MADRASA ENHANCEMENT AND GLOBAL SECURITY

A Model for Faith–Based Engagement

By Douglas Johnston, Azhar Hussain, and Rebecca Cataldi
Foreword

In the wake of the October 30, 2006 bombing of a madrasa in Chingai, Pakistan, enormous pressure was exerted on our indigenous Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith (Wahhabi) partners to discontinue their relationship with our Center and its effort to reform the madrasas. In response, we issued a statement that paid deference to the past accomplishments of these schools, which extend as far back as the Middle Ages when they were the unrivaled peaks of learning excellence in the world and inspired the establishment of our own university system in the West. We also stated our belief that “the madrasas should be viewed as sacrosanct institutions devoted solely to providing a morally-based education to students from all levels of Pakistani society. Just as they should not be the targets of military action by governments or other armed bodies, they should also not be misused by ‘freedom fighters’ in pursuit of political ends.”

As this statement began to appear in the local Pakistan media, the pressure subsided and our partners were able to continue working with us in our joint efforts to help the madrasas regain their former footing. As a result, more than 2,000 madrasa leaders have undergone our training, and many of them are now making the kinds of adjustments to their curriculums and teaching techniques that will enable students to achieve their full potential.

Once this initiative is fully implemented, it will go far toward providing a brighter future for the children of Pakistan. At that point, the country of Pakistan will owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Khalid Rahman of the Institute of Policy Studies in Islamabad, with whom we partnered for the first year and a half, and to Hafiz Khalil Ahmed of the Jamia Matleh Uloom madrasa in Balochistan and Qazi Abdul Qadeer Khamosh, Chairman of the Muslim Christian Federation International, who have partnered with us ever since. Their unfailing courage and commitment have been an ongoing source of inspiration throughout.

Within our own ranks, special tribute must be paid to the herculean contributions of Azhar Hussain, our Vice President for Preventive Diplomacy. His skills as a trainer are legendary, as are his extraordinary wisdom and judgment, which have guided this effort from start to finish (including development of the model of engagement that has proven so effective). On top of all that, he is one of the most engaging individuals
on the face of the planet. This unique combination of talents and personal qualities, which has been brought to bear in full measure in the execution of this project, was recognized in 2006 by the New York-based Tanenbaum Center for Inter-religious Understanding when Azhar was named that year’s recipient of their Peacemakers-in-Action Award.

Finally, Rebecca Cataldi has more than made her mark as the unsung hero of this entire operation. Working diligently from dawn to dusk (and often beyond), she put in countless hours coordinating the project’s activities, evaluating program effectiveness, and capturing the substantive aspects of the work in this monograph and numerous other reports. In addition, she helped facilitate an on-the-ground breakthrough in opening up the girls’ madrasas for this same kind of training.

Beyond the stalwarts mentioned above, the invaluable contributions of numerous others are recognized in the Acknowledgements Section of this report. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, never have so many owed so much to so few.

Douglas M. Johnston
President
Acknowledgments

The authors wish to extend their deepest gratitude to the following people whose hard work and dedication to the task contributed greatly to the development of this monograph:

- Henry “Duke” Burbridge, for his substantial work on the evaluation assessments, data presentations, and research on possible applications of the approach taken in this project to the Pakistani public education sector,

- Aejaz Karim, for his substantial research on the history of the madrasas and the current madrasa system and for his work on the compilation, analysis, and presentation of ICRD data,

- Allyson Slater, for her contributions to the development of the monograph language and presentation,

- Asiya Mohammed, for her synthesizing of voluminous information to create a structure for the monograph,

- David Newman, for his research contributions on the history of the madrasas and editorial support,

- Stephen Hayes, for his editorial support, and

- Patrick Moore and Rose Marshall, for their constant support and assistance throughout.

In carrying out the Pakistan Madrasa Project, the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD) owes a great deal of its success to its indigenous partners in Pakistan, who, despite living in an often-dangerous environment of sectarian violence and anti-Americanism, had the courage to work with us for peace and a better future for Pakistan’s children. They have been harassed, mocked, and attacked for the work they have undertaken to bring about greater tolerance within their own society. In addition to those already mentioned, we especially want to thank:
• Syed Rashad Bukhari
• Zafar Jan
• Dr. Abdul Rashid
• The more than 2,000 madrasa leaders, administrators, and faculty who have joined this important work and who continue to struggle with injustice and the threat of violence while promoting peace and the value of human life.

Finally, ICRD extends its profound gratitude to those foundations and individual donors who enabled this project to take root four years ago and to achieve the considerable progress that has been made to date. Not only is your support helping to build a better future for the children of Pakistan, but to the extent that this effort is countering the forces of extremism, it is helping to secure a better future for our own children as well.
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About ICRD

The mission of the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD) is to address identity-based conflicts that exceed the reach of traditional diplomacy by incorporating religion as part of the solution. More often than not, these conflicts take the form of ethnic disputes, tribal warfare, or religious hostilities. Capitalizing on the positive role that religious leaders and institutions can play in facilitating trust and overcoming differences is a trademark ingredient of the Center's approach.

ICRD fulfills its mission by:

1. Serving as a bridge between the political and religious spheres in preventing and resolving conflicts.

2. Deploying inter-religious action teams to “trouble spots” where conflict threatens or has already broken out.

3. Training religious clergy and laity in the skills of peacemaking.

4. Providing feedback to theologians and clergy on interpretations of their teachings that are contributing to strife and misunderstanding.

ICRD is about “cause” and, as such, has as its highest priority the task of preventing conflict rather than dealing with its consequences after the fact. To date, ICRD has focused its efforts on Sudan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, the Middle East, and the United States.

