>**

The curriculum guidelines for "Ethics for Non-Muslims"—currently an alternative to Islamic Studies—appear to present a comprehensive description of the minority religions of Pakistan. If this course, or a component of this course, were included in the core curriculum, it would effectively dispel many of the inaccuracies and stereotypes found in the current depictions of religious minorities.

## **4. Develop teacher-training programs to focus on the constitutional rights of religious minorities, critical thinking, and the importance of promoting tolerance for diversity in classroom pedagogy.**

Wide-scale teacher training programs should be developed and implemented to promote the professional development of public school teachers, especially as pertains to religious tolerance, critical thinking, and the constitutional rights of religious minorities. Teachers must be made aware of the aspects of the constitution that guarantee the rights of religious minorities and their responsibility as teachers to include these aspects in the lessons. Course material should be distributed to all teachers that include the following articles of the Constitution of 1973:

<sup>95</sup> The curriculum guidelines for the Ethics for Non-Muslims Course can be found on the Pakistan Ministry of Education website. <[http://www.moe.gov.pk/nc/iii\\_xii/Ethics%20Grades%20III-XII.zip](http://www.moe.gov.pk/nc/iii_xii/Ethics%20Grades%20III-XII.zip)>.

- a. *Wherein adequate provision shall be made for the minorities freely to profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures.*  
Pakistan Constitution (1973), Preamble
- b. *(a) Every citizen shall have the right to profess, practice and propagate his religion; and (b) every religious denomination and every sect thereof shall have the right to establish, maintain and manage its religious institutions.*  
Pakistan Constitution (1973), art. 20(a-b)
- c. *No person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction, or take part in any religious ceremony, or attend religious worship, if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own.*  
Pakistan Constitution (1973), art. 22(1)
- d. *All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law,*  
Pakistan Constitution (1973), art. 25(1)
- e. *Nothing in this Part shall affect the personal laws of non-Muslim citizens or their status as citizens.*  
Pakistan Constitution (1973), Part IX Islamic Provisions, art. 227(3)

## **5. Create channels of communication and cooperation between parents, teachers, and officials.**

The parents of students have to be engaged in the public education system, and their concerns must be addressed. The violent results of religious intolerance have created an atmosphere of insecurity throughout Pakistan and a concerted effort is needed to combat this in the education system. Progressive-minded stakeholders should be empowered.

## **6. Facilitate interfaith initiatives.**

Interfaith dialogue initiatives and joint academic/extracurricular activities should be facilitated with faculty and students of other religions where possible.

## **7. Develop realistic timeframes for implementation.**

Donor countries should be mindful of the unstable political climate of Pakistan and develop contingency plans for deteriorating relationships, intensified internal conflict, and shifting priorities. These circumstances are often difficult to predict and are clearly beyond the influence of donor countries. Projects should be designed to produce incremental progress, and should not rely on extended periods of stability. Pakistan has yet to experience a decade without a military coup or imposition of martial law.

## **8. Remove pejorative content from the Constitution of 1973.**

The followed sections of the Constitution present a challenge in the creation of an unbiased environment for religious minorities both in the education system and society at large.

- a. *A person shall not be qualified for election as President unless he is a Muslim...*  
Pakistan Constitution (1973), art. 41(2)



b. *After the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker the National Assembly shall, to the exclusion of any other business, proceed to elect without debate one of its Muslim members to be the Prime Minister.*

Pakistan Constitution (1973), art. 91(3)

c. ... *“non-Muslim” means a person who is not a Muslim and includes a person belonging to the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist [sic] or Parsi community, a person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves “Ahmadis” or by any other name), or a Bahai, and a person belonging to any of the scheduled castes.*

Pakistan Constitution (1973), art. 260(3)(b)

## FINDINGS MADRASSAS

Our study found that the challenges in madrasa education as they relate to religious minorities are much different than in public schools for a number of reasons:

1. There are no (or extremely few) religious minorities in the madrasa system, and most of the opinions offered about religious minorities are based on second-hand information;
2. The madrasa curricula and textbooks are not uniform in key areas; they are often centuries-old texts that refer to other religions in the context of the era in which they were written;
3. Madrasa education is religious by nature, and bias against religious minorities takes a different tone and form;
4. Madrasa education is isolated from a large part of the Pakistani society, and graduates do not have the same employment prospects, but they wield great influence as Islamic clergy.

