

A New Agenda  
For The Education Of Indian Muslims  
In The 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Report

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# Foreword

In our contemporary world of significant political, social and economic dislocations, Indian Muslims – like other disadvantaged communities with large populations - need to take stock periodically, and chart new directions for the education of their youth to meet the challenges of an ever-changing present and uncertain future. More than a decade ago, the Sachar Committee addressed similar concerns in its 2006 Report entitled, *Social Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India*, the first such official document in post-independence India which focused only on Indian Muslims, and also included a pioneering and comprehensive analysis of their education.

The 2006 Sachar Committee Report's major contribution in education was to highlight various features of the steady post-independence deterioration in the educational status of Muslims, situate this decline within the context of the socio-economic and political disadvantages faced by them, and to also make various educational recommendations to reverse this downward trend. This iconic document, it should be reiterated, was a response to the concerns faced by Indian Muslims at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and since then their educational position has in fact deteriorated even further. These and other significant developments since its publication in 2006 necessitate a critical introspection into the educational position of Muslims in contemporary India, towards charting a significantly improved educational future in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The human dimensions and enormity of the educational challenges in undertaking this endeavour can be gauged from the following estimates of the Indian Muslim population. The 2011 Census indicated that there were approximately 17.2 crore Muslims, constituting 14.2% of India's population, making them the largest religious minority in India, and the third largest Muslim population in the world next to Indonesia and Pakistan. Since the 2011 Census, using World Bank data, it was estimated that by 2021, there were likely to be about 9.9 crore Muslim children and youth under 25 years, excluding the 0.2 crores enrolled in college (Table 1). Of this, approximately 80% of Indian Muslims would be poor and lower middle class constituting about 7.9 crores.<sup>1</sup>

## **Brief Outline of Report**

This independent and non-sponsored report focuses on the government policies that require to be adopted, and the complementary policy advocacy and community-based measures that also need to be undertaken, to significantly improve the development and education of this group of poor and lower middle class Indian Muslims under 25 years. They constitute approximately 7.9 crore Muslim infants, children, school students, and youth under 25 years not enrolled in schools and colleges. The report principally aims at delineating the rationale, goals, priorities, policies and other interventions that should focus on this group constituting the new education agenda.

This report will articulate a coherent education vision, as well as delineate concrete measures, that address the concerns of Indian Muslims with significantly varying levels of educational attainment. It is based on an analysis of secondary data - relevant books/ articles and official publications; international and all-India reports; large scale learning surveys and national/ state and district level official enrolment and attendance data. The main goal is to stimulate a discussion as to what concretely Indian Muslims should be doing in this crucial juncture of their development to chart a significantly better educational future.

## **Why a New Education Agenda for Indian Muslims is Urgently Needed**

- Official data indicates that Muslims have now the lowest levels of school and higher education enrolment - even lower than traditionally disadvantaged groups like SCs and STs – and have also the lowest participation rates in all prestigious school and higher educational institutions including KGBVS, Central Universities, and Institutions of National Importance (Tables 2 and 3).
- Muslims continue to be among the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in India. A pioneering 2018 intergenerational mobility study indicated that in the current economic liberalisation period, most of the upward mobility gains in India over recent decades had accrued to other traditionally disadvantaged groups like SCs and STs, but for “Muslims these opportunities have substantially deteriorated”.<sup>2</sup> Muslims are now also the most insecure and politically marginalized in India.

- Post-Sachar education policies specifically targeted at Muslims have had very limited impact.<sup>3</sup> In the absence of a popularly acceptable and comprehensive alternative report on the education of Indian Muslims replacing the decade-old Sachar Committee Report's educational views and recommendations, a new education agenda is required which rectifies the Committee's critical omissions and addresses the current educational and other critical challenges facing Muslim youth.
- In times of crisis, for nations at large and individual communities like Muslims seeking sustainable solutions, there is now a world-wide, evidence-based consensus that relevant education reform is the single most important driver of all-round social and economic development.<sup>4</sup>

## **What is New About This Education Agenda?**

This education agenda has distinctive features which differentiate it from other various commentaries on the state of the education of Muslims and recommendations for its improvement in the recent past. In the main, these discussions have not made any substantial break from the general thrust of the 2006 Sachar Committee's educational perspectives and recommendations. Specific examples of the differences between this agenda and the Sachar Report, as well as other documents on overall education policy, will be highlighted later.

While recent Indian education policy documents have emphasised the importance of improving the learning of school students, the policy changes advocated by them with the sole exception of the 2019 Draft National Education Policy, reflect a lack of understanding of the seriousness and depth of the school learning crisis. Moreover, since the learning crisis extends beyond schools and is impacted by earlier developments in infancy and childhood, for any significant improvements to be implemented it is not enough to focus only on the learning outcomes of students.

A more holistic perspective is required that can articulate the extent of learning deficits in different groups of children and youth which hinder them from meeting various contemporary challenges, highlight the considerable negative impact of this failure on the nation as a whole and vulnerable Muslims in particular, and thus provide the

context for understanding the relevance and effectiveness of the solutions offered at the end of the report.

## **Distinctive Features of this Education Agenda**

- Focuses exclusively on the learning of poor and lower middle class, (vulnerable/disadvantaged) Muslim youth under 25 years, who constitute about 80% of the total Indian Muslim population.
- Emphasises the interdependence of deficits and improvements in learning of each of the following 3 distinct groups of vulnerable Muslim children and youth: infants and children between birth - 6 years; students in Classes 1-12; and out-of school /college youth below 25 years.
- Demonstrates that only an uncompromising focus on improving the learning of these 3 groups of disadvantaged Muslims within a holistic and interdependent perspective can meet the larger learning crisis faced by Muslims, and engage constructively with the developmental challenges they face in contemporary India, concentrating on states and districts in which Muslim participation is particularly weak.
- Underscores the foundational importance of developmental inputs during the first 1,000 days of life, demonstrating that the learning of disadvantaged Muslim students cannot depend solely on educational reforms in preprimary centres and schools, but also requires a special focus on learning and development in the first 3 years of infancy.
- Rectifies the lack of attention paid to the large group of out-of school /college vulnerable Muslim youth under 25 years, whose varied and considerable learning needs are often seen as requiring little else beyond adult literacy classes and opportunities for vocational training. At 3.1 crores, these poor and lower middle class Muslim youth exceed the 2.70 crores enrolled in schools and colleges.
- Articulates a new and more expansive conception of learning to meet the challenges facing all disadvantaged students in contemporary India, including poor and lower middle class Muslim school students - far more relevant to the entire range of the latter's educational needs than basing it mainly on student

learning outcomes and a misguided focus on vocationalising secondary education- the narrow and main features of current school educational reform.

*This education agenda also highlights the understanding that the learning of all 3 groups of vulnerable Muslims cannot be significantly improved without Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups also providing a variety of “learning enabling” interventions for them - including policy advocacy, capacity building and community-based initiatives, complementing government policies and schemes. This has been detailed in 7 charts outlined in Chapter 9 - the final chapter of the report.*



# Chapter 1

## Goals and Priorities of the New Education Agenda

### SECTION 1

#### Three Goals

1. Ensure all Muslim children complete a full cycle of 12 years of quality school education from Classes 1-12 leading to relevant learning outcomes by 2030
2. Ensure all Muslim children between birth - 6 years benefit from access to Early Childhood Development programmes, which includes 2 years of pre-primary education by 2030
3. Ensure all Muslim youth outside the formal education system under 25 years have better access to educational opportunities and vocational training.

The following is the rough breakdown of these 3 groups of vulnerable Muslims estimated to be about **7.9** crores in 2020; approximately 80% of the **9.9 crore** Muslims under 25 years. (See Table 1 and Note on Calculations and Projected Estimates of Muslim Children and Youth):

1. About **2.1 crore** infants and children under 6 years
2. Approximately **2.7** crore school students in Classes 1-12.
3. About **3.1** crore out-of school and college youth below 25 years

*While this agenda applies to all Muslims, none of the above 3 agenda goals or their broader socio-economic objectives can be realised without primarily focusing on articulating and improving an expanded and comprehensive vision of learning for the above 3 distinct groups of poor and lower middle class (vulnerable) Muslims under 25 years. Why they need to be prioritised will be discussed in the next section.*

## SECTION 2

### **Five Key Reasons for Prioritising Poor & Lower Middle Class (Vulnerable) Muslims and Their Education**

#### **2.1 Muslims are Among the Most Disadvantaged – 80% are Poor & Lower Middle Class**

- Muslims as a whole, along with SCs and STs, are among the most disadvantaged sections of the Indian population. Not only are Muslims disproportionately represented amongst the poorest groups in India, but various expert estimates indicate that 80% of them are poor and lower middle class – including many OBC Muslims.<sup>1</sup>
- While poverty has considerably reduced in India in the recent past with many of the poor entering the lower middle class. However, a large section of this group are particularly vulnerable and many actually slip back into poverty annually mainly due to emergency expenditures such as high private medical and hospitalisation costs

#### **2.2. Muslims Have the Lowest Enrolment Rates at School and Higher Education Stages - Poor & Lower Middle Class Muslims are the Most “Educationally Backward”**

- Muslim enrolment is now lower than national averages at all levels of school and college education. Their education participation rates are also lower than other disadvantaged groups like SCs and STs, including enrolment in prestigious school and higher educational institutions such as KGBVs, Central Universities and Institutions of National Importance (Tables 2 & 3).
- Since there is a considerable difference in enrolment rates between the highest and lowest socio-economic status quintiles, it can be safely assumed that poor and lower middle class Muslims are have even lower rates of elementary, high school and higher education enrolment than Muslims as a whole, and constituting the most disadvantaged large social group in India.<sup>2</sup>
- This link between socio-economic status and educational participation is a world-wide phenomenon. As the 2018 World Development Report highlights, “In nearly

every country, parents' wealth and education attainment are the main determinants of their children's education. On average, in developing countries there is a 32 percentage point gap between the chances of children in the poorest and richest quintiles completing primary school".<sup>3</sup>

- While there are significant enrolment differences among Muslims from different classes and castes, popular discourse on “educationally backward Muslims” often disregard these socio-economic factors. Given the growing privatisation of education, high school and college attendance is increasingly dependent on both the direct and the indirect costs of education. Consequently, poor and lower middle class Muslim students attend inferior government, low-cost private schools and madrasas, have higher dropout rates, and their high school and higher education participation is proportionately far lower than their more affluent Muslim peers.
- A similar view was expressed a decade earlier by the Sachar Committee Report noting that it was the abject poverty of Muslims, and the direct and indirect costs of schooling for poor parents, which accounted for high dropout rates and limited years of schooling.<sup>4</sup>
- One recent estimate is that by 2018-19, at best about 66% of poor and lower (vulnerable) Muslim youth in the age-group 16-18 years, would have completed 8 years of elementary schooling. (See Tables, Chapter 1 - Note on Estimates of Completion Rates of Elementary Schooling for Muslims)

### **2.3. The Equity Argument - Role of Education in Empowering Vulnerable Muslims**

From an equity/ human rights imperative, all people should be provided with opportunities to develop their capacities and to participate fully in society. Education is the most effective and sustainable driver to harness their talents and participation and contribute to their all-round development. As the following UNESCO document indicates, education confers a variety of benefits to individuals, their communities and countries.

## The Multiple Benefits of Education

Benefits of education for the individual		Benefits of education for society and the state	
ensures human dignity	shapes a person's sense of identity and affiliation with others	allows for the transmission of culture, values, identity, languages, and customs from one generation to the next	encourages a rich cultural life
fosters physical and cognitive development	enables socialization and meaningful interaction with others	promotes sustainable economic growth	helps build a national identity
allows for the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and talents	enables a person to shape the world around them	fosters democratic and peaceful societies	promotes social justice aims
contributes to the realization of the full potential of the individual	enables their participation in community life	Encourages participation and inclusion in decision making processes	overcomes persistent and entrenched challenges
enhances self-esteem and increases confidence	contributes to a full and satisfying life within society		Encourages sustainable development, including respect for the environment
encourages respect for human rights	empowers and allows for the increased enjoyment of other human rights		

Reproduced from UNESCO, *Right to Education Handbook*, 2019, pg. 30.

Since vulnerable populations in most countries have limited opportunities to develop the talents and participation, the *Human Development Report 2014* has observed:

*“Universalism should guide all aspects of national policies to ensure that all groups and sections in society have equality of opportunity. This entails differential and targeted treatment - -providing greater proportional resources and services to the poor, the excluded and the marginalized to enhance everyone’s capabilities and life choices.”*

Human Development Report 2014, *Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience*, UNDP, pp. 10-11

Therefore, since vulnerable Muslims are among the poorest groups in India, and also the most educationally disadvantaged, education and other enabling public policies need to positively discriminate in their favour and thus enable them to benefit from an empowering education.

## **2.4. Lessons from Elite Capture**

When educational schemes or benefits of any other kind are provided to any group, for a variety of reasons it is the well-off within the group that eventually “capture” the scheme and become its primary beneficiaries. For example, while the reservation policy in educational institutions in India are applicable to all SCs and STs, it is the children of the comparatively well-off / elites among them that are disproportionately represented in enrolment in educational institutions, especially in higher education. Similarly, in the USA, attempts to diversify college student bodies with schemes facilitating entrance of Negro/black students has similarly seen the enrolment of proportionately more students from relatively elite backgrounds from these disadvantaged communities.

Muslims have also suffered in the recent past from lack of specifically targeting them in policies meant to improve their socio-economic status. By identifying Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs) and trying to provide benefits to Muslims and other religious minorities residing in them, the Kundu Committee noted that Muslims were not targeted as exclusive recipients of these policies.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the benefits to Muslims from these post-Sachar policies was limited, as the target group of these schemes included all minorities – many of whom were also relatively well off and cornered most of the benefits.<sup>6</sup>

Consequently, unless poor and lower middle class Muslims are specifically targeted, the more affluent, powerful sections of the Muslim community will disproportionately benefit from any educational scheme aimed at the general population of Muslims.

## **2.5. Falling Upward Mobility & Stagnation of Muslims in India’s Post-Liberalisation Phase**

The following 2018 report of a study of intergenerational mobility in India, by Sam Asher, Paul Novosad and Charlie Rafkin, is quoted in some detail since it provides persuasive empirical evidence for why the new education agenda needs to target the

enrolment of poor and lower middle class Muslims. Using the data from the *India Human Development Surveys* (IHDS), and the *Socioeconomic and Caste Census*, the authors have highlighted that during the post-economic liberalisation phase in India, “our most novel and striking finding is that upward mobility has fallen substantially among Muslims in the last twenty years”.<sup>7</sup>

In comparison to the significant progress of SCs and STs, the study noted that it was poor Muslims whose educational rankings had deteriorated. Noting that while a high school education was an absolute prerequisite for a white collar job in government or the private sector, the study noted that, “access to high school and college for Muslims from bottom half families has stagnated for the last fifteen years”.<sup>8</sup> This underscores the significance of enrolment strategies that prioritise 12 years of schooling for poor and lower middle class Muslim students to realise Goal 1 of the education agenda. In conclusion, this pioneering study of intergenerational mobility observed:

*“Our findings imply that virtually all of the upward mobility gains in India over recent decades have accrued to Scheduled Castes and Tribes, groups with constitutional protections, reservations in politics and education, and who have been targeted by many development policies. For other groups, there is little evidence that economic liberalization has substantially increased opportunities for those in the lower half of the rank distribution to attain higher relative social position, and for Muslims these opportunities have substantially deteriorated.”*

S. Asher, P. Novosad and C. Rafkin, “Intergenerational Mobility in India: Estimates from New Methods and Administrative Data”, 2018, pg.7

# Chapter 2

## **Achieving Goal 1 - Focusing on Learning of Vulnerable Muslim Students to Realise 12 years of Quality Education for All Muslims by 2030**

### **SECTION 1**

#### **Improving Basic Literacy, Numeracy & Related Skills of Vulnerable Muslim Students in Government & Low-Cost Private Schools**

##### **Introduction**

Missing in the path-breaking and influential Sachar Report was highlighting the foundational importance of learning in retaining young Muslim children in school, as well as the understanding that all students including Muslims needed to acquire a basic set of language, mathematics skills and other cognitive and non-cognitive competencies in the primary and later stages of schooling to be able to access higher education, and also help them to be better and more productive citizens. And this omission was all the more surprising, because beginning a decade earlier to the publication of the 2006 Sachar Report, learning outcomes in primary and middle schools had been a focus of discussions on quality education, and had been singled out as one of the most important areas of educational reform throughout India. This had been underscored by the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) begun in the mid-nineties, and also in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) initiated in 2000-2001.

Both these nation-wide and flagship programmes of the Central and State Governments initiated about 2 decades ago understood that major deficiencies in classroom teaching-learning processes, and the resultant hugely substandard learning outcomes in literacy, numeracy and other cognitive skills, was a major reason for children dropping out of elementary educational institutions. Since then, educational authorities have been continuing to implement state-wide educational reforms to improve learning outcomes at all levels of school education. In early 2017, a significant development in furthering the learning agenda took place with the HRD Ministry

amending the rules under the Right to Education (RTE) Act to make it compulsory for all state governments to codify expected levels of learning which students in Classes I to VIII should achieve in different subjects.

## **The Equity Dimensions of the Learning Crisis - the National and International Experience**

When it comes to the education of poor and lower middle class Muslim children in India, we need to broaden the traditional understanding of equity to incorporate an equal focus on their acquisition of learning, instead of merely focusing on a quantitative expansion of enrolment, educational facilities and scholarships. Underlying this special focus on learning in this new agenda is the growing understanding that there is a deep and pervasive learning crisis affecting mainly the vast majority of poor and lower middle class Indian children and youth of all communities, including Indian Muslims. Unless we deal effectively with this learning deficit, we would be profoundly failing our children with equally negative consequences for the nation and its communities.

There is now a widespread acceptance of the view that that little is being learnt in most elementary schools in India by Civil Society organizations, education bodies, politicians and the general public. The hugely publicized ASER reports' findings that the vast majority of children in most government and private schools were not acquiring grade level skills were reinforced by similar conclusions arrived at by large - scale learning surveys conducted by government bodies like the NCERT and SCERTs, as well as private organizations like Educational Initiatives. In this connection, the 2018 Central Government flagship programme, *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan - An Integrated Scheme for School Education* –has noted that its major objectives are “enhancing learning outcomes of school education “and ensuring “equity and inclusion at all levels of school education”.<sup>1</sup>

We are not the only country facing this learning crisis. One of the early commentators on its international dimensions was Lant Pritchett, who as early as 2013, made this observation:



*“More than a billion children worldwide - 95 percent - are in school. Schooling, however, is not the same as education. Few of these billion students will receive an education that adequately equips them for their future. The poor quality of education worldwide constitutes a learning crisis; donors and development agencies have been complicit in its creation.”*

L.Pritchett, “The Rebirth of Education : Why Schooling in Developing Countries Is Flailing”, *Centre For Global Development Brief* , September 2013, p. 4

Similarly, noting that the great schooling expansion has not translated into learning, a more recent document highlighting this international crisis in learning has been the *2018 World Development Report*. Pertinently entitled, *Learning To Realise Education’s Promise*, it reinforces the equity argument made in the previous chapter on the education of vulnerable Muslims by emphasising that the learning crisis affects the poor the most:

*“This learning crisis is a moral crisis. When delivered well, education cures a host of societal ills. For individuals, it promotes employment, earnings, health, and poverty reduction. For societies, it spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion. But these benefits depend largely on learning. Schooling without learning is a wasted opportunity. More than that, it is a great injustice: the children whom society is failing most are the ones who most need good education to succeed in life.”*

World Development Report, *Learning to Realise Education’s Promise*, World Bank, 2018, p. 3

## **1.1. Learning Deficiencies of Poor and Lower Middle Class Students - What the Evidence Indicates about Vulnerable Muslim Students and Other Disadvantaged Groups**

### **1.1.a. Learning Skills of Vulnerable Muslim Primary Students among the Poorest and Significantly Substandard**

- Recent ASER and IHDS 2 – both large scale learning surveys of Indian students revealed that in terms of acquisition of reading, writing and arithmetic skills,

Muslim primary students were either the worst performers, or among the worst, in comparison to OBCs, SCs/ STs and their peers from other religions.<sup>2</sup>

- A 2005 Pratham study indicated that primary students in Urdu medium Municipal Corporation schools of Mumbai fared significantly lower in reading and writing than Hindi and Marathi medium students. In Class 3, as many as 54.3% of Urdu medium students were classified as unable to read; and 58.8% as unable to write. The corresponding figures for Class 4 students were not less shocking at 41.2% and 44.6% respectively.<sup>3</sup>
- Nearly all the Muslim and other students in the above studies were studying in government schools or low-cost private unaided schools, and thus the vast majority of them were from poor and lower middle class (vulnerable) families.

### **1.1.b. All Disadvantaged Students Including Vulnerable Muslims Likely to Be Disproportionately Represented Among the Weakest School and College Learners**

- Since similar studies on learning levels of vulnerable Muslim students at more advanced stages of school and college education are not available, they have to be extrapolated from relevant studies of similar groups.
- A 2017 ASER study, Beyond Basics, which covered about 30,000 rural youth from every major state between 14-18 years, included both students enrolled in schools and colleges, as well as youth outside them. It concluded that their foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and English of both these youth groups were poor, and observed that even weaker was the ability to apply these skills to everyday tasks.<sup>4</sup>
- Many other studies reveal significant substandard acquisition of reading, writing, mathematics, science and English by most Indian students studying at upper primary, high school, and in professional colleges and other institutions of higher education.<sup>5</sup> Within this general student population, disadvantaged students including vulnerable Muslims are highly likely to be disproportionately represented among the poorest learners.

## **1.2. The Varied Negative Impact of Schools Failing in Their Minimum Responsibility of Equipping Most Poor and Lower Muslim Students with Primary-Level Skills**

### **1.2. a. The Burden of Incomprehension and Early School Dropout of Vulnerable Muslim Students**

In addition to nurturing the all-round development of each child, Indian schools have also been traditionally responsible for undertaking a range of responsibilities: equipping students with foundational skills, knowledge and values needed to be active participants in the social, economic and political life of their communities, state and the nation. While stakeholders would disagree with the relative importance of any one of these tasks, all would agree that the most basic and minimum responsibility of schools should be to equip their students with the literacy and numeracy skills required to follow classroom transactions, comprehend other subjects in the school curriculum, and to be able to apply these skills to cope with daily tasks.

However, as the previous subsection has indicated, most poor and lower middle class students, including vulnerable Muslim students, are not even acquiring even primary level skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Moreover, these limited literacy and numeracy skills are not likely to get remedied and substantially improved as they proceed to higher stages of school education, thus making understanding whatever is taught in any school subject during the entire span of their schooling extremely limited. Effective learning of these basic competencies is fundamental to retaining poor and lower middle class children in school. Continuing to attend upper primary and then high school, and failing to comprehend what they are studying makes full-time school attendance challenging and out-of school default options - to stay at home and do household tasks, or work and earn - more attractive for students and parents.

It is this lack of ability to comprehend and participate in any meaningful way with classroom instruction which is the main cause for premature dropping out of many poor and lower class children after they complete upper primary school. This early withdrawal from school, and related limited transitioning to high school, is particularly the case with poor and lower middle class Muslim students. As documented earlier, enrolment rates of Muslim students are lower than the national average, and at best

only about 66% of vulnerable Muslims between 16-18 years are likely to have completed 8 years of schooling.

### **1.2.b. Limiting Future Education, Vocational Training and Employment Options**

These poor educational qualifications limit the future of many young vulnerable Muslims. For those who do not want to pursue higher education, an attractive vocational training option are the large number of courses for a variety of crafts and trades offered by the Industrial Training Institutes. This national network of more than 13,000 government and private ITIs now require candidates to have a minimum Class 10 qualification, or a higher secondary qualification for most courses. Both Class 10 and Class 12 certificates are also minimum requirements for entry into polytechnic colleges in India. Those without an ITI, polytechnic or an undergraduate college qualification are limited in their employment options.

### **1.2.c. Census Literates - Functional Illiterates**

As importantly, early withdrawal from school of poor and lower middle class Muslim students with limited learning skills makes them ill-equipped to deal with basic tasks requiring the application of the 3 R's. The experience of more educationally advanced Latin American countries indicate that their functional literacy rates are likely to be far lower than official literacy figures.<sup>6</sup> This is also likely to be the case in India where census enumerators neither have the time or competency to judge functional literacy. In other words, while the Census may list many poor and lower middle class Muslim youth as literates, they may actually be functionally illiterate as well as innumerate.

## **1.3. Schools Are Also Failing In Equipping Disadvantaged Students to Become Responsible Citizens**

Since the advent of mass education, schools all over the world have been entrusted with the responsibility of preparing their students to become responsible citizens. This has also been the case in post-independent India. Our schools have been entrusted with the task of developing in students a knowledge of India's democratic institutions, as well as appropriate attitudes and values that would help students to become responsible citizens.

Unlike literacy and numeracy learning surveys, we do not have large-scale studies evaluating the state of civic knowledge and values of poor and lower middle class students in government schools. However, we can extrapolate from a large scale study of the civic and social awareness and values of students studying in highly reputed English medium schools catering to middle class and affluent households residing in metropolitan cities.

This 2011 study conducted by Educational Initiatives and Wipro evaluated 23,000 students from Classes 4, 6 and 8 in 89 schools on their awareness and attitudes in 3 major areas: (1) Social issues like gender equality, acceptance and respect for diversity, sensitivity to others (2) Civic and citizenship issues and trust in institutions, and (3) Ecology/environmental issues. The results indicated that much needed to be done to promote traditional civic concerns such as gender equality, acceptance of diversity and care for the immediate environment.<sup>7</sup> Students in government and low-cost private schools are not likely to be very different in holding such attitudes and values than students in English medium private elite schools evaluated in this study.

## **Conclusion – Looking Back, Looking Forward**

This Section listed a number of reasons for focusing on the learning of poor and lower middle class Muslim students situating this within the world-wide crisis in learning, which has had profoundly negative consequences on their educational trajectories and adult futures. It also highlighted that the learning levels of poor and lower middle class Muslim primary students were among the lowest in the country, and also that these hugely substandard acquisition of primary skills did not substantially improve for most vulnerable students at more advanced stages of high school and higher secondary education.

Government and low-cost private schools are failing in discharging the minimum fundamental responsibility of any school in India - equipping their students with foundational literacy and numeracy skills and the related ability to apply them to everyday tasks. Significantly improving the considerably substandard learning of these vulnerable Muslim students is also a necessary condition for retaining them in school and ensuring that all Muslim students complete 12 years of quality education by 2030.

Moreover, many of these state government and private schools were also failing in their traditional responsibility of equipping students with the civic awareness and values necessary to become responsible citizens, and are using textbooks and other supplementary materials which teach values antithetical to those enshrined in the Indian Constitution.<sup>8</sup> Promoting constitutional principles and values in all our schools is critical to coexisting democratically and harmoniously in a world fraught with uncertainty, conflict and violence.

Since Goal 1 of the education agenda includes the acquisition of relevant learning outcomes, which goes beyond the acquisition of these basic primary level learning skills and their application to life outside school, the next section of this chapter explores various issues related to this important concern.

## SECTION 2

### **Equipping All Vulnerable Muslims Students with Advanced Skills and Competencies, Soft Skills and Values to Meet Challenges of Profound Changes in Knowledge, Employment and Citizenship**

#### **Introduction**

In the last 2 decades there has been a quantitative and qualitative explosion of knowledge in every sphere of human activity, as well as an exponential increase in our ability to create, store and distribute this knowledge to all corners of the globe, and to make it available through mobile phones and other devices to increasing numbers of the world's population. When other factors such as climate change and fake news are added to this ongoing impact of the explosion of knowledge, formal educational institutions will need to deal with a series of challenges - among the most important of these being the demands made by profound changes in knowledge, employment and citizenship.

To meet these challenges, we need to articulate an expanded vision of learning, and delineate the type of skills and values with which schools need to equip students to contribute effectively to their families, communities and the nation. While this discussion is applicable to students in all schools, given the overall thrust of this report,

the focus will be on the learning needs of disadvantaged Muslim students in government and low-cost private unaided schools.

Moreover, as this section will demonstrate, these Muslim students, and their equally poor peers from other disadvantaged households, will be even more marginalized in the future, unless they are equipped with a broad repertoire of cognitive and non-cognitive soft skills, attitudes and values which are central to this expanded vision of learning. The current narrower focus on improving learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, as well as vocational training in schools, will be totally inadequate to meet significant present and future challenges.

## **2.1. Challenges of Knowledge, Employment & Citizenship in a World Where the Only Constant is Change**

### **2.1.a. Challenges of Acquiring and Applying Knowledge**

Given the ongoing exponential expansion of knowledge, much of what is taught by teachers and regurgitated by students in schools and board examinations will have little relevance in the immediate future. Moreover, nearly all the factual information can anyway be retrieved by simple internet searches when needed. This easy availability of knowledge within school or college, or even one's residence, will have a profound impact in all spheres of life, including education, access to government services and employment, etc.

The most important educational challenge will be to equip students with the necessary skills to be able to acquire and apply the knowledge that they need, much of it increasingly available on the internet. Those without the skills to do this will be disadvantaged in many areas of life, including the chance to improve their material and social prospects.

### **2.1.b. Challenges of Present and Future Employment**

The profound impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven automation on a variety of occupations in the world has recently received considerable attention from academics, business and political leaders. This Fourth Industrial Revolution will have an unprecedented impact on what is produced, how it is produced and how it is distributed. Many current jobs are likely to disappear and new ones will take their

place. Both white and blue collar workers will therefore need to upgrade existing skills and learn new competencies.

While there is considerable disagreement about the number of jobs that will be lost and gained in various countries, there is general agreement that this AI-driven automation will negatively impact mainly those workers without certain skills and those employed in jobs which are largely repetitious. The poor and educationally disadvantaged will be disproportionately represented in this group.

### **2.1.c. Citizenship Responsibilities - New Challenges of Climate Change & Fake News**

While schools all over the world have always been expected to play an important role in equipping students for citizenship, two new challenges - climate change and Fake News - need to get far greater attention. The former has already had a visible impact and poses an existential danger to all mankind. Estimates of the impact of climate change on countries, including India, during the next two decades indicate that it will be profound and that the poor will be the most affected.

The widespread proliferation and impact of “Fake News” during the last decade has created an entirely new challenge to all countries and their citizens. In this connection, in a study published in *Science*, and using some 126,000 pieces of data provided by Twitter that had been shared by some 30 lakh users over more than ten years, the 3 MIT researchers found that, “the truth simply cannot compete with hoax and rumor. By every common metric, falsehood consistently dominates the truth on Twitter, the study finds: Fake news and false rumors reach more people, penetrate deeper into the social network, and spread much faster than accurate stories”<sup>9</sup>

Mobile phones with internet facilities using social media platforms have a large number of urban - and increasingly rural - users in India. In 2019, it was estimated that there were 80 crore mobile users, and 32.6 crore internet users in 2018. Among the popular social media platforms mainly used for social contact and entertainment included Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Twitter.<sup>10</sup>

It is the unchecked Fake News that gets tweeted and retweeted by these platforms on issues related to Dalits, Muslims and other religious minorities, child kidnappings, cows, etc. that has played a decisive role in the last few years in spreading mob violence and



killing many innocent people. In February 2018, the Supreme Court observed that such acts could not be allowed to become the new norm and had directed Parliament to draft new legislation to punish the perpetrators of mob violence. Moreover, there is the added and well documented danger of the misuse by countries and political parties of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to subvert the democratic electoral process.

Without implementing policy changes and widespread awareness of its consequences, the full force of the impact of both climate change and fake news will be felt by the immediate generations to come. Schools and colleges therefore need to face these new and continuing threats to India's environment, social fabric and democratic institutions, and educate students on their civic roles and responsibilities. Some organizations like Centre For Environment have launched a number of large-scale educational programmes on climate change and sustainability within and outside schools - but given the enormity of what is at stake, far more needs to be done.