Among others, ICRD’s approach has been endorsed by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick (former Archbishop of Washington, DC), and by former Secretaries of State Madeline Albright and Gen. Colin Powell.
Executive Summary

It is critical that Pakistan not slide into the status of a failed state with nuclear weapons. This is of paramount importance to the United States, to the people of Pakistan, and to international peace and security. There are many actions that are essential to preventing this dire outcome, but it is clear that broad educational reform in Pakistan—particularly among the estimated 20,000 to 25,000 madrasas—is chief among them.

Previous efforts at madrasa reform have met with little success owing, in part, to a lack of will on the part of the Government of Pakistan, inadequate funding, and a sentiment of suspicion and resistance within the madrasa community. Perceived threats to the madrasas’ identity, or to Islam more generally, have only fostered a sense of urgency to build more madrasas and have contributed directly to their explosive growth.

Over the years, there have been few serious attempts to engage the madrasas in a reform process. The work of the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD) is the latest of these; but contrary to past experience, it has thus far been meeting with considerable success. Over the past four years, ICRD has worked with more than 2000 madrasa administrators and teachers from more than 1300 madrasas to:

1. encourage expansion of the madrasa curriculums to include the scientific and social disciplines, with a special emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights,

2. encourage the adoption of pedagogical techniques that promote critical thinking skills among the students,

3. convey conflict resolution (and dialogue-facilitation) skills, and

4. equip selected workshop graduates with the skills to train other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders in these same areas.

This monograph describes in detail the entirety of ICRD’s madrasa enhancement project, including the results of an independent third party evaluation, and provides a prototypical model for madrasa engagement going forward. The model is based on a set of proven principles which include (1) developing personal relationships with madrasa leaders based
on trust, (2) demonstrating respect for madrasa leaders, their culture and religion, (3) grounding all project activities in Islamic religious principles, (4) drawing upon Islam’s historic educational accomplishments, and (5) encouraging madrasa leaders to take ownership of the enhancement process.

The ICRD engagement model is based on a highly interactive workshop format that provides training for key madrasa administrators and teachers. From those who go through the initial 6-10 day workshop, a smaller number are selected to receive follow-on training that equips them to train others. To further institutionalize the program, work is currently underway to create a Madrasa Teacher Training Institute that will be co-located with and supported by key Pakistani universities.

Madrasas, by and large, are supported by their local communities because they answer real human needs; providing education, food, and shelter to many children who would otherwise go without. They have a long and rich history (from the Middle Ages through the sixteenth century, they were without peer as institutions of higher learning), and they will not disappear anytime soon. Rather than attempting to marginalize them as some have suggested, it would be far wiser to engage them in the larger effort to create a better future for the youth of Pakistan. The good news is that, with internally-motivated reform, madrasas can also play a powerful role in countering extremism. The hearts and minds of those who commit acts of terror in the name of Islam are best changed not by persuading them to become less pious Muslims, but by helping them to understand the peaceful intent of their own theology.

In other words, the best way to fight bad theology is with good theology. This monograph describes our efforts to do precisely that in one of the most complicated and least-understood conflict zones in the world. These efforts have extended to madrasas from all four provinces of Pakistan, including a number in the most radical areas. It is hoped that this model of engagement and its demonstrable track record of success can point the way forward not only throughout Pakistan, but in other parts of the world where similar tensions exist.
Pakistan Madrasa Project Summary

Overview

- Since the attacks of 9-11, Pakistani madrasas (Islamic religious schools) have come under particular scrutiny, and many observers have come to associate them with the teaching of radicalism and violent jihad. Given the position of respect and influence that madrasa leaders, as religious authorities, often command among their students and their larger communities, madrasas have tremendous potential to shape the influence of Pakistan’s future religious leaders and the development of Pakistani society more generally. Yet all too often, the potential contributions of madrasas to peacemaking have been overlooked. Previous efforts at madrasa reform have met with little success owing to a lack of political will by the Pakistani government and the suspicion and resistance of the madrasas themselves. Perceived threats to the madrasas’ identity, or to Islam more generally, have only fostered a sense of urgency to build more madrasas and led to their explosive growth. Few attempts, other than that of ICRD, have been made to engage madrasas directly in the reform process.

- In 2004, ICRD began its Pakistan Madrasa Project, a unique initiative to engage Pakistani madrasa teachers in training programs that: (1) encourage expansion of the madrasa curriculums to include the social and scientific disciplines, with a particular emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights; (2) encourage transformation of the pedagogy to promote critical thinking skills among the students; (3) teach conflict resolution and dialogue-facilitation skills; (4) facilitate discussion among leaders of the five Muslim sects that sponsor madrasas on how Islamic principles of peace and tolerance can be incorporated into madrasa education; and (5) equip the more capable workshop graduates to become “Master Trainers” who can train other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders in these same subjects.

- ICRD has found that the most effective way to stimulate madrasa leaders to embrace change is by appealing to Islamic values.
This approach also encourages madrasa leaders to expand their horizons by drawing upon the past accomplishments of these religious schools. In the training workshops, madrasa leaders reflect on Islamic values relating to peace and tolerance and the role they played when the madrasas were the unrivaled bastions of learning excellence a thousand years earlier. For many madrasa leaders, it is their first opportunity to discuss Islamic principles, education, and philosophy with educators from other Muslim schools of thought and to reflect on the past successes of Islamic education. The ICRD approach is succeeding because the madrasa leaders themselves have recognized the benefits of reform, have been inspired to improve their own education, and have assumed significant ownership of the process.