## MADRASSA RECOMMENDATIONS

Even more so than public school reform, madrasa sector reform is a politically and religiously charged undertaking. From our previous involvement with madrasa leaders, ICRD has come to recognize a profound level of mutual distrust between the madrasa community and the government of Pakistan. The following policy recommendations are offered with these challenges in mind:

### 1. **Official engagement between the madrasa boards and the government of Pakistan (GOP) should be encouraged.**

The government of Pakistan (GOP) should build consensus within the various governmental ministries and interest groups on a policy of madrasa reform that will be acceptable to the madrasa leaders, which must then be clearly articulated to the public. The GOP should seek the endorsement of the madrasa boards for any proposed madrasa reform program. The existing madrasa reform agreement which was signed by the ITMP National Madrasa Oversight Board and the GOP should be signed into law and implemented.

## 2. Teacher Training Program Development.

While public schools, in theory, are to adhere to government-mandated educational guidelines, no such system of uniform educational standards exists for the madrassas. A system of madrasa accreditation and teacher certification should be put in place to ensure that madrassas are meeting mutually agreed-upon educational standards. These standards should be developed in full cooperation with the madrassas to ensure their ownership in the process. Toward this end, ICRD is currently working with various Pakistani universities to develop a series of university training programs for madrasa leaders that will provide the basis for certification and set the stage for full implementation of the madrasa educational enhancements. Teacher training programs should place a great emphasis on the systematic pedagogical training of madrasa teachers, beyond curricular enhancements, as by itself, official inclusion of “contemporary” subjects in madrasa curriculums is insufficient to make a meaningful difference. Even more critical is to train teachers in key areas such as the following:

- a. Teaching methodology, with an emphasis on interactive and student-centered learning, development of critical thinking skills among the students, and ensuring that all subjects are taught in a way that promotes genuine learning and skill development;
- b. Ethical principles and how they can be imparted to students and applied in the classroom environment, including tolerance, diversity/pluralism, and inter-/intra-faith relations;
- c. Child development, psychology, and emotional intelligence, including the impact of fear and trauma on children and the influence of the teacher as a role model;
- d. Reflective practice and the ability to evaluate one’s own teaching style and the learning styles of one’s students and then to adapt one’s teaching accordingly.

## 3. Curricular reforms should be instituted, with particular focus on certain areas of need.

Madrassas should make their curriculums more accessible to those outside the madrasa system in order to dispel suspicion and promote greater understanding between the madrassas and other academic communities. Curricular reforms should emphasize areas such as the below.

### RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN PRACTICE

The madrasa boards should be encouraged to make revisions to the madrasa curriculum, and funding should be made available for their development and distribution. Reforms should highlight some key themes in order to place greater emphasis on the principles of religious tolerance and religious freedom. These could include areas such as: historical achievements of Islamic societies in promoting respect for and protecting the rights of others, and how these principles should be applied today; principles of nonviolence and historical nonviolence movements; historical conflicts and examples of successful conflict resolution initiatives; comparative studies of principles and practices of human rights; studies of world cultures; international organizations and their

roles in peace building and human rights; and the role of religion/religious institutions, civil society, and youth in peace building.

### **RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN EDUCATION**

Courses on the comparative study of religions should be included or expanded, with an emphasis on promoting religious tolerance and interfaith understanding. Madrassa scholars who have previously studied this area have suggested incorporating the following into madrassa education: (a) an emphasis on the study of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity in addition to Islam (these scholars have compiled a list of specific topics of study for each religion and an accompanying list of suggested texts); (b) the study of other Islamic schools of thought other than that of the sect with which the madrassa is affiliated; and (c) interfaith/inter-sectarian dialogue initiatives and joint academic/extracurricular activities should be facilitated with faculty and students of others sects/religions where possible.

### **MODERNIZING TEXTBOOKS**

Additional texts should be incorporated to complement (not replace) existing classical texts which are being used in madrassas, many of which are at least 500-700 years old or older, most importantly in the following areas: (a) texts which address the role of non-Muslim citizens in a modern Muslim society and how a Muslim should treat non-Muslims in the contemporary world should be included; (b) current texts are particularly needed in the areas of *ijtihad* (reinterpretation of Islamic traditions) and the sciences (such texts can show the evolution of ideas on Islamic jurisprudence); and (c) books explaining various schools of thought should be incorporated into Islamic studies courses, with refutation texts balanced by texts that promote a better understanding of other points of view.

# Appendix

## LIST OF TEXTBOOKS REVIEWED

### Public School Provincial Textbook Board Textbooks (Total: 107)\*

**KEY:** *Meri Kitab* = My Book      *Meri Urdu Ki Kitaab* = My Urdu Book  
*Deeniyat* = Islamic Studies      *Islamiyat* = Islamic Studies  
*Darsi Kitaab* = Textbook