Since attention to the threat of Fake News is partly of far more recent origin, the response to it has been more limited. While a growing number of American states are requiring schools to teach students media literacy skills to recognize differences between real and fake news, the good news is that a similar but limited intervention has also been launched in India. To counter rampant rumor mongering using WhatsApp, a new initiative was launched in Kerala in July 2018 in some government schools in Kannur District that focused on training school children to successfully identify fake news, and other kinds of false information on the internet and social media.<sup>11</sup> More schools in India need to implement similar initiatives.

## **2.2. Advanced Skills and Competencies Required to Meet Preceding Challenges**

### **2.2.a. Skills Required for Acquiring & Applying Knowledge**

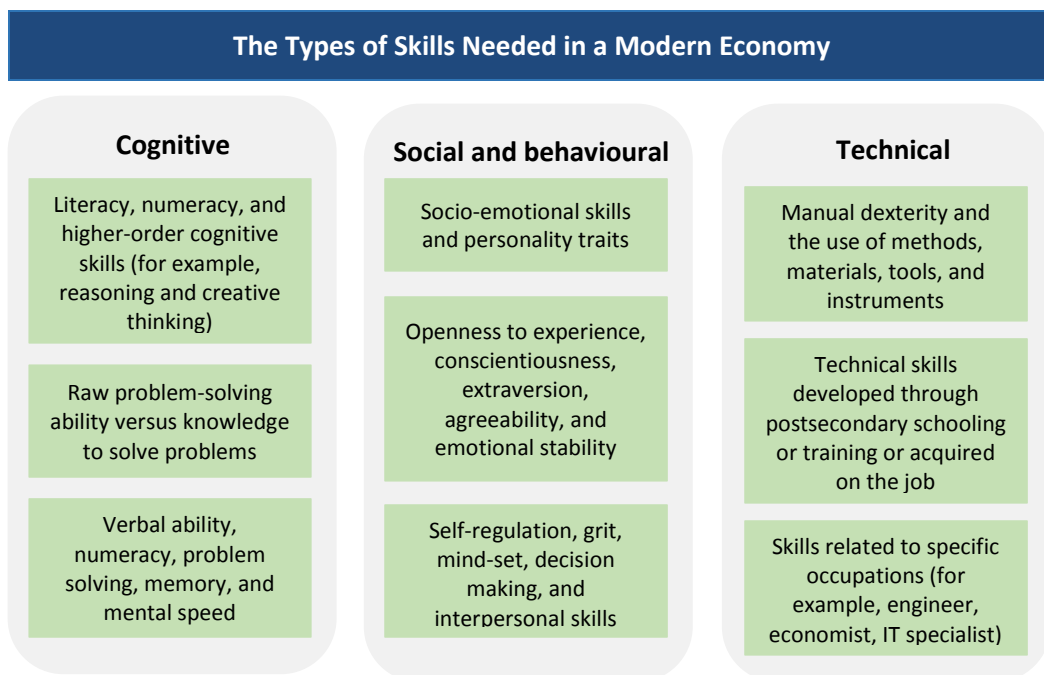
The Fourth Industrial Revolution that we are living in will continue to make available a vast range of useful knowledge and news on the internet. For example in education, MOOCs or Massive Open Online Courses are being offered free or partially free. In 2018, it was estimated that 800 universities had created more than 10,000 of these MOOCs in the past six years.<sup>12</sup> Such online courses can be extremely valuable,

especially to those who want to upgrade their qualifications or improve their skills and employment prospects, but cannot afford to attend full-time college.

With jobs becoming obsolescent or requiring new skills, and lifelong learning becoming a necessity, the future will increasingly privilege those with advanced skills of literacy and numeracy, as well as critical thinking skills, to read critically, comprehend and apply information available to them on a range of devices for various utilitarian and other purposes. Especially important are advanced reading comprehension skills in regional languages and English. Those who do not have these competencies face a bleak future.

### 2.2.b. Skills Required for Current and Future Employment

As noted earlier, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven automation will negatively impact mainly those without certain skills and employed in jobs which are largely repetitious – the poor are disproportionately represented in this group. According to the 2016 World Development Report entitled *Digital Dividends*, a well-educated worker requires various types of social and emotional skills, beyond foundational cognitive skills such as basic literacy and mathematics, which are captured in the following table provided in this report:



Reproduced from World Development Report 2016, *Digital Dividends*, World Bank, pg. 33

### **2.2.c. Values and Skills Required for Citizenship**

It must be highlighted that preparing students to meet the challenges of living as knowledgeable and active citizens in contemporary India has become even more challenging, given the ongoing disputes and conflicts over pressing issues such as secularism, acceptance and respect of cultural and religious diversity, gender equality, tolerance and sensitivity to others. These and other relevant civic values and attitudes need to be revisited and appropriate responses need to be implemented in schools.

We need to build on this foundation of appropriate civic values and attitudes to meet the new challenges of Fake News, climate change and creating a sustainable world. A basic understanding of media literacy, advanced reading comprehension skills and above all critical thinking skills discussed earlier would be indispensable. The following subsections review whether our schools understand these challenges and are beginning to make the necessary changes.

## **2.3. Failure of Schools Equipping Students with Basic and Advanced Competencies and Its Implications for Meeting the Challenges of Knowledge, Employment & Citizenship**

### **2.3.a. Impact of Deficiencies in Literacy Skills on the Acquisition and Application of Knowledge**

The internet will be one of the main sources of acquiring different types of knowledge, including accessing higher education courses, opportunities for higher education, and an indispensable enabler dealing with practical concerns – buying and selling; accessing and filing government documents; knowledge of advertised employment opportunities, etc. All of these different uses of the internet requires advanced reading skills in regional languages and English. Not acquiring even primary levels of literacy in these languages, as documented in Section 1 of this chapter, hugely marginalizes most disadvantaged Indian students, including vulnerable Muslims, both in terms of pursuing knowledge and available education opportunities, as well as dealing with practical concerns.

In this connection, it should be noted that the infrastructure for accessing this knowledge is becoming increasingly available in rural India too, and will become

available to most Indians within the next decade. Currently, as documented earlier, it is little used for educational and practical purposes by both the urban and rural general public. By far, the largest number of users of the internet were under 35 years, and its main uses were for email messages, social networking and entertainment.

### **2.3.b. Impact of Deficiencies in Literacy, Numeracy and Advanced Skills Reflected in Inadequate Skills in Workforce**

The 2018 World Bank Development Report has summarised the negative impact of school learning deficiencies on the quality of workers entering the workforce, including reduced job quality to reduced earnings:

*“Because education systems have not prepared workers adequately, many enter the labor force with inadequate skills. Measuring adult skills in the workplace is hard, but recent initiatives have assessed a range of skills in the adult populations of numerous countries. They found that even foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy are often low, let alone the more advanced skills. The problem isn’t just a lack of trained workers; it is a lack of readily trainable workers. Accordingly, many workers end up in jobs that require minimal amounts of reading or math. Lack of skills reduces job quality, earnings and labour mobility.”*

World Development Report, *Learning to Realise Education’s Promise*, 2018, p. 9

It must be noted that the lack of basic foundational skills of literacy and numeracy of Indian youth in the age group 14-18 years, as highlighted in Section 1, would also show up as weak skills in the Indian labour force. It would also result in the similar range of negative impacts observed in other countries documented in the above World Bank Report.

### **2.3.c. Schools Failing In Equipping Vulnerable Students to Meet New Citizenship Challenges**

As documented earlier in subsection 1.4, students are not acquiring basic civic awareness and values. Moreover, the type of advanced reading and reasoning skills that students need to be equipped with to meet the new global citizenship challenges

of climate change and Fake News is currently beyond the pedagogical capacities of the vast majority of government and low-cost private schools

## **Conclusion**

Government and low-cost private schools cannot abandon their responsibilities of preparing their students to meet the important challenges outlined in this chapter. Charting the way forward for learning reform in these schools, the new mission of government and low-cost private schools will have two main components. First, to articulate an expanded vision of learning which builds on their traditional responsibilities of equipping students with basic literacy, numeracy and other foundational skills, the ability to apply these skills to everyday tasks, as well as civic values and attitudes required for living in a democratic, inclusive and secular India. Second, building on this foundational base, more advanced skills of literacy, numeracy, scientific knowledge and critical thinking, as well as social and emotional (soft) skills, need to be developed by students to meet current and future challenges of knowledge, employment and citizenship in a constantly changing world.

It is this holistic and larger vision of learning that is at the heart of the two sections of this chapter which has focused on Goal 1 of the new education agenda - 12 years of schooling with relevant learning outcomes for all Muslim students.

# Chapter 3

## **Goal 1 - Engaging with Three Important Issues Concerning the School Education of Vulnerable Muslims - Girls' Education - Medium of Instruction - Madrasas**

In almost any discussion on Muslim education, invariably one or more of the following three important issues feature: girls' education; what should be the medium of education (Urdu/ English/ state regional languages); and madrasas. Since the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, these subjects have been significant concerns to Muslim communities throughout India on which a wide variety of opinions have been expressed, reflected in an extensive literature of articles, books and reports in English and various other languages. Much of this has been polemical in nature. For example, a burning 19<sup>th</sup> Century issue on which there was hugely divergent opinions related to the education of Muslim girls. A wide range of Muslim maulvis, and educators, community leaders and politicians, as well as English colonial administrators, Christian missionaries and others weighed in on whether they should receive formal education or not, whether they should attend schools / coeducational schools, and what should be the appropriate goals and content of school instruction for girls.

While in contemporary India, there would be very few who would argue that girls should not be enrolled in school, there would be still considerable disagreement among poor and lower middle class Muslim parents on what the content and purposes of a daughter's formal education should be, and whether this should be different from the schooling of their sons. Similar differences of opinion would arise in Muslim communities concerning madrasas and the medium of instruction. For example, should we be increasing the enrolment of poor Muslim students in full-time madrasas and Urdu medium schools, and would this be in their best interests, as well as the development of the larger community of Indian Muslims?

*Since effectively implementing Goal 1 of the education agenda will have a profound impact on the education of Muslims in the coming decades, it is therefore critical to engage with these three important concerns, within the context of facilitating or*

*hindering the successful implementation of this goal. The following views and recommendations on Muslim girls' education, medium of instruction and madrasas will be mainly based on whether they can promote 12 years of education for all poor and lower middle class Muslims, and can equip them with basic literacy, numeracy, higher order reasoning skills and values that will help them to deal creatively with a world where the only constant is change.*

## **SECTION 1**

### **Goal 1 and the Education of Vulnerable Muslim Girls**

The need to pay particular attention to the education of girls in post-independence India, as well as in other nations, is the result of a variety of factors including a growing consensus that educating them provides a variety of individual and societal benefits:

*“Girls’ education is a strategic development priority. Better educated women tend to be healthier, participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and enable better health care and education for their children, should they choose to become mothers. All these factors combined can help lift households, communities, and nations out of poverty.”*

World Bank Group, *Girls’ Education Overview*, 2017,  
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/girlseducation>

It is therefore not surprising that educational opportunities for educating Muslim girls considerably expanded in post-independence India, building on earlier pioneering efforts to provide formal education to Muslim girls in colonial India by government authorities, as well as Muslim organizations and other groups and individuals. Despite considerable expansion, most commentators have felt that their progress has been limited. Based on various data sets, the 2006 Sachar Committee Report noted that Muslim girls were performing worse than Muslim boys.<sup>1</sup> As the following subsections indicate, contemporary enrolment data suggest a surprisingly very different picture of the educational participation of Muslim girls than the one outlined by the Sachar Report.

## 1.1. While Fewer Indian Girls Are Enrolled Than Boys, Contrary to All Expectations More Muslim Girls than Muslim Boys Now Enrolled at Upper Stages of School Education

*More Muslim girls are now enrolled than boys at the upper primary, high school and higher secondary stages. Equally surprising, as the following table indicates, is that the proportion of Muslim girls as a proportion of total Muslim enrolment is higher than the corresponding all India, SC and ST figures at all stages of education*

### Percentage of Girl's Enrolment to Total Enrolment at Different Stages of Education, All- India and Different Groups, 2015-16

Category	Primary (Stds. 1-5)	Upper Primary (Stds 6-8)	Secondary (Stds.9-10)	Higher Secondary. (Stds 11-12)	Higher Education
<b>All India</b>	48.2%	48.6%	47.6%	47.2%	46.2%
<b>SC</b>	48.4%	48.8%	47.7%	47.8%	45.8%
<b>ST</b>	48.3%	48.5 %	48.6%	47.7%	46.2%
<b>Muslim</b>	<b>49.1%</b>	<b>51.3 %</b>	<b>52.1%</b>	<b>51.7%</b>	<b>46.8 %</b>

Source: DISE Data, 2015-16

## 1.2. The Better Comparative Enrolment of Muslim Girls is Deceptive - Both Muslim Girls and Boys Have Extremely Limited Enrolment in Terms of Their Shares of the Total Indian Population

The above data that the gender parity enrolment ratios of Muslim girls exceeds the corresponding national and SC / ST girls' figures are deceptive A more realistic picture emerges in the following table comparing these rates to their share of the overall population.



**Proportion of Muslim and SC Students of Total Enrolment of Students by Gender and Their Indexes of Social Equity at Each Stage**

Category	Muslim Females	SC Castes Females	Muslim Males	SC Males
Percent of Total Higher Secondary Enrolment	8.8 %	17.5%	7.4%	17.2%
Index of Social Equity at Higher Secondary Stage	62%	108%	52%	106%
Percent of Total Higher Education Enrolment	4.73%	13.78	4.61%	14.0%
Index of Social Equity at Higher Education Stage	33%	85%	32%	86%

Source: DISE 20115-16 and AISHE, 2015-16

As indicated above, the share of Muslim and SC female student enrolment of total enrolment of Indian girls at the higher secondary stage was 8.8% and 17.5% respectively. Any meaningful comparison between both sets of figures can only be made by factoring in their respective shares of the Indian population – 14.2 % and 16.2 respectively – and calculating and comparing the Index of Social Equity for both groups, as has been computed in the above table for the higher secondary and higher education stages. (See Table 2, Chapter 1 for a longer discussion on the calculation and utility of the Index of Social Equity).

The Index of Social Equity for Muslim girls at the higher secondary stage at 62% in 2015-16, reflects their underrepresentation in enrolment in terms of their proportion of the population at this stage. The corresponding figure for almost equally disadvantaged SC girls at 108% % indicates that there were proportionately more SC higher secondary female students than their share of the population. Similar differences can be seen at the higher education stage. Larger differences are reflected in the enrolment of boys. The Index of Social Equity for Muslim boys at the higher secondary stage was a mere 52% while for SC boys, the corresponding figure was more than double at 106%. These difference were even more pronounced striking at the higher education stages where the Indexes of Social Equity for Muslim men and ST men were 32 % and 86% respectively.

### **1.3. Quality Concerns in the Education of Poor Muslim Girls - Content and Goals of Education - Who Should Receive Private Education and English Medium Schooling?**

#### **1.3. a. Gender Differences in Private Education/ Urdu and English Medium of Instruction**

In a note on *Minority Education* prepared for members of Parliament indicated that in 2011-12, though more Muslim girls than boys were attending government and government aided schools at the elementary level, the ratio of Muslim girls to Muslim boys in private unaided schools was 0.78. As the document noted "due to higher fee, poor parents may not be sending girls to private unaided schools."<sup>2</sup> Other studies also indicate a similar gender difference of parents in their choice of English medium schools for Muslim boys and Urdu medium for Muslim girls.<sup>3</sup>

#### **1.3. b. Gender Differences in the Goals of Education**

This gender differential in parental choice of private schooling and medium of instruction reflects differing views of the purposes of education in the lives of Muslim boys and girls. Additional investments in both the education of Muslim boys and English medium instruction is seen by poor parents as improving their future employment choices, and the material prospects of the family. Unlike Muslim boys, girls contribute far more to domestic and other duties from an early age, and are simultaneously socialised by their families and immediate communities into becoming good Muslim wives and mothers. School education is viewed essentially as making them literate and numerate and preparing them for these future domestic roles. In fact, the functioning of some schools may be actively contributing to this conservative domesticating role.<sup>4</sup>

Unlike their more affluent Muslim counterparts, the poverty of most poor and lower middle class Muslim girls, and the neighbourhoods they live in, often circumscribes their options for education as well as employment. In this connection, patriarchy also plays a significant role in the lives of vulnerable Muslim girls and limits their own growth and potential contribution to the outside world.<sup>5</sup>

However, during the last two decades, there has been a change of attitudes to their education and employment as a result of the changes in the cultural, economic and socio-political environment, especially in urban areas. The authors of a 2010 study, limited to Pune city, concluded that, “there is a positive change in the attitude of not only respondents but their parents also, and that realization of the necessity of being employed, proper utilization of talent, and growing sense of responsibility of not only improving the economic condition of family but contributing in economic growth and development of the society”.<sup>6</sup> In a 2017 interview, Amitabh Kundu who headed the Post-Sachar Evaluation Committee observed that “the employment rate among educated urban Muslim women is rising. Increasingly, they are breaking familial and traditional barriers to get education and employment”.<sup>7</sup>

Many disadvantaged Muslim girls are delaying marriage by continuing with their formal education and are actively seeking careers off the beaten track and economic independence, especially in urban areas.

#### **1.4. Overall Limited Muslim Enrolment and Quality Concerns in the Education of Vulnerable Muslim Girls - Implications for the Way Forward**

The importance of focusing on Goal 1 of the new education agenda is reinforced by the recent DISE data indicating that both Muslim girls and more so boys are hugely underrepresented at middle and upper stages of school education. Since most of them would be from vulnerable households, the highest priority should be given to implementing government policies, and policy advocacy, capacity building and community initiatives to improve their enrolment and learning which will be detailed in Chapter 8. While these measures do not preclude specific gender strategies for improving enrolment of girls such as location of schools, appointment of female teachers, the focus should be to ensure that all poor and lower middle class Muslim boys and girls are enrolled, retained and learning by 2030.

What the superior gender parity educational performance of Muslim girls seems to be suggesting is that attitudes to girl’s education have significantly changed, and that - like other disadvantaged groups - there is little resistance from poor Muslim parents to sending their daughters to school. Even in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where the enrolment of Muslims is particularly poor, more Muslim girls are enrolled at the upper primary level, high school and higher secondary stages than boys (Table 4, Chapter 3).

Disadvantaged Muslim parents therefore no longer need to be persuaded - in fact are keen - to educate their girls – a phenomenon noted earlier by the Sachar Committee.<sup>8</sup> What they now need to be convinced of is that their daughters need to be provided equal educational opportunities as sons to pursue 12 years of education, and acquire higher order reasoning skills as well as values to help them function as active citizens contributing to their individual, family, community and national development. This is becoming increasingly important as women are not only contributing to family expenditures, but in a growing number of cases are the sole bread-winners.

In this connection, some of that activities that will be listed later in Chapter 9, as to what needs to be done for information-poor Muslim parents and students in terms of new education and career choices, need to be considered, including the importance of showcasing successful female role models from similar disadvantaged backgrounds. Muslim and other Civil society organisations currently working in the field of raising awareness, empowerment and education of Muslim girls and women, can play an important role. These efforts have been recently documented by both Suchitra Samantha and Farah Naqvi in their 2017 publications, which have featured both older and more recent initiatives.<sup>9</sup>

Towards this vision of equality and development, much more needs to be done with Muslim communities, parents and students by Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups to minimise gender differences in the choice of government/private schooling and the medium of instruction. More importantly, they should work towards repurposing the content and goals of the formal education of Muslim girls, and to help them visualise and secure employment alternatives and channel their aspirations for a better future.

## SECTION 2

### **Goal 1 and the Medium of Instruction: The Competing Demands of Urdu, English and Regional Languages in the Education of Vulnerable Muslim Students**

#### **Introduction**

Given the extraordinary linguistic diversity of India – 122 major languages and 1599 other languages according to the 2001 Census of India - it is understandable that there has been considerable conflict and confusion spanning over many decades over issues regarding the mediums of instruction in Indian education. Though many had expected that after independence English would lose its importance, given its growing and pervasive use in competitive examinations and employment, it continues to be the medium of instruction in almost every professional education college and prestigious higher education institution.

Moreover, in post-independence India, its use in education has exponentially expanded as it has also become the preeminent medium of instruction in school education. Broadly, three types of English medium schools have evolved: high fee charging, private unaided schools with extravagant infrastructure and provisions catering to the rich; a larger group of more modestly equipped schools –often government aided - catering to the expanding middle classes; and in the last 2 decades, the ubiquitous growth of private, low fee-charging English medium schools for the poor in slums and villages all over India for which there is a great demand - many merely English medium in name.

While the growth of English medium schools and colleges has been mainly propelled by market forces, the rapid growth of dominant regional languages as mediums of instruction has been the result of aggressive state education policies. This has seen a phenomenal expansion of school education in the regional languages. The ascendancy of regional languages and English, both in education and in general use, has also seen a corresponding decline of Urdu. For example, the number of people declaring Urdu as their first language has declined in 2011 to only 4.2% of the Indian population.<sup>10</sup> If it can be assumed that all or most of these Urdu speakers were Muslims, it would mean that only about 30% of Muslims declared Urdu as their first language.

## 2.1. Can Urdu Medium Schooling Become a Major Vehicle for Providing Vulnerable Muslim Students with 12 Years of School Education and Relevant Learning Skills by 2030?

Whether Urdu can play a major role as a medium of instruction for realising Goal 1 of the education agenda can only be determined in the context of understanding its position vis-a-vis other mediums of instruction. The Maharashtra data is highlighted in the following table as it has the largest proportion of Urdu medium students.

### Percentage of Total Student Enrolment by Medium of Instruction in Sections in Schools, Maharashtra, 2015-16

Category	% of English Enrolment To Total Enrolment	% of Urdu Enrolment To Total Enrolment	% of Marathi Enrolment To Total Enrolment
Primary Only	7.3%	4.8%	72.0%
Primary + U.Prim, Only	14.2 %	10.1%	64.8%
Prim.+ U.Prim.+ Sec+ H. Sec.	<b>56.6%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	28.4%
U. Prim. Only	2.2%	36.3 %	46.9%
U.Prim + Sec + H. Sec	9.2%	<b>5.6%</b>	82.6%
Prim + U.Prim. + Sec	50.3%	1.1.%	28.5%
U.Prim + Sec	21.6%	4.1%	74.6%
<b>Total Enrolment in All School Sections</b>	<b>17.4%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	<b>66.6 %</b>

Computed from medium of instruction data in *State Report Cards*, DISE 2015-16

The above table encapsulate the relative positions of English, Urdu and Marathi in Maharashtra, by school stages/section. Though Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar have significantly larger Muslim populations, it should be reiterated that the Maharashtra data has been provided as it has more than any other state, the largest proportion of students studying in Urdu medium schools. However, even in Maharashtra, this percentage is a bare **6.7%**. Even this limited enrolment of **6.7%** in Urdu medium sections is misleading. Less than **2%** of all students were enrolled in “complete” Urdu medium schools, i.e. those that had all the sections/ stages from primary to higher secondary. The proportion of Urdu enrolment in other incomplete

schools which had only secondary or higher secondary sections or both, was also very limited, ranging from **1.1%** to **5.6%** - despite Maharashtra being among the few states that offers education in Urdu up to the higher secondary level. In many other states, Urdu is only an optional subject in schools.<sup>11</sup> As is apparent in the next table, enrolment in Urdu medium schools for the country as a whole is far more limited than Maharashtra.

### Percentage of Total Enrolment of Students by Medium of Instruction in Sections in Schools All India, 2015-16

Category	% of English Enrolment To Total Enrolment	% of Urdu Enrolment To Total Enrolment
Prim + U. Prim + Sec.+ H. Sec.	<b>56.6 %</b>	<b>0.8 %</b>
Prim + U. Prim + Sec	50.3%	1.0%
U. Prim + Sec + H. Sec.	9.2%	1.4%
Upper Prim + Sec.	21.6%	1.7%
<b>Total Enrol. in School Sections</b>	<b>17.4%</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

Computed from medium of instruction data in *State Report Cards*, DISE 2015-16

Enrolment in Urdu medium schools for the country as a whole is far worse than Maharashtra. While the total proportion of students in Urdu medium sections is only **2%**, only **0.8%** of all Indian students are enrolled in Urdu medium schools which have all 4 schools stages/sections from primary to higher secondary. And less than **2%** of the proportion of all students are enrolled in other types of incomplete Urdu medium schools which have either secondary or higher secondary sections.

The above disaggregated data reveals the fundamental problem that Urdu medium schools face in all states. Even in Maharashtra, for parents and students who want to pursue a full course of Urdu medium school instruction from primary school to higher secondary or even high school, there are few such complete schools in most rural and urban locations. An analysis of transition rates of students in Maharashtra has noted that “Muslim students are not able to move from Urdu medium schools to other medium schools and they drop out from the education system early”.<sup>12</sup> In Karnataka, which has also large numbers of Urdu medium schools, those who want to continue with their studies attempt to migrate to schools that offer other mediums of

instruction. But admission is not always granted for those who seek enrolment at middle or high school stages, and those who get in have to cope with the enormous difficulty of learning a range of school subjects in a new medium of instruction.

## **2.2. Poor Quality of Learning, Pedagogy and Infrastructure in Urdu Medium Schools**

As documented in Chapter 2, a large - scale survey of reading and writing levels of primary students in Municipal Corporation schools of Mumbai indicated that Urdu medium students fared significantly lower in reading and writing than Hindi and Marathi medium students. In Class 3, as many as 54.3% of Urdu medium students were classified as unable to read, and 58.8% as unable to write. The corresponding figures for Class 4 students were no less shocking at 41.2% and 44.6% respectively. Accounting for substandard learning in Urdu medium schools in Karnataka, M.A. Siraj has observed:

*“This poor quality of learning is due to a variety of reasons, including very poor physical conditions, poor quality of teachers and teaching, limited number of Urdu teacher training colleges, limited knowledge of Urdu of even trainers, textbooks poorly translated from regional languages, etc.”*

M.A. Siraj p.12; Mehfil e Nisa in 2014; *Islamic Voice*, April, 2014;

## **2.3. Employment and Related Factors and Its Impact on Urdu Medium Schooling**

Many historical and cultural factors account for the close affinity for Urdu among various Muslim communities in different regions of India. But despite these strong bonds, and many efforts by government and Muslim organisations to promote Urdu medium instruction, its decline has been inexorable in post-independent India. In stark contrast to the varied benefits which can potentially accrue to students if they chose to study in English medium schools, there are no similar tangible educational, practical and material advantages for young Muslims to pursue Urdu as a medium of education, which principally accounts for its decline. For students educated in Urdu, the most they can expect is to teach in an Urdu medium school or a madrasa.<sup>13</sup>



## **2. 4. Urdu Cannot Become a Major Medium of Instruction for Vulnerable Muslim Students**

Urdu cannot become the medium of instruction for most poor and lower class Muslim students for a number of reasons. There is very limited demand for Urdu medium instruction – it is only the first language of about 30% of all Indian Muslims. There are also proportionately few complete Urdu medium schools available to pursue education from the primary level to the higher secondary stage to implement Goal 1. Moreover, poor standards of Urdu medium schools - students and teachers – and limited available educational resources in Urdu cannot currently make it an instrument for developing basic scientific knowledge and higher order thinking skills. Neither does it promote enrolment in higher educational institutions including professional colleges, nor access most of the knowledge available on the internet. Finally, it does not prepare students for the wide variety of government and private sector jobs available in contemporary India.

## **2.5. Can English Medium Schools Instead of Urdu Become the Major Vehicle for Educating Poor and Lower Middle Class Muslim Students and Implementing Goal 1?**

Writing in 1997, Jeffrey observed that “where English is considered to be the language of the wealthy, Urdu is now regarded as the primary language of the poor, particularly of poor Muslims”.<sup>14</sup> Wealthy Muslims have for decades before and after independence studied in English medium schools. Aspiring middle class educated Muslims, after independence, also began opting for English medium education for their children to secure employment. Unconfirmed figures indicated that while there were about a dozen English medium schools in Bangalore run by Muslims in 1982, by around 2016 this had expanded to 450 schools!<sup>15</sup>

The abandoning of any patronage or espousal of Urdu in schools by the aspiring middle class and wealthier Muslims resulted in a corresponding decline of Urdu medium schools. Urdu medium schools, as currently functioning, has little to offer vulnerable Muslim students by way of accessing basic and useful knowledge and skills, higher education and employment. However, on all these educational and employment-related factors, English medium education in India has far more potential to make a

significant positive impact. As the preceding tables on school enrolment by mediums of instruction in subsection 3.2.a. have documented, English has by now consolidated its place as the dominant medium of school instruction in Maharashtra and India – most strikingly revealed in the evidence that more than 50% of Indian students are enrolled in complete schools which have all 4 stages of primary to higher secondary schooling offering English as the medium of instruction.

Beginning more than two decades ago, the demand for English medium schooling by all sections of Indian society has also led to a corresponding decline of not only Urdu, but all regional languages as mediums of instruction. Meeting the demands of ambitious middle class parents, English medium instruction has had a ‘killer’ impact on all other mediums of school instruction:

*“To cope with this new demand of parents, educational trusts running established regional medium schools have in many cases had to add English medium divisions to existing classes. Some have started entirely new parallel English medium schools. Others have abandoned their original mission of promoting regional medium education, and have switched over entirely to English medium instruction.”*

John Kurrien, ‘The English Juggernaut : Regional Medium Schools In Crisis’, *The Times Of India* , April 30, 2004

This mass migration to English medium schools by the poor is only likely to increase as the demand for English in various service sectors continues to expand, and all types of professional and prestigious higher education courses continue to be offered in English. Moreover, unlike the early post-independence decades, English medium schooling is no longer viewed with hostility as culturally alien and the sole preserve of the elite. Au contraire, it is now being explicitly promoted as being absolutely critical and empowering for the poor in contemporary India by diverse spokesman such as the Dalit activists Chandra Bhan Prasad and Kanchi Iliah Shepherd. Other votaries of English medium schooling include Narayana Murthy of Infosys fame and Rajasekhara Reddy, ex-Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, in response to the public demand for English medium schooling, Kashmir has switched over to English medium, and Telengana has started this process. It is also

the preferred medium of instruction to Nagamese in Nagaland.<sup>17</sup> Contrary to established language policies, states all over India have also undertaken various initiatives to introduce government English medium schools. A recent large-scale study on preschool education in rural India documented that parents from a random sample of 357 villages in the 3 states of Assam, Rajasthan and Telengana preferred preschools with English as a medium of instruction!<sup>18</sup>

For large sections of Indian society, English medium schooling is the educational panacea. As Baird in his analysis of private English medium schools in Hyderabad and Mumbai has noted:

*“Today, English serves as the language of expertise and management in India; politicians, if they can speak good English, will often do so to assert elite status. As a result, English maintains a powerful presence among the poor of India: the vast majority of low-income parents I interviewed believed that if their child can speak English, he or she would be guaranteed a middle-class job. In previous demand-side analysis of the low-fee private school sector, the majority of lower-middle class Indians viewed English as their ticket to mobility—just within reach, but with required sacrifices. Private school tuition is one of these channels.”*

Ross Baird, *Private Schools for the Poor : Development, Provision, and Choice in India*, May 2009, p.21

*Therefore, given this demand from all sections of Indian society, the following subsections addresses whether English, unlike Urdu, could become the major vehicle for providing 12 years of quality education with relevant learning outcomes for poor and lower middle class Muslim students?*

## **2.6. Can Functional Literacy, Numeracy & Higher Order Cognitive Skills be Acquired By Vulnerable Muslim Students in English Medium Government & Low - Cost Private Schools?**

The above question is particularly relevant because poor parents, including Muslims, invest so much time and money to get their children enrolled and retained in these schools, and so much effort to ensure that their children learn English. While there is anecdotal evidence on success stories and failures, it is important to focus only on studies that have evaluated the quality of learning of poor and lower middle class children attending government and low-cost private English medium schools. Based on this evidence, a judgement can be made as to whether such schools can enable vulnerable Muslim students to realise Goal 1 of the agenda, and thus improve their access to knowledge, higher education and employment prospects.