- Although initially subject to a high degree of suspicion, ICRD’s efforts have been well-received by the madrasa leaders and have thus far involved over 2100 madrasa leaders from more than 1300 madrasas. These leaders represent all five of the religious sects that sponsor these schools: Deobandi, BareIlvi, Ahle-Hadith (“Wahhabi” in the West), Shia, and Jamat-i-Islami.

- Many madrasa leaders have asked that similar training be provided for all of their teaching staff, and graduates of ICRD’s “Master Trainer” program have already conducted more than 100 training workshops for other madrasa leaders. Both male and female madrasa leaders are now requesting ICRD training for the female teachers of girls’ madrasas, something the men had previously strongly opposed. Madrasa leaders have also asked for ICRD’s assistance in securing the resources needed to equip their schools with computers, textbooks, and teachers in the new disciplines.

- The madrasa leaders, once engaged, often become passionate about implementing change and improving the quality of education in their schools. Thus, the key challenge at this point is not that of overcoming resistance to change, but of meeting the expectations that have been created. In short, ICRD has completed the crucial “winning the hearts and minds” stage and has laid the necessary groundwork for taking the project to scale.
Methodological Principles

- The methodological principles that have guided the Pakistan Madrasa Project include:

  (1) developing personal relationships based on trust with madrasa leaders and other respected local actors;

  (2) demonstrating respect for madrasa leaders and a sensitivity to their cultural norms and nuances;

  (3) showing respect for religion and religious principles, and demonstrating a credible track record of faith-based engagement with the Muslim world;

  (4) grounding all activities in Islamic religious principles;

  (5) inspiring madrasa leaders to expand their horizons by drawing upon the past accomplishments of Islam;

  (6) characterizing the effort as one of “enhancement” rather than “reform”;

  (7) encouraging madrasa leaders to take significant ownership of the process of change;

  (8) being inclusive;

  (9) building consensus;

  (10) engaging the multiple stakeholders at various levels of society (e.g. madrasa faculty and administrators; the top Madrasa Oversight Board; Pakistani government officials at the provincial and national levels; the media; and other religious, civil society, and business leaders);

  (11) partnering with appropriate indigenous actors and organizations;

  (12) supporting transparency;
(13) honoring identity;

(14) emphasizing active listening and empathy;

(15) creating a safe and nurturing environment where madrasa leaders can explore the idea of embracing change without pressure or fear of losing face;

(16) motivating involved madrasa leaders to engage their colleagues in the process of change; and

(17) sustaining engagement with the madrasas by remaining involved and not abandoning them or raising expectations that cannot be met.

Training Programs for Madrasa Teachers

The madrasa teacher training programs incorporate the following components:

- **Overcoming Barriers to Change**—It is critical to address the fears and anxieties that many madrasa leaders feel with regard to change. In addition to fearing the possible secularization and Westernization of their curriculums, teachers who do not have the skills to teach subjects like math and science fear that they may become irrelevant and lose their jobs if these subjects are added to the curriculum. Many madrasa teachers also fear the prospect of failure if they try to implement new techniques or courses, worrying that they will lose face and come to be seen as incompetent by their students.

- **Honoring Islamic Achievements and Tradition**—The past accomplishments of Islam in selected areas of educational achievement and in promoting human rights and religious tolerance are emphasized and celebrated in order to inspire change.

- **Promoting Tolerance and Appreciation of Others**—Special sessions focus on promoting tolerance for other points of view. After a presentation on Islamic teachings relating to tolerance, experiential activities are conducted that enable participants to
become aware of their own personal biases and to explore various means for overcoming them.

- **Exploring Identity and Teaching Conflict Resolution Skills**— Participants are encouraged to explore their own feelings in relation to perceived threats to their identity and how they respond to such threats. Workshop sessions also explore such concepts as the fundamentals of conflict, active listening, communication, mediation, and negotiation. These sessions help the participants develop conflict resolution skills which they can then apply in their own schools, communities, and society at large. ICRD has also conducted special workshops focused on peace education and the Islamic basis for democracy.

- **Developing Awareness and Integration of Human Rights**— Within the workshops, dialogue is initiated about the basis for promoting human rights in Islamic law and how human rights principles can be integrated into the madrasa curriculum and pedagogy. This approach promotes human rights not from a foreign point of view, but from a religious point of view consistent with the teachings of Islam.

- **Enhancing Teaching Methodology, Pedagogical Skills, and Foundational Knowledge**—There is a strong focus within the project on equipping the participants with enhanced pedagogical skills and educational knowledge. Efforts are made to help the participants determine how they can integrate concepts of tolerance, pluralism, identity, and human rights into their teaching methodology. Sessions address such topics as child psychology, ethics and responsibilities, interactive and student-centered learning, critical thinking and analytical abilities, and styles of teaching and learning. These sessions are interactive in nature.

- **Integration and Experiential Exposure**—In the final sessions, participants are encouraged to learn from one another and from non-traditional speakers with whom they would normally not interact (and who expose them to new ways of teaching and learning). These activities give the madrasa leaders the opportunity to put into practice new concepts they have learned in the training. Workshop sessions have included presentations
by female Muslim scholars, and by leaders of other sects, religions, and nationalities.

“Master Trainer” Programs and Associated Workshops

- The Master Trainer programs equip promising madrasa leaders with the skills to conduct workshops for other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders. To date, Master Trainers have conducted more than 100 one-day workshops for other madrasa leaders in Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh, and the Northwest Frontier Province.