| GRADE LEVEL | PUNJAB TEXTBOOK BOARD  | SINDH TEXTBOOK BOARD                                    | KPK TEXTBOOK BOARD                                      | BALUCHISTAN TEXTBOOK BOARD                                      |
|-------------|--|---|---|---|
| 1           | Meri Kitab <sup>†</sup><br>Deeniyat  | Darsi Kitaab<br>Deeniyat<br>Social Studies              | Meri Urdu Ki Kitaab<br>Deeniyat                         | Darsi Kitaab<br>Islamiyat                                       |
| 2           | Meri Kitab <sup>†</sup><br>Deeniyat  | Darsi Kitaab<br>Deeniyat<br>Social Studies              | Meri Urdu Ki Kitaab<br>Deeniyat                         | Darsi Kitaab<br>Islamiyat                                       |
| 3           | Meri Kitab<br>Urdu<br>Deeniyat<br>Social Studies                                     | Darsi Kitaab<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies             | Meri Urdu Ki Kitaab<br>Islamiyat                        | Darsi Kitaab<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     |
| 4           | Meri Kitab<br>Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies <sup>†</sup>                       | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     | Meri Urdu Ki Kitaab<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies      | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                             |
| 5           | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies <sup>†</sup>                                     | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     | Meri Urdu Ki Kitaab<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies      | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                             |
| 6           | Urdu <sup>†</sup><br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies <sup>†</sup>                        | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                             |
| 7           | Urdu <sup>†</sup><br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies <sup>†</sup>                        | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                             |
| 8           | Urdu <sup>†</sup><br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                                     | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                     | Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                             | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Social Studies                             |
| 9           | Bahar-e-Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies <sup>‡</sup>                           | Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies                           | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies                   | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies                           |
| 10          | Bahar-e-Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies <sup>‡</sup><br>(same book as Grade 9) | Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies<br>(same book as Grade 9) | Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies<br>(same book as Grade 9) | Urdu<br>Islamiyat<br>Pakistan Studies<br>(same book as Grade 9) |

\*As some textbooks do not print publication dates, the dates are not listed here. However, the reviewed books were the most current editions available and primarily being used during the 2010–2011 school year.

<sup>†</sup>More than one version reviewed; in the case of Social Studies books, at least one version was in English.

<sup>‡</sup>Only English version reviewed.

**Madrasa Textbooks (Total: 4)**

| TEXTBOOK NAME       | ENGLISH TRANSLATION                | SUBJECT AREA         | MADRASSA GRADE LEVEL** | AUTHOR   | PUBLICATION YEAR           |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| Kanz-ul-Daqaq       | The Treasure of Difficult Problems | Fiqh (Jurisprudence) | 3                      | Maulana Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Mahmood-al-Nasafi | 710 AH (1310 CE)           |
| Al-Hadaya           | The Guidance                       | Fiqh (Jurisprudence) | 5 & 6                  | Burhan-ud-Din Abi-al-Hassan Ali                  | 511-593 AH (1117-1196 CE)  |
| Mashkwat-ul-Masabeh | The Lamp of the Lamps              | Hadith               | 6                      | Imam Tirmizi                                     | 421-502 AH (1030-1108 CE)* |
| Riaz-ul-Saleheen    | The Garden of Pious People         | Hadith               | 6                      | Abi Zakria Yahya Bin Sharaf-al-Navie             | 631-676 AH (1233-1277 CE)  |

\*Dates listed are of Imam Tirmizi's birth and death.

\*\*Madrassas have their own grading system which is not necessarily equivalent to the public school grading system.

## ACRONYMS

**APE:** Ahmed Pur East

**BETHAK:** Organization: Be Empowered Through Awareness And Knowledge. In the Punjabi language the word BETHAK is a distinct stratum of society where people sit in a certain place to discuss their plans and lines of action for the development of a society.

**CIA:** Central Intelligence Agency (USA)

**DEO:** District Education Officer

**EDO:** Executive District Officer

**FGD:** Focus Group Discussion

**GDP:** Gross Domestic Product

**ICRD:** Organization; International Center for Religion and Diplomacy

**KPK:** Khyber Pukhtunkhwa; State in Pakistan

**MCOP:** Minorities Concern of Pakistan

**MDC:** Management and Development Consultant

**MOE:** Federal Ministry of Education, Pakistan

**NCS:** National Conservation Strategy

**NGO:** Non-Government Organization

**NIDA:** National Integrated and Development Association

**PETF:** Pakistan Education Task Force

**PMTA:** Pakistan Minority Teachers Association

**SDPI:** Sustainable Development Policy Institute (Pakistan)

## GLOSSARY

**Abrahamic Religion:** A religion that trace itself back to Abraham, generally referring to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

**Ahle-Hadith:** One of the Islamic sects in Pakistan. Also known as “Salafi” or “Wahhabi.”

**Ahmadi:** Followers of the Ahmadiyya Islamic movement founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the 19th century.