*Will the English medium education provided by government and low-cost English medium schools help poor and lower middle class Muslim students realise their hopes and dreams, or will it be a cruel chimera?*

## **2.7. Significantly Substandard Levels of English in Rural Government English Medium Schools**

The following data is based on the results of a large, multi-state ASER learning survey involving 4,553 rural government school students in Kashmir, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur who chose to answer in English. Though they were not asked about the medium of instruction in their schools, these students were selected for a special analysis, since the assumption was that they chose to answer in English because they were studying in English medium government schools.

Almost 42% of these students in Classes 5-8 were at best able to read English words but not simple sentences that a Class 1 student could be expected to read and comprehend. In a state like Kashmir, where English has been the medium of instruction in the entire state for about 2 decades, the number of non-sentence readers was actually slightly higher at 47% (Table 5, Chapter 3). If almost half the upper primary students in rural government English medium schools in Kashmir were not able to read simple English sentences, one can only surmise that the only way these and many other

students coped with other subjects in the school curriculum was through learning by rote, and reproducing answers verbatim from their textbooks.

## **2.8. Similar Substandard English Levels in Urban Low-Cost Private English Medium Schools**

The following empirical evidence on English proficiency of students in low-cost private English medium schools catering mainly to poor urban households is based on Tanuka Endow's 2018 paper, "Inferior Outcomes: Learning in Low-cost English-medium Private Schools—A Survey in Delhi and National Capital Region". Nearly half the women in the households were illiterate or had been educated till only the primary level. The main earners in the family included a high share of drivers, auto drivers and sales people, as well as construction labourers, tailors, helpers and security personnel. Adding schooling and private tuition costs together, parents spent monthly around Rs. 650–1,300 per child in Delhi and Rs. 800–1,400 per child in Noida, which are considerable financial outlays for education by these vulnerable households.<sup>19</sup>

The above evaluation, though it involved fewer students than the ASER study, tested other aspects of English skills and also documented the quality of teachers and classroom practices in these schools. The English tests were based on ASER tests set deliberately low so that a Class 1 child would have been able to read and comprehend sentences such as: "This is a large house"; "I like to read"; "She has many books". Almost 30% of the children in Classes 1-5 could not tell the meaning of a single sentence. Speaking skills were worse. Given a series of 12 pictures, 54% of children in Delhi and 34% in Noida were not able to utter a single sentence describing any of the pictures. In another reading comprehension test of a textbook passage, more than 50% of the students could not tell the meaning of what they read.<sup>20</sup>

## **2.9. Main Reasons for Deficits in English of Disadvantaged Students Attending Low Cost English Medium Private Schools.**

The following reasons for the low levels of English are based on field-observations of classrooms and interviews with students, parents, teachers and other stakeholders conducted by Tanuka Endow, Usree Bhattacharya and Jyotsna Lall. Like Endow, both Bhattacharya and Lall conducted research in low-cost private unaided English medium schools catering to disadvantaged households and have arrived at similar conclusions.<sup>21</sup>

Most of these schools were run by entrepreneurs, who had limited or no experience in education. In order to generate profits, as any other profit-making business, and also keep their fees low enough to attract poor parents, students were taught in large multi-grade classes. Moreover, those who were recruited as teachers were mostly young people who had studied in regional medium institutions, had no teaching qualifications and were paid a pittance. The following are the main reasons for the low English learning levels of students:

#### Limited English Proficiency of Teachers

The main reason for most students acquiring little or no English skills was their teachers' own extremely limited knowledge of the language. Most important of all, since the spoken English skills of these teachers were particularly deficient, they were unable to conduct their classes in English. This had various negative consequences for teaching, learning and evaluation.

#### Classroom Teaching – English, Regional Languages and the Translation Method

Given the limited English proficiency of teachers, the classes were conducted in a mixture of English and the regional language. The English textbooks were taught by reading the text aloud in English, simultaneously translating the lesson in the regional language. While most students broadly understood the text that was explained by their teachers, many were unable to understand individual words or phrases. Opportunities to respond in English were minimal, and sometimes responses of students were actively discouraged by corporal punishment.

#### Memorisation

Since the entire goal of classroom instruction was geared to doing well in examinations, a considerable amount of classroom time was spent in memorising model compositions, essays and answers to questions that were likely to appear in examinations. These were either written on the blackboard by teachers, or dictated to students. This was the pattern set for teaching not only English, but also all other subjects in the school curriculum.

### Lack of Parental Support

Since parents themselves had limited formal education and knowledge of English, they had little or no understanding of what their children learnt in schools, unaware of the English language deficits of their children, and spent considerable sums of additional money on tuitions for their children.

## **2.10. Most Poor & Lower Middle Class Muslim Students Will Not Reach a Functional Level of Proficiency in English in the above Private or Government English Medium Schools, Leave Alone Higher Order Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skills**

Clearly the sub-standard English skills of students in these schools could improve if teachers were more proficient in the language. However, this may be impossible for most low-cost private schools. In order to attract English-speaking teachers, far higher salaries would have to be offered. They would also need smaller classes, which would increase the school fees and make them unaffordable for poor parents.

While this may not be the case for state and local governments, who can afford higher teacher costs and smaller classes, they would also need to invest far more human and financial resources to run good English medium schools. Token initiatives will not make the slightest difference. For example, in 2007 the Andhra Pradesh government introduced English medium instruction in 6500 schools across the state as a pilot program and offered only a 13-day workshop to re-train teachers in the teaching of English to be able to teach in these newly started English medium schools!<sup>22</sup>

The experience of a few dedicated NGOs working in a small number of municipal or private low-cost schools with good English-speaking teachers can be misleading since both the initial conditions and scaling up issues in government and low cost private schools are of a significantly different order of qualitative and quantitative magnitude. Achieving the impossible goal of making English the medium of instruction for many disadvantaged Muslim students, would involve helping lakhs of them, who come from households where English is not heard - leave alone spoken - not only acquire basic speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in English, but also to think, express themselves in English and acquire higher order reasoning skills.

In this connection, it should be emphasised that the quality of teaching and learning of English quality of instruction highlighted above in unaided budget English medium schools catering to the poor is not likely to be very different from similar inexpensive private initiatives in rural and urban India, nor differ from the English medium rural government schools that are being started in various states to stem the migration from government schools to the low-cost private English medium sector. Any observer of government English medium schools in India would confirm what Baird has noted of government schools in Andhra Pradesh: “in practice, English-medium government schools are not teaching in English”.<sup>23</sup>

### **2.11. The Best Option - Strengthening English in Government and Government Aided Regional Medium Schools**

The three language formula was endorsed by the 1986/1992 Policy on Education and the 2005 NCF; as well as a commitment to using the regional/ national language as the medium of school instruction. The latter is standard practice in almost every developed country of the world. This is in keeping with this report’s perspectives expressed in Chapters 2 and 6. While many poor and lower middle class Muslims in different states of the country speak the local language, and send their children to government regional medium schools, this needs to be specially encouraged to expand employment possibilities and as importantly encourage civic engagement, access to positions of power and privilege, and integration of Muslims with other local communities.



*“It is a general perception that more than religion, it is the lack of proficiency in market-linked languages that is the bane of Muslim education and mars their prospects of employment or effective integration with the life and development of the State. For instance, Urdu medium of education does not endow the community with linguistic skills relevant for administration and the market. A person educated through Urdu medium is not sufficiently skilled to apply for a Government job, or can read a newspaper in English or Kannada or file an FIR in a police station, or plead his case for facilities with civic authorities or Civil Supplies Department or can understand the dominant cultural trends in popular literature, films or journalism. This incapacity deters the community’s effective integration with the mainstream life and development and also hinders its access to positions of power, profit and privilege which lends assertiveness to them”*

M.A, Siraj,, *Status of Urdu Medium Schools in Karnataka*, Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy (NLSIU), 2017, pp. 1-2

What government schools and Civil Society groups need to do to improve English standards is detailed in Chapter 6 in the section on learning, and Charts 1 and 2 in Chapter 9.

## **Conclusion - Looking Back, Looking Forward**

It is important to state that the position of this report is that the decision regarding the medium of instruction for any young child should rest with parents, and that as much as possible it should be an informed choice. If parents want their children to study in Urdu medium schools, they should also be made aware that the chances of completing high school or higher secondary education in Urdu medium schools is limited in every region of India, and that it offers little or no prospect for higher education or employment.

The issue of making an informed choice for vulnerable parents, as to whether to choose English as the medium of instruction, is far more complicated. Seeing the clearly visible educational and material advantages that the children of the affluent are receiving as a result of studying in English, it would be almost impossible to dissuade poor parents from enrolling their children in government or low cost English medium schools by

arguing that it may not be in their best interests. Sending children to an English medium school has also become a status symbol for poor parents.<sup>24</sup> It is only if they are convinced that the standards of English in regional medium schools are visibly improving – that enrolling children in regional medium schools can also make them proficient in English (and concurrently that poor children in private and government English medium schools for the disadvantaged are unable to acquire even basic English skills), that a reverse large-scale migration to regional medium schools will become possible.

From a pedagogic and developmental perspective, this would be desirable. However, this will take time since improving significantly the standards of English involves, as a necessary but not sufficient condition, the hiring of teachers who know English, at higher salary costs. Unlike private budget schools, these additional teacher salary costs can be met by state and local governments. However, this will not be enough since far more human and financial resources are required to improve the English of disadvantaged students in regional medium government schools. To reiterate, regional medium schools will also have to incorporate some of the complementary measures to improve learning and accountability of schools in general, and the acquisition of English skills in particular, outlined in the first 2 charts of subsection 2 dealing with Goal 1 in Chapter 9.

In the immediate future, however, one can expect to see decreasing enrolments in Urdu medium schools as well as regional medium schools, and increasing intake of poor and lower middle class Muslim students in the government and low cost English medium private sector. In spite of the evidence that English medium instruction in government schools will only exacerbate the learning crisis of poor and lower middle class Muslims - neither acquiring the necessary learning skills in the regional languages or in English - the reversal of this migration to English medium schools will depend on state government authorities and Civil society organisations taking the necessary school and community initiatives to improve the standards of English in regional medium schools. Muslim organisations have an important role to play in raising awareness among parents about making informed choices regarding the type of schools their children attend, and also providing community-based initiatives for teaching English.

## **SECTION 3**

### **Goal 1 and Madrasas**

No discussion on the education of Muslims in contemporary India can be complete without discussing the role of madrasas. Since the focus of this report is on the education of poor and lower middle class Muslims, this discussion is particularly relevant since almost all madrasa students come from such vulnerable households. It is therefore important to understand the role of madrasas in the education of Indian Muslims in general, and for poor Muslims in particular, and the ongoing contemporary attempts at the modernisation of madrasas to meet the religious and material needs of the latter.

#### **3.1. The Contemporary Relevance of the Sachar Committee Report's Views on Madrasas**

A significant contribution of the 2006 Sachar Committee Report was its frank and illuminating discussion on the role of madrasas in the education of Muslims in India. The main issues that it dealt with and the solutions that it articulated are still relevant to any discussion on their role in a new education agenda for Indian Muslims. Beginning with the Committee's articulation of the significant position of madrasas in the life of Indian Muslims, and the suspicion that madrasas evoked, are concerns that continue to resonate a decade later after its Report's publication:

*“Madarsas, through which the Community ensures that its future generations acquire knowledge of Islam, have become a symbol of Muslim identity in India- - Labeling of Madarsas as a den for terrorists is extremely worrisome for the Muslim community. Even though there has been no evidence to suggest that Madarsas are producing terrorists they are constantly under scrutiny. It has been pointed out that the existence of Madarsas (though not as a substitute for regular schools) is necessary for Muslims as, apart from providing basic education, they serve as an important instrument of identity maintenance for the Community”*

India, Prime Minister’s Office, Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India: A Report, 2006, p. 16

### **3.2. Sachar Report and Contemporary Estimates of Madrasa Enrolment - Only a Small Percentage of Muslim Students Attend Madrasas**

Prior to the publication of the Sachar Report, there was a growing controversy about the number of madrasas – estimates varied from a few thousand to sixty thousand (EPW). One of the major contributions of the Sachar Committee was to provide a corrective to the popular myths about the number of Muslims attending madrasas – “a persistent belief nurtured, in the absence of statistical data and evidence, is that Muslim parents have a preference for religious education leading to dependence on Madarsas”<sup>25</sup>

In this connection, an important contribution of the Sachar Committee report to the madrasa debate was to highlight the distinction between maktabas and madrasas noting that the former are neighbourhood schools, often attached to mosques, that provide religious education to children who attend regular schools to get ‘mainstream’ education. It noted that the common belief that a high proportion of Muslim children study in madrasas stems from the fact that they are actually enrolled in the local Maktabas, and that only 4% of all Muslim school-going children attended madrasas.<sup>26</sup>

The latest official DISE data indicates that recognised and unrecognised madrasas had a total enrolment of about 25.5 lakh students which constituted about 7.7% of the total Muslim student enrolment of 3.3. crores in 2015-16 (Table 6, Chapter 3). The 2006

Sachar Committee Report and DISE 2015-16 data indicating that 4% and 7.7% of all Muslim school-going children attend madrasas are the best recent official estimates available. Since many private schools, including madrasas, are not included in official enrolment data, we may never be able to quantify accurately the number of children attending madrasas, and also distinguish them from those studying in part-time maktabas. This is highlighted by an 2011-12 estimate of the National Monitoring Committee on Minorities' Education indicating that 9.7% of Muslim children attend recognised and non-recognised madrasas.<sup>27</sup> Though even official estimates vary, it is clear that the overwhelming majority of poor Muslim students receive their formal education in mainstream government, government aided and private schools.

### **3.3. Key Features of Madrasas in Contemporary India**

Since their advent in India with the early Muslim rulers, madrasas have changed to face a number of challenges. The following features of contemporary madrasas are largely a result of developments and reforms undertaken in colonial and post-independence India:

- Since they offer free education and often free boarding facilities, as well as possible employment as imams and maulvis, most madrasa students belong to poor families. This was not the case in pre-colonial India, where upper class Muslims also attended madrasas, which was training for employment as scholars and administrators in the reigning dispensation. But this changed in colonial India as the madrasa links to employment in the state apparatus was broken.<sup>28</sup>
- The changing socio-economic composition of madrasas, and other developments in colonial India, reversed the earlier emphasis on rational studies in favour of the study of the Hadith to eliminate syncretic tendencies in poor Muslims and transform them into pious, personally responsible Muslims.<sup>29</sup> Contemporary madrasas continue to be caught in this perceived conflict between worldly knowledge and religious knowledge.<sup>30</sup> This struggle is reflected in continuing debates over the religious and secular aims of madrasa education, the extent to which secular subjects should be incorporated in the curriculum, and also which of these subjects should be considered secular and appropriate for study.

- There are a wide variety of madrasas in contemporary India. Many are grouped under, or loosely associated, with different schools of thought, often ideologically hostile to each other, like the Deoband, Nadwatula, Ahi i Hadith and Bareilvi schools. There is little or no connection between them - most follow their own syllabus and textbooks, and there is no uniformity even in the number of years required to obtain degrees or different levels of learning. Most madrasas teach up to the primary level or at the most to the secondary level.<sup>31</sup>
- Suspicious of government funding, and reversing the precolonial trend of depending on state patronage, the financing of colonial madrasas began to solely depend on community funding. This lack of trust of government, and reliance on community funding continues in contemporary India.
- However not all madrasas have continued to refuse state financial assistance. Some states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Assam have constituted madrasa boards and have provided grants-in-aid to madrasas registered with them. In this growing number of registered madrasas, the curriculum include secular subjects and use state-prescribed or NCERT textbooks.<sup>32</sup>
- Many more girls are now attending madrasas, including coeducational madrasas, despite the popular perception regarding Muslim parent's hesitation in sending their girls to co-educational institutions".<sup>33</sup>

### **3.4. Post-Independence Madrasa Reform /Modernisation of Madrasas**

Like their colonial predecessors, new developments have made contemporary madrasas make changes mainly due to pressures from contending forces and groups from within the Muslim community to respond to the changing external environment. Broadly, the motivation to modernise madrasas can be characterised by two broad types of goals.

- Preparing the new generations of ulema to become more knowledgeable and socially aware community leaders.
- Improving the skills and knowledge of madrasa students required to cope with the challenges of education and employment in modern India.

Given the focus of this report, the following will evaluate the latter set of initiatives, specifically focusing on the large-scale government sponsored schemes to modernise madrasas.

The first major intervention of the Central Government was the MHRD scheme, *Area Intensive and Madrasa Modernisation Programme of the Ministry*, which focused on infrastructure and curriculum development and was implemented for a number of years. The Sachar Committee considered the scheme ineffective, and recommended that the scheme be reviewed, and revamped before embarking on its expansion.<sup>34</sup> While there have been some other government sponsored programmes, the next major intervention in the modernisation of madrasas was the MHRD centrally sponsored scheme, *Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas (SPQEM)*. According to a 2018 NUEPA evaluation, SPQEM started during the XIth Five Year Plan in 2009-10 covered over 21,000 madrasas and was currently being implemented in 18 states in the country.<sup>35</sup>

The two main objectives of the SPQEM are: a) to encourage Madarsas and Maktabas to introduce formal subjects i.e. Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Hindi and English; b) to enable the children studying in Madarsas and Maktabas to achieve academic proficiency in classes I to XII.<sup>36</sup> This was to be achieved by providing for the following: salary of additional teachers, strengthening of libraries and book banks, providing teaching learning materials (TLMs) and other essential pedagogical equipment for teaching modern subjects at primary/middle/secondary and senior secondary levels.

### **3.5. Large-Scale Modernisation of Madrasas -Evaluation of the Implementation of SPQEM**

While individual or some groups of private madrasas are also undergoing modernisation, it is the quality of the large-scale implementation of the SPQEM in many states of India which has the greatest relevance to understanding its role in the education of vulnerable Muslims in contemporary India. The following is based on the findings of a 2018 NUEPA evaluation report, and to a lesser extent an earlier 2013 evaluation conducted by the K. R. Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities, Jamia Millia Islamia.

1. The responses of the community, parents and madrasa staff and management were considerably enthusiastic about SPQEM because it combined religious and modern subjects thus serving both material and spiritual needs<sup>37</sup>
2. The positive impact of the scheme included improvements in the enrolment of poor children and madrasa infrastructure. It also provided madrasa students a new opportunity to study modern subjects and thus allowing students to aspire to “becoming doctors or engineers or civil servants or police officers”.<sup>38</sup>
3. Under the SPQEM scheme, the extent and coverage varies from state to state. Most madrasas focus mainly on elementary education and the coverage of higher levels of education is limited.
4. The 2013 evaluation observed that there was little clarity on SPQEM guidelines on eligibility of madrasas, which had resulted in a variety of implementation deficiencies. Among the more important consequences was the inclusion of ineligible institutions. Funded under SPQEM, many madrasas were being “run as essentially mainstream public schools” and in many others “the curriculum followed was hardly any different from that of any elementary school except one or two classes of Sunni theology each week.”<sup>39</sup>

### **3.6. Poor Quality of Teaching / Learning of Secular Subjects in Madrasas Under SPQEM and Other Community-Funded Madrasas and Its Varied Impact**

#### Limited Teaching of Secular Subjects

Both the 2013 and 2018 SPQEM evaluations had documented that untrained and unqualified teachers were teaching subjects like science, mathematics and English, and that teachers were appointed by individual madrasa managements, and not regulated by any authority. Moreover, in many government funded madrasas, the science kit and the single computer provided was also not used by students. Moreover both students and teachers were using the conventional rote methods of teaching and learning used in teaching the Quran and Islamic subjects for the secular subjects such as science and social studies.<sup>40</sup>



The teaching of secular subjects in other unrecognised madrasas is likely to be even more limited, since it is government SPQEM funding that has enabled many madrasas to provide both the teachers and learning resources to teach secular subjects. A 2015 report of a survey of 55 madrasas conducted in by Karnataka Students' Islamic Organisation of India (SIOI) documented that less than half taught English, and less than 20% had access to science, mathematics and social science subjects.<sup>41</sup> Another study of 500 prominent madrassas across India revealed that 85 per cent of them did not teach Social Science, English and Mathematics to the students.<sup>42</sup>

### Equivalence of Madrasa Certification and Entry Into Higher Levels of Education

The Sachar Committee had recommended that mechanisms needed to be worked out to link madrasas with mainstream education and employment in 3 ways: madrasas could be connected to higher secondary boards so that madrasa students could shift to mainstream schools after completing madrasas; provision of "equivalence" to Madarsa certificates/degrees for subsequent admissions into institutions of higher level of education, especially when admission is done through a common entrance examinations; similar recognition of madrasa degrees to enable them to sit for competitive examinations for Civil Services, Banks and Defence Services.<sup>43</sup>

There is no evaluation of the extent to which these mechanisms have been implemented, and have enabled madrasa students to access higher levels of education and employment. The 2018 NUEPA evaluation indicated that only a small number of students used the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) scheme to enable madrasa students to study at the secondary and upper secondary level, mainly due to lack of awareness of this facility.<sup>44</sup>

However, despite any formal recognition of madrasa qualifications, transitioning from a madrasa to a mainstream institution at any stage of school or college education will pose adjustment and academic problems. As Arshad Alam has noted that when students transition from the parallel stream of primary-level madrasas to continue their education in regular schools, they "will find it very hard to adjust to new educational and pedagogical context".<sup>45</sup> This can become perhaps impossible for most madrasa students to cope with when they transition later at high school or higher education stages.

### Impact of Medium of Instruction in Madrasas on Entry Into Higher Levels of Education

As detailed in the preceding subsection on the medium of instruction, the language of classroom instruction can facilitate or limit entry into higher levels of school and college education. Like many other aspects of madrasa education in India, there is no empirical data available on the medium of instruction in these institutions. In 2002, Imtiaz Ahmad impressionistically observed that Urdu was the medium of instruction in North Indian madrasas.<sup>46</sup> It is unclear how many madrasas continue to teach in Urdu in the northern and other states of India. However, as documented in the previous subsection, the educational mobility of Urdu medium students is blocked, as few high school and higher secondary schools use it the language of instruction, and even more limited is its use in higher education.

Imtiaz Ahmad also noted that in Bengal, Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the medium of instruction was the regional languages. Madrasas registered under SPQEM are likely to be using the regional language, but the extent to which the regional language is used as a medium of instruction in madrasas is also likely to vary from state to state, and even and within states. In Karnataka, the Students Islamic Organisation of India (SIOI) study of 55 madrasas indicated that more than 50% did not offer Kannada as a subject.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the study of Koran and related religious subjects in most madrasas would be in Arabic. Therefore, even if government increasingly facilitates the recognition of madrasa degrees for entry into higher levels of school or higher education, many madrasa students immersed in religious instruction and secular subjects in other languages like Arabic and Urdu would find it far more difficult than regular students to cope with academic requirements when they transition to mainstream educational institutions.

### Madrasa Graduates and Opportunities for Employment and Social Mobility

There is only limited evidence, and no state or all-India level studies available, exploring the link between madrasas and employment. A study of 77 madrasas in Mewat district of Haryana, a Muslim majority district, enrolling about 8,000 poor Meo students indicated that 78% of the madrasa graduates were employed in madrasas, dargahs and mosques, and only a few went on to university education. The study noted that only around three per cent of madrasa educated persons have attained a higher level of socio-economic development. Otherwise “most of them fell into the category of poor

socio-economic conditions as madarsa trained persons cannot bring any substantial socio-economic change because their professions cannot bring good remuneration”.<sup>48</sup>

Confirming the popular perception that most madrasa graduates are mainly absorbed in low-paying jobs, and that their education restrict them from other forms of employment and social mobility, another observer of madrasa education in Karnataka has trenchantly articulated varied aspects of the negative impact of madras education on their graduates:

#### Future of Madrasa Students – Limited Employment/ Salaries/ Social Mobility

*“A madrassa degree attained after 10-12 years of study of theological syllabus - unrecognised and carrying no credibility with employers as it is - offers limited job prospects in mosques and madrassas which barely yield enough to keep the soul and body together. Even a very well-paid Alim who works as an imam in a mosque in large sized cities, receives wages less than even a category 3 Government employee. There are no additional allowances, nor any pension or retirement benefits. They have no bargaining power either. Such is the oversupply of madrassa graduates that the mosque managements can readily hire new recruits for lesser wages in case of demand for enhancement of wages. Employment prospects being bleak, several of them look back at the madrassas to revert to them for teaching. It is not a choice, but a compulsion. They transfer to the fresh entrants the same knowledge that fetched them a measly livelihood incapable of improving the quality of life.”*

M.A.Siraj, “Mainstreaming Madrassa Education”, Occasional Papers Series on Karnataka Religious Minorities, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, National Law School of India University, Bangalore, October 2016, p. 83

### **3.7. Lessons From the Bangladesh System of Government-Sponsored Madrasas**

It is important to understand whether an expanded government-funded SPQEM can produce significantly better results in terms of acquisition of relevant skills and knowledge for further education and employment. In the absence of relevant empirical Indian studies concerning the quality of education of these SPQEM madrasas and the impact on their students, it is instructive to learn from the experience of Bangladesh,

where an older and far larger system of government sponsored Aliya madrasas has been institutionalised to produce skilled manpower with religious knowledge. State funding has involved being regulated in terms of curriculum content and teacher recruitment policy under a unified state recognised Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board (BMEB). This board is responsible for designing curriculum, textbook production and holding examinations. Certificates granted by BMEB after various levels of madrasa public examinations are considered equivalent to secondary school certificates, higher secondary examinations for admission to general formal education

*The few studies on the quality of secular education in Aliya madrasas indicate that they are limited and inferior to regular schools, and have other negative impacts:*

- A large-scale World Bank Survey of rural students indicated that while all students fared poorly, Aliya madrasa students fared significantly worse in English and mathematics than regular students. Girls performed worse than boys, but the gender gap was more pronounced in Aliya madrasas.<sup>49</sup>
- Despite Aliya madrasas being expected to teach science and ICT, few have the required infrastructure and teachers and consequently few students offer these subjects at the higher secondary level.<sup>50</sup>
- This neglect of science has impacted the study of science by madrasa students in higher education institutions; there are few madrasa students in the medical and engineering institutions, and applied and theoretical science departments of Bangladesh public universities.<sup>51</sup>
- The 2010 World Bank study quoted above also observed that an existing analysis of Bangladesh labour market earnings data reveals a negative correlation between madrasa attendance and wages.<sup>52</sup>
- In addition to its negative impact on learning, a 2006 scholarly study contrasting social values of rural female graduates from modernised Aliya madrasas and mainstream rural schools indicated that the former “ favour boys for higher education (than girls), consider housewives as ideal for raising kids (than working women) and prefer larger families”.<sup>53</sup>

### **3.8. While SPQEM Could Be Improved, Can It be Qualitatively Expanded to Become an Important Parallel Avenue for Realising Goal 1 of the Agenda - Providing 12 Years of Quality Education for Vulnerable Muslim Students?**

The evaluations of the SPQEM indicate that poor Muslim parents overwhelmingly support the SPQEM initiative primarily because it combines secular subjects with religious knowledge. This is also an important factor in sending girls to madrasas – there are more girls than boys in them. This imbalance, as discussed in detail in the earlier subsection on the education of girls, is a direct consequence of the gendered world view of poor parents which privileges the main goal of school education as preparation of daughters to be good Muslim wives and mothers.

However, while clearly the introduction of secular subjects in madrasas is absolutely critical in contemporary India, and is welcomed by poor Muslim communities they serve, the implementation of the SPQEM scheme is extremely deficient and needs to be reviewed thoroughly before expanding it. Recruiting additional untrained and unqualified teachers by Madrasa Committees, and formally adding secular subjects and some resources -a single computer, a science kit which have rarely been used, and an arbitrary selection of library books - will not significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning in government funded madrasas.

Moreover, the example of Bangladesh is instructive to understand the limitations of madrasa reform. Despite its Aliya madrasas having a long history of government funding, government regulation of curriculum and history textbooks and better infrastructure, it had even poorer learning levels in secular subjects than the corresponding low standards of learning in mainstream rural schools. Therefore it would be virtually impossible for even a thoroughly revamped SPQEM to make significant improvements in government funded madrasas in India which will bring them on par with mainstream schools in the teaching of secular subjects.

#### **Are Significant Reforms in Teaching Secular Subjects in Government Funded Madrasas Possible?**

Both the 2013 and 2018 evaluations of SPQEM have suggested a number of changes to improve their administrative functioning as well as their quality of quality of teaching

and learning. The present Minister of Minority Affairs, Muktar Abbhas Naqvi has recently reaffirmed the present BJP Government's commitment to modernise madrasas which included the training of teachers in secular subjects to connect their students to mainstream avenues of education.<sup>54</sup>

However, the mainstreaming of Indian madrasas requires large-scale qualitative and quantitative changes, as was done in the case of Aliya madrasas in Bangladesh, and not mere cosmetic improvements. Such sweeping change will not be feasible. Unlike Bangladesh which is a 90% Muslim nation, there is no political will or public support, for the quantum jump in financial and human resources that will be required to properly modernise madrasas in India, where Muslims are a disadvantaged minority. Moreover, many community funded madrasas would stay away from such a scheme, and would oppose any possible large- scale government attempt to control what is taught in madrasas, viewing it as an unwarranted intrusion in their affairs.

*Consequently, for the various reasons that have been already detailed, SPQEM and other such government schemes for modernising madrasas cannot be quantitatively expanded and improved to become an important parallel avenue for providing 12 years of quality education for poor and lower middle class Muslims, and provide them with the literacy, numeracy and critical thinking skills required to meet the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> Century India.*

### **3.9. Concluding Observations on the Important But Limited Role of Madrasas in the Education of Vulnerable Muslims - Revisiting the Sachar Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

From the viewpoint of the education agenda that is proposed in this report, the Sachar Committee's observations on madrasa education continue to be relevant. The following expands on the Committee's main observations concerning their role in identity maintenance; provision of basic education for poor Muslims; the need to modernise madrasas and their view that these institutions are not a substitute for mainstream education

### Identity Maintenance and Muslim Communities

The Sachar Committee observed that madrasas were instruments of identity maintenance to Indian Muslims. To ensure that they continue to play that role in contemporary India, it is important that Muslims continue to run makhtabs and madrasas, and that the state does not arbitrarily interfere in the religious education they provide. Decisions on changes in the content of this religious component should be left to members of the community.

### Madrasas Not a Substitute for Mainstream Education – The Role of Muslim Organisations / Civil Society and the Provision of Quality Alternatives

The Sachar Committee had noted that children were often sent to madrasas since there was no regular schools in the neighbourhood.<sup>55</sup> Since the 2006 Sachar Committee Report, notable developments have taken place- mainly a large expansion of regular schools, and the passing of the 2010 RTE Act making eight years of elementary education a justiciable right for all children. It is therefore important to ensure that states implement the RTE Act and provide schools in Muslim neighbourhoods.

For government schemes to be implemented speedily and properly, as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9, Muslim organisations and Civil Society groups will need to actively advocate at state and sub-state levels for such provision. It is therefore important for Muslim organisation and Civil Society Groups to actively use the RTE Act provisions for ensuring the availability of accessible government alternatives. However, the provision of accessible schools may not be enough. As the 2013 SPQEM Evaluation Report observed, poor parents sent their children to madrasas, despite accessible government schools since they felt that little was taught and learnt in the latter.<sup>56</sup>

### Madrasas as Providers of Basic Education for Poor Muslims

While providing accessible and quality government schools will need to be actively pursued as a policy option, it will take time for this to be implemented, and poor Muslim parents will continue to seek free madrasa education for their children. It is therefore important to concurrently encourage both government and community initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning of secular subjects in all madrasas. Towards this end, as indicated earlier, the implementation of SPQEM needs to be reviewed before further expansion. In order to enable poor parents to make

informed choices about their children's education, it is also important for Muslim organisations to hold discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of madrasa education in Muslim communities

### Modernising Madrasas - Combining Religious Knowledge and Secular Subjects - The Unresolved Synthesis

As is true of madrasas in other countries with large populations of Muslims, there is an ongoing debate in India, which began in its colonial past, on how they should respond to changes in the modern world. These discussions continue to reflect a lack of any consensus on what constitutes secular subjects, to what extent secular subjects should be included and the religious/ practical objectives they should serve in the madrasa curriculum.