Madrasa Teacher Training Institute

- In partnership with selected Pakistani universities, ICRD is currently developing a Madrasa Teacher Training Institute that will provide specialized teaching certification programs for madrasa educators. Teachers graduating from this Institute will develop an in-depth understanding of educational philosophy, teaching methodology, classroom management, ethical educational principles, and other important aspects of the educational process.

Other Components of the Pakistan Madrasa Project

- **Curriculum Enhancement**—ICRD has engaged scholars from four of the five sects that sponsor madrasas to develop model curriculums that incorporate best educational practices from throughout the Muslim world.

- **Curricular Materials for Peace Education**—ICRD is also engaging madrasa leaders in developing a special peace education module for madrasas, as an outgrowth of a training workshop on peace education which it conducted for madrasa leaders in conjunction with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in 2007.

- **Female Madrasa Engagement**—ICRD is in the process of creating training programs specifically designed for the female teachers of girls’ madrasas. Currently it is envisioned that this initiative will involve 12 core training programs, three Master
Trainer programs, and at least 45 one-day workshops conducted for other previously uninvolved female madrasa leaders.

- **Engagement of the Ittihad Tanzeemat Madaris Deenia (ITMD) Madrasa Oversight Board and Visit to the United States**—Widespread reform must be instituted systematically with the support of the madrasa oversight boards. The top Madrasa Oversight Board, the Ittihad Tanzeemat Madaris Deenia (ITMD), oversees the individual madrasa boards which, in turn, oversee the madrasas of each of the five sects that sponsor these schools and which determine examination and accreditation requirements for the affiliated madrasas. ICRD achieved a breakthrough in June 2007 when the leaders of the ITMD, along with the Pakistani Government’s Secretary for Religious Affairs, accepted ICRD’s invitation to visit the United States in order to study religious education in America and discuss educational enhancement. This visit provided a unique opportunity for Pakistan’s highest madrasa officials to observe how subjects like math and science are integrated with religious subjects and how principles of tolerance and human rights are implemented in Islamic education in America. It also enabled these madrasa leaders to demonstrate to Americans their openness to implementing change. The madrasa leaders met with educators, religious leaders, scholars, and US government officials to discuss madrasa reform, religion and peacebuilding, and various other topics.

- **Engagement of the Pakistani Government**—The Government of Pakistan is a critical stakeholder in the madrasa enhancement process, and its cooperation is necessary for full implementation of the project. Since 2006, ICRD has been meeting with Pakistani officials at both the federal and provincial levels to enlist their support for the ICRD madrasa project and to seek direct cooperation in relation to specific initiatives. Following the visit by the ITMD delegation to the United States, the Government of Pakistan publicly requested that ICRD conduct training seminars to educate madrasa teachers in “interfaith harmony, religious tolerance, human rights, and women’s
ICRD continues to work with the Pakistani government and the ITMD to facilitate final agreement on a new madrasa reform package that can be signed into law.

**Engagement of the US Government**—The US Government also has a critical stake in improving madrasa education and in promoting stability in regions where madrasas have particular influence. However, because of former President Musharraf’s desire to handle the madrasas himself, there has been no US government involvement in the ICRD initiative, at least not during the “winning the hearts and minds” phase. Now that President Musharraf has stepped down and ICRD is ready to proceed with full-scale implementation, the US government has become an advocate.

**Overseas Study/Exchange Visits and Interaction with America and the West**—ICRD is working to secure the necessary resources to facilitate overseas study visits by madrasa Master Trainers, in order to study Islamic education in other countries and to form relationships with overseas counterparts. This exchange program will begin by bringing selected Master Trainers to the United States to study American Islamic and religious education, civil society, and culture. Through this program, Master Trainers will observe how diverse cultures and religions are able to coexist with their differences in the United States, and how religion is integrated with modern subjects in American Islamic schools. A major aim of this program is to inspire Pakistani religious and educational leaders to make similar contributions to Pakistani civil society. Many madrasa leaders have expressed a desire to participate in such exchange programs.

**Media Engagement**—Due to the often-volatile security situation in Pakistan, ICRD has intentionally stayed out of the media spotlight while conducting the Pakistan Madrasa Project. However, we are now at the point where we are able to engage with the media on a more substantive level in order to increase

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<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/default.asp?page=2007%5C07%5C18%5Cstory_18-7-2007_pg7_20>
the public’s awareness of the merits of madrasa engagement. ICRD also plans to engage the editors of madrasa newsletters, which reach a wide audience and exert significant influence within their respective communities.

**Impact and Evaluation of the Project**

The madrasa project has been evaluated through the use of multiple instruments, including ICRD post-workshop surveys, workshop observations, interviews, and follow-up visits to madrasas. In addition, a third-party evaluation was conducted in May of 2008 by the Washington-based Salam Institute for Peace and Justice. Highlights of this impact assessment include the following:

- **Requests from Madrasa Leaders for Further Training and Educational Enhancements**—Perhaps the greatest indication of the impact of the training programs is the fact that the madrasa leaders, once resistant to the idea of change and distrustful of American organizations, are now continually asking ICRD to conduct further training programs. These requests have come even from madrasas in the most “radical” areas of the country, including madrasas that have trained Taliban or are now teaching the children of Taliban. Both male and female madrasas are also now requesting training for female teachers of girls’ madrasas.