**Ameen:** A word uttered during Islamic prayer.

**Azan:** The Islamic call to prayer.

**Balochistan:** One of the four provinces in Pakistan.

**Barelvi:** The largest Islamic sect in Pakistan. Emerged in the Indian subcontinent in the 19th century and is defined by its incorporation of many Sufi practices.

**Caste System:** A rigid, hierarchical social system most commonly associated with Hinduism in India.

**Darood:** An invocation where Muslims recite specific phrases to compliment the Prophet.

**Deobandi:** The second largest Islamic sect in Pakistan. Founded in the 19th century in northern India, it favors a strict interpretation of Islam devoid of outside influences.

**Dhimmitude:** Protected status of non-Muslims under Islamic law.

**Eid Milad Unnabi:** Celebration of the birthday of the Prophet.

**Field Research:** Any activity seeking to collect primary data including face to face interviews, telephone or postal surveys and direct observation.

**Fiqh:** Islamic jurisprudence.

**Guru Nanak:** Founder and first Guru of Sikhism, a minority religion in Pakistan (1469-1539).

**Hadith:** Sayings and teachings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad.

**Hanafi:** One of four Islamic schools of Sunni jurisprudence. The Barelvi, Deobandi, Salafi, and Jamaat-e-Islami sects are all Hanafi.

**Haram:** Anything that is explicitly forbidden according to Islamic law.

**Hazrat:** A title of respect used to denote a person of religious significance.

**Hifz-e-Quran:** The memorization of the Quran in its entirety; an accomplishment of great significance in Islam.

**Ijtihad:** Individual reasoning.

**Imamat:** Leadership of prayer.

**Islamabad:** Capital of Pakistan.

**Islamiat:** Islamic studies.

**Islamization:** The process of a social entity becoming dominated by Islam. Contemporary usage often implies the spread of Islamist ideologies.

**Ismailis:** Followers of the second-largest branch of Shia Islam. Ismaili spiritual leaders are given the hereditary title Aga Khan.

**Jamat-e-Islami:** The oldest religious political party in Pakistan. It runs one of the five madrasa boards.

**Jihad:** Struggle; most often denoting an inner spiritual struggle.

**Jurisprudence:** Theory and philosophy of law.

**Kalima:** The central creed in Islam: “There is no god but God, Muhammad is God’s Messenger.”

**Karachi:** Most populous city in Pakistan.

**Kashmir:** Region disputed by India and Pakistan bordered by China, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

**Khyber Pakhtunkhwa :** One of the four provinces in Pakistan; formally North West Frontier Province.

**Madrasa:** Islamic religious school.

**Madrasa Governing Boards:** The five madrasahs boards are: Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, Rabta-tul-Madaris Al-Islamia, Wafaq-ul-Madaris Shia Pakistan, Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Salafia, and Tanzim-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnah wa Jama’a.

**Mangal Sootar:** A symbol of a Hindu marriage.



**Murtid:** An apostate.

**Nationalist:** Strong political identification with one's nation.

**Pakistan Studies:** The term used for social studies courses in grades 6-10.

**Partition (1947):** The Indian Independence Act 1947 officially dissolved of the British colony of India.

**People of the Book:** Jews and Christians; those people upon whom sacred texts were also revealed according to Islam.

**Polytheism:** The belief in multiple gods.

**Primary School:** The first stage of education, usually up through grade eight in Pakistan.

**Proxy indicator:** Indirect indicator.

**Punjab:** One of the four Pakistani provinces.

**Quetta:** Capital of the Pakistani province Balochistan.

**Qur'an:** Holiest text in Islam.

**Radd:** Texts that refute other interpretations of Islam.

**Rafayadain:** An act during Islamic prayers.

**Religious Minorities:** Individuals who are not members of the dominant religious tradition (in the case of Pakistan, non-Sunni Muslims).

**Sahab-e-Karam:** The noble companions of the Prophet.

**Sandoor:** A red-orange colored cosmetic powder, used on the head by married Hindu women.

**Secondary Level School:** The second stage of education, usually from grade nine through twelve in Pakistan.

**Seerat-un-Nabi:** A biography of the Prophet Muhammad.

**Shia:** A follower of Shia Islam, the smaller of the two major Islamic sects who believe Ali should have been the first caliph after the death of Muhammad.

**Sikh:** A follower of Sikhism.

**Sindh:** One of the four Pakistani provinces.

**Sunni:** A follower of Sunni Islam, the largest sect in Islam which forms a majority in Pakistan; Sunnis disagree with Shias chiefly over the role of Ali in Islam.

**Tafsir:** Explanation of or commentary on religious text.

**Two-Nation Theory:** According to this theory, Hindus and Muslims are considered two different nationalities and should have two separate nations.

**Ulema:** Islamic scholars; learned men who often have had extensive years of religious study and are capable of issuing influential religious rulings or "*fatwas*."

**Urdu:** Official language of Pakistan.

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