A prime example of this lack of clarity in the highest madrasa echelons was reflected in the views of the Chairman of the Madrasa Modernising Committee responsible for implementing the government scheme for introducing secular subjects. In a 2008 interview, he is reported to have said that modernisation of madrasas did not involve teaching secular subjects, but that it meant that madrasas should excel in the teaching of religious subjects!!<sup>57</sup>

As Arshad Alam notes, contemporary debates about the introduction of modern subjects in madrasas do not understand the madrasa world-view in which:

*"There is a fundamental religious core, the dissemination of which is their primary role. Science and other subjects are all welcome to the extent that that they do not disturb this fundamental core which is considered to be true for all time to come. Far from being a critical methodology, science has become a tool for further refinement of religion."*

Arshad Alam, "Science in Madrasas", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 40, Issue No. 18, 30 Apr, 2005

Since the primary goal is to produce pious and observant Muslims, and not future critical citizens, madrasas embrace science and other secular subjects from primarily a religious perspective, with no attempt to have a meaningful integration of both world views. This synthesis should be the focus of madrasa reform without which the



introduction of secular subjects would be superficial and could reinforce conservative religious agendas. As Alam has highlighted:

*“The Indian government’s programme of modernisation of madrasa education also suffers from the same lacuna. Far from suggesting ways to bring madrasa students into the educational mainstream, it gives sops to madrasas by way of some funds to arrange for teaching of modern subjects. Little thought is given to the purposes of introducing such subjects in madrasas and the results that it might have. By simply making modern subjects as an ‘add-on’ to the existing and unquestioned religious core, we are bound to create more Muslims who would be experts in arguing and perhaps also ‘proving’ that the basis of genetic engineering lies in the Quran!*

(Arshad Alam, “Modernising Madrasa Education”, *Outlook*, April 23, 2007

# Chapter 4

## **Achieving Goal 2 - Focusing on the Learning & Development of All Vulnerable Muslim Children in the Birth-6 Years Age Group to Benefit from Early Childhood Development Programmes Including Two Years of Pre-Primary Education by 2030**

### **Introduction**

Excluding the more affluent 20% of Indian Muslim children aged under 6 years, this chapter makes the case for focusing on the development of the remaining 80%, i.e. the approximately 2.1 crore poor and lower middle class (vulnerable) Muslim infants and children under 6 years. The first section of this chapter highlights the significance of the birth to 3 years stage of infancy, and the enormously negative impact that the neglect of this stage has had on the development of vulnerable children in India. It also delineates the related issue of the corresponding lack of understanding of the importance of psychosocial development of infants and early learning and development, and its consequent neglect in most programmes for the birth-3 years age-group in India. Similarly, given that pre-primary education influences holistic child development, including school readiness, the second section of this chapter also makes the case for improving the learning /development of disadvantaged Muslim children in the age-group 4 - 6 years.

### **SECTION 1**

#### **The Birth-3 Years Stage**

##### **1.1. Importance of Birth - 3 Years Stage**

Research in neuroscience, behavioral science, health sciences and economics has established that the first 1000 days of life, between a woman's pregnancy and her child's second birthday, is the critical window of time for influencing lifelong health and

intellectual development. The findings of Nobel Laureate James Heckman and his colleagues have established that the rates of return to a nation's economy and society at large is the highest for investment in children's development between birth to 3 years.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.1.a. Neglect of the Birth-3 Years Stage in India and Its Lifelong Negative Consequences**

Optimal development of young children at this stage occurs when an integrated approach is taken involving the health of adolescent girls (mothers/ prospective mothers), and ensuring that adequate health inputs, nutrition and psycho-social stimulation is provided to infants. Deprivation of these inputs in early infancy can have severe consequences such as wasting and stunting. Associated with an underdeveloped brain, stunting (significantly lower height for age) can be irreversible by the age of two and can have "long lasting harmful consequences including diminished mental ability and learning capacity, poor school performance in childhood, reduced earnings and increased risk of nutrition-related such as diabetes and hypertension".<sup>2</sup>

The effects of childhood stunting on adult earnings in India have been quantified in a recent multi-nation World Bank study which estimated that around two-thirds of the working population in India earned 13 percent less due to adverse outcomes of childhood stunting that persisted in adulthood. According to this report released in 2018, these workers suffered from impaired brain development, which led to lower cognitive and socio-emotional skills and lower levels of educational attainment. This resulted in 66 percent of the Indian workforce earning less than it would have otherwise. Of the 140 countries analysed, only Afghanistan and Bangladesh surpassed India's proportion of workers who were stunted as children.<sup>3</sup>

*India has paid a heavy price for neglecting to focus on this early stage of infancy on a war footing. We have the largest number of stunted children in the world which has had enormous negative consequences for the future development of these children, and the nation as a whole. Despite some recent progress in reducing stunting, according to the 2015-16 National Family Health Survey (NFHS 4), 38% of Indian children under 5 years are stunted.*

Proportionate to their share of the population, there should be about at least about 50-60 lakh young Muslims, among the 4.68 crore children under 5 years in India, who are stunted. Since stunting is proportionately larger in the lower quintiles of the general population, these Muslim children would disproportionately belong to poor and lower middle class households.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.1.b. Critical Role of Parents and Caregivers in Providing Psychosocial Stimulation to Infants - A Missing Link in ECCE Programmes that Adversely Affects Vulnerable Populations including Muslims**

Children are learning from the day they are born through active interaction with the adults who take care of them. Through early warm, interactive, and playful experiences with their mothers/ caregivers, infants acquire emotional health and social competence which provide a solid foundation for emerging cognitive abilities.

Research in brain development has concluded that adequate nutrition and health inputs for infants are essential but not enough. What is required additionally is psychosocial stimulation right from birth. This holistic understanding is the key to optimal brain development and physical growth in early childhood. The positive outcomes are highlighted below:

*“Longitudinal studies have indicated that those who received both nutrition and stimulation as infants have benefitted in a variety of different ways: significantly improved cognition at age 7 years, 11 years and 17 years; at age 22 had higher adult IQ and higher achievement in reading, mathematics and general knowledge; infants whose parents responded readily to their cries during the first months of life better able to deal with setbacks in later life; parental care rather than achievement test scores was a better predictor of which students completed high school”*

Research cited in Z. Kurrien, “Right to Learning for the Prenatal to Three Years Age Group”, *Rights to the Youngest: Towards a Legal Framework for Early Childhood Development*, 2016, pp. 104-105

The above immediate and long-term benefits of early psychosocial stimulation are still not understood widely in India by parents and caregivers, and even by those involved in designing ECCE programmes. As part of home-based child care, building the understanding and capacities of caregivers to provide it along with health care and good nutrition, needs a special focus in schemes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) - the world's largest community programme for infants and their mothers.

## SECTION 2

### Pre-Primary Education (4-6 Years)

#### 2.1. Multiple Benefits of Quality Pre-Primary Education

Lancet has reported data from 71 countries corroborating the findings of Heckman and his colleagues that investment in pre-primary education also yields high returns.<sup>5</sup> Good quality preschooling provides various benefits, and it is the most disadvantaged children that gain the most:

*“Preschool programs targeting children ages 3–6 can foster foundational skills and boost children’s ability to learn. Children who attend preschool have higher attendance and better achievement in primary school. Moreover, they are less likely to repeat, drop out, or need remedial or special education, all of which benefit not only students but also education systems because efficiency is increased. Across countries at all income levels, the most disadvantaged children benefit most from quality early child education programs”*

World Development Report, *Learning to Realise Education’s Promise*, 2018, p. 116

The most sophisticated and comprehensive study conducted in India on various aspects of the effectiveness of preschool education on school readiness covered 14,000 children from 3 states – Assam, Rajasthan and Telengana. Its report, *The India Early Childhood Education Impact Study*, concluded that preschool participation from age 4 to 5 years had a significant impact on school readiness and that its findings “add further evidence to the body of knowledge from around the world on the positive impact of preschool education on later learning”.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.2. Poor Quality & Limited Coverage of Preschool Centres for Disadvantaged Children**

The vast majority of government anganwadis and private low-cost preschool centres serving predominantly vulnerable children provide very limited developmental and educational opportunities for children. In fact, most urban anganwadis are merely de facto food distribution centres. They conduct limited or no preprimary classes, since they function under severe accommodation constraints operating from whatever limited space is available such as homes of anganwadi workers, small rented huts, temples, etc.

A recent study of preprimary participation estimates that about 27 % of the age-group 3-6 are currently not attending any preschool centres.<sup>7</sup> Disadvantaged young children would be disproportionately represented in those not attending. While about two thirds of preprimary age children may be attending, it can be safely assumed that most of the disadvantaged among them receive significantly substandard quality of preschooling. It should be reiterated that it is high quality preschool education which accounts for much of its varied short and long-term benefits.

### **Conclusion – Looking Back, Looking Forward**

There has been a tremendous growth of preschool facilities, especially in the private sector in India. Parents living in slums are increasingly sending their children to nearby preprimary centres. However, there is limited understanding among those who run these facilities and parents, that the quality of preschooling in both government and private centres that is provided for vulnerable children, including disadvantaged Muslims, cannot equip them with the school readiness inputs that they need.

While there is a limited understanding of what constitute school readiness and developmentally appropriate activities for preprimary age children, there is at least a growing awareness among policy makers, parents and general public that preprimary education is important for children in the age-group 4-6 years. However, the situation is very different for the birth-3 years stage, where even many implementers of the ICDS schemes for vulnerable infants are not aware of the significance of this stage for all later learning and development, and its long-term impact on the health and material progress of disadvantaged adults.

Both the coverage and quality of the ICDS schemes for infants and older children have well-known deficiencies when it comes to providing health and nutrition inputs. What is less-known and almost entirely missing in its programmes for the birth-3 years stage is the importance of early stimulation, which needs to form an essential component of the capacity building of parents and caregivers of vulnerable infants. The role of ICDS, which is the flagstaff government programme in providing early childhood development for all disadvantaged children in the birth – 6 years age-group including vulnerable Muslims, is detailed in Chapter 7. What additionally Muslim organisations and other Civil Society groups should do is listed in Chapter 9.

# Chapter 5

## **Achieving Goal 3 - Focusing on Promoting the Learning of Vulnerable Out- of- School/ College Muslims Under 25 Years to Benefit from Access to Educational Opportunities & Vocational Training**

### **1.1. Rationale for Focusing on the Learning of Poor and Lower Middle Class Muslim Youth Under 25 Years Outside the Network of Schools and Colleges**

#### **1.1.a. Vulnerable Muslims Are Considerably Over-Represented in This Group**

Children and youth from middle class and affluent Muslim families under 25 years constitute approximately 20% of Indian Muslims. Many of them are enrolled in high schools and colleges or working in established family businesses or white –collar occupations. Unlike them, the lives of the estimated 3.1 crore poor and lower middle class Muslim children and youth, between the ages of 6 -24 years and outside the formal educational system, is vastly different.

Among the latter, there would be many young and older children between 10 -18 years staying at home, who are part or full-time child labourers engaged in family chores or family-based work, or working outside in small businesses/ trades and manual occupations. Many of them would have dropped out of school before or immediately after completing elementary school, and not enrolled in high school. While some older youth between 18-24 years may have had opportunities to attend technical training or other vocational education courses, a larger number would be engaged in a variety of manual occupations and acquiring skills, mostly on-the- job. Many of the females in this older group would be married and already raising families.



### **1.1.b. More Poor and Lower Middle Class Muslims Between 6-24 Years Outside School & Colleges Than Enrolled as Students**

It should be reiterated that in Section 1 of Chapter 1, it was projected that by 2020 there would be about 3.1 crore poor and lower middle class Muslims between the ages of 6-24 years outside school and college; 20 lakh more than the projected 2.90 crore students – 2.70 crore enrolled in school and 20 lakhs in college.

#### **The “Invisibility” of This Group of Vulnerable Youth and its Implications**

*Most official policies and education discussions pay limited attention to this youth group focusing more on those enrolled in schools and colleges. Even the progressive 2006 Sachar Committee Report paid little or no notice to poor and lower middle class out-of school/college Muslim youth in its recommendations.*

*This youth group under 25 years gets limited attention by both government bodies and NGOs, because they are poor, dispersed in a variety of occupations including home-based work, and difficult to organize. Moreover, unlike students in formal institutions, they are not systematically enumerated, which contributes to this group remaining invisible. Consequently in the absence of data, it is more difficult to initiate large-scale evidence-based policies and interventions which can be implemented and monitored.*

### **1.1.c. Acquisition Of Foundational Skills and Capacities for Their Application by This Group of Vulnerable Muslim Youth is Significantly Substandard**

Though not limited to Muslim youth, the 2017 ASER study, *Beyond Basics*, which covered 30,000 rural youth in the age group 14-18 years from every state will be quoted extensively, since unlike most other learning survey studies, it evaluated the ability of older youth to also apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills to everyday situations as well as related domains

Acquisition of foundational skills of literacy and numeracy - While about 25% of these 14-18 year olds could not read a Class 2 level text fluently, arithmetic skills were even

worse. Less than half could divide a 3 digit number by a 1 digit number –considered a proxy for the ability to do simple operations.

Application of reading skills - Only 54 % could answer 3 of the 4 questions based on the written instructions on the O.R.S. packages, widely available in urban and rural India for prevention of dehydration in the case of diarrhea.

Application of arithmetic skills / common calculations - Less than two-thirds could do the basic addition and subtraction calculations required for managing a simple budget and making purchase decisions; only 38% could do calculations involving purchasing a T-shirt on sale with a 10% discount; and even fewer - only 22% - could calculate correctly the repayment amount to a bank after taking a loan.

Knowledge of English - Less than half the rural youth that were tested could read and understand the meaning of simple English sentences like, “I like to read” and “She has many books”.

ASER 2017 concluded that substantial numbers of these young people had difficulty applying their limited literacy and numeracy skills to real world situations.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that 86% of them were either enrolled in school or in college. The acquisition of these skills and the capacities for application would have even been far more limited for those out-of- school youth in the 14-18 age groups, who had never enrolled dropped out at the primary, middle or high school level. Given their significantly higher than average dropout rates, poor and lower middle Muslim youth would have been overrepresented in this group.

## **1.2. What These Poor and Lower Middle Class Muslim Youth Need - A Second Chance for Acquisition of Formal Education and Other Skills**

It can be reasonably extrapolated from the above ASER study that the vast majority of the estimated 3.1 crore poor and lower middle class Muslims between 6-24 years outside the formal system, are likely to have not even acquired even basic literacy and numeracy skills or the capacities for their application to real life situations. There would also be those, who did not enter school or left school after a few years, who are virtually illiterate. Moreover, they too will also require advanced learning skills required

to meet current and future challenges of acquiring knowledge and enabling lifelong learning, as well as employment and citizenship.

Many of these employed/ unemployed Muslim youth would also be seeking opportunities for vocational training to further their prospects for better employment and improved material welfare. In addition to expanding existing vocational education opportunities for them, they also need a second chance to acquire a formal school qualification or college qualification which also enables them to improve their employment and material prospects.-As documented earlier, about 66 % of poor and lower middle class Muslims in the age-group 16-18 years would have only completed 8 years of elementary schooling.

### **1.2.a The Special Case Of English - Vulnerable Out-of-School/College Muslim Youth Need to Acquire English Proficiency Skills.**

Given the existential reality of large numbers of job seekers chasing after far fewer jobs, the major preoccupation of poor and lower middle class Indian youth is to get remunerative employment. An opportunity to acquire English skills, or improve their limited grasp of the language, would further their employment prospects and opportunities to improve their earnings. The special study of English did not feature in the recommendations of the Sachar Committee, though a premium on its acquisition as a result of the liberalization /globalization of the Indian economy and the growing use of computers, had predated its 2006 Report.

Though a focus on English acquisition did not feature in the Committee's recommendations, the continuing growth of the service sector, which now contributes more than 50% of India's GDP, has added to the demand for English. A British Council report, *Demand for English Language Services in India and China*, notes that it is in industries like Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), hospitality, tourism, retail and aviation in particular which generate a large number of jobs which require competency and fluency in English.<sup>2</sup> The following is an estimate of the returns to English language skills in India:

*“In India, the raw difference in earnings between people who speak English and people who do not is large -----there are large statistically significant returns to English language skills in India. Wages are on average 32% higher for men who speak fluent English and 13% higher for men who speak a little English relative to men who speak no English. For women, the average returns is 22% for fluent English and 10% for a little English.”*

M. Azam, A. Chin and N. Prakash, “The Returns to English Language Skills in India”, IZA Discussion Paper No. 4802, 2010, p. 21.

## **Conclusion - Looking Back, Looking Forward**

The estimated 3.1 crore vulnerable out-of- school /college Muslim youth will get further marginalised unless they acquire vocational skills; are also provided a second chance to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills and the ability to apply them to real life situations; and given opportunities to acquire more advanced learning skills to meet the challenges of the modern world. The latter would perhaps best be acquired if they were provided avenues to rejoin the formal educational stream. In addition, they need to be provided part-time opportunities to acquire English proficiency skills which can have tangible economic benefits.

As detailed in Chapter 8, government policies and schemes for acquiring literacy skills, educational certification and vocational training will need to be expanded and focused on disadvantaged Muslim youth outside the formal education system. It is only such government interventions focused on them that can provide the human and financial resources on the scale required to significantly improve their education and material prospects. These need to be complemented by policy advocacy and community-based initiatives of Civil Society groups, including Muslim organisations, which will be outlined in Chapter 9.

# Chapter 6

## Government Policies for Achieving Goal 1 of Agenda Enrolment and Learning

### Introduction

Each of the next 3 chapters are devoted to government policies that are required to achieve each of the 3 goals of the new education agenda. This chapter is devoted to Goal 1 and has 2 main sections. While Section 1 is devoted to government policies required to expand school enrolment of poor and lower middle class Muslim students, Section 2 is devoted to government programmes that can significantly improve their learning.

### SECTION 1

#### Government Policies and Interventions Focusing on Enrolment Strategies for Providing 12 Years of Education for Poor and Lower Middle Class Muslim Students by 2030

##### 1.1. Roles of Different Levels of Government in Framing and Implementing Education Policies

###### 1.1.a. Government Policies & Schemes - Not Other Initiatives – is the Prime Mover in School Educational Reform

Realising Goal 1 requires enrolling and providing good quality education to large numbers of poor and lower middle class Muslims projected to be about 2.7 crore school students in 2020. Given the magnitude of this task, it must be emphasized that it is only government bodies and policies - and not initiatives of Corporates, NGOs or Civil Society - that can provide the scale of financial and human resources, but also the legitimacy and power that would be required for sustainable implementation on an All-India level. While the latter can and should contribute in a number of ways, including policy advocacy and capacity building which will be delineated in Chapter 9, the

principal driver will be state, district and local education bodies, education officials and politicians who can ensure that all young Muslims will receive 12 years of quality education by 2030. In this connection, it should be highlighted that the 2009 RTE Act places the full responsibility on the government for implementing the fundamental right that all Indian children now have to 8 years of free and compulsory elementary education.

### **1.1.b. State Governments - Not the Central Government - Have the Primary Role in Improving School Education, Including Enrolment of Vulnerable Muslim Students**

Since Education is on the Concurrent list, and while both the Centre and States in India share specific responsibilities for it, most decisions that affect the school education of vulnerable Indian students, including young Muslims, are made at the state and sub-state level. Though the Centre has a greater role in higher education, in school education it has a more limited and indirect role through national policies and academic bodies like the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE). MHRD is also the principal architect and funder of various Centrally Sponsored Schemes like SSA, RMSA and now the Samagra Shiksha which are implemented throughout the country. But even here, state and local education authorities and bodies not only contribute to its funding, but make the most important implementation decisions.

### **1.1.c. Role of State & Sub-State Governments in School Policies - Sachar Report Omitted Critical Role of State and Sub-State Governments in School Policies**

The most important school education policies and decisions in India are made by state and local education authorities, administrators and politicians. These include the framing and disbursement of state, district and municipal corporation education schemes and budgets; location and funding of schools; provision of free textbooks, learning materials and scholarships; fee-structure regulations; provision and payment of teachers and school staff; formulation of textbooks and curriculum; the setting of examination papers and administration of school examinations; evaluation of learning outcomes, etc.

Consequently, the primary focus of any reform education agenda for Muslims has to be on influencing educational decisions taken by state and local education authorities to significantly improve the enrolment and learning of Muslim students. For example, education budgetary decisions made by state and local bodies to enhance the provision of uniforms, textbooks, transport and scholarships to needy Muslim students will reduce school dropout and increase their education participation. Locating government schools near Muslim neighbourhoods can make a difference since in their absence, Muslim parents often send their children to low-quality madrasas.

*In this connection, a critical omission in the recommendations of the 2006 Sachar Report was the need for contextualised state-level and sub-state level education policies and initiatives, as detailed in the following sub-sections. This omission is all the more striking since an important contribution of the Sachar Committee was to provide disaggregated data on educational enrolment in states, and to highlight inter-state differences in school participation.*

## **1.2. Significant Inter-State & Inter- District Differences in Muslim School Enrolment**

DISE data is used for all education planning, and the 2014-15 DISE enrolment statistics indicate significant inter-state and inter-district differences in school enrolment at all stages. All the following state-level and district –level figures have been calculated from this DISE enrolment data, and have been detailed in Tables 7 and 8 respectively.

Of the 15 states which contain about 95% of the Muslim population in India, the best 5 educational performers in rank order were Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka Among the lowest 6 performers were Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (Table 7).

Significant differences also exist in inter-district Muslim enrolment at all levels of school education in these states. For example, of the 456 districts in the above 15 states, there were as many 255 low performing districts (56%) in which the proportion of Muslim high school students of total high school student enrolment in the district as a percentage of the Muslim share in the district population was below 80%, and only 53 districts where the corresponding proportion was above 100% (Table 8).

As many as 209 districts, i.e. more than 80% of these 255 low performing districts in terms of Muslim high school enrolment, were located in the 6 lowest performing states of Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Only 10 such low performing districts were in the 5 highest state performers - Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Of the 53 districts where the Muslim enrolment was above 100%, 35 such districts (66%) were located in in the 5 best performing states, and only 3 districts in the 6 lowest states.

Of the 15 states, in terms of Muslim enrolment at all levels of school education, the best performer was Kerala, and the worst was Uttar Pradesh – the performance of all the other 13 states fell between the good performance of Kerala and the correspondingly hugely substandard enrolment levels of Muslim students in Uttar Pradesh. For example, the proportion of Muslim high school students as a proportion of the Muslim share of the Kerala population was 116 % in 2014, and was more than 3 times the corresponding 36% for Uttar Pradesh.

Moreover, 11 of Kerala's 14 districts had more than 100% Muslim enrolment at the high school level in comparison to the proportion of Muslims in the district. On the other hand, there was not a single such corresponding district in Uttar Pradesh. While in Kerala, there was not a single low performing district, as many as 72 of the 75 districts in Uttar Pradesh were low performers – less than 80% Muslim high school enrolment in proportion to the percentage of Muslims in each of the 72 districts.

### **1.3. Achieving 12 Years of Education for All Poor & Lower Middle Class Muslims By 2030 Requires Focusing on State and District-Level Enrolment Strategies**

The order of magnitude of implementing Goal 1 of providing 12 years of education for all Muslims needs to be highlighted. Poor and vulnerable Muslims are not only the most educationally disadvantaged group in India, but their school population totals about 2.7 crores. Having amongst the lowest school completion rates, it should be reiterated that one estimate indicates that by 2018-19, at best about 66% of vulnerable Muslim youth in the age-group 16-18 years would have completed 8 years of elementary schooling.



Implementing Goal 1 of the new education agenda therefore would need a significant increase in financial resources; as importantly, state and district enrolment policies need to be articulated and implemented in a manner that strategically allocates these inputs. What needs to be done in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan, where Muslim enrolment is significantly limited, in how many districts, and at which level of school education – is of a hugely different order of magnitude than what needs to be done for vulnerable students in far better performing states like Kerala, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Details on these strategies provided in the following subsections.

### **1.3.a. Special Focus on Targeting Vulnerable Muslims in the Backward Districts of 6 States where their Enrolment is Poor**

As documented in subsection 1.2, of special concern are the 6 poor performing states in terms of improving Muslim school enrolment – Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. As indicated in Table 3, the Index of Social Equity for Muslim students at the elementary, high school and higher secondary stages school education is the lowest in these 6 states. Moreover, at every level of school education, these states also contain the greatest number of districts where the proportion of Muslim enrolment is below 80% of the percentage of Muslims located in the district. For example at the high school stage, it is 209 of a total of 254 districts (Table 8). From a strategic perspective of improving the overall school enrolment of disadvantaged Muslims, these 6 states need special attention since they contain about 45% of the total Indian Muslim population.

*It should be highlighted that poor and lower middle Muslims need to be targeted since their enrolment, especially at upper primary / high school / higher secondary stages will be far lower than more affluent Muslims. As articulated earlier in Chapter 1, unless vulnerable Muslims are specifically targeted, more affluent sections of the community will disproportionately benefit from schemes aimed at the general Muslim population. Therefore, without additional schools and human and financial resources for vulnerable Muslim students in backward districts of Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, Goal 1 of the agenda will not be realized, and Muslims will continue to be the most educationally backward group in India*

### **1.3.b. Uttar Pradesh Should Receive the Highest Priority**

Muslims constitute about 19% of the population of Uttar Pradesh. Amongst all states, it has the largest Muslim population in India, and also by a considerable margin the lowest Muslim enrolment rates at all levels of school education (Table 7). Muslim enrolment in 72 of its 75 districts are poor performing Muslim enrolment districts at the high school level - as a proportion of the Muslim population in these districts, enrolment was below 80%. In 2014-15, there was not a single district in UP where the Index of Social Equity for Muslims at the high school stage exceeded 100% (Table 8). Similarly substandard rates of Muslim student enrolment situation is likely to be the case at all other lower and upper stages of school education in UP.

*Given the size of its Muslim population and the extent of its educational backwardness in terms of the educational participation of poor and lower middle class Muslims at all levels of school education, the highest priority must be given to significantly improving their school participation in Uttar Pradesh, including locating schools in or near Muslim neighbourhoods, and increasing the number of scholarships and other measures for incentivizing their enrolment.*

### **1.3.c. What All States Need to Do to Implement Relevant Enrolment Strategies: Focus on Muslim Enrolment at Upper Stages of School Education**

Every state has regions in which Muslim student enrolment is considerably below average, especially at upper stages of school education. Therefore, every state including Kerala, the best performing state, would need to look at their overall education policies at the state and district level, as well as at the block and municipal corporation levels, and implement strategies to increase the enrolment of poor Muslim students wherever it is limited.

In this connection, the Sachar Committee recommended locating high quality government schools in Muslim areas. While locating schools in or near Muslim neighbourhoods is one option, the most important obstacle to pursuing high school and higher secondary education for poor and lower middle class Muslim students is its unaffordable costs, partially because currently about 40% of high school and higher secondary schools in India are private unaided institutions. Reducing the costs of education to vulnerable Muslim households by increasing the number of student

scholarships and related provisions required to pursue schooling in government or private unaided schools will make a significant difference to the enrolment of Muslim students.

### **1.3.d. Aligning State and District Enrolment Strategies for Implementing Agenda Goal 1 with MHRD’s Samagra Shiksha – An Integrated Scheme of School Education**

A detailed framework of what is planned for the country as a whole for providing quality education for all is given by MHRD in its 2018 articulation of the *Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan - An Integrated Scheme of School Education*.<sup>1</sup> The vision of this flagship scheme of MHRD is to ensure 12 years of inclusive and equitable quality school education, including the higher secondary stage, and 2 years of pre-primary education, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) for Education. India is a signatory to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is committed to implementing SDG Goal 4 – 12 years of quality school education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030. This MHRD document lists a number of enrolment strategies and prioritises targeting various disadvantaged groups including Muslims. States need to align their state and district enrolment strategies for Muslims with the larger national plans.

It should be highlighted that the 2013 Report of Standing Committee of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities’ Education had also documented that there a number of districts where the enrolment of Muslim children in elementary schools were found to be disproportionately poor, and recommended that MHRD “accordingly issue clear instructions to State Governments and also review district-wise performance of enrolment of Muslim children to identify the districts where intensive efforts are required”.<sup>2</sup>

## SECTION 2

### **Government Policies and Interventions Focusing on Improving Learning of Poor and Lower Middle Class Muslim Students to Achieve Goal 1 of Agenda of Providing 12 Years of Education for All Muslim Students**

#### **Introduction**

Government policies and interventions for improving the learning of vulnerable Muslim students are based on the following key considerations and priorities:

- Most government policies to enhance learning significantly impact the learning of all students, and not any particular subgroup, since they deal with pedagogical areas like curriculum, evaluation, examinations, textbooks, teacher training, etc.. Unlike enrolment strategies focusing on vulnerable Muslims, the learning of Muslim students cannot be specially singled out for special attention by most of these learning-enhancement policies
- However, within these overall learning strategies for all students, state and local education authorities need to monitor whether these strategies are improving the learning of vulnerable Muslim students and take corrective measures accordingly.
- This focus on learning enhancement should pay particular attention to the learning needs of vulnerable students. Their needs are different from those of their more affluent peers studying in high fee-charging private schools. The content of policies and pedagogical interventions for improving the learning of vulnerable children will be explored in the subsections that follow.

#### **Listing of Policies and Interventions for Improving the Learning of Vulnerable Students**

Government policies for improving learning will be discussed under 7 subsections:

- Focus on Acquisition of Foundational Primary Level Skills of Vulnerable Students

- Remedial Education at the Primary Level and Beyond
- Improving Learning in Key Subjects - Especially the Teaching of English
- Curricular Reform - Promoting Constitutional Principles and Values
- Vocationalising School Education and Its Current Expansion Should be Discontinued - Start Vocational Education Later in Class 10
- Professional Development of Teachers
- Interdependence of Pedagogical Reforms Impacting Learning

## **2.1. Focus on Acquisition of Foundational Primary Level Skills Of Vulnerable Students**

### **2.1.a. Focusing on Learning in Class 1- Addressing Diversity of New Entrants, Including Differences in Age of Entry, Pre-primary Experience & Home Languages**

Nearly all government and low-cost private schools in India admit vulnerable students of varying ages ranging from 2 + to 7+ years, with little or no pre-primary experience and speaking a variety of home languages. Many of these students are therefore not developmentally, mentally or linguistically prepared to cope with the formal and rote teaching of the 3 R's. Primary teachers in most Indian schools plunge into formal whole-class teaching in Class1 in the official state language, and expect that through repeated parrot-like repetitions of the language exercises in the textbook, new entrants will soon be equipped with early literacy skills. This does not happen for the majority of students.

Since multiple pedagogic issues are not addressed, large numbers of vulnerable students fail to learn right from the beginning in Class 1 and these deficiencies in learning often continue unremedied throughout their 5 years of primary schooling and beyond. Consequently, as documented in Section I of Chapter 2, at the end of primary school (Class 5), most poor and lower middle class Muslim students, and those from other disadvantaged groups, have acquired very limited foundational competencies in literacy and mathematics.

## **2.1. b. Focusing on Learning in Class 1- School Readiness and Spoken Language**

Since many disadvantaged Class 1 entrants have limited or no pre-primary experience and are diverse in age and capacities to learn, it will be necessary to incorporate a school readiness component for them at the beginning of formal schooling. School systems will need to work on different models of how to do this, for example, banning the use of formal textbooks for the first few months of the academic year, and instead providing new entrants with an activity-based curriculum of school readiness activities.

Since children from disadvantaged backgrounds enter schools with limited vocabulary and forms of expression, as well as a variety of home languages different from the medium of school instruction, the content of the primary curriculum should focus on improving their spoken language repertoire, through activities which encourage to speak and express their thoughts and feelings in their own home language. The evidence indicates that this has positive effects on learning and retention in school.<sup>3</sup> While we need to encourage multilinguality in the classroom which focus in the beginning on spoken and written expression in the home language, since the situation is so varied from school to school, there is no “one size fits all” solution to how and when we should transition primary school students to the official medium of instruction of the school.