- **Attitudinal Shifts and Acceptance of Others**—Numerous significant attitudinal shifts have taken place, as many participating madrasa leaders have demonstrated a greater openness toward others and to new ideas, including a desire to make values of religious tolerance and human rights a stronger part of madrasa education. For example, madrasa leaders participating in specialized workshops on ‘Islam, Democracy, and Elections’ who had previously believed that Islam was incompatible with democracy acknowledged that the program had cleared up their misperceptions. Participants pledged not only to participate in the future electoral processes but to convince their students, teachers, and the public to vote. Many of these madrasa leaders went on to give speeches at their mosques during Friday prayers about the importance of voting and democratic involvement by religious leaders and the religious community.
Efforts by Madrasa Leaders to Reduce Violence and Radicalism—Madrasa leaders who have participated in the ICRD training programs have subsequently gone out of their way to prevent violence and to protect or save lives, including those from other sects. They have preached sermons on peace and reconciliation. One madrasa leader used Islamic principles of forgiveness and conflict resolution skills he had learned in the ICRD workshop to prevent the tribal elders in his village from executing a girl after she was deemed to have violated tribal codes by contacting a boy in a neighboring village. In another instance, several months before the Red Mosque’s violent clash with the Pakistani government, one of its clerics appeared with three of his madrasa students at an ICRD workshop, threatening that these students were ready to become suicide bombers if the government did not submit to their demands. The madrasa workshop participants stood up, told the cleric that he was not following Islam and was giving madrasas a bad name, and then escorted him out of the building. During the campaign of hardline cleric Maulana Fazlullah, whose militants fought the Pakistani army and took over areas of the Swat Valley in the Northwest Frontier Province, the students of one madrasa leader who had participated in an ICRD workshop were seen holding signs saying “Not in the name of madrasas.” This effort managed to keep Fazlullah’s forces away from many of the madrasas in that area. The relationships formed with key members of the Pakistani madrasa community also enabled ICRD and one of its madrasa partners to play an instrumental role in securing the release of the Koreans held hostage by the Taliban in the summer of 2007.

Programs Conducted by Madrasa Leaders—Some madrasa leaders are now conducting their own programs on their own initiative to promote peace and religious tolerance. For example, ICRD’s Deobandi partner, the Jamia Matleh Uloom madrasa, has conducted several ten-day training workshops on its own for Deobandi madrasa teachers and administrators from Balochistan.

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Subjects covered included interfaith harmony, religious tolerance, and peace education, and special efforts were made to facilitate dialogue and mutual learning between the participants and a variety of parties with whom they would normally have little interaction. Among the speakers in one workshop, for example, were a Muslim woman addressing the participants on the topic of human rights, an American political officer, and a madrasa leader who had visited America who spoke on the positive characteristics of American culture and the fact that most Americans do not hate Muslims. ICRD’s Ahle-Hadith partner initiated special interfaith workshops bringing together Muslim and Christian leaders to explore ways they could cooperate in countering extremism and ending religious discrimination.

Data from Third-Party Program Evaluation by the Salam Institute:

- **Curricular Enhancement**—
  - A total of 92.9% of survey respondents felt that they better understand the importance of incorporating social and scientific disciplines into the madrasa curriculum, while 61.4% are teaching (and encouraging others in their madrasa to teach) social and scientific disciplines.
  - A majority of those surveyed felt that the most important outcome of the ICRD training was the inclusion of concepts of peace and human rights into the curriculum.

- **Pedagogical Enhancement**—
  - The ICRD project was effective in introducing new pedagogical styles and approaches, including critical thinking and problem-solving skills, to madrasa administrators and teachers.

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3 Multiple answers were allowed for some survey questions, such as when participants were asked to choose most important aspects or outcomes of the programs.
o Fifty-six point one percent (56.1%) of the participants stated that they now increasingly employ interactive and experimental teaching styles.

o Many of the focus group participants and interviewees stressed that ICRD was successful in the reduction of harsh punishment and the improvement of teaching methods for madrasa teachers. Reducing the use of corporal punishment in madrasas has been one of the key behavioral changes that has occurred as a result of participation in the ICRD programs.

- **Peace, Tolerance, and Human Rights**

  o Ninety-eight point three percent (98.3%) of survey respondents agreed that they better understand the role of Islam in promoting religious tolerance and dialogue as a result of the ICRD program, with 66.7% strongly agreeing.

  o All of the survey respondents stated that promoting religious tolerance and dialogue was one of the most important concepts they were exposed to when participating in the ICRD program.

  o Eighty-two point five percent (82.5%) of the survey respondents felt that the most effective feature of the ICRD program was the teaching of conflict resolution skills. In terms of outcomes, 78.9% felt that inclusion of concepts of peace, tolerance and human rights into the curriculum was most effective, while 64.9% emphasized listening and working together with non-Muslims to create a more peaceful society. Fifty-two point six percent (52.6%) stressed the change in negative perceptions about non-Muslims and Western society and culture. (Note: The rating scale permitted multiple responses.)

  o At least 40% of the participants are interested in participating in exchange programs where they can meet
with scholars and religious leaders from different parts of the world.

- **Impact on Behavioral Changes**—

  - Fifty-nine point six percent (59.6%) of the survey participants indicated that as a result of their participation in the ICRD programs, they have started teaching (and have encouraged others to teach) Islamic principles in support of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

  - Forty-three point nine percent (43.9%) of the respondents indicated that they have organized seminars and invited other scholars and non-Muslim members of the community to speak about co-existence and peace.

  - In addition to teaching and encouraging others to teach these themes, 66.7% of the participants stated that they have incorporated these themes into Friday sermons and other lectures.

  - It is less clear how these changes are being implemented in the madrasas in a systemic way. According to participants, application of these new conflict resolution and teaching skills, as well as incorporation of new sciences and others disciplines into the madrasas, has not been easy due to lack of funding, books, manuals, or lecture outlines. Participants asked for specific lesson plans, textbooks, manuals, and other tools.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

After more than four years of working with madrassa leaders from throughout Pakistan, ICRD has completed the “winning the hearts and minds phase,” and is now at a tipping point where sufficient momentum has been achieved to take the effort to scale. Doing so will involve: (1) working with selected Pakistani universities to develop a series of university training programs for madrassa leaders that will provide the basis for certification of madrassa faculty, (2) engaging madrassa scholars in developing model curriculums that reflect best practices in educational
development from throughout the Muslim world, (3) securing the necessary funding to modernize the schools and to provide teachers and textbooks in the new disciplines, (4) providing vocational skills training and associated job opportunities for madrasa graduates, and (5) exposing madrasa leaders to other educational approaches, through overseas study and exchange visits.

**Summary of Recommendations for Madrasa Enhancement and Engagement:**

- **Policy**—
  - The Government of Pakistan (GOP) should build consensus within the various governmental ministries and interest groups on a policy of madrasa reform that will be acceptable to the madrasa leaders, which must then be clearly articulated to the public. This policy should include the following components:
    - (1) Constructive engagement with the madrasas, rather than their marginalization, should be the centerpiece.
    - (2) The GOP should make explicit that madrasas are not to be used by the military or any political party to advance militancy, nor should they be encouraged to teach extremist views about any other group, country, or religion.
    - (3) The same goals and standards articulated in Pakistan’s constitution for the social and moral development of its citizens should apply equally to madrasa students and their teachers. This should include mandatory training in human rights and religious tolerance for everyone.
    - (4) The GOP should seek the endorsement of the madrasa boards for any proposed madrasa reform program.
    - (5) In light of the above recommendations, the new madrasa reform bill, which has been negotiated over
the past several years between the ITMD Madrasa Oversight Board and the former GOP Secretary for Religious Affairs, Vakil Ahmed Khan, should be signed into law as soon as possible. Among other things, this bill would provide for the creation of a new Inter-Madrasa Board that would oversee development of the enhanced curriculums and monitor the implementation of the curricular enhancements. Female madrasa leadership should also be included in this initiative.

- At the district level, scholarship programs should be created to enable madrasa students and teachers to attend public universities or vocational centers.

- The US government and the rest of the international community should support policies of madrasa engagement rather than marginalization.

- Funding should be provided to enable the madrasas to teach the new curriculum courses effectively, in accordance with standards agreed to by both the madrasas and the Government of Pakistan.

**Research**—

- Greater systematic research should be done at the national/international level to gather comprehensive data on Pakistan’s madrasas, including a comprehensive needs assessment conducted in partnership with the madrasas themselves.

**Pedagogy**—

- Greater emphasis must be placed on the systematic pedagogical training of madrasa teachers, beyond curricular enhancements. By itself, official inclusion of “contemporary” subjects in madrasa curriculums is insufficient to make a meaningful difference. Even more critical are (1) ensuring that all subjects are taught in a way that promotes genuine learning and skill
development and (2) an educational environment that promotes tolerance, human rights, and peace and which works against intolerance and violence. These goals have guided ICRD’s efforts to date.

- A system of madrasa accreditation and teacher certification should be put in place to ensure that madrasas are meeting mutually agreed-upon educational standards. Toward this end, ICRD is working with the University of Karachi to develop the first Madrasa Teacher Training Institute.

- Pedagogical training programs should include an emphasis on areas such as interactive teaching methodology, development of critical thinking skills, classroom management, child development/psychology, and the ability to assess teaching and learning styles and to adapt one’s teaching accordingly.

**Curriculums**

- Principles of religious tolerance, human rights, peace education, and conflict resolution skills development should be integrated into both the social sciences and the religious courses. Areas of emphasis should include Islamic achievements in promoting respect for and protecting the rights of others; principles and historical movements of nonviolence; comparative studies of world religions, cultures, and human rights practices; and the role of religious institutions and youth in peacebuilding.

- Vocational training programs should be provided for madrasa students, emphasizing locally-relevant employable skills development.

- Current texts should be added to complement (not replace) existing classical texts which are being used in

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4 The following include curricular recommendations from both ICRD and the madrasa and religious scholars engaged by ICRD to develop model curriculums.
madrasas, many of which are at least 500-700 years old or older.

- Selected scholars of each sect should be engaged to develop an enhanced integrative curriculum for their respective sects, after receiving training in research methodology and engaging in a study of best practices in various educational fields and contexts. These scholars would then work within a mechanism or subcommittee of the newly-created Inter-Madrasa Board to ensure that these curricular recommendations inform the development and enhancement of the madrasa curriculums on an ongoing basis.

  • *Exchange and Exposure Programs*—

    - The level of madrasa exposure to and engagement with other countries and cultures should be deepened through overseas study and exchange visits.
Chapter 1

Introduction

In 1999, the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD) was founded to address identity-based conflicts that exceed the reach of traditional diplomacy by incorporating religion as part of the solution. Today, it is more critical than ever that the influence of religion be understood and that religious actors become engaged in preventing or resolving conflicts throughout the world. Religious leaders engaged in the pursuit of peace can provide an effective counter to those who would manipulate religion to serve their own political ends.