## **2.1. c. Focus on the 3 R’s in Classes 1-3 - What National & International Research Indicates**

Government policies must also prioritise learning of the 3 R’s in the first 3 years of primary school. Without a strong foundational base in literacy and numeracy skills, large-scale studies conducted by Educational Initiatives and ASER have established that answers by elementary and high school students to primary-level test items and questions show limited improvement in reading and arithmetic skills in middle and high school grades.<sup>4</sup>

Considerable international evidence arrives at a similar conclusion. Under the dramatic sub-title, “Those who can’t read by Grade 2 fail to catch up”, the *2018 World Development Report* made the following observation:

*“Illiteracy at the end of grade 2 has long-term consequences for two reasons. First, learning is cumulative. Education systems around the world expect students to acquire foundational skills such as reading by grades 1 or 2. By grade 3, students need to read to access their curriculum. Students who master these foundational skills early are at an advantage: skills from early grades are strongly positively associated with later school performance. Children who cannot read by grade 3 fall behind and struggle to catch up, perhaps irreparably.”*

World Development Report, *Learning to Realise Education’s Promise*, 2018, p. 74

### **2.1.d. Pedagogical Reforms Required in Classes 1-3 for Acquisition of the 3 R’s : Focus on Interrelated Strategies Promoting Teaching and Learning of Vulnerable Students**

In addition to issues concerning school readiness and home language issues discussed in subsection 2.1.b., pedagogical reforms in the first 3 years of primary school should focus entirely on what is required to ensure that most vulnerable students acquire basic skills in the 3 R’s. Below are only a few of the important measures that need to be taken, and are meant to be illustrative of the need for a different and integrated approach

#### Textbook Content:

First and foremost, since textbooks are the most important resource used by teachers and students alike in most schools, changes in their content focusing on the needs of vulnerable students can greatly impact learning. The evidence indicates, “In India and Kenya, for example, the curriculum has been designed for the elite. Teachers and textbooks focus on advanced topics that are of little use in helping struggling students. These students then fall even further behind - eventually so far that no learning whatsoever takes place.”<sup>5</sup>

#### Supplementary Reading Materials and Other Curricular Activities

A strong foundational base cannot be achieved by instruction focusing only on the prescribed textbook, without engaging the interests and minds of young students. Since they have little to read in their homes, they need to be provided with, and

encouraged to read, a wide variety of supplementary reading materials. The curriculum must also include other child - centred joyful activities and games that promote creativity and physical development.

*Evaluation reform:*

Evaluations of children’s learning which reward rote reproduction of formulaic answers cannot promote foundational learning. A range of innovative classroom activities need to be implemented which focus on the 3 R’s, and complemented by a continuous monitoring of learning levels to ensure that at least by the end of Class 3, most children will have acquired a minimum level of grade appropriate reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

## **2.2. Providing Remedial Education at the Primary Level and Beyond: What National and International Research Indicates**

In all primary level classes in government and low-cost private schools, there will be a majority of students in each class who are not acquiring the appropriate level of basic reading and arithmetic skills, and require special attention as they are falling behind. Since most vulnerable children have limited or no assistance at home in their studies, government policies must ensure that they provide additional remedial classes in government schools for these students, especially in Classes 1- 3. To reiterate, many of these skills are not likely to improve at elementary and high school levels, resulting in a range of negative consequences detailed in subsection 1.2. of Chapter 2.

There is national evidence indicates that additional remedial education in primary schools helps children to remedy deficiencies in foundational skills.<sup>6</sup> However, the evidence from other countries also indicates that remedial education is also effective at higher stages of school education.<sup>7</sup> The limited acquisition of post-primary Indian students of basic literacy and numeracy skills, as also detailed in Chapter 2, indicates that many of our vulnerable students will require remedial education throughout their years of schooling.



*“Remedial prevention programs can help at-risk youth who are in the formal education system to prepare for rigorous academic work in further education or training. Three remedial prevention approaches show promise. The first offers support to primary and secondary students willing to stay in school and master foundational skills. Programs in India and Mexico City that offer additional instruction for disadvantaged students have shown positive impacts on foundational skills (especially in India)”*

World Development Report, *Learning to Realise Education’s Promise*, World Bank, 2018, p. 121

## **2.3. Improving Learning in Key Subjects, Especially the Teaching of English**

Chapter 2 noted that in addition to deficiencies in foundational and advanced skills of literacy and numeracy, poor and lower middle class students were also woefully deficient in civic and scientific knowledge and skills. Instead of delineating the interventions required in these and other subjects taught at various stages of education, the teaching of English in regional medium schools is highlighted here, as issues related to deficiencies in the competence of their English teachers reflects similar concerns with the capacities of teachers in all other subjects, notably the teaching of mathematics and science.

### **2.3.a. Strengthening the Teaching of English in Government Regional Medium Schools**

With the increasing liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy, the instrumental importance of English for education and employment has been recognised by the poorest sections of Indian society, reflected dramatically in a significant migration of disadvantaged students from free government schools to low-cost English medium private schools. This extraordinary decrease in government school enrolment has had two responses from school education authorities. First, starting English medium government schools in even rural and tribal areas to meet the increasing public demand for such schools. Second, every state has started teaching English as a second/foreign language at the primary level in government regional medium schools.

This two-decade long phenomenon of poor parents withdrawing their children for low-cost English medium options has been partially driven by the low standards of English in government schools. Improving the teaching of English in regional medium government schools will help in the empowerment of vulnerable students, and may also stem the massive student exodus from these schools.

While nearly every state has started to introduce English as a subject in Class 1, it is universally recognised that the standards of English of students, especially those of poor or lower middle class students in government schools, are pathetic. An illustrative example is the multi-state ASER study of over 5 lakh students indicating that in 2016 only about 15 % of children in Class 5 could read and understand simple English sentences like: “This is a tall tree” and “She has a red dress “; this figure increased to only about 31 % in Class 8.<sup>8</sup>

While there are many causes for these grave limitations in English reading skills, the main reason is that most teachers themselves have very limited English skills, especially spoken English. Moreover, as an NCERT report on English teaching practices in government schools observed, teachers do not move beyond the textbook and use ineffective classroom teaching practices with little understanding of the language itself; almost no attention is paid to speaking and listening skills in English; little attention is paid to developing independent reading skills – the focus is only on students and teachers reading the English textbooks aloud, and developing writing skills by students merely copying text written by teachers on the blackboard.<sup>9</sup>

Unless policy reforms for learning enhancement focus on ensuring that teachers of English in government regional medium schools have a basic command of English, especially spoken English, are also equipped with effective pedagogical and evaluation methods and provided supplementary materials beyond the textbook, vulnerable students will continue to suffer the varied consequences of acquiring grossly inadequate English reading and communication skills. They will face an increasingly marginalised future, being severely limited in a number of respects: entry into prestigious institutions of higher education; access the Internet for practical knowledge or for increasing their educational qualifications from online courses offered by Indian and foreign universities; blocked from applying for jobs that require varying degrees of proficiency in English skills, etc.

## 2.4. Curricular Reform - Promoting Constitutional Principles and Values - Reviewing and Revising Textbooks and Supplementary Materials

As concluded in Section 1 of Chapter 2, promoting constitutional principles and values in all our schools is critical to students coexisting democratically and harmoniously, and particularly important when Muslims are often at the receiving end of violence. These values are not being reflected in the history, social studies and language textbooks followed in many of our state government and private schools. The following observations from the Report of the CAGE Committee appointed by MHRD to examine textbooks and parallel textbooks used in government and private schools, not following the CBSE syllabus, are indicative:

*“Textbooks now proliferate in which communal ideology shapes the contours of the understanding of Indian history, society and culture. These are essentially erosive of intellectual faculties. They teach a ‘history’ swamped by myths, false scriptural attribution and concocted claims for India’s greatness. Narrow polemics leave unexplored whole areas of composite culture, syncretism and ideas. Most disturbing is the propaganda against minority religions. Such passages violate historical fact, deny India’s composite culture, endorse caste hierarchies eschewed by our Constitution and mobilize a culture of violence that disregards the law. This is the area demanding the most sustained intervention, with implications also for value education and the representation of Indian realities”.*

MHRD - Committee of the CAGE, *Regulatory Mechanisms for Textbooks and Parallel Textbooks Taught in Schools Outside the Government System*, 2005, p. vi-vii

Based on the premises that educational materials must be produced within the framework of the Constitution according to processes transparent to the public, the following are some of the important recommendations made by this CAGE Committee that warrant consideration:

- Procedures for approving curricular materials should include a serious appraisal by academic experts of their adherence to the core principles of egalitarianism, democracy and secularism.

- It is proposed that there be instituted a National Textbook Council to monitor textbooks. This must be independent of any organization involved in textbook preparation, and also be fully autonomous so as genuinely to represent civil society and academia.
- Along with the establishment of formal bodies to investigate specific complaints, there should be support for other civil society initiatives in this area. Adequate funding must be made available to concerned agencies to carry out research on textbook content. All institutions of higher learning should support research in school textbooks.<sup>10</sup>

## **2.5. Vocationalising School Education & Its Current Expansion Plans Should be Discontinued – Start Vocational Education Later in Class 10**

Beginning in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Colonial India with the 1854 Woods Despatch and 1882 Hunter Commission, and continuing with the 1986 National Policy and the current Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, a variety of Commissions and Committees in India have recommended introducing vocational education in the formal education system. The most significant post-independence effort to vocationalise education was the Kothari Commission, and its implementation was a failure - falling far short of its goals and targets.<sup>11</sup>

In this connection, it is important to detail why the most recent effort - the MHRD scheme of Vocationalising of Education in Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools – has been a dismal failure. The *Report of the Committee for Rationalisation and Optimisation of the functioning of the Sector Councils* – known as the Sharda Prasad Committee Report- has reviewed the experience of 4,817 schools in 22 states providing vocational education in secondary and higher secondary levels, and their attempts to place students in industry. In 2013-14, against an enrolment of 4, 47,350, only an insignificant number of 873 students were placed in various trades (0.19%).<sup>12</sup>

According to the Sharda Committee Report, this dismal placement record – for every 1,000 students, less than 2 were placed in jobs - was a result of various factors:

- What was being implemented in these schools was not vocational education in the real sense of the term. The required infrastructure and staffing was not available, unlike Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), where full-fledged

classrooms, workshops, tools, equipment, machinery, qualified trainers, industry interface, are provided.

- Vocationalisation of education was taught as a voluntary additional optional subject, in addition to five subjects, at secondary school level and as an optional subject within five subjects at the senior secondary level.
- No regular trainers were provided. Part time staff were recruited, who were paid badly and were therefore unreliable teachers.
- The courses did not have any involvement with industry – no market linkage nor any interaction with employers.<sup>13</sup>

As in the implementation of many new educational schemes in India, there is a determined effort not to learn from the past. Despite the failure of the most recent scheme, as well as past efforts to vocationalise school education, the current Samagraha Shikshan Abhiyan, which MHRD describes as its flagship programme aimed at the all-round development of children in Classes 1-12, has in fact even recommended extending vocationalisation to the middle school stages. The old and new vocational elements of this scheme include:

- Exposure to Vocational Skills at Upper Primary Level would be extended.
- Strengthening of vocational education at secondary level as an integral part of curriculum
- Vocational education which was limited to Class 9-12, to be started from class 6 as integrated with the curriculum and to be made more practical and industry oriented.<sup>14</sup>

For almost all stakeholders, vocationalising school education has an obvious attraction without any understanding of the tremendous additional costs; the low quality of any skills that are imparted; the limited linkages to industry and job placement, and the sheer impracticality of scaling up such pedagogical reforms. For many poor and lower middle class parents and students, including Muslims, unlike the normal academic curriculum, it dangles delusions of acquiring bankable skills and certificates and early entry into employment after school. The education bureaucracy, as well as teachers and principals of government and low-cost private schools, are in the thrall of the same chimera – the misguided notion that that since many disadvantaged children would

discontinue education after high school, it is best to incorporate a strong vocational component in schools - now to begin at the upper primary level - to launch them successfully into the world of work.

*In stark contrast to the recommendations of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, and the prevailing zeitgeist, this education agenda strongly supports the Sharda Prasad Committee Report recommendation that the “present scheme of Vocationalisation of Education should be discontinued as it neither provides employment to youth nor meets the exact skill needs of the employer”.<sup>15</sup>*

In fact, the Report made the following pertinent recommendations as to what should be prioritised in school education:

*“a) Every child irrespective of his caste, creed, religion, gender, region or economic status should get 10 years of schooling so that the three Rs - Reading, Writing and Arithmetic - form the basic foundation on which the higher vocational education and training system could be successfully built upon. If the child does not acquire these at this stage, he will not be able to acquire, ever thereafter howsoever skilled he might become.*

*b) At the secondary school level, the children should be sensitized about the dignity of labour, world of work and career options but vocational education and training should start only after 10 years of schooling which is the case in most of the developed world.”*

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, *Report of the Committee for Rationalisation and Optimisation of the functioning of the Sector Councils, Vol.1, 2016, p. 31*

In connection with the type of learning skills that should be prioritised in schools, it would be important to briefly revisit and summarise subsection 2.2. of Chapter 2 which detailed the skills required in a modern economy: cognitive skills including literacy, numeracy and higher order reasoning and problem solving competencies; social and emotional soft skills as well as technical skills acquired through post -secondary training and on the job. Given that, as also detailed in Chapter 2, our government and low-cost private schools are not serving many poor and lower middle class students

with even basic literacy and numeracy skills, the great challenge is to enable these schools to also equip their students with the range of cognitive and non-cognitive skills and competencies to enable them to cope with the demands of a modern economy rather than the more expensive and wasteful option of turning schools into inefficient “vocationalising “ institutions.

## **2.6. Interdependence of Pedagogical Reforms Impacting Learning: Curriculum; Textbooks; Critical Thinking Skills; Testing of Learning; Board Examinations**

Chapter 2 dealt with achieving Goal 1 of the agenda -12 years of quality education with relevant learning outcomes for poor and lower middle class Muslim students. It noted that students needed basic literacy, numeracy and other foundational skills, the ability to apply these skills to everyday tasks, as well as more advanced skills of literacy, numeracy, scientific knowledge, critical thinking and creative skills to meet current and future challenges of acquiring knowledge, employment and citizenship.

Such a broad range of learning outcomes requires a holistic and interrelated agenda of learning reforms. If students are expected to acquire critical thinking skills at the high school stage, basic reasoning skills also need to be taught and acquired at the primary level. Moreover, we cannot expect teachers or students to take higher order thinking skills at any stage of schooling seriously, if regular evaluation of classroom learning, end-of year testing and high stakes board examinations only expect answers reproduced from the textbooks and formulaic answers to a fairly predictable set of questions. Both significant changes in the content of the school curriculum and textbooks in all subjects – humanities and sciences – and the way these are taught and tested in the classroom, need to be viewed as interrelated parts of a holistic agenda of government policies and learning /evaluation reform interventions.

## **2.7. Professional Development of Teachers**

While government education officers and headmasters are aware that English teachers themselves have very limited command of English, they are less aware that even primary regional language and mathematics teachers lack proficiency in basic foundational reading, writing and arithmetic skills. Such deficiencies among teachers

become even more exposed when they have to instruct students at the upper primary/middle school level.

### **2.7.a. Strengthening the Professional Development of School Teachers by Improving Subject Matter Competence, Teaching Methods & Attitudes to Students**

Both national and international research indicates that teachers are woefully deficient in the acquisition of skills and knowledge of the subjects that they are expected to teach:

*“In several Sub-Saharan countries, the average teacher does not perform much better on reading tests than the highest-performing grade 6 students. Across six countries in the region, teachers are not as knowledgeable as their students. In Bihar, India, only 10.5 percent of primary school teachers are able to solve a three-digit by one-digit division problem and show the steps correctly”*

World Development Report, *Learning to Realise Education’s Promise*, 2018, pp. 80-81

Given that the education agenda focusses on foundational and advanced levels of learning, improving the subject matter competencies of teachers at all stages of school education in all subjects need to receive the highest priority. Simultaneously, as in the case of English, teachers also need to be equipped with relevant teaching methods, as well as how to monitor and evaluate learning.

Finally, we need to focus on improving teacher attitudes towards their students, as these play a crucial role in the learning and the overall development of poor and lower middle class students. In the context of the experience of Muslim students, the Sachar Committee Report had observed that “a growing communal mindset among large number of school teachers adds to the ‘hostile’ school atmosphere.”<sup>16</sup> Almost a decade later, Human Rights Watch released a report documenting discrimination against SC, ST and Muslim students in 4 states: Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh.



*“This report finds that discrimination takes various forms, including teachers asking Dalit children to sit separately, making insulting remarks about Muslim and tribal students, and village authorities not responding when girls are kept from the classroom. Teachers and other students often address these children using derogatory terms for their caste, community, tribe, or religion. In some schools, children from vulnerable communities are not ever considered for leadership roles such as class monitor because of their caste or community. Many are expected to perform unpleasant jobs such as cleaning toilets”*

Human Rights Watch, *They Say We're Dirty: Denying an Education to India's Marginalised*, (Summary), 2014.

As the author of this report, Jayshree Bajoria, observed, “ Instead of encouraging children from at-risk communities who are the first in their families to ever step inside a classroom, teachers often neglect or even mistreat them”<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

Implementing the preceding series of interrelated policy interventions would improve the learning of all disadvantaged students, and also make a significant contribution to achieving Goal I of the education agenda which is focused on the learning of the smaller subset of poor and lower middle class Muslim students.

There would be few among education planners, headmasters and teachers in India who would not subscribe to the goal of improving student learning. The current mantra about what needs to be done is that the traditional blackboard should be replaced with digital blackboards, and that this must be accomplished in a mission mode to significantly improve learning on a large scale. One estimate is that the current MHRD scheme, *Operation Digital Board*, which plans to implement this replacement in all government and government-aided schools by 2022 will need between 7,000 to 1,000 crores.<sup>18</sup> It must be highlighted that the impact on learning through such a whole-sale shift to digital technology has a very limited basis in national or international empirical research to justify the extraordinary expenditures incurred on redesigning classrooms, equipping them with computers, developing software and scaling up their use in our government schools.<sup>19</sup>

*First and foremost, we need to understand that there is no magic bullet out there. While there is a role for digital technology to assist teachers and students, what is required to significantly impact the learning of vulnerable students are far more fundamental changes in the functioning of our government schools, along the lines suggested in the preceding subsections. And the successful implementation of all these government policies and interventions depends mainly on ensuring more accountable schools in general, and providing more caring and effective teachers in particular. As the World Development Report states, “Teachers are the most important determinant of student learning. --- No other school level factor has an impact nearly this large on student achievement.”<sup>20</sup>*

# Chapter 7

## **Government Policies Focusing on the Learning / Development of Vulnerable Muslim Children in the Birth-6 Years Age Group to Realise Goal 2 of Benefitting from Early Childhood Development Programmes Including Two Years of Pre-Primary Education by 2030**

### **Introduction**

Unlike the formal educational system which provides detailed statistics on enrolment, schools, facilities, learning achievement, the statistics on children in the birth -6 years age group is far more limited. The main source of official statistics for the under sixes in India are the *National Family Health Survey (NFHS)* reports which have been issued periodically since 1992-93. The 2015-16 NFHS 4 Report will be the principal source of data for this discussion.

Sections 1.1. and 1.2. of this chapter deal with an overall perspective on the health, nutritional status and development concerns of the under sixes in India and the status of implementation of ICDS - the main government programme for vulnerable children and their mothers – focusing on coverage and utilisation of its services and other implementation concerns. This provides the context for recommendations of government policies to improve the coverage and quality of ICDS delineated in Section 1.6. As in the case of government policies for improving learning of vulnerable Muslim students described in the previous chapter, these recommendations are of two kinds:

- Policies that affect all vulnerable children, and thus also Muslim children.
- Specific government interventions that should prioritise Muslim children

## 1.1. Health and Nutritional Status of Children in India 2015-16

Despite improvements in the poor health and nutritional status of Indian children between 1992-93 and 2015-16, as recorded in successive National Family Health Surveys, key statistics on the stunting and wasting of Indian children indicate that the health and nutritional status of Indian children continues to be grim, and even more so for children from vulnerable households:

- 38 percent of children under five years of age were stunted (too short for their age). Stunting is a sign of chronic undernutrition.<sup>1</sup>
- 21% of children under five years of age were wasted (too thin for their height). Wasting is a sign of acute undernutrition.<sup>2</sup>
- According to the 2018 Global Nutrition Report, India has the largest number of stunted children (4.7 crore) as well as wasted children (2.6 crores) in the world.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.1.a. Stunting and its Impact – Socio-Economic and Inter-State Differences

This section focuses on stunting as illustrative of some issues concerning malnutrition in children in India, and also because stunting itself has been demonstrated to have a wide range of negative impacts on the life trajectories of affected children. As Section 1 of Chapter 4 has documented, the international evidence indicates that stunting can have long lasting harmful consequences including diminished mental ability and learning capacity, poor school performance in childhood, reduced earnings and increased risk of nutrition-related diseases such as diabetes and hypertension.

While as many as 38 % of children under 5 years in India are stunted, the incidence of stunting is far higher in poorer households. The incidence of stunting ranges between 51% in the lowest wealth quintile to 22% of children in the highest wealth quintile.<sup>4</sup> NFHS 4 also reveals considerable inter-state differences. Kerala (20%) and Goa (20%) have less than half the percentage of stunted children than Bihar (48%) and Uttar Pradesh (46%) – the latter have also far larger child populations. The remaining states fall in between Kerala/ Goa and Bihar/Uttar Pradesh.<sup>5</sup>

## **1.2. Government Provision for Children in Birth-6 Age-Group and Mothers: The Flagship ICDS Programme – Coverage and Quality**

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) started in 1975 is the main government scheme for the under sixes child population in India, and represents one of the world's largest programmes for early childhood care and development. It aims to improve the health, nutrition and overall development of children in the birth -6 years age-group, and enhance the capacities of mothers to look after the various needs of their children. Among the varied services offered for children in government anganwadis (child centres), include food supplements, growth monitoring, health checkups, immunisation services and preschool education. There are also services for pregnant and lactating mothers - medical checkups, supplementary food, health and nutrition education.

### **1.2.a Universalising and Improving Quality of ICDS Service and its Potential of Significantly Impacting Children's Development**

The continuing efforts to universalize ICDS and improve the quality of its services for children and women is based on the understanding that it has helped vulnerable children, and that there is a great demand for its services by disadvantaged households. The WCD 12<sup>th</sup> Plan document has also highlighted this conviction that significantly expanding and improving the quality of ICDS “has the potential of contributing to a reduction in mortality, improved child nutrition status (increased weight for age in children) and a favourable impact on reducing malnourishment”.<sup>6</sup>

### **1.3 Directive of Universalising ICDS and Actual Limited Coverage**

While, there have been ongoing critiques of its coverage and quality of services, ICDS has also been recognised as being indispensable for the well-being of vulnerable children and mothers. In 2001, the Supreme Court directed the government to ensure that every settlement had a functional anganwadi, and that ICDS was extended to all children under six, and also all pregnant or lactating women and adolescent girls – an order that was reiterated and expanded in later years. Apart from these Supreme Court judgements, universalizing ICDS and ensuring full coverage for all children was recommended in the National Common Minimum Programme of the United

Progressive Alliance government, 2004. A similar recommendation also made later by the 2013 National Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy.<sup>7</sup>

Despite, these high-powered directives on universalizing ICDS, the reality on the ground has been very different. In 2015-16, NFHS 4 indicated that only 54 % of children in the Birth - 6 years age-group received any one or more of the following ICDS services for children - food supplements, immunisation services, health checkups and preschool education. About half the pregnant and breast feeding mothers did not receive any of the 3 ICDS services supplementary food, health checkups and health and nutrition education.<sup>8</sup>

### **1.3. a. Poor Quality of ICDS Implementation –Neglect of Birth-3 Years Stage**

Since its inception, there have been various evaluations and reports which have highlighted the quantitative and qualitative shortcomings of ICDS programmes. One of the most comprehensive and constructive critiques of ICDS was the 12th Plan document of the Women and Child Development (WCD) which concluded that its services have been “relatively well implemented only in isolated pockets”, and that it “has been largely criticized for its relative lack of focus on both the 0 to 6 month age-group and children in the 6 month to 3 year period, both of which are the most vulnerable to slip into under-nutrition”<sup>9</sup>

### **1.3. b. Provide Necessary Inputs for the Neglected Birth-3 Years Age Group in ICDS Supplemented by Caregiver Education Focusing on Psychosocial Development of Infants**

The *2013 National Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy* has highlighted that children in this age-group should receive an opportunity for psychosocial stimulation and early interaction in safe, nurturing and stimulating environments within the home and appropriate child-care services. The considerable advantages accruing to vulnerable children from receiving psychosocial stimulation was documented extensively in Section 1 of Chapter 4 which concluded that these benefits are still not understood widely in India by parents and caregivers, and even by those involved in designing ECCE programmes.

### **1.3. c. ICDS - Limited Coverage / Poor Quality of Preschool Education in Anganwadis**

Section 2 of Chapter 4 cited the evidence indicating the multiple benefits of preprimary education. It should be emphasised that these benefits accrue only to those who have been exposed to good quality preprimary schooling and not to the type of education provided in most ICDS anganwadis, as described below:

*With some exceptions, anganwadis generally act as a place where children come primarily to collect their mid-day meal and spend some time when parents are away at work. There is generally no planned ECE activity and children can be found playing among themselves while the anganwadi worker does her administrative work. When some activity takes place, it is invariably recitation of poems or rhymes or learning of letters and numbers*

Presentation by Vimala Ramachandran based on background papers for a forthcoming report, *Mobile Creches, State of young child in India Report 2019*

Given this lack of functioning, the NFHS estimate that 38 % of children under six years received preprimary education in ICDS anganwadis in 2015-16 should be interpreted cautiously.<sup>10</sup>

### **1.3.d. Government Policies for Improving Pre-Primary Education in ICDS Anganwadis - Quality Features that Need to be Provided.**

Anganwadis need to provide quality preprimary education since the varied benefits of preschooling cannot be realized without such significant qualitative changes. The following is the briefest of summaries of what is required and draws extensively from two recent publications.<sup>11</sup>

#### Need for a Holistic, Child-Centred Curriculum and Activity-Based Pedagogy

Teacher-centric teaching practices in most Indian preschools is based on the notion that teachers are meant to fill passive children with desirable knowledge, and have failed to keep pace with developments in the neurosciences, learning theories and developmental psychology. What is needed are preschool centres where:

- Children feel wanted, secure and happy in a welcoming classroom climate
- Children learn effectively as the curriculum is based on their development needs
- Children learn through play, handle materials, have opportunities to communicate and express themselves freely, observe, question, solve problems and create.
- Children develop positive self-concepts and self-regulation and social skills.
- Children develop a positive attitude towards learning, and the knowledge and skills that prepare them for primary school.<sup>12</sup>

#### Need for Quality Standards & Developmentally Appropriate Activities

The 2014 document of the Ministry of Women and Child Development entitled, *Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Development*, identifies 8 components of quality in preprimary service provision.<sup>13</sup> A detailed description of the domains of development at this stage, as well as the type of developmentally appropriate activities for children to be engaged in, is provided in the *National Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Curriculum Framework*.<sup>14</sup>

### **1.4. Complementary Government Policies Needed That Target the Development / Learning of Vulnerable Muslim Children Under 6 Years**

The overall efforts to universalise and improve the quality of ICDS anganwadis, as detailed in the preceding subsections, will impact all vulnerable children, including those from poor and lower middle class Muslim households. However, more specific quantitative targeting of vulnerable Muslim children in ICDS schemes is also required. As detailed in the following subsections, the use of ICDS services is limited among vulnerable Muslim mothers and their children - this poor coverage of ICDS in most states had been flagged earlier by the Sachar Report.<sup>15</sup>

#### **1.4.a. Vulnerable Muslim Mothers & Children Utilise ICDS Services Far Less than SCs/ STs**

- Muslim children under 6 years are the least likely among all disadvantaged groups to utilise ICDS services. Only 46% of them used one of the 4 ICDS



services – lower than the national average of 54% and far lower than SCs (59%) and STs (64%).<sup>16</sup>

- Similarly a far larger proportion of pregnant Muslim women did not receive any of the 3 ICDS services from an anganwadi centre during pregnancy (58%), and while breastfeeding (62%). This was far higher than the national average of 46% and 51% %. The comparable figures for SCs were far lower at 40% and 45% respectively.<sup>17</sup>

#### **1.4.b. Expansion of ICDS Services in States and Districts Focusing on Vulnerable Muslim Mothers and Children**

There is a need to prioritise the expansion of ICDS services in states and districts with sizeable Muslim populations. This is particularly the case in regions of the country where ICDS coverage is limited. This is best exemplified by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar – the 2 states which have the largest and third largest Muslim populations in India, and between them constitute about one third of all Indian Muslims. While only 54 % of Indian children below 6 years received one or more of the 3 ICDS services for children, the figures for Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were far lower at 39% and 49% respectively.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Conclusion – Looking Back, Looking Forward**

Given the poor health status of many disadvantaged Indian children, reflected in the unacceptably high rates of stunting and wasting, there is an urgent need to expand ICDS services, quantitatively and qualitatively. This expansion should specially focus on the birth-3 years stage, and make caregivers aware of the beneficial and varied impact of the psychosocial stimulation of their infants. Particular attention needs also to be paid to significantly improving the quality of preschool education being provided in ICDS anganwadis.

All of these measures, including expanding ICDS services in poorly served states and districts, will benefit all disadvantaged mothers and children, but less so vulnerable Muslim mothers and children, as documented in Section 1.4.a. Apart from the unsuitable location of anganwadis, and patriarchal restrictions on the mobility of Muslim women outside the family home unaccompanied by another household member, was cited as reasons for the poor utilisation of anganwadi services by Muslim mothers.

The need for proactive measures and enabling interventions to increase the numbers of vulnerable Muslim users are obvious. Policies and interventions include prioritising expansion of ICDS services in states and districts with large Muslim populations and limited coverage like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar; location of new anganwadis in or near Muslim neighbourhoods; extending outreach services of ICDS; and advocacy of the importance of utilising ICDS services in Muslim communities.

Here NGOs and other community groups have a special role, and need to engage in a variety of interventions. These include policy advocacy, awareness raising drives and other community based initiatives to achieve Goal 2 - improve the development and learning of vulnerable Muslim children in the birth - 6 years stage including providing 2 years of preprimary education by 2030. These interventions articulating the critical role of Muslim organisations and Civil society groups in implementing this and the remaining 2 goals of the education agenda will be detailed in Chapter 9.

# Chapter 8

## **Government Policies/ Schemes for Achieving Goal 3 of Agenda for Out- of- School/ College Vulnerable Muslims Under 25 Years to Benefit from Access to Educational Opportunities & Vocational Training**

### **Introduction**

As detailed in Chapter 5, the learning skills of many poor and lower middle class Muslim youth, outside the formal educational system under 25 years, were poorer than the limited learning skills of those currently enrolled in school, since most of the former would have dropped out prematurely from school. Some of them who may never have attended school, or dropped out before completing primary school, were likely to be illiterate and innumerate.

While most out-of-school/college Muslim youth would be engaged in a variety of occupations, including domestic chores and home-based work, manual occupations and small trades, quite a few would be interested in a second chance to improve their educational and vocational skills/qualifications to better their material and social prospects. Chapter 5 concluded that the estimated 3.1 crore vulnerable out-of- school /college Muslim youth under 25 years would get further marginalised unless they acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills, and were also provided a second chance to pursue formal education and opportunities to pursue vocational training.

This chapter will analyse the government policies and programmes that are being implemented, evaluate their benefits wherever possible, and recommend what needs to be done to these official schemes to improve the access of poor and lower middle class, out-of-school /college Muslim youth for educational and vocational opportunities.

## **1.1. Targetting Government Schemes to Improve Access to Better Educational Opportunities and Vocational Training for of Out-of-School Vulnerable Muslim Youth**

Of the 3.1 crore vulnerable out-of school/college Muslims in the age group 15-24 years, there would be many who would like to access adult opportunities that improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills, and also return to formal education. Others would prefer to acquire vocational skills, or improve existing skills, that better their immediate material and employment prospects. Given the numbers involved, and the scale of human and financial resources required, government programmes that actively promote opportunities for disadvantaged Muslim youth to acquire educational certification, literacy and vocational skills are critical.

These government schemes will be analysed under the five broad “second-chance” pathways categorisation that Rukmini Banerji has used in analysing the various programmes developed in India and other countries of South Asia for meeting the educational and learning needs for those who are now above fourteen and have not completed their schooling.<sup>1</sup>

- Distance education opportunities for acquiring “learning equivalency” and educational certification
- Women’s empowerment programmes to provide for literacy and learning needs of women and adolescent girls as well as entry into the education system
- Government Adult Literacy Programmes
- Skill Development Schemes
- Other second chance models and programmes

The next subsections will detail the main official schemes under these 5 broad categories, and evaluate where possible their impact on poor and lower middle class out-of school/college Muslim youth under 25 years, as well as recommend measures that improve their access to these schemes.

### **1.1.a. Distance Education for Learning Equivalency & Educational Certification Improving Access of Muslim Youth to the National Institute of Open Schooling**

For those who have dropped out of school and want to continue with their formal education, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) offers a variety of courses and certification for students in Classes 3, 5 and 8, as well as for high school and higher secondary stages. It also offers a number of vocational and life enrichment programmes. Between 1990-2014, the NIOS certified more than 33 lakhs at the high school and higher secondary stages, and about 5 lakhs at the 3 Open Basic Education (OBE) levels equivalent to Class III, V, and VIII respectively of formal education. The majority of the NIOS learners were school drop outs, rural youth, urban poor, and both girls and women who were not able to continue for a variety of reasons in the formal schooling system. Many of these learners used the completed high school certification to access vocational and academic courses.<sup>2</sup> The current enrolment, according to the NIOS website is 27.1 lakhs. To meet the demands for second chance formal education, many states have started State Open Schools (SOS) in regional languages.

#### Impact on Muslim Youth / Recommendations for Focusing Expansion on Muslim Youth

The NIOS started a minority cell in 2006. Madrasas could register with NIOS, under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Providing Quality Education in Madrasas (SPQEM), so that their students could opt for study at secondary and senior secondary level, as well as vocational courses. SPQEM was to fund the entire scheme. However, a 2013 evaluation of its implementation, noted that very few madrasas had availed of the scheme, “as the majority of the madrasas that were visited had no information regarding NIOS or its functioning”.<sup>3</sup>

It is recommended that the Minority Cell of NIOS focus on ways to get madrasas to register under SPQEM and enable their students to opt for education and vocational courses. On the overall front, there is a need to specifically target Muslim out-of school youth to enroll in NIOS courses.

## **1.1.b. Women’s Empowerment – Literacy, Skill Development and School Entry - Mahila Samakhya, Nai Roshni and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) Programmes**

### 1. Mahila Samakhya

This programme was started in 1989 as a discussion forum cum action front to empower marginalised rural women by forming sanghas (groups) to discuss problems they confronted, and to initiate relevant activities. Reporting on its status in 2014, the *Mahila Samakhya National Review* noted that the programme had expanded to 679 blocks in 11 states and had a presence in 44,446 villages, that is in about a quarter of the villages of the districts where it was present. In these villages, there were 55,402 sanghas which had a membership of about 14 lakh rural women.<sup>4</sup>

Of particular relevance to out-of-school Muslim girls are the various programmes run by these sanghas for skill training and enabling girls to rejoin the formal educational system through the Mahila Shikshak Kendras. For rural Muslim girls and women who face a number of constraints on their behavior, what the Mahila Samakhya uniquely has to offer are its empowerment initiatives which demonstrate how “collectives of empowered women can take responsibility and work in their communities to bridge the gender gaps and promote education and development of marginalized girls and women”.<sup>5</sup>

### Impact of Mahila Samakhya on Muslim Women / Recommendation for Expanding Muslim Women Participation

While it has a presence in 11 states and a membership of about 14 lakh rural women, the Mahila Samakhya Scheme needs to expand and improve Muslim participation in its programmes. As the 4<sup>th</sup> Joint Review Mission of the Mahila Samakhya observed, Muslim participation continued to be limited, as earlier evaluations had also noted.<sup>6</sup> While SCs and STs constituted 55% of its sangha membership, Muslims on the other hand were underrepresented at 8.5%.<sup>7</sup>

### 2. Nai Roshni

This Scheme for Leadership Development of Minority Women has been implemented since 2012 by the Ministry of Minority Affairs since with the help of NGOs in various

states of India. The objective of the scheme is to empower and instill confidence among minority women, including their neighbours, by providing knowledge, tools and techniques for interacting with Government systems, banks and other institutions at all levels. The residential and non-residential training courses is offered to mainly minority women between the ages of 18 and 65 years with a preference being given to those coming from households earning below 2.5 lakh rupees per annum from all sources. The new 2017 guidelines encourages women from other communities to join not exceeding 25% of the total from other communities living in the same village/locality.<sup>8</sup>

### Impact on Muslim Women / Recommendation for Evaluation and Consequent Expansion

A 2016 quick evaluation of the Nai Roshni scheme indicated that the scheme was being implemented by 343 NGOs in 24 states. In the 8 states that was studied intensively, most women trainees were Muslim women.<sup>9</sup> After a more comprehensive evaluation of whether the scheme is meeting its stated objectives, expanding its outreach merits consideration since Muslim women are its main beneficiaries.

### 3. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) Scheme

The KGBV Scheme was launched in 2004 for setting up residential schools at upper primary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and minorities. KGBVs are now functioning in 27 states, and are located in educational backward blocks where schools are at great distances and are a challenge to the security of girls. KGBVs attempt to enroll adolescent girls who are unable to go to regular schools to out of school girls in the 10+ age group who are unable to complete primary school. Only a few states have forged links to secondary schools enabling KGBV students to get a secondary school certificate.

The KGBV offers an unique opportunity for rural girls from deprived backgrounds to receive an empowering and high quality education. Based on examples of excellence demonstrated by Mahila Samakhya - run KGBVs in Uttar Pradesh which demonstrate what can be achieved, Krishna Kumar and Latika Gupta have observed:

*“As a unique and unprecedented scheme covering the compounded disadvantages that rural girls from deprived socio-economic back-grounds suffer, it needs to be recast more ambitiously, with a long-term vision, which goes beyond ideas like “hand-holding” and offers a solid educational grounding to a highly vulnerable clientele. The example set by MS in UP, where a passionate sense of responsibility towards KGBVs appears to have developed, deserves to be given a more realistic chance to flourish in the context of not just upgradation of KGBVs to classes X or XII but also in terms of MS’ own institutionalisation.”*

Krishna Kumar and Latika Gupta, “What Is Missing in Girls’ Empowerment?”, *Economic & Political Weekly*, June 28, 2008, p.23

#### Impact / Recommendation for Expansion and Increasing Participation of Muslim Girls

- Despite reservation for Muslim girls, their utilization has been limited. The scheme provides for a minimum reservation of 75% seats for girls from SC/ST/OBC and minorities communities and 25% to girls from families that live below the poverty line. The MHRD *Annual Report 2015-16* recorded that 3598 KGBV s were functional with a combined enrolment of 3.5 lakh girls. Of this SC and ST constituted 55%, while Muslims on the other hand compared to their share of the Indian population were underrepresented at 6%.<sup>10</sup>
- Since the KGBV has great educational potential for Muslim girls, it needs to expand and prioritise efforts to enrol Muslim girls, including locating new KGBVs in the 1,228 Community Development Blocks where the Minority population is 25% or more of total population as identified by the Ministry of Minority Affairs. These new and older KGBCs also need to forge links to secondary schools enabling their students to receive a secondary school certificate.
- Since the potential benefits of the KGBV scheme to all disadvantaged girls are many, the entire scheme needs to be revisited in terms of its pedagogical effectiveness – a good place to start would be the broad reforms suggested in the EPW article by Krishna Kumar and Latika Gupta cited earlier.



### **1.1.c. Eradicating Illiteracy Among Muslims - Targeting Vulnerable Muslim Youth in Adult Literacy Programmes**

Literacy rates in India have been continuously on the increase since independence, due principally to the rate of expansion of elementary schooling, and to a lesser extent the impact of adult education programmes. In 2001, the literacy rate was 65% for persons 7 years and above; the figure for 2011 was 73% - the male and female literacy rates were 81% and 65% respectively. At 69%, the Muslim rate was lower than the national average; the corresponding male and female literacy rates were 75% and 62%.

Among all major Indian religious communities, Muslims had the lowest literacy rates. In 2011, of the total number of 28.30 crore Indian illiterates, 26% or 7.40 crore were Muslims. This proportion of Muslim illiterates of the total Indian illiterate population far exceeded the Muslim proportion of the total Indian population at 14.2%. Since the vast majority of illiterates were between 25 - 65+ years, given the considerable differences in age and aptitude amongst these learners, making even the majority of them literate will be a herculean task.

After being in the doldrums for some years, Adult Literacy programmes are recently receiving more attention. The 2015-16 MHRD Annual Report provides various details concerning adult literacy programmes being conducted in different states. Under the National Literacy Mission, two major schemes are being run: Sakshar Bharat and Support to Voluntary Agencies for Adult Education and Skill Development. According to this MHRD document, about 45 lakh literacy learning centers are functioning in different states of the country. By 2015, 36.6 crores were certified as literate having passed the NIOS assessment test which prescribed competency levels in reading, writing and numeracy.<sup>11</sup>

#### Impact on Muslim Literates / Recommendation to Target Illiteracy Among Muslim Youth

Out of these certified literates, 86.32 lakhs were Scheduled Castes (23.65%), 46.4 lakhs were Scheduled Tribe (12.72%) and 30.2 lakhs were Minorities (around 8.29%).<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that the proportion of SC and ST certified literates far exceeded their share of the Indian population, unlike Muslims whose performance was correspondingly far below.

According to the 2011 Census, of the approximately 450 lakh Muslim illiterates above 6 years, only 70 lakhs - 20% of the 360 lakh Muslim youth between the ages of 15-24 years - were illiterate. Therefore instead of trying to make literate all 450 lakh illiterate Muslims, it is recommended that adult literacy drives should target this smaller group of younger Muslim illiterates. Here to the focus should be on the 6 states with specially limited Muslim school enrolment and containing 45 % of the Indian Muslim population – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat. In 2011, little more than 40 lakh Muslim illiterates were located in these states constituting 58% of the total number of Muslim illiterates between the ages of 15-24 years.<sup>13</sup>

#### **1.1. d. Vulnerable Muslim Youth and the Main Government Skill Development Schemes**

The main Skill Development schemes are those run by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) with various project partners in different states of India. The following extract from the Sharda Prasad Committee Report summarizes the principal objectives and features of this major government programme – the Skill Development Initiative:

- Provide skills to youth, particularly, early school leavers, who faced entry barriers because of lack of required educational qualification.
- Meet the growing demand of skilled manpower, particularly, in the Services Sector in view of the GDP growing at a phenomenal rate of 8 to 9% per annum.
- Provide skilled manpower at a faster rate without joining two year – long courses under the Craftsmen Training Scheme (Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), and provide employment opportunities to a large number of youth entering the job market.
- Though not a substitute for the longer term ITI courses, it was also felt necessary to run these courses as not many of the ITIs ran courses for the growing services sector.<sup>14</sup>

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) was established in 2008 and mandated to train 15 crore people by 2022 as part of the National Skill Development Policy 2009, which set out a target of providing job skills to as many as 50 crore by 2022. The actual performance has been far short of this unrealistic goal. Data shows

that the NSDC, through its partners, only managed to skill around 6 lakh youth till September 1, 2017, and could place only 72,858 trained youth, exhibiting a placement rate of around 12 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

### Impact on Muslim Youth / Recommendation to Focus on Muslim Youth

There is no available evidence on the impact of these schemes on Muslim youth. However, despite the NSDC not meeting its overambitious goal, this particular skill development initiative has great potential for vulnerable Muslim youth, since it is a large-scale programme capable of absorbing large numbers of youth without formal educational qualifications, and provide short-term training for entry-level jobs in the services sector.

It is therefore recommended that publicity about these schemes are targeted at Muslim youth. As this initiative matures, it is important to ensure that this initial training does not merely ensure that trainees access low-paying entry level jobs, but can also be a potential stepping stone for them to acquire more skills for better job prospects. Moreover, as the Sharda Prasad Report has highlighted, it is not a substitute for the longer term vocational courses offered by ITIs and the Apprenticeship Training Schemes.

### **1.1. e. Other Government Schemes for Vulnerable Muslims - Nai Manzil and Seekho aur Kamaon Schemes**

#### 1. Nai Manzil

Launched in 2015 at Patna, the Nai Manzil: An Integrated Education and Livelihood Scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Minority Affairs with assistance from the World Bank, and supported by NIOS and NSDC. It aims to benefit minority youth from BPL families between 17-35 years, who do not have a formal school leaving certificate, i.e. those in the category of school dropouts or educated in community education institutions like madrasas. Its objectives are to provide non-residential education bridge programmes for eligible minority youth to obtain open schooling certification of Class 8 or Class 10, as well as impart high quality skill training, including soft skills, leading to productive employment. It also seeks to provide job placement support to students seeking employment.

The primary catchment area for beneficiaries under this scheme are the 1,228 Community Development Blocks where the Minority population is 25% or more of the total population, as identified by the Ministry of Minority Affairs. Nai Manzil has contracted various agencies who have been given targets to fulfil in 2016-17 and 2017-18 in 27 States and 2 Union Territories. In both years, 87,266 students were enrolled - 24% were enrolled at the Open Basic Education elementary level and 76% of candidates at the secondary level. 47.6% of enrolled students were females.<sup>16</sup>

#### Impact / Recommendation for Evaluation of Effectiveness and Subsequent Expansion

In the light of the Sharda Prasad critique of skill development schemes run by the Ministry of Minority Affairs and other Ministries detailed in the subsequent subsection 1.3.c., this initiative of the Ministry of Minority Affairs should be evaluated for its effectiveness. It should then be considered for expansion, as it focuses on minority youth from BPL families between 17-35 years, who do not have a formal school leaving certificate, and has enrolled large numbers of them, including many females.

#### Seekho aur Kamaon

The Seekho aur Kamaon scheme is an initiative of the Ministry of Minority Affairs which targets youth from 14 -- 35 years of age, and aims to improve employability of existing workers, school drop outs, etc. belonging to minority communities and ensure their placement. It also aims to conserve and update traditional skills of minorities and establish their linkage with market. The scheme will upgrade the skills of minority youth in various modern and traditional vocations depending upon their educational qualifications, present economic trends and the market potential, which can earn them a suitable employment or make them suitably skilled to opt for self-employment.<sup>17</sup>

Between 2013-2017, there were 2,17,454 people trained in residential and non-residential courses. A 2017 National Productivity Council evaluation of the implementation of the Seekho aur Kamao scheme in 8 states between 2013-2016 noted that most of the trainees the evaluators contacted were Muslims. While the minimum qualification for candidates was a Class 5 pass, only 1.7% of these trainees had just this qualification. 57% were Class 12 and 13 % were graduates.<sup>18</sup>

## Impact/ Recommendation for Evaluation of Effectiveness and Subsequent Expansion

In the light of the Sharda Prasad critique of skill development schemes run by the Ministry of Minority Affairs and other Ministries, the recommendations on both these initiatives will be discussed in a later subsection 1.3.c.

### **1.2. Vocational Education for Youth with High School/Higher Secondary Certificates**

Unlike the previous schemes for skill training, the older and more established technical training and skill development schemes like the Craftsman Training Scheme (Industrial Training Institutes) and the Apprenticeship Training Scheme expect all entrants to have a minimum elementary or high school formal school qualification, and are generally longer and more comprehensive vocational skill training courses. While there is no evidence available on their impact on Muslim trainees, the potential advantages for disadvantaged Muslim youth enrolling in either of these courses is explored in subsection 1.2.c.

#### **1.2.a. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)**

Started in 1950, the Craftsman Training Scheme was established to meet the needs of industry by providing them with trained workers and has now developed into a national network of government and private Industrial Training Institutions (ITIs). At the end of 2015-16, there were 12,412 ITIs - 2,051 Government and 10,361 private and the total seating capacity of these ITIs was 2,551,330. These ITIs conduct courses of 1-year to 2-year durations. The entry qualification is Class 10 or Class 12. There are only 11 courses where the entry qualification is 8th standard. Under the ITIs, there are 73 engineering and 48 non-engineering courses.<sup>19</sup>

#### **1.2.b. Apprenticeship Training Scheme**

This training scheme involves a period of basic training followed by practical training in the factory. The minimum age prescribed for entry into the Apprentice Training Scheme is 14 years and the entry qualification varies from Class 8 to Class 12, and the period of training varies from 6 months to 4 years. There are 260 designated trades under the ATS in which 30,165 establishments conduct training of 2.3 lakh trade apprentices out

of which 36,000 apprentices are engaged in Central Public Sector Undertakings/Central Government and 1.94 lakh in the State Public Sector Undertakings / State Government Departments and Private Sector.<sup>20</sup>

### **1.2.c. Advantages of Enrolling in ITIs and Apprenticeship Training Schemes for Vulnerable Muslim Youth**

Unlike the previous schemes for skill training detailed in subsection 2.1., the older and more established technical training and skill development schemes like the Scheme for Craftsman Training Scheme - Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) - and the Apprenticeship Training Scheme expect all entrants to have a minimum elementary or high school formal school qualification, and generally longer and more comprehensive vocational courses.

Are there any benefits for vulnerable Muslim youth to pursue either of these two longer vocational education courses, rather than enroll in one of the short-term government skill development schemes detailed earlier. The following observations of the World Bank encapsulates the advantages for them to pursue the institutionalised training and employment avenues offered by the former to acquire vocational skills recognised throughout India by both government and industry.

*“Data from labor market surveys in India have shown that individuals with formal vocational education training have a higher probability of being salaried workers (rather than being casual workers, self-employed or unemployed) than individuals coming to the labor market with only general secondary education. Data also show that they benefit from a substantial wage premium (about 18 percent in 2011–12). As 46 percent of Industrial Training Institute (ITI) trainees are from below poverty line households, comprehensive skills training also provides an effective pathway for youth from poor backgrounds into employment.” and “Apprenticeship training is attractive for youth, especially from vulnerable families, because it combines earning with the possibility to obtain an educational certificate that is recognized in the market.--- The dual mode of training improves learning outcomes and is especially successful in developing transferable and soft skills allowing for better labor mobility of graduates. Recent research in India has also documented beneficial cost-benefit relations for companies participating in apprenticeship training”*

World Bank, *India - Skills Strengthening for Industrial Value Enhancement Operation*, 2017, pp. 3-4.

### **1.3. Important Issues and Priorities in Government Policies - Improving Access To Educational Opportunities and Vocational Training for Vulnerable Muslim Youth**

The out-of school/college Indian population in the age group 15-24 years in 2015-16 is estimated to be 24.1 crores, and of these roughly about 19.3 crores are likely to be from poor and lower middle class households. Only a considerable expansion of current programmes would meet the needs of those interested in a second chance at acquiring literacy, educational or skill qualifications. There is therefore considerable scope for expansion of these schemes. While disadvantaged Muslim youth will certainly gain from this expansion, some specific concerns will need to be addressed to maximise benefits for them. The following delineates some of these concerns, and some measures that need to be taken for improvement.

### 1.3.a. Improving Limited Enrolment of Muslims in Various Government Schemes

The previous subsections have documented that the evaluations of general programmes - Adult Literacy, Mahila Samakhya and KGBV schemes - indicate that Muslims are often underrepresented, or as in the case of NIOS, the benefits are not reaching them. While, the reasons for this can be many, in the case of Muslim girls the need to locate these schemes closer to Muslim communities should be given special consideration. However, as documented in subsection 1.1.a, the fact that the majority of madrasas were not aware that their students could register with NIOS and opt for study at secondary and senior secondary level, which would be entirely funded under the SPQEM - raises the more general issue of the lack of information of new opportunities and schemes. In this connection, the observations of the Sharda Prasad Committee are pertinent:

*“Young people who can be trained are not aware of the sectors and skills that are in short supply, since there is no publicly accessible labor market information system (employment exchanges run by the Ministry of Labour and Employment are a poor substitute), nor is there a publicly available skill gap analysis by sector for each state, let alone by district. In other words, there is a problem of information asymmetry. Employers, industry or services, are looking for skilled people to employ but can’t find them. Youth looking for jobs who can afford to pay for pre-service vocational training do not know which skills are in demand, and therefore can’t find jobs.*

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, *Report of the Committee for Rationalisation and Optimisation of the functioning of the Sector Councils, Vol.1, 2016, pg.158*

This problem of a lack of information is acutely felt by all disadvantaged students and youth, especially the latter who do not have even teachers to apprise them of career and education choices. In an information-poor environment, what need to be done specifically for vulnerable Muslim youth, will be detailed in the discussion on implementing the new education agenda in Chapter 9.



### **1.3.b. Encouraging Skill Development Among Muslim Out-of –School College Youth by Subsidising Costs of Training**

In addition to the lack of information on skill development courses, the following quotation, yet again from the Sharda Prasad Committee Report, articulates the financial hardships and dilemmas faced by all disadvantaged youth of whether or not to pursue the vocational education option.

*A further demand problem arises from the fact that young people turning 15 often do not possess the ability to pay for the training. Potential trainees face two kinds of costs if they decide to acquire vocational skills pre-service. First is the financial cost of the training itself, including living expenses. The second is the opportunity cost of not being in a job. The reason most such young people left school after (or even before) completing elementary school (class 1-8) is that they were not sure any further general, academic education would improve their employability, specially for a formal sector job. The dual burden of the financial and opportunity cost of pre-service vocational training is a serious barrier against entry of youth into VET. Hence they don't wish to join vocational education in senior secondary school or pre-employment vocational training that may be on offer from the public or private sector.*

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, *Report of the Committee for Rationalisation and Optimisation of the functioning of the Sector Councils, Vol.1*, 2016, pg.159

As in the case of Muslim students, who need far more government financial assistance for formal education detailed in Chapter 6, the issue of funding/ subsidising skill development courses for disadvantaged Muslim youth need to be considered by both Central and State Governments. The Ministry of Minority Affairs can take a lead role in this, as well as seek other non-official sources of funding.

### **1.3.c. Encouraging Skill Development Among Muslim Out-of –School College Youth - Need for Improving the Quality of Training and its Outcomes**

The issue of making skill development courses an attractive option for youth is intimately related to the quality of training offered in government and private skill development schemes and their outcomes in terms of employment. Two examples illustrate the issue.

#### 1. Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)

While government ITIs have in the recent past attempted to upgrade their facilities and courses, in 2018 it was reported that of the approximate 2,700 private ITIs in Uttar Pradesh, the Skill Development Minister was going to derecognize 500 institutions for a variety of reasons including lack of infrastructure and facilities and in some cases no buildings, teachers or students.<sup>21</sup> Why this has happened elsewhere also is provided in the following comment on the rapid expansion of private ITIs in the nation:

*“A recent parliamentary report on private ITIs has exposed yet another scam - - the Quality Council of India’s approval for thousands of private ITIs. If the number of private ITIs has grown from under 2,000 to over 11,000 in five years, it points to a colossal failure of regulation, accompanied by a lack of quality training.”*

Santosh Mehrotra and Ashutosh Pratap, “Skill India Urgently Needs Reforms”, *The Hindu*, April 6, 2018

#### 2. Recommendations for Muslim Youth

While there is an obvious need to regulate the quality of private ITIs, training in Government ITIs is a cheaper and a better quality option. There is therefore a need to expand the enrolment of the existing Government ITIs and start new ones with a mandate to increase enrolment of disadvantaged Muslim youth. These new Government ITIs should preferably be located in the 1,228 Community Development Blocks, where the minority population is 25% or more of the total population, as identified by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

### 3. Revisit Quality of Skill Development Initiatives of the Ministry of Minority Affairs

Since the skill development initiatives of the Ministry of Minority Affairs - Nai Manzil and Seekho aur Kamaon focused on Muslim youth, enrolment in them has increased considerably. However, in a sweeping critique of these and other skill development schemes, the Sharda Prasad Report highlighted that the Ministry of Minority Affairs and 8 other Central Ministries:

*“do not have any training infrastructure and conduct short term training courses of generic nature with the help of vocational training providers in the private sector or NSDC training partners. These are mostly run for the benefit of the youth which are subject matter of their Ministries ----. However, they neither have skill needs of employers nor standard course curriculum for trainees, nor independent assessment and certification machinery. The training is mostly sub-standard, supply driven and doesn't have any correlation with the specific needs of the employers as a result it does not meet two basic objectives of the vocational training – meeting the exact skill needs of the industry and providing the youth with decent opportunities of livelihood at decent wages”*

Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, *Report of the Committee for Rationalisation and Optimisation of the functioning of the Sector Councils, Vol.1*, 2016, p. 23

In the light of the above comments on its deficiencies, the Ministry of Minority Affairs should examine what it needs to do to make both its schemes - Nai Manzil and Seekho aur Kamaon – more effective before further expansion.

#### **1.3.d. Prioritising Adult Literacy/School Certification Schemes for Vulnerable Muslim Youth**

In Chapter 5, it was highlighted that the vast majority of the estimated 3.1 crore Muslim youth below 25 years, outside the formal system, were likely to have not even acquired even basic literacy and numeracy skills or the capacities for their application to real life situations. While Chapter 2 detailed the type of advanced cognitive and non-cognitive learning skills that students would require to cope with the exponentially

expanding frontiers of knowledge, the increasingly Artificial Intelligence driven economy and to meet the new challenges of Fake News and climate change, poor and lower middle class Muslim youth outside the formal educational system will also need to acquire these skills to cope with these learning challenges.

It is therefore important that government schemes for adult literacy and educational entry and certification should focus on improving the range and quality of learning skills of youth enrolled in their schemes. They should also expand their schemes, and prioritise the enrolment of Muslim youth in MHRD's Adult Literacy programmes, NIOS, Mahila Samakya and KGBV schemes. The specific recommendations have been detailed in the relevant subsections of Section 1.1. In this connection, the Ministry of Minority Affairs has an important facilitating and promotional role, and how best to do this requires a wider consultation involving NGOs, media professionals, etc.

Increasing the formal educational qualifications for out-of school/college Muslim youth, who dropped out before completing high school, is important for a variety of reasons – the chief among them is improving one's job prospects. In comparison to the short-term NSDC skill development courses for which formal educational qualifications are relaxed, Muslim youth should be encouraged to consider ITI training - nowadays for the vast majority of ITI courses the minimum qualification is Class 10 or Class 12 pass. The latter, it should be reiterated is a surer pathway for acquiring technical skills, employment and material welfare enhancement.

## **Conclusion – Looking Back, Looking Forward**

In 2021, it was estimated that of the approximately 46.9 crore persons between 6-24 years, about 29.5 crores would be school and college students and the remaining 17.4 crores would be outside the formal educational system. For this large number of school /college youth, a back –of – envelope calculation would indicate that current government educational and skill development programmes do not cover even 10 % of this group. While there is considerable talk about India's youth dividend, we are not going to capitalise on this if we do not pay immediate attention to our out-of-school/college youth and enable them to fulfil their potential.

As Rukmini Bannerji has pointed out our entire focus has been on those within the formal educational system, and that while the “2014 National Youth Policy recognizes

that young people who have not completed school need special focus but does not allude to the magnitude of this population nor explicitly lay out specific interventions for such youth”.<sup>22</sup> A more recent example of this myopia within the educational establishment is reflected in the 33 themes that MHRD published in 2015 to facilitate discussion on the New Education Policy (NEP). Of the 13 themes covering school education and 20 themes which dealt with higher education, only one theme referred specifically to the needs of the large numbers of learners outside the formal educational system.

*While India has neglected this entire out-of-school/college group, the situation of poor and lower middle class Muslim children and youth among them is particularly grim. By 2020, it was projected that there would be 3.1 crores between the ages of 6-24 years outside the educational system – more than those enrolled in schools and colleges. As noted in Chapter 5, they are ‘invisible’ for a variety of reasons, and hence get limited attention by both government bodies and NGOs. Even the progressive 2006 Sachar Committee Report recommendations omitted altogether these vulnerable out-of-school/college Muslim children and youth.*

*For the Muslim community to progress and contribute to national development, this hugely disadvantaged group needs the benefit of second chance schemes of education and vocational education, that only government programmes can provide at the required scale to make any significant difference to their lives. In catalysing and articulating these policies, as well as monitoring their implementation, Civil society groups including Muslim organisations have an important role. What more these groups need to be doing at the policy level, as well as implementing concrete initiatives in Muslim communities, will be delineated in the next chapter dealing with their critical role in implementing the new education agenda.*

# Chapter 9

## **Implementing the New Education Agenda - The Indispensable Role of Muslim Organisations & Other Civil Society Groups in Policy Advocacy, Capacity Building and Community-Based Initiatives**

The final chapter of this report articulates the framework and issues relating to the implementation of the new education agenda for Muslims in contemporary India. There are 3 Sections:

- Section 1 articulates the important reasons why the realisation of all three education agenda goals depends not only on government programmes, but also on Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups undertaking complementary policy advocacy and capacity building activities, and community-based interventions. The focus here is on understanding why these Civil Society interventions and initiatives are crucial for the education and development of poor and lower middle class Muslims, rather than the 20% of the more affluent Indian Muslims.
- Section 2 details four important overall activities to be undertaken by Muslim organisations and other Civil Society groups for enhancing the learning and development of vulnerable Muslim stakeholders
- Section 3 outlines concrete action points - policy advocacy and capacity-building activities that need to be undertaken by Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups to kick-start and ensure effective implementation of government policies and schemes for vulnerable Muslim children and youth. It also details the community-based interventions that need to be undertaken to complement government programmes, and also compensate for their deficiencies and omissions. The listing of these basic components of the new education agenda are provided in 7 charts at the conclusion of this section. The section and report concludes with some brief observations on the way forward.

## SECTION 1

### 1.1 Why the Role of Muslim Organisations and Other Civil Society Groups are Critical to Realising the New Education Agenda Goals

Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups need to implement community based interventions for students and parents, as well as policy advocacy and capacity building activities to kick-start and ensure government programmes function properly. Why both sets of activities are particularly important for vulnerable Muslims, and not for the more affluent Muslim minority, can best be understood by considering the influence of the Matthew Effect on their lives, as delineated below in subsections 1.1.a - 1.1.c.

#### 1.1.a. The Matthew Effect – “Early Advantage Begets Further Advantage and Early Disadvantage Begets Further Disadvantage” - The Widely Varying Life Trajectories of Affluent and Vulnerable Children & Youth

Most individuals from educated and affluent backgrounds have distinctly different development and education trajectories from birth onwards, compared to those from poor and lower middle class households. The former begin with a development and learning advantage in infancy, which is cumulatively built on in later years – the “Matthew Effect”, a phrase coined by the sociologist Robert Merton, after a passage in the Matthew Gospel in the Bible, to describe the social phenomenon that early advantage begets further advantage.

In stark contrast, poor and lower middle class children have a huge disadvantage beginning with deficits in development and learning in early infancy; these early deficiencies increase incrementally in later years. In this case, the Mathew Effect is reflected in early disadvantage begetting further disadvantage. The research evidence for the assertions of inequality expressed in the following subsections 1.1.b.and 1.1.c. have already been detailed in Chapters 2 - 5.

### **1.1.b. The Matthew Effect - The Impact of Early Disadvantage & Advantage on Learning and the Life Trajectories of Vulnerable and Affluent Muslims**

As highlighted in Chapter 4, developmental inequalities between the poor and the more affluent reveals itself at birth, and deepens in the first few years of childhood long before children enter pre-primary school. The most extreme examples of this early disadvantage can be seen in the pernicious effects of stunting. Besides stunted Indian Muslim children below 5 years, estimated to be 5-6 million, there would be many other young Muslims, who fail to thrive due to living in conditions of adverse environmental poverty and limited parental interaction.