As 9-11 so powerfully reminds us, the greatest threat facing the world today is the potential marriage of religious extremism with weapons of mass destruction. So long as religious militancy remains a potent force, our world will be in danger. It is widely recognized that the central front in the war on terrorism is the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan, where the Taliban and Al Qaeda operate and where Islamic scripture and theology are perverted to justify wrongful action. In a context where religious legitimacy trumps all, the best counter to bad theology is good theology. To ensure that future generations are not vulnerable to the ideologies of the extremists, it is necessary that the religious education system be reformed in a way that both creates economic opportunity for the students and instructs them in the fundamental Islamic principles of human rights and religious tolerance.

In Pakistan, teachers and administrators of the madrasas (Islamic religious schools) hold positions of special influence and authority as religious leaders. However, since 9-11, Pakistani madrasas have come under special scrutiny, and many observers have come to associate them with the teaching of radicalism and violent jihad. It has been alleged that certain Pakistani madrasas hosted Osama bin Laden, gave support to the July 7, 2005 London bombers, and send students to fight in the violent conflicts in Afghanistan and other countries. Much of the Taliban leadership is said to have been educated in Pakistani madrasas. Sectarian violence within Pakistan has also been linked to certain madrasas. In turn, the use of force against madrasas has often led to disastrous results. In July 2007, a violent confrontation between the Pakistani Government and the heavily-armed Red Mosque in Islamabad, which at the time was
home to one of the largest madrasas in the world, resulted in the destruction of the women’s school and more than 100 deaths. This was followed by retaliatory suicide bombings in various parts of the country that continue to this day.

While the gravity of such problems cannot be denied, research indicates that the vast majority of the madrasas are not involved in extremist activity or paramilitary training. (It is estimated that no more than 15 percent of Pakistan’s madrasas preach “violent jihad”\(^5\)). However, a more pervasive challenge exists with regard to the curriculums and teaching methodology of many of the madrasas. In a number of such schools, a strict focus on religious studies often excludes effective teaching of “contemporary” disciplines such as math and the sciences. The pedagogy stresses unquestioning obedience to the teacher and rote memorization of the Qur’an in Arabic, (a language seldom understood by school-age students in Pakistan). Further, sectarian ideologies are often taught in a way that leaves little room for the understanding or acceptance of other sects, religions, or cultures. This approach tends to produce graduates who are ill-equipped to deal with the challenges of modernity, have few economic opportunities, and who may be susceptible to manipulation by ideologues.

Historical wounds, perceived injustices, and repression have created a “culture of victimhood” that has effectively isolated madrasa leaders from much of the outside world. Fearful that new ideas and interacting with others may lead to the loss of their religious and cultural identity, some instinctively reject modernization and the concept of coexistence. Conditioned by decades of fear, many madrasa teachers and administrators have reached the point where opposing others and living in conflict have become an integral part of their identity. This environment of hostility is perpetuated as these ideas are passed on to the students and their communities.

The angst madrasas feel toward the United States and the West runs deep in Pakistan and only serves to exacerbate this situation. During the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the United States armed Muslim fighters and provided textbooks to madrasas that glorified violence as a way of encouraging them to fight against the “infidel” invaders. Among madrasa administrators and teachers today, one finds many who have

previously fought against the Soviets and who are still willing to put their lives on the line to preserve the Islamic way of life. This time, however, the perceived enemy of Muslim identity is not the former Soviet Union, but the United States. Feeling used, abandoned, and betrayed by America after the Soviets were expelled from Afghanistan, Pakistani madrasa leaders harbor distrust and hostility toward the United States. They have come to believe that America and the West are conspiring against them and other Muslim countries and accuse the United States of igniting sectarian violence and causing most of the ills to be found in Pakistani society. Here one sees a strong disconnect between the historical narrative of the madrasa leaders and that of many in America, who see former US support of the jihadists as an example of how America has helped Muslims in need. Many American government officials, while reflecting on terrorist strikes by self-proclaimed Islamists, express a sense of “betrayal” in light of America’s assistance in the Afghan-Soviet war, just as Pakistanis and Afghans feel betrayed by what they see as the opportunistic departure of America and its resources following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Each side claims to have been “used” by the other for its own ends.

These historical wounds exacerbate the tensions resulting from current events. Madrasa leaders often express perceived grievances that America supports “apostate” Islamic governments which oppress their own people; imposes economic and military sanctions on Islamic nations, while seeking to control the Arabian Peninsula in order to dictate oil prices; supports Israel’s occupation of Palestine; and shares the ambitions of colonial powers that previously oppressed Muslims. Until very recently, the view has prevailed in Pakistan that the United States—having shifted its focus to Iraq in 2003—has been looking for ways to withdraw from Afghanistan before the conflict there is fully resolved. This has compounded the sense of abandonment felt by many Pakistanis. These perceptions, in turn, lead to a mindset that Muslims are oppressed and that their identity is being threatened.

The Pakistan government, as an ally of the United States, is viewed by many madrasas as a traitor to its own national interests. The madrasas thus view themselves as the sole institutions left to safeguard the identity and interests of Pakistan and of Muslims. Fearing secularization and loss

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6 Saleem H. Ali. Islam and Education: Conflict and Conformity in Pakistan and Beyond. (Not Yet Published).
of identity, many religious leaders are convinced that if they don’t confront modernism, their way of life will be destroyed by Western decadence. Classrooms across the Muslim world have thus become a major battleground in combating Western ideals. There is also a negative association between modernization and secularization that leads to a deep resistance to the idea of “reform,” particularly to the extent that such reform is perceived as being imposed from the outside.