While many young vulnerable Muslim children, like their disadvantaged peers, enter pre-primary school with poor language and cognitive skills, the benefits of pre-primary schooling are also limited as they attend poor quality pre-primary classes, or none at all. Thus, by the time they enter primary school, they are already further disadvantaged in terms of their readiness for schooling. Adding to this early disadvantage is the poor quality of education provided by inferior government schools and low- cost private schools they attend, resulting in substandard acquisition of reading, writing and arithmetic skills - see Chapters 2, 4 and 6 for corroborating research.

Furthermore, their parents are unable to compensate for these deficiencies. Inadequate accommodation and related lack of opportunities to study at home, and limited cultural capital ensures that many of these students do not show marked improvement in fundamental literacy and numeracy skills at the middle and high school level and very limited acquisition of higher order cognitive and non-cognitive skills, thus reducing their chances for completing schooling, accessing higher education and improving their employment prospects.

Summing up, early disadvantage in poor and lower middle class Muslim children translates into a vicious cycle of negative outcomes. In sharp contrast, for Muslims from middle class and affluent households, early advantage in health, nutrition and learning opportunities translates into a wholly different and virtuous cycle of positive outcomes. Through a variety of means available at their disposal, including cultural and financial capital – these affluent children are able to build on these early foundational learning advantages in learning.



Most important of all – throughout their school careers, affluent Muslim parents are able to compensate for any limitations of schools by teaching their children themselves, or hiring tutors for the purpose. As significantly, when it comes to choices of college and careers, for students from affluent Muslim families informed choices are possible since they have a fund of resources to tap into - educated parents and relatives, their friends and business contacts – who also act as role models and mentors - as well as access to educational and career consultants, and nowadays other sources of knowledge such as the Internet. The cumulative impact of these factors is that there are few obstacles - social, financial and lack of information - to their performing well in competitive examinations, entering and completing their education in prestigious colleges/ universities, and securing high-paying jobs.

### **1.1.c. Summing Up -The Indispensability of Policy Advocacy/ Capacity Building Initiatives and Community-Based Interventions**

There are important lessons to be drawn from the preceding discussions delineating the considerably different life trajectories of vulnerable and more affluent Muslims. The most obvious conclusion that one can draw is that improving learning for vulnerable Muslims depends on a variety of interdependent factors, and merely depending on government programmes will not be enough. Achieving all 3 interlinked agenda goals and positively impacting the futures of vulnerable Muslim children and youth will depend on policy advocacy, related capacity building initiatives as well as community-based interventions for the following reasons:

- Focusing on improving learning in pre-primary centres and schools alone will not compensate for stunting and other failures to thrive in infancy resulting in early disadvantages in learning and overall development.
- At present, government provisions are limited in coverage and quality. Expanding government provision, and scaling up the necessary qualitative changes to improve learning in early childhood programmes and government schools and to initiate schemes that will focus on vulnerable Muslims, will take time to be implemented. Therefore, in the immediate future these schemes cannot be depended upon to deliver the necessary learning reforms which were highlighted in Chapters 6 and 7.

- Given the lack of political will, inertia, limited perspectives and capacities of government education agencies, especially at the state, district and sub-district levels, we cannot depend on them alone to initiate desirable policy changes or to possess the technical expertise required for articulating and implementing policies and schemes for vulnerable Muslims. This will take time and sustained Civil society advocacy and capacity building efforts to help initiate and detail the policies that are required, catalyse the implementation of reforms and also help build the capacities of government programme implementers.
- Since vulnerable Muslim parents, like their affluent peers, need to provide a range of 'learning-enhancing' inputs to their children, they will have to depend on Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups for community-based interventions to build their own capacities as caregivers and parents. Students will require community-based initiatives such as Education and Career Counselling to compensate for an information-poor environment, and Remedial Education and Support Classes to compensate for deficiencies and omissions in government school provision.

*The group that is the least served by government institutions and programmes is the out-of-school/ college Muslim youth under 25 years. The vast majority of this most marginalised of all large Indian social groups, estimated to be 31 million, and larger than the 27 million vulnerable Muslim school students, are among the least prepared to cope with the educational and developmental challenges of contemporary India. What needs to be done for them to further their material and social progress has been detailed earlier in Chapter 8, and later in this chapter. Implementation of government schemes and other Civil Society initiatives for them would have a significant positive impact on the nation as a whole, and the development of Indian Muslims in particular.*

## SECTION 2

### **Articulating Four Important Overall Activities to be Undertaken by Muslim Organisations and Other Civil Society Groups for Enhancing the Learning and Development of Vulnerable Muslim Stakeholders**

#### **2.1. Missing Data on Muslims - Policy Implications and Lessons from the Contrasting Education Trajectories of SCs/STs & Muslims in Independent India**

Till the publication of the 2006 Sachar Committee Report, almost no data was made available separately on Muslims. Though there has been considerable improvement since the publication of the Sachar Report, the continued omission more than a decade later of data on Muslim education in some important national official publications is conspicuous by its absence.

The NCERT annual publications on learning outcomes in key curricular areas between 2000 -2016 for Classes 3, 5 and 8 provides disaggregated national and state-level data for SC, ST and OBC students, but not on Muslims. Similarly the School Education Department of MHRD in its annual statistical publication, *Educational Statistics At A Glance* provides varied types of literacy, school and higher education data, on SC and ST students, but no information on Muslim students. So too do prestigious all-India school networks like Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas, who make data available only on SC and ST enrolment. MHRD's Department of Higher Education publishes data on Muslim student higher education enrolment in its annual All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE), and NUEPA on Muslim school enrolment in its DISE reports. But here too, both annual publications provide far more additional educational data on SCs and STs.

It should be emphasised that the post-independence educational success of SCs and STs was mainly due to the education reservation policy instituted for them, whose progress was tracked and reinforced by the regular reporting of government agencies on a variety of education indicators. This collection and reporting of data, enabled

government agencies and Civil society groups to initiate, target, monitor and evaluate SC/ST enrolment and learning, and make mid-course corrections in various large-scale educational schemes such as DPEP and SSA. While just prior to independence, SCs/ STs had poorer rates of enrolment than Muslims, they have now overtaken the latter at all levels of school and college education, including participation in prestigious school and college networks, as documented in Chapter 1, Tables 2 and 3.

Similarly, a variety of educational indicators will be required to initiate, monitor and evaluate various government schemes for Muslims – without this data, it will be impossible to realise the 3 agenda goals.

#### Recommendations on Reporting of Data on Muslims

- 1. Provide for Muslims the same educational indicators used to provide official data on SC and ST students – including enrolment, learning and provision of facilities/ scholarships in all Central and State reports – to assist in tracking the educational progress of Muslim students, at all stages and networks of school and higher education. Similarly government policies and schemes dealing with the development and education of children under 6 years like ICDS, as well as out-of-school/college youth under 25 years, need to provide disaggregated data on all disadvantaged groups, including Muslim beneficiaries. Multinational institutions like UNICEF, UNSECO and the World Bank should also be urged to follow suit in the reporting of data.*
- 2. A related issue in the reporting of data on Muslims is that it is often reported under the category of ‘Minority’. To avoid any ambiguity, ‘Muslim’ should replace ‘Minority’, and data on other minorities should be reported separately.*
- 3. Similar recommendations on the reporting of data on Muslims, it should be noted, were made by the 2013 Report of the Standing Committee of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities’ Education (NMCME).<sup>1</sup>*

*Rectifying the limitations in the reporting of data on Muslim education is one of the most important policy advocacy contribution that Civil society groups can make - a low-*

*hanging fruit that requires urgent attention. This may be most expeditiously and effectively achieved in collaboration with the Ministry of Minority Affairs.*

## **2.2. Two Types of Critical Engagement with Policies that Impact Young Children, Students and Out-of –School / College Youth Under 25 years**

It is also imperative that Civil society groups continue to engage in and expand their policy advocacy activities. To maximize benefits to Muslim stakeholders, these interventions should be of two kinds:

- Critical engagement with policies / schemes / legislation that affect all disadvantaged children, students and out-of-school/college youth under 25 years like the 2013 National Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy, the Central Government flagship Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, the RTE Act and Adult Literacy schemes.
- Critical engagement with these interventions and other schemes with a view to targeting all vulnerable Muslim stakeholders.

This type of dual political advocacy is necessary to help Muslim stakeholders. An illustrative example of the first type of engagement is the implementation of the RTE Act, which enjoins all schools to have a minimum of basic facilities, specified teacher-pupil ratios, and trained teachers. Research indicates that less than 10% of all schools are compliant with all these norms.<sup>2</sup> Sustained advocacy by Civil society groups including Muslim organisations will be required for compliance and ensuring proper implementation of the RTE Act, and other important educational initiatives, including ensuring state and central governments spend a larger proportion of their budgets on education, as well as effective implementation of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan scheme, that affect all disadvantaged children, including vulnerable Muslims.

The second type of engagement, complementing the above overall initiatives, are policy interventions specifically targeting vulnerable Muslim students - the most educationally backward among all disadvantaged Indian groups. For example, Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups in all states need to engage with state and district education authorities to implement schemes that improve their enrolment. A special focus should be enrolment drives concentrating on Muslim students in the 6 states that have the largest number of backward districts where the proportion of

Muslim enrolment is below 80% of the percentage of Muslims located in the district (See Section 1.3. of Chapter 6, and Tables 6 and 7).

*Given that the direct costs of education significantly impact retention at the high school and higher secondary stage, more student scholarships and other financial assistance for poor and lower middle class Muslim students will make a significant difference to their enrolment. Student scholarships and other forms of assistance provided by corporates and Muslim philanthropy can play a role. But as highlighted in Section 1 of Chapter 6, it is only government that can provide the scale of human and financial resources that can make a significant difference to the enrolment and learning of disadvantaged Muslim children.*

*For example, the pre-matric scholarships is only one of many government scholarships and forms of financial assistance that are available to Muslim students; in 2017-18, about 2 million fresh scholarships were disbursed, and 1.7 million were renewed. And it is only sustained and strategic policy advocacy activities, complemented by capacity building initiatives and awareness raising drives, by Civil society groups that will ensure that many of these government policies and schemes do not remain on the drawing board as pious intentions, but actually get off the ground and are properly implemented.*

### **2.3. Promoting Values Education and Security Within a Protective School Environment for Muslim Students**

Section 2 of Chapter 6 provided a detailed analysis and outline of the important areas that needed to be addressed by government policies and interventions to make a significant difference to the learning of vulnerable Muslim students. One issue that was flagged was values education. As highlighted in subsection 2.5 of Chapter 6, quoting a CABE Committee Report, a specific concern that needed to be addressed was the content of the history and language textbooks used in schools, which were explicitly promoting dangerous communal messages and values. Some of the important Committee recommendations dealing with this important concern were also documented.

An “invisible” issue which must also be publicly and urgently addressed is the related development of the emotional and physical bullying of Indian Muslim children and their overall security in schools that was highlighted in the recent book, *Mothering a Muslim*.<sup>3</sup> It should be mentioned that more than a decade earlier the Sachar Committee had voiced similar concerns with a focus on textbooks:

*“The ‘communal’ content of school textbooks, as well as, the school ethos has been a” major cause for concern for Muslims in some states. This is disconcerting for the school going Muslim child who finds a complete absence of any representation of her Community in the school text. Moreover, many schools are culturally hostile and Muslim students experience an atmosphere of marginalization and discrimination.”*

*and*

*“Simple things in the text books can sow the seeds for religious intolerance, create caste bias and/or reduce sensitivity to gender differences, while the intent and purpose of texts should be to do just the opposite. The Committee recommends that a process of evaluating the content of the school text books needs to be initiated to purge them of explicit and implicit content that may impart inappropriate social values, especially religious intolerance.”*

India, Prime Minister’s Office, Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India: A Report, 2006, pp. 37 & 244

The teaching of appropriate and inclusive values, and the physical and emotional security of all children in schools have important implications for the quality of education that is provided to all our children, and the future development of the nation. Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups therefore need to articulate and intervene in government policies at the Centre, state and sub-state levels dealing with both areas of concern. These should be complemented by community and school-based initiatives, including meetings with school authorities and teaching staff, School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations.

## 2.4. The Role of Civil Society Groups in Addressing Information-Poor Environments

Students all over the world have to confront the issue of what they will do after they complete school. Will they start work or pursue higher education or both? For students from affluent educated families, as noted in the discussion on the Mathew Effect, informed choices are possible since a fund of resources are available to them. A large-scale 2009 study in urban and rural Maharashtra indicated that wealthier Muslim girls were far clearer than their poorer counterparts about their aspirations and “significantly a higher proportion of them aspire to get jobs in non-traditional sectors like software engineering, civil services, engineering, and medical profession”.<sup>4</sup>

For poor and lower middle class Muslim boys and girls, the issue of whether to pursue higher education and employment is far more difficult. In addition to financial constraints, the sources of information which allow for informed choices do not exist in their homes and immediate neighbourhoods. Whatever is there is at best extremely limited. In fact, commenting on poor students from Urdu medium schools, Abdul Shaban has observed:

*“Further socio- economic marginality and quality of education also affects the aspirations among students of the community, and specifically, girls. More than 71% of the girls and 62% of the boys do not have clarity in their aspirations or “no aspirations” at all. Thus, a significantly small proportion of girls of girls and boys of the community in the state study with a clear aim and it affects the overall representation of the community in various spheres of the economy, society and polity”*

Abdul Shaban, “Muslim Girls in Urdu Medium Schools of Maharashtra: Progress, Retention and Aspiration”, *Economic & Political Weekly*, June 18, 2016, Vol. 11. No.2, p. 69

A detailed analysis of the impact of this information-poor environment, with many examples of the obstacles faced by poor students, is provided in Anirudh Krishna’s illuminating book, *The Broken Ladder: The Paradox and the Potential of India’s One Billion*. Noting that “children of poorer parents, no matter how talented and hard-working, rarely achieve positions commensurate with higher capabilities” and mostly



end up in low-paid or dead-end positions, his explanation for their narrow range of aspirations and generally low-career achievements is relevant to understanding the rationale for Civil society interventions and the type of initiatives that need to be implemented in Muslim communities for vulnerable students and youth:

*“While it is of fundamental importance, education is not the only significant gap in preparation. Multiple weaknesses – including lack of information about the full range of career options, non –availability of guidance about how to get ready for the competition, and absence of better role models – combine to present almost insurmountable obstacles for lakhs of talented and hard-working individuals in disadvantaged situations. ----- The ladders that lead talented people upwards are broken in many places. These breakages are detrimental not just for the affected individuals; they limit the achievements of an entire society”*

Anirudh Krishna, *“The Broken Ladder : The Paradox and the Potential of India’s One Billion* , Kindle Edition, Chapter 5, 2017.

The issue of what to do after school is particularly acute for most students who fail to do well in the Class 10 or Class 12 board examinations. For many of them, especially, if they cannot afford private colleges, their futures can seem to be extremely limited. The above obstacles to social mobility exists even more sharply for vulnerable youth who left school before or after elementary school.

It is therefore important for Civil Society to implement the following initiatives for poor and lower middle class Muslim parents and students/youth that will provide information on education and career choices, and related activities including concrete assistance in completing application procedures and coaching classes in the following areas:

Types of Community-Based Initiatives  
Education/Career Counselling /Mentoring  
Application Assistance and Coaching Classes

1. *Awareness raising drives using role models of successful Muslim men and women from poor and lower middle class backgrounds in various fields to promote the benefits of remaining in school and completing higher secondary education as a minimum, as well as pursuing higher education and undertaking unconventional careers.*
2. *Information on prestigious school networks like Navodaya Vidyalayas and residential girls' schools like Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas. Motivating parents and students to apply to these institutions, complemented by coaching classes for entrance examinations.*
3. *Securing free admission into private unaided schools (mostly exclusive English medium institutions in practice) under the 25% RTE Act reservation clause for economically disadvantaged Muslim students, and running coaching classes especially in English to help them remain and benefit from their admission to such schools.*
4. *Special coaching and other assistance to meritorious students to access prestigious higher educational institutions like IITs and IIMs.*
5. *Awareness raising drives for out-of-school Muslim youth to enroll in adult literacy classes and the educational and material benefits of formal education certification through NIOS. Motivating and assisting out-of-school youth to access continuing education opportunities and skill development schemes like ITIs, as articulated in Chapter 8, and to aspire to and benefit from careers off the beaten track.*
6. *Career and educational counselling accessible to students and out-of-school/college youth.*
7. *Providing information on - and accessing- bank loans and scholarships for school and higher education, as well as financial assistance for out-of-school/college youth, provided by government and private funding organisations, including corporates and Muslim charities.*

An illustrative example of what organisations can do to provide information for vulnerable youth is the detailed listing of all the programs run by Government of India provided in the 2017 online NCERT document, *Minority Education Policies, Programmes and Schemes - Frequently Asked Questions*.<sup>5</sup> This type of listing needs to be given the widest publicity and complemented by similar state-level publications in other languages.

## **SECTION 3**

### **Action Points**

#### **7 Charts Detailing the Necessary Initiatives that Need to be Undertaken by Muslim Organisations and Other Civil Society Groups to Implement Education Agenda Goals**

For each of the 3 goals of the agenda, Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups need to undertake 2 types of interventions: policy advocacy/capacity building - and community-based initiatives. The activities for each of the 3 goals of the agenda is articulated in 2 separate Charts - Chart 1 and Chart 2 detailing what needs to be undertaken by Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups for each of the above two types of interventions:

- Policy advocacy initiatives engaging with the main government programmes for ensuring their implementation with a focus on vulnerable Muslims, as well as capacity building of government programme implementers, will be delineated in 3 charts – one for each goal.
- New community-based programmes, or expanding existing initiatives, to improve learning by focusing on building capacities of different vulnerable Muslim stakeholders - parents, young children, students/ youth – will be listed in the remaining 3 charts - one for each goal.
- Goal 1 has one extra chart - Chart 1.a for enrolment advocacy, and Chart 1.b. for learning advocacy making a total of 7 charts.

## Goal 1

### Policy Advocacy and Capacity Building Activities Towards Enrolment and Learning of Vulnerable Muslim School Students (Charts 1.a. & 1.b.)

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Goal 1 - Chart 1.a.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Main Government Programmes and Schemes and Policy Advocacy Initiatives At Centre/ State/ Sub-State Levels</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advocacy for Improving Enrolment</b></p>	<p><i>Rationale/ details of the following policy advocacy recommendations for enrolling vulnerable Muslim students detailed in Chapter 6</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Critical engagement with government agencies at all levels of government to articulate enrolment enhancement policies and schemes for vulnerable Muslim students, articulated in detail in Chapter 6 with a focus on 6 backward states.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1. Targeting enrolment of vulnerable Muslim students in the 6 states of Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, containing about 45% of Indian Muslims, and the most number of backward districts, in terms of Muslim enrolment.</li> <li>1.2. Focusing on UP which has the largest Muslim population and the largest number of such backward districts.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Targeting vulnerable Muslim students in these backward districts in every state, especially at upper primary, secondary &amp; higher secondary stages.</li> <li>3. Aligning above state, district and local enrolment strategies with MHRD's Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan - similar goal of 12 years of education for all – as well as advocating for upward and downward extension of the RTE Act – and its better implementation and increasing overall educational expenditure – as well as all other general government policies and schemes related to school education.</li> </ol>

	<p>4. As highlighted in the preceding subsection 2.1., all enrolment, learning and related education data to be reported for Muslims, as currently provided for SCs and STs - by all levels of government and for all government and private school networks. This initiative to be facilitated by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.</p> <p>5. Policy advocacy activities include publicising government schemes and scholarships available for vulnerable Muslim students</p>
<p><b>Building Capacity for Improving Enrolment</b></p>	<p>Collaboration with government for capacity building of state and sub-state government education personnel involved in designing, monitoring and evaluating enrolment - enhancement policies and programmes focusing on vulnerable Muslim students.</p>

	<b>Goal 1 - Chart 1.b.</b> Main Government Programmes and Schemes and Policy Advocacy Initiatives At Centre/ State/ Sub-State Levels
<b>Advocacy for Improving Learning</b>	<p><i>Rationale and details of the policy advocacy recommendations for implementation in schools for improving learning of vulnerable Muslim students articulated in Chapter 6 under the following broad 7 categories</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focus on Acquisition of Foundational Primary Level Skills of Vulnerable Students</li> <li>2. Remedial Education at the Primary Level and Beyond</li> <li>3. Improving Learning in Key Subjects, Especially the Teaching of English</li> <li>4. Curricular Reform –Promoting Constitutional Principles and Values</li> <li>5. Vocationalising School Education and Its Current Plans Need to be Discontinued. Start Vocational Education Later in Class 10</li> <li>6. Interdependence of Pedagogical Reforms Impacting Learning</li> <li>7. Professional Development of Teachers</li> </ol>
<b>Building Capacity for Improving Learning</b>	<p>Collaboration with government for capacity building of state and sub-state government education personnel involved in designing, monitoring and evaluating learning- enhancement policies and programmes focusing on vulnerable Muslims.</p>

## Goal 1

### Community-Based Interventions Towards Improving Learning of Vulnerable Muslim School Students

	<b>Goal 1 - Chart 2</b> Details of Community-Based Initiatives Rationale and recommendations detailed in Chapters 2 & 6
<b>Remedial Education</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Focus on 3 R's at primary level</li><li>2. For students(Classes 6-12) - all subjects</li></ol>
<b>Support Classes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Providing opportunities for homework/ reading library books / cultural activities. The Sachar Committee Report had recommended urban community study centres.</li><li>2. Support classes for all competitive examinations including prestigious school and higher education networks like Navodya Vidyalayas and IITs, and all students entering private unaided schools through the 25% RTE reservation clause.</li></ol>
<b>Education / Career Counselling and Related Activities</b>	<p><i>For more details of areas listed below, see previous subsection 2.4. in this chapter as to what needs to be done for information-poor Muslim parents and students</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Information/application assistance for all competitive examinations</li><li>2. Vocational / higher education/ career counselling</li><li>3. Motivation drives to retain students in school.</li><li>4. Motivating and mentoring meritorious students to aspire to education and careers off the beaten track.</li></ol>

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Goal 1- Chart 2 (Continued)</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Details of Community-Based Initiatives Rationale and recommendations detailed in Chapters 2 &amp; 6</p>
<p><b>English Support Classes</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For English medium government and low-cost private schools, improving English from Class 1 onwards</li> <li>2. Support classes for all students in regional medium schools</li> <li>3. For improving employment/ material prospects of out-of- school youth with a focus on spoken English.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Parent Education &amp; Empowerment; PTAs &amp; School Management (SMCs)</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equipping parents for their roles in children’s overall development/ learning – health, nutrition, responsive interaction, study habits, etc.</li> <li>2. Motivating parents to ensure daughters and sons complete school and to fulfill careers aspirations.</li> <li>3. Parents ensuring children/students are not just enrolled but attend schools regularly throughout the school academic year. Regular contact with classroom teachers on academic and overall progress of students.</li> <li>4. Conveying basic knowledge of learning outcomes to educated Muslim parents and School Management Committee (SMC) members to improve accountability for better learning in schools</li> <li>5. Assisting SMCs and PTAs to initiate school-based initiatives to promote secular values and inclusiveness, prevention of bullying and school security for all students.</li> </ol>



## Goal 2

### Policy Advocacy and Capacity Building Activities Relating to Vulnerable Muslim Children Under 6 Years

	<b>Goal 2 - Chart 1</b>
	Main Government Programmes and Schemes and Policy Advocacy Initiatives At Centre/ State/ Sub-State Levels (Rationale and recommendations detailed in Chapters 4 & 7)
<b>Advocacy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Legislation actualizing the right to Early Childhood Development of the young child and also the rights of beneficiary mothers.</li><li>2. Universalizing ICDS programmes in all states, with special attention to states, like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, with large Muslim populations and where provision is limited, with a focus on vulnerable Muslim mothers and infants</li><li>3. ICDS focus on the birth-3 years age-group</li><li>4. Schemes for qualitative inputs in ICDS</li><li>5. Promoting better utilisation of ICDS facilities significantly underutilized by vulnerable Muslim mothers &amp; preschoolers</li><li>6. More creches for children which Muslim women can access.</li><li>7. More effective publicity focused on improving access of Muslim caretakers and pregnant mothers to ICDS services.</li><li>8. Disaggregated data available on all beneficiaries including Muslim women and children to be facilitated by Ministry of Minority Affairs.</li></ol>

<b>Capacity Building</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaboration between Civil society groups and government for capacity building of implementers of ICDS programmes for birth-3 years at all levels including articulating schemes, technical support in monitoring / evaluation as well as training of anganwadi staff</li> <li>2. Similar collaboration to ensure quality preschool education in ICDS anganwadis.</li> </ol>
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## Goal 2

### Community-Based Initiatives For Vulnerable Muslim Children Under 6 Years

	<b>Goal 2 - Chart 2</b> Community-Based Initiatives Rationale and recommendations detailed in Chapters 4 & 7
<b>Birth-6 Years</b>	<p><i>Current ICDS coverage little more than 50% of all children under 5 years. Poor quality of ICDS and its limited use by Muslim beneficiaries. Therefore Civil society groups should also be:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Promoting large number of community-based programmes focusing on building capacities of Muslim caregivers to provide home-based holistic child-care, with a focus on psychosocial stimulation of infants in the birth-3 years age-group presently missing in ICDS</li> <li>2. Running affordable quality preschool programmes focusing on Muslim preschoolers</li> <li>3. Running creches focusing on children of working Muslim mothers.</li> </ol>

<b>Birth -3 Years : Awareness Raising Drives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The success of all government programmes and community-level initiatives, specifically for the birth-3 years age-group, depends on Muslim caregivers understanding the significance of this stage for present and future learning/development.</li> <li>2. Extensive use all types of media and participation in campaigns to promote government and Civil society programmes for early childhood development in Muslim localities, and to raise awareness about the benefits of accessing ICDS services</li> </ol>
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### Goal 3

#### Policy Advocacy and Capacity Building Activities Relating to Out-of School/College Muslim Youth Below 25 Years

	<b>Goal 3 - Chart 1</b>  Main Government Programmes/ Schemes and Policy Advocacy Initiatives At Centre/ State/ Sub-State Levels Rationale and recommendations detailed in Chapters 5 & 8
<b>Advocacy</b>	Promote expansion of all effective schemes for the education and vocational training of out-of –school youth under 25 years with a focus on their better access and utilization by vulnerable Muslim youth in the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NIOS – Improve functioning of its Minority Cell initiative under SPQEM to register madrasas and enable students to enroll in NIOS education and vocational courses.</li> <li>2. NIOS – Improve participation of Muslim youth in NIOS and newly opened State Open Schools for educational certification</li> <li>3. Mahila Samakhya and Nai Roshni- Improve Muslim women’s participation in both women’s empowerment schemes.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. KGBV - Improve Muslim girl’s participation – one initiative being location of new KGBVs in Community Development Blocks identified by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.</li> <li>5. Evaluation of the effectiveness of Nai Manzil and Seekho aur Kamaon schemes of Ministry of Minority Affairs before expansion</li> <li>6. Location of new Government ITIs in Community Development Blocks as well as funding for Muslim youth seeking ITI training.</li> <li>7. Encourage young illiterate Muslim youth between 15-24 years to enroll in Adult Literacy classes with a focus on the 6 ‘backward’ states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat.</li> <li>8. Enrolment and related data sets for above schemes to be reported for Muslims wherever currently provided for SCs and STs – this initiative to be facilitated by Ministry of Minority Affairs</li> </ol>
<p><b>Addressing Information – Poor Environments</b></p>	<p>Need for a wide-ranging consultation with relevant government agencies, media / advertising agencies /youth role models, etc., on how best to publicise the above government schemes among Muslim communities, and facilitate better access of vulnerable Muslim youth to these educational and vocational programmes</p>

### Goal 3

#### Community-Based Initiatives For Out-of- School/ College Muslim Youth Below 25 Years

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Goal 3 - Chart 2</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Community-Based Initiatives Rationale and recommendations detailed in Chapters 5 &amp; 8</p>
<p><b>Awareness Raising Campaigns and Accessing Government Schemes</b></p>	<p>National, state and community-based awareness raising campaigns on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Challenges facing all disadvantaged Muslim youth in India including issues and the imperatives of improving a range of learning/vocational skills, as well as related issues such as women’s empowerment.</li><li>2. Eradicating illiteracy with a focus on Muslim youth in the age group 15-24 years especially in the 6 ‘backward’ states and the need for improved functional literacy and numeracy skills.</li><li>3. Need for improving educational certification through NIOS and newly opened State Open Schools.</li><li>4. Improving vocational skills through enrolling in Government ITIs and Apprenticeship Training Schemes</li><li>5. Participating in short-term NSDC skill development schemes.</li><li>6. Concrete assistance at the community-level to vulnerable Muslim youth, especially young women, on how to access the above government programmes and schemes.</li></ol>

<b>Education / Career Counselling and Related Activities</b>	Need for a wide-ranging discussion on how best to institutionalise education and career counselling for vulnerable Muslim youth at the community level, and also provide role models and mentors, especially for the talented among them, to facilitate their aspirations to excel/ fulfill their dreams to do something different.
<b>Other Initiatives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need for community centres for older Muslim youth, who may or may not be married to enable, for example, discussions on a variety of issues, including gender-related concerns, careers for women, marital counselling and family planning.</li> <li>2. Computer and Practical English courses for improved education and career prospects.</li> </ol>

### **2.5.a. Need for Expertise in Policy Advocacy, Capacity Building and Implementing Community Initiatives**

Not all Muslim organisations or Civil Society Groups can engage in the activities listed in the above charts. Many of the above initiatives need different forms of academic, practical and pedagogic expertise. For example, Remedial education has been suggested as one of the community- based activities that can be undertaken. Remedial education should not be equated with the provision of conventional support or tuition classes. Merely asking a retired or currently employed teacher to undertake remedial education will not help students who need remediation. Remedial education requires pedagogical expertise of a different kind. Similarly English classes requires more than recruiting volunteers from within or outside the community with a command of English and letting them loose on a group of students.

It is therefore important for Muslim organisations and other Civil society groups to reflect on what it is that they are attempting to achieve when they engage in policy advocacy, capacity building and community initiatives, and collaborate with other organisations and individuals when required that can provide the necessary expertise.

## 2.6. Conclusion – The Way Forward

While facing serious existential and survival challenges in various parts of the country, it is difficult for Indian Muslims to articulate the paths that can lift them from the deepening morass they find themselves in, and visualise a future in which their security, material and social prospects will have visibly improved. However difficult the task may be, there is no alternative to a serious and continual critical introspection about the political, social, economic and educational steps that need to be taken, and the need for an enlightened Muslim leadership to initiate and catalyse these measures.

In this connection, as the Foreword and Chapter 1 of this report has documented, the experience of many countries and disadvantaged communities in recent history has shown educational reform to have been the main driver of their all-round sustainable development and uplift. What concretely needs to be done for the education of Indian Muslims to face the varied challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been documented throughout this report, culminating in the preceding 7 charts in this chapter which has detailed the policy advocacy, capacity building and community initiatives that need to be undertaken by Muslim organisations and other Civil Society groups for vulnerable Muslims.

While recent developments and official education documents have had little to offer Indian Muslims, there has been one notable exception - the *2019 Draft National Education Policy (NEP)* which was published online on June 1 for public comments, while the last chapter of this report was in the final stages of completion.<sup>6</sup> It seems that the final NEP document will be made available to the general public at the earliest by the end of 2019, by which time the public contributions plus inputs from the states and Parliament will have been incorporated.

We do not know what recommendations this final document will contain. More importantly, we will have to wait for a much longer span of time to understand which of these recommendations will be first formally accepted and finally implemented by various states. However, the 2019 Draft NEP is the most recent and comprehensive official statement of the vision, goals and structure of the education system that is viewed as relevant to the needs of India and its future citizens. Moreover, compared to its NEP predecessors and any other contemporary document on education policy, it has

addressed far more comprehensively issues relating to the education of Indian Muslims.

More importantly, since there are quite a few common elements in the recommendations of this report and the Draft NEP, invoking the latter can legitimatise and add weight to the policy advocacy, capacity building and community initiatives that need to be undertaken by Muslim organisations and Civil Society groups, which are common to both this and the National document. A discussion of these common elements, together with the positive features and limitations of the 2019 Draft NEP, as well as its limitations are provided in Appendix 1.

The need of the hour is a wide-ranging dialogue, especially among Muslim youth, communities and their leaders, on charting their educational future in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is hoped that this report and the concrete reforms it advocates will catalyse this discussion on the way forward for Indian Muslims. Seize the day, for as Shakespeare reminds us:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves  
Or lose our ventures”



# Appendix

## The New Education Agenda for Indian Muslims and the 2019 Draft National Education Policy

On June 1, the *Draft National Education Policy 2019* (NEP) was published online for public comments. From its inception in 2015, the entire process has taken more than four years with considerable inputs from the general public, teachers, academics and Civil Society groups. However, the 2019 Draft National Education Policy itself was begun later in June 2017, and was preceded by two reports: the TSR Subramanian Committee Report and a 2016 MHRD document, *Some Inputs for Draft National Education Policy*. Since the publication of the 2019 Draft NEP, more than 1 lakh contributions have been received. It seems that the final NEP document will only be completed and made available to the general public at the earliest by the end of 2019, by which time these comments from the public, and inputs from the states and Parliament will have been incorporated.

### 1.1. Potential Role of 2019 Draft NEP in Promoting Agenda Goals

Since the Draft 2019 NEP was issued in June 2019, while the last chapter of this report was being completed, it was felt important to incorporate in this Appendix those of its findings relevant to the education of Indian Muslims. The Draft NEP is the most recent and comprehensive official statement of the vision, goals and structure of the education system that is viewed as relevant to the needs of India and its future citizens. Moreover, compared to its NEP predecessors and any contemporary document on education policy, it has addressed far more comprehensively issues relating to the education of Indian Muslims. More importantly, there are quite a few common elements in the recommendations of this report's agenda and the 2019 Draft NEP, which are unlikely to be revised in the final NEP report. Therefore, if this is the case, invoking the NEP can legitimatise and add weight to policy advocacy and community initiatives undertaken up by Muslim organisations and Civil Society groups that are common to both documents.

### **1.1.a Positive Features and Recommendations in 2019 Draft NEP**

Unlike its immediate predecessors – the Subramanian and MHRD Reports – the 2019 Draft NEP devoted an entire chapter, *Equitable and Inclusive Education* - to disadvantaged groups, which it termed as URGs - underrepresented groups in education. It noted that the 2016-17 DISE data indicated that the decline of the proportion of the total enrolment at the primary level as students progressed to the higher secondary level was poor for the SCs and even worse for STs and Muslims – the 3 main URGs. Quite a substantial part of this chapter was devoted to delineating what caused exclusion and discrimination in education for URGs, and articulating what could be done to work towards attaining full equity and inclusion in schools.<sup>1</sup>

The specific recommendations for Muslims were provided in the subsection of this chapter, *Education of children from educationally underrepresented groups within minority communities*. Noting that the greatest educational underrepresentation were Muslims among religious communities in school and higher education, it made a series of recommendations including locating excellent schools in areas with high Muslim population; hiring of teachers with knowledge of Urdu or other home languages; strong academic support for Muslim students to enable larger numbers enter higher education ; scholarships for excellent students from Muslim communities to enter higher education and strengthening madrasas and maktabas and modernising the curriculum.<sup>2</sup>

While it was important to make these recommendations, these were in the main similar to those forwarded by the 2006 Sachar Committee Report. Perhaps the more important observations and recommendations of the Draft NEP relating to Indian Muslims, and other URGs, were those related to initiatives within and outside the structure of schools affecting the development and learning of all students. Highlighting the importance of the age group birth – 6 years, and the learning crisis in school education which was a key reason for the progressive drop in enrolment as students from URGs moved from primary to higher secondary education, its main recommendations included:

- A downward and upward extension of the age-group covered by the RTE Act to now include the 3-18 years age group (free and compulsory education covering 3 years of quality pre-primary education and 12 years of school education by 2030)
- By 2025, every student in Grade 5 and beyond would have achieved foundational literacy and numeracy.
- Curriculum and pedagogy would be transformed by 2022 in order to minimize rote learning and instead encourage holistic development and 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, communication, collaboration, multilingualism, problem solving, ethics, social responsibility, and digital literacy.
- Achieve an inclusive and equitable education system so that all children would have equal opportunity to learn and thrive, and so that participation and learning outcomes would be equalized across all genders and social categories by 2030.
- Ensure that all students at all levels of school education were taught by passionate, motivated, highly qualified, professionally trained and well equipped teachers.<sup>3</sup>

### **1.1.b. Similarities in this Report, the Draft 2019 NEP and Earlier National Commitments and Documents of International and Indian Organisations**

The first 2 agenda goals of this report are almost identical to recommendations of the Draft NEP relating to the provision of quality and learning outcomes for the age group 3-18 years by 2030, since they are both derived from the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4 goals) to which India is a signatory. Similarly the following issues have all been highlighted in recent documents of the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, Centre For Global Development as well as Indian organisations such as Pratham, Educational Initiatives and CCED including importance of the birth -6 years stage ; the crisis of learning in schools; focus on foundational learning of literacy and numeracy at the primary level ; minimising rote learning and the need for 21<sup>st</sup> century higher order thinking and related skills and values in school education; the focus on equitable and inclusive education and learning and teacher development. All of these

concerns have been discussed and incorporated in various chapters of this report, and have been footnoted accordingly.

## **1.2. Inherent Limitations of the Draft NEP in Articulating the Educational Reform Needed for Indian Muslims**

### **1.2..a. Depth of the Crisis in the Education of Indian Muslims Not Reflected In the Draft NEP Due to Limitations of Empirical Data Presented in its Report**

Unlike previous NEP documents, or the flagship MHRD scheme Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, the Draft NEP is a distinct improvement in terms of highlighting the educational backwardness of Indian Muslims. However, both the lack of provision of relevant empirical data as well as shortcomings in the limited data presented in the Draft NEP report, has led to a lack of understanding of the depth of the underrepresentation of Indian Muslims in schools and colleges, resulting in limitations in the solutions offered.

#### Limitations of Enrolment Data

The observation that among religious minorities, Muslims are the most underrepresented in school and higher education had been observed by the Sachar Committee and even earlier commentators. While also noting that the educational gap between Muslims and other groups remained high, the Draft NEP made specific comparisons between Muslims and other URGs such as SCs and STs.

Among the few instances that empirical data was provided in the Report, the 2019 Draft NEP noted that U-DISE 2016-17 data indicated that while about 19.6% of students belong to SCs at the primary school level, it fell to 17.3% at the higher secondary level. This drop-offs was even more severe for ST students (10.6% to 6.8%), and Muslim students (15% to 7.9%).<sup>4</sup> Though both the latter groups are shown to be faring poorly, these enrolment rates that have been cited give the mistaken impression that the participation rates of Muslims are higher than STs. A more reliable and relevant comparison can only be made if these enrolment figures are compared to their respective shares in the Indian population, and calculating the Index of Social Equity derived by taking:

Muslim or ST Percentage of Student Enrolment at Any Stage

----- x 100  
Corresponding Muslim or ST Percentage of Indian Population

According to the 2011 Census, SCs, STs and Muslims compose 16.2%, 8.2% and 14.2% of the population respectively. Therefore the Index of Social Equity for SCs, STs and Muslims at the higher secondary stages is 107% and 83% respectively, and far lower for Muslims at 56 %. Using 2015-16 DISE data, Table 2 in this report has highlighted that the Index of Social Equity for Muslims at the upper primary, high school and higher education is also significantly lower than the corresponding figures for SCs and STs.

#### Additional Omission in Draft NEP Enrolment Data

Moreover, in addition to the above limitations in these enrolment statistics, the Draft NEP omits featuring data on the relative participation of these three disadvantaged groups in elite school and higher education networks – a key indicator of the underrepresentation of Muslim educational participation. As documented in subsection 2.1 of Chapter 9 of this report, SC and ST enrolment figures are provided by Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas, but not for Muslims. However, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs) school network provides the relevant enrolment statistics, and the relevant Index of Social Equity for Muslims is significantly lower at 49% when compared to SCs at 185% and for STs at 305%. (Table 3 of this report)

Similarly the Index of Social Equity for enrolment in Central Universities for SCs, STs and Muslims is 72 %, 48%, and 29%. Muslims fare even worse in participation in Institutes of National Importance where their Index of Social Equity is a mere 11%, while SCs and STs are proportionately many times larger at 80% and 72% respectively. (Table 3)

Here too, merely considering the relative proportion of Muslim, SC and ST students of total student enrolment in elite school and higher education networks is deceptive, and there is a need to also calculate their Index of Social Equity for each of these groups to get a more relevant indicator of educational participation and deprivation.

## Implications of Omission and Limitations in Data - False Equivalence Between URGs – Highest Priority to Muslims Needed

Prioritising Muslim education by the 2019 Draft NEP can pay rich dividends for improving the poor educational status of Indian Muslims, who are now at the bottom of the heap. In this connection, analysing the remarkable educational progress of SCs and STs in the post-independence decades is instructive. A combination of factors - educational reservation, scholarships and various educational subsidies - and focused attention on their educational progress by Central and State governments in large-scale schemes like DPEP and SSA transformed their educational status from being the most disadvantaged groups in colonial India. Muslims on the other hand were grossly neglected by successive Central and state governments in post-independence India. Consequently, though Muslims were better placed than SCs and STs in colonial India, they were decisively overtaken by the latter in latter decades, and are now educationally the most disadvantaged group in India at all stages of education, including elite school and higher education networks.

Therefore, instead of drawing a false equivalence between all URGs, and treating Muslims and SCs and STs as more or less equally educationally underrepresented, the forthcoming NEP should unambiguously state that Muslims are the educationally the most disadvantaged among all URGs with empirical evidence backing this claim. Consequently, given that recommending educational reservations for Muslims would be a non-starter, this privileging of Muslims among URGs needs to be reflected in the highest priority being given to a variety of other recommendations that would significantly increase their enrolment and learning in general and elite networks of school and higher education. In this connection, the two following overall recommendations warrant special consideration

- Focus on State and District-Level Enrolment Strategies
- Comprehensive educational data on Muslims required to monitor their educational progress.

### **1.2.b. Increasing Muslim School Enrolment – Strategic Focus on States and District-Level Enrolment Strategies Required**

As Section 1 of Chapter 6 has documented, among all states – Bihar, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh - the Index of Social Equity at the elementary, high school and higher secondary stage is the lowest for Muslims. These 6 states also contain the largest number of districts where the Index of Social Equity is below 80%, and also contain about 45% of India’s Muslim population.

In specific recommendations on improving the educational participation of Muslims, the forthcoming NEP should focus on improving the educational participation of Muslims in these 6 “backward” states and districts. For example at the high school stage, of the total of 255 districts in India in which the proportion of Muslim enrolment is below 80% of the percentage of Muslims located in the district, as many as 209 of them were located in these 6 states (Table 5 of this report). The highest priority should be given to Uttar Pradesh which has the largest Muslim population in India. In as many as 72 districts of its 75 districts, the Index of Social Equity for Muslims at the high school stage was below 80%.

The 2019 Draft NEP has recommended that special Special Education Zones will be set up in disadvantaged regions across the country “on the basis of clear social development and socio-economic indicators” with additional funding from the Centre.<sup>5</sup> Using non-educational indicators to identify backward educational zones is very likely to be not reliable or relevant. Using DISE district-level data, and identifying Special Districts, for example, on the basis that the Index of Social Equity should be below 80 % for any educational stage, would focus directly on the issue of educational underrepresentation of all URGs, and would also make it simpler for all states to implement.

As highlighted in Chapter 6, states have the primary role in ensuring universalisation of school education for all students including Muslims by 2030. Towards this end, the strategy should be to encourage all states – with a special focus on the 6 states mentioned earlier - to enhance their educational plans in districts where Muslims are grossly underrepresented. A similar exercise can also be done for other URGs like SCs and STs. The Central Government should prioritise the provision of additional

assistance for this purpose on the lines of the 2019 Draft NEP recommendations for Special Education Zones.

### “Elite Capture” and The Need to Focus on Poor and Lower Middle Class Muslims

As Chapter 1 has articulated in greater detail, both the national and international experience indicate that when educational schemes or benefits of any other kind are provided to any group, for a variety of reasons it is the well-off within the group that eventually “capture” the scheme and become its primary beneficiaries. This is true for SC and ST elites gaining disproportionately from the reservation policy implemented in higher educational institutions, and Muslims losing out to other relatively well-off minorities in India in schemes in Minority Concentration Districts (MCDs).

Consequently, unless poor and lower middle class Muslims are specifically targeted, the more affluent and powerful sections of the Muslim community will disproportionately benefit from any educational scheme aimed at the general population of Muslims. This would hold true for all other URGs. The Special Education Zones do not also address this concern

### **1.2.c. Monitoring Muslim Educational Progress Critically Depends on Provision of Equivalent Data Indicators Used to Monitor the Education of SCs and STs.**

The Draft NEP has recommended that data be gathered to track the progress of all URGs and to “facilitate the design and delivery of targeted initiatives”. Given that prior to the 2006 Sachar Report, there was little or no educational data on Muslims, the need for such data on Muslims had been recognised by the Sachar Committee, and also recommended later by the *2013 Report of the Standing Committee of the National Monitoring Committee for Minorities’ Education (NMCME)*. However, while there has been some improvement, far more needs to be done. This has been discussed in great detail in Section 2 of Chapter 8 of this report.

While at present, educational data in official publications at various levels of education is furnished for SCs and STs, no data is provided for Muslims by the following:

- NCERT- All India and state-level annual reports on learning outcomes
- MHRD’s publication, *Educational Statistics At A Glance*



- Annual Reports of prestigious school networks like Kendri Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas

Moreover, compared to SCs and STs, more limited data is provided for Muslims in the following:

- NIEPA's annual DISE publications on schools
- Annual publications of the All India Survey of Higher Education (AISHE)

It should be highlighted that the post-independence educational success of SCs and STs was in part due to the wealth of data on them which enabled government agencies to monitor their educational progress and target initiatives to improve their enrolment and learning including large-scale schemes such as DPEP and SSA.

#### Recommendations on Reporting of Data on Muslims

The present recommendation in the Draft NEP is too general, and gives no indications of the extent of the lacunae in the collection and reporting of data on Muslims. What is required in the forthcoming NEP is a highlighting of this concern, and the following specific recommendations:

- Provide for Muslims the same educational indicators used to provide official data on SC and ST students – including enrolment, learning and provision of facilities/ scholarships in all Central and State reports – to assist in tracking the educational progress of Muslim students, at all stages and networks of school and higher education.
- Similarly government policies and schemes dealing with the development and education of children under 6 years like ICDS, as well as out-of-school/college youth under 25 years, need to provide disaggregated data on all disadvantaged groups, including Muslim beneficiaries. Multinational institutions like UNICEF, UNSECO and the World Bank should also be urged to follow suit in the reporting of data.
- A related issue in the reporting of data on Muslims is that it is often reported under the category of 'Minority'. To avoid any ambiguity, 'Muslim' should replace 'Minority', and data on other minorities should be reported separately

### 1.3. Critical Neglect of the Birth-3 Years Age Group in the Draft NEP Report

The Draft NEP Report should be commended for its focus on the importance of ECCE to establish a strong foundational base for all later learning and development, and the need for quantitative and qualitative expansion of programmes for the under sixes. While acknowledging learning “commences immediately at birth” and some limited overall suggestion on what needs to be done for infants in the birth to 3 years stage, the focus is almost entirely on the older 3- 6 years age group. There are a variety of reasons for the prospective NEP to give equal, if not more importance, to the birth-3 years age group. These have been articulated in detail in Chapters 4 and 7 of this report, which has also cited a number of international and national studies highlighting its critical importance and the consequences of its neglect.

Chief among the important reasons for prioritising the birth – 3 years age-group in the revised new policy report is that India has the largest number of stunted children in the world, and that many poor children are also not thriving, due to various input deficits in the first three years. This has had a wide range of negative consequences for later learning and health - all-round physical, social/emotional and intellectual development - as well as its impact on reduced wages in later life. In fact, the lack of provision of inputs at the early stage of infant development has far greater short-term and long-term impact on health, learning and equity than deficits at the pre-primary stage.

Moreover, even among the general public, though it may be imperfectly understood, there is some recognition that the pre-primary stage is important, reflected in the rapid expansion of private pre-primary centres in villages and slums. However, as far as the infancy stage is concerned, even policy makers and implementers of Early Childhood Development programmes have a limited understanding of the significance of this stage, including the importance of psycho-social stimulation and responsive care-giving in the development of infants. Finally, as documented in Chapter 4, the Nobel Laureate James Heckman and his colleagues have established that the rates of return to a nation’s economy and society at large is the highest for investment in children’s development between birth to 3 years.

## Birth - 3 Years Stage - Revisions Required in Forthcoming NEP

Given the equity and learning enhancement thrust of the NEP, and the preceding discussions articulating its crucial and varying impact, the forthcoming NEP should give equal, if not more importance, to the first 3 years of infancy and highlight its special importance for poor children. This should be grounded in a short review of supporting national and international evidence, as well as a detailed articulation of the types of programmes required for optimal infant development.

### **1.4. Ideological Critique of English in the Draft NEP and its Consequences.**

The Draft NEP is to be commended for its endorsement of the 3 language formula and the emphasis on multilingual pedagogy and mother tongue instruction in the early years. However, the overall discussion of the role of English reflects an ideological animus which has thrown blinkers in understanding the important learning - enhancement and equity promoting role of English in 21<sup>st</sup> Century India.

Much of the extended criticism of English as a medium of instruction and as the excluding language of the elite is valid, as well as the need for promoting Indian languages in all walks of life. However, English has become a dominant medium of school education, despite initial political and cultural opposition from the states, which with a few exceptions have promoted the teaching of regional languages in post-independence India.

Despite a range of free services and materials provided to students in government schools, what has been omitted in the Draft NEP is an understanding of why many of the urban and rural poor have abandoned free government regional medium schools for the rapidly expanding rural and urban low- cost English medium private alternatives. Contrary to established language policy, various state governments are now opening English medium schools to counter this inexorable Juggernaut-like migration. Compared to Hindi or any other Indian language, English is now the dominant medium of instruction at upper levels of school instruction (Section 2 of Chapter 3 of this report for discussion and corroboration)

It is this understanding that English is the gateway to various forms of important knowledge, higher paying and status-enhancing jobs that fuels this demand for English. While the NEP may wish otherwise, the importance of English as the medium of instruction in schools will continue for such time as English continues to play a dominant role in important areas of Indian life and society. To ensure that regional languages regain their legitimate role and importance in school education, it is therefore important to ensure the significant improvement in the teaching of English in all regional medium schools. In this connection lost in the unnecessarily lengthy and questionable diatribe against English is the Draft NEP's recommendation that English must be taught in a high quality manner, with an emphasis on functionality and fluency.<sup>6</sup>

### Recommendations on the Teaching of English in Regional Medium Schools

If government schools are not only to merely survive but also thrive, the recommendation on the teaching of English in regional medium schools needs to be given the highest priority and fleshed out in the forthcoming NEP. This would include providing its rationale and also recommending what needs to be done, especially prioritising the training and appointment of competent English teachers. Some of these concerns have been addressed in Chapters 3, 6 and 9 of this report.

This privileging of English and relevant recommendations in regional medium schools will be a significant equity and learning-enhancement contribution to the education of all URGs in India. As importantly, it will also catalyse the renaissance of government regional medium schools, thus promoting the other NEP goals on universalising school education and recommendations on the use of Indian languages in schools.

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# Tables

## Foreword – Table 1

### Projected Population of Muslim Children, Students and Youth below 25 years, 2020

	Total Number of Muslim Children/ Youth Below 25 Years	Total Number of Poor and Lower Muslim Class Children / Youth at 80% of Muslim Totals Below 25 Years
Goal 1 - 0-5 years	2.56 crores	2.1 crores
Goal 2 – Enrolment Classes 1-12	3.4 crores	2.7 crores
Goal 3 – Below 25 Years not in schools/colleges	3.93 crores	3.1 crores
Total Goal 1 +2+3	9.89 crores	7.9 crores

Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation publication entitled *Youth in India: 2017*; DISE 2014-15 and 15-16; AISHE 2016-17 and 2017-18.

### Table 1 - Note on Calculations and Projected Estimates of Muslim Children and Youth

The 3 goals of the education agenda corresponding to 3 different age groups: Goal 1 – Vulnerable Muslim children between 0-6 year; Goal 2 – Vulnerable Muslim school children enrolled from primary to higher secondary (approx. 6years and older; Goal 3 – Children and Youth below 25 years not enrolled in schools or colleges. There are no precise figures for any of these 3 groups of Muslim children and youth, and therefore the following projected figures are not meant, and should not be used, for any planning purposes. They are merely meant to be indicative of the number of children and youth involved in implementing each of these 3 goals. The following indicates how these approximations were calculated based on the available data.

The following available data sets were used – 2011 Census of India figures on the Indian and Muslim population given by broad age-groups; World Bank 2020 estimate for the general Indian population by similar broad age-groups provided in a Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation publication entitled *Youth in India : 2017* ; the 2014 -15 and 2015-16 DISE data providing Muslim school and general population

enrolment figures, and similar higher education enrolment data provided for 2016-17 and 2017-18 by AISHE.

Since both the 2011 Census and the 2020 World Bank data was reported by broad age-bands 0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14, 15-19 and 20-24, the totals for the age-group 0-5 years for Muslims and Indians was extrapolated from the 2011 Census data amounting to 2.37 crores of Muslim children and 17.17% of the total population of children in this age-group. Using the latter percentage, it was calculated that in 2020 there would be 2.56 crore Muslim children below 6 years (Goal 1). Using similar calculations and both data sets, Muslims in the 6-24 age-group in 2020 was calculated as 7.53 crores. Since AISHE data for Muslim students in higher education was 0.17 crores by 2016-17 and increased to 0.18 crores by 2017-18. It was projected that by 2020-2021, it would be roughly 0.2 crores. Therefore young Muslims enrolled in school but not in colleges, as well as those not enrolled, above 5 years and below 25 years would be 7.33 crores (7.53 minus 0.20).

DISE data indicated that in 2014-15 the Muslim school enrolment up to the higher secondary level was 3.3 crores and had increased to 3.32 crores by 2015-16. It was projected that by 2020, it would increase at best to 3.4 crores (Goal 2). Therefore, young Muslims above 5 years and below 25 years not enrolled in schools and colleges (Goal 3) would be 3.93 crores (7.33 minus 3.4), and the total number of Muslims between 0-24 years would be 9.89 crores. Based on expert estimates, that 80% of all Muslims would be poor and lower middle class (vulnerable), the corresponding figures have also been provided for each of these 3 goals

## Chapter 1 - Table 2

### Proportion of Student Enrolment of Muslims, SCs and STs at Different Stages of Education and Their Respective Indexes of Social Equity for Each Stage, 2015-16

Category	% of Muslim Student Enrolment to Total Student Enrolment	% of SC Student Enrolment to Total Student Enrolment	% of ST Student Enrolment to Total Student Enrolment
Upper Primary Classes 6-8	12.6%	19.5%	9.8%
Index of Social Equity For Upper Primary Enrolment	<b>89%</b>	<b>120%</b>	<b>120%</b>
High School Classes 9-10	10.24%	18.68%	8.49%
Index of Social Equity For High School Enrolment	<b>72%</b>	<b>115.5%</b>	<b>104%</b>
Higher Secondary Classes 11-12	8.05%	17.33%	6.77%
Index of Social Equity For Higher Secondary Enrolment	<b>57%</b>	<b>107%</b>	<b>83%</b>
Higher Education Enrolment	4.67%	13.91%	4.93%
Index of Social Equity Of Higher Education Enrolment	<b>33%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>60%</b>

Source: DISE 2015-16; AISHE 2015-16

Note – A meaningful comparison of enrolment ratios of different categories of the Indian population like Muslims, SCs and STs can only be made when their respective shares of the Indian population is taken into consideration, and the Index of Social Equity is calculated for each stage. According to the 2011 Census of India, Muslims compose 14.2% of the population and SCs and STs constitute 16.2% and 8.2% respectively. The Index of Social Equity for any group is calculated at any stage of education as:  $\text{Percentage of Student Enrolment} / \text{Percentage of Population} \times 100$

Therefore, for example, while the % of Muslim student enrolment is 12.6% at the upper primary stage, and the corresponding figure for STs is lower at 9.8%, it is the latter that has a better education participation because its proportion of the Indian population at 8.2% is much smaller than Muslims at 14.2%. Therefore, the Index of Social Equity for STs at the upper primary stage is 120% and for Muslims is 89% indicating that there are

proportionately more ST students at the upper primary stage in comparison to their percentage of the Indian population, while for Muslims, there are fewer proportionately fewer students at this stage in comparison to their share of the total Indian population. **As the above Table 1 indicates, at all stages of school and higher education the index of Social Equity for Muslims is much lower than SCs or STs, especially the former indicating far lower levels of educational participation at all levels of education**

## Chapter 1 - Table 3

### Proportion of Student Enrolment of Muslims, SCs and STs in Prestigious School and Higher Education Networks and Their Respective Indexes of Social Equity

Category	% of Muslim Student Enrolment to Total Student Enrolment	% of SC Student Enrolment to Total Student Enrolment	% of ST Student Enrolment to Total Student Enrolment
Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan KVS Schools (As on 31-03-2016)	Not Provided	19.9%	5.5%
Index of Social Equity KVS Schools	No Data	<b>123%</b>	<b>67%</b>
Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya JNVS as on 31-03-2018	Not Provided	25.28%	19.79%
Index of Social Equity JNVS	No Data	<b>159%</b>	<b>240%</b>
Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs), 2015-16	7%	30%	25%
Index of Social Equity KBBVs	<b>49%</b>	<b>185%</b>	<b>305%</b>
Central University -2015-16	4.1%	11.6%	3.9%
Index of Social Equity Central University	<b>29%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>48%</b>
Institute of National Importance 2015-16	1.5%	13.0%	5.9%
Index of Social Equity Institute of National Importance	<b>11%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>72%</b>

Source: KVS – Annual Rep.2017-18 from website; JNVS source from Annual Report on website, KGBV from MHRD Annual Report 2015-16; and Higher Ed. data from AISHE 2015-16 from website

**Note - As the above Table 3 indicates, where data is available, at all elite school and higher education institutions the index of Social Equity for Muslims is much lower than SCs or STs, especially the former indicating far lower levels of educational participation of Muslims at all levels of education.**

## **Chapter 1 - Note on Estimates of Completion Rates of Elementary Schooling for Muslims**

Based on 2011 Census data by using methodology suggested by UIS-UNESCO, it was calculated that the completion rate of eight years of elementary schooling for SC and ST 16-18 year olds by 2011 were 60% and 50% respectively. The corresponding figures for 2001 were 42% and 33%. Muslim completion rates were not provided. However, since both enrolment and attendance data for Muslims is far lower than SCs or STs, it would be safe to estimate that by 2018-19, at best about 66% of the subset of poor and lower middle class Muslims in the age-group 16-18 years would have completed eight years of elementary schooling.

## **Chapter 3 - Table 4**

### **Girl’s Enrolment as a Proportion of Total Student Enrolment in School Education All-India, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**

Category	All-India	Uttar Pradesh	Bihar
Upper Primary (Class 6-8)	51.3%	50.6%	54.5%
Secondary (Class 9-10)	52.1%	50.4%	54.4%
Higher Secondary (Class 11-12)	51.7%	53.3%	51.7%

Source DISE 2015-16

## Chapter 3 - Table 5

### English Levels of Upper Primary (Classes 5-8) Students in Government English Medium Schools

	Total Number of Students Tested	Cannot read sentences Total Number	Percentage of Non Sentence Readers
Arunachal Pradesh	1,316	726	55.2%
Jammu & Kashmir	1,498	703	<b>46.9%</b>
Manipur	427	68	15.9%
Nagaland	1,312	403	26.7%
Total	4,553	1,900	<b>41.7%</b>

Source: Provided by ASER from data collected for annual 2016 ASER Report

## Chapter 3 -Table 6

### Number of Muslim Students and Madrasas Students Enrolled at Different Stages of School Education and The Proportion of Madrasas Enrolment to Respective Totals of Muslim Students

	Elementary Stage	High School Stage	Higher Secondary Stage	All School Stages
Enrolment of All Students	196,716,511	39,145,052	24,735,397	260,596,960
Enrolment of Muslim Students	27,149,228	4,008,453	1,991,199	33,148,880
Total Madrasa Enrolment Recognised / Unrecognised	2,210,145	234,870	108,836	2,553,851
Percentage of Madrasa Enrolment to Total Muslim Students	8.1%	5.9%	5.5%	7.7%

Source: Calculated from DISE 2015-16 publications



## Chapter 6 - Table 7

### Performance of States Ranked by Index of Social Equity for Muslim Students at Elementary, Upper Primary, High School and Higher Secondary Stage, 2014-15

	Index of Social Equity of Muslims at Elementary Stage	Index of Social Equity of Muslims at Upper Primary Stage	Index of Social Equity of Muslims at High School Stage	Index of Social Equity of Muslims at Higher Secondary Stage
<b>Best 5 Performing States</b>				
Kerala	<b>126%</b>	<b>123%</b>	<b>116%</b>	<b>87%</b>
W. Bengal	122%	114%	99%	81%
Tamil Nadu	100%	98%	93%	89%
Maharashtra	115%	109%	92%	65%
Karnataka	110%	107%	93%	59%
<b>Next Best Performing 4 States</b>				
Jammu & Kashmir	97 %	95%	89%	88%
Assam	111%	100%	72%	59%
Andhra Pradesh	102%	93%	83%	61%
Telangana	108	98%	85%	53%
<b>Lowest 6 Performing States</b>				
Bihar	90%	79%	68%	65%
Gujarat	90%	89%	69%	57%
Jharkhand	88%	88%	60%	42%
Madhya Pradesh	77%	70%	52%	51%
Rajasthan	86%	69%	51%	41%
Uttar Pradesh	<b>69%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>36.3%</b>	<b>35.3%</b>

Source: The Index of Social Equity figures calculated from DISE 2014- 15 state-level high school enrolment data, and population figures from 2011 Census district level Muslim and general population data.

## Chapter 6 - Table 8

**Performance of Districts by Index of Social Equity for Muslims at the High School Stage Calculated by Percentage of Muslim High School Education Participation in District in Proportion to The Muslim Share of Population in the District 15 States Ranked According to the High School Performance of Their Muslim Students**

	Districts with Muslim ISE < 50%	Districts with Muslim ISE 50% - 79%	Districts with Muslim ISE 80%-99%	Districts with Muslim ISE 100 % >	Total Districts In State
<b>Best 5 Performing States</b>					
Kerala	Nil	Nil	3	11	14
W. Bengal	1	2	9	8	20
Tamil Nadu	Nil	2	25	3	30
Maharashtra	Nil	2	29	5	36
Karnataka	Nil	3	19	8	30
<b>Total Districts</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Next Best Performing 4 States</b>					
Jammu & Kashmir	2	3	3	14	22
Assam	4	16	6	1	27
Andhra Pradesh	1	6	6	Nil	13
Telangana	Nil	4	6	Nil	10
<b>Total Districts</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Lowest 6 Performing States</b>					
Bihar	2	19	15	2	38
Gujarat	2	19	12	Nil	33
Jharkhand	7	13	3	1	24
Madhya Pradesh	10	37	4	Nil	51
Rajasthan	7	21	5	Nil	33
Uttar Pradesh	45	27	3	Nil	75
<b>Total Districts</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Total Districts in Above 15 States</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>456</b>

Source: The ISE (Index of Social Equity) figures calculated from DISE 2014-14 district level high school enrolment data, and population figures from 2011 district level Muslim and general population data.