Given the position of respect and influence that madrasa leaders, as religious authorities, often command among their students and their larger communities, madrasas have tremendous potential to shape the development of Pakistani society. Too often, the role of madrasas as potential sources of peacemaking has been overlooked, since perceptions of madrasas as being violent, intolerant, and backward persist both within Pakistani society and internationally. This has led to policies of isolation, marginalization, forced reform, or sometimes even violent confrontations between the madrasas and the US and Pakistani governments. Some scholars, like Robert Looney⁷ and the International Crisis Group⁸, advocate strengthening the public school system or other educational institutions to provide alternatives to the madrasas. Few attempts have been made to engage the madrasas on a constructive level or even to study what effects such engagement might have on empowering the madrasas to contribute to the country’s peaceful development.

ICRD has taken an unconventional approach to its engagement with the madrasas, grounded in the conviction that foremost among the core values of Islam are the principles of tolerance and peaceful coexistence. The approach itself is based on the premise that madrasas will respond positively to respectful, faith-based engagement. With this as its guiding principle, ICRD began the Pakistan Madrasa Project in 2004, by engaging Pakistani madrasa teachers in training programs that:

- encourage expansion of the curriculums of the madrasas to include the social and scientific disciplines, with a particular

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<www.uvm.edu/~envprog/madrassah/reform-edu.pdf>
<http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4568&l=1>
emphasis on integrating principles of religious tolerance and human rights (particularly women’s rights),

- teach pedagogical methods which promote critical thinking and problem-solving skills among the students based on associated training in educational and child development,

- teach conflict resolution and dialogue-facilitation skills,

- facilitate discussion among leaders of the five sects that sponsor madrasas on the Islamic principles of peace, tolerance, and human rights and how these principles can be incorporated into madrasa education, and

- equip selected newly-trained teachers with the skills to train other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders in the above areas.

When ICRD began conducting workshops in Pakistan, it faced a great deal of suspicion and no small degree of hesitation from the madrasa leaders, who were distrustful of any American organization and who feared that attempts to modernize their education would result in the loss of their Islamic identity. However, after the first two-week pilot workshop in February 2004, madrasa leaders realized that the programs were designed not to challenge or change their Islamic identity, but rather, to improve the overall performance of their schools. They began to embrace the ICRD programs, recommend them to other madrasa leaders, and request further training for themselves.

ICRD has found that the most effective way to inspire madrasa leaders to embrace change and implement lasting reforms is by appealing to Islamic values that support such change. That is a large part of why ICRD’s reform efforts have found success where others have failed. Rather than attempting to secularize or impose foreign values, ICRD’s approach has been one of helping the madrasas to help themselves. It is an approach that challenges madrasa leaders to live up to their own laudable religious values.

This approach is also inspiring madrasa leaders to expand their horizons by drawing upon the past accomplishments of Islam. In the training workshops, madrasa leaders reflect on Islamic values relating to peace and tolerance and the role madrasas played when Islam was at its peak a thousand years ago. What is emphasized is that the key to the success of these early Islamic societies was their ability to utilize the
diverse talents of their populations, as exemplified by the model of religious tolerance established in Moorish Spain. Presentation topics have included the role of the madrasas in early Islamic education, the teaching of religious and ethnic tolerance in early Islamic educational systems, Islamic educational curriculums and modern-day requirements, and the modern-day failures of Islamic countries and educational systems. For many madrasa leaders, the ICRD workshops provide their first opportunity to discuss these topics with educators from other sects and to reflect on the past successes of Islamic education in a diverse academic setting. This has provided a non-threatening way for madrasa leaders to challenge themselves, by drawing comparisons with what has gone before. The ICRD model is succeeding because the madrasa leaders themselves are recognizing the benefits of reform and have assumed significant ownership of the process.

To date, ICRD’s efforts have been well-received by the madrasa leaders and have thus far involved over 2100 madrasa leaders from more than 1300 madrasas (a significant number, but one that represents only the tip of the iceberg in light of the total universe of 20,000-25,000 madrasas that is thought to exist). These leaders come from all five of the religious sects that sponsor these schools (Deobandi, Barelvi, Ahle-Hadith (“Wahhabi” in the West), Shia, and Jamat-i-Islami), and from each of Pakistan’s four provinces, as well as the northern tribal areas.

After attending the training workshops, madrasa leaders have exhibited greater self-reflection and are able to evaluate their own institutions from a broader perspective. Many madrasa leaders have asked for similar programs to be conducted within their own madrasas for all of their teaching staff. Graduates from the “Master Trainer” program are already conducting training workshops for other madrasa leaders. Both male and female madrasas are also now requesting ICRD training programs for female teachers of girls’ madrasas, something that male madrasa leaders previously opposed but are now actively seeking. Madrasa leaders have also asked for ICRD’s assistance in securing the resources to modernize their schools, including textbooks, computers, and salaries for teachers in the new disciplines. Most importantly, a number of madrasa leaders who formerly preached the need to fight the West are now preaching the need for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

ICRD has found that most madrasa leaders respond positively to respectful engagement. For example, an Ahle-Hadith partner recalled
speaking to a group of associates about the pain felt by Americans when people in other countries burn their flag, comparing it to the pain felt by Muslims when someone desecrates the Qur’an. Instead of such hurtful actions, he suggested that people should express their feelings and opinions in other, more constructive ways—for example, by writing to the government or the US Embassy to voice their complaints and concerns. Absent a tradition of representative government themselves, most of the madrasa leaders had never thought of such a course of action. Yet they reacted favorably to the idea, writing down the US Embassy address on the spot and pledging to follow that course in the future.

By engaging these religious leaders directly, and appealing to Islamic values in particular, ICRD’s work is not only affecting the attitudes of these administrators and teachers but also of their students and the communities within which they command significant influence. Of critical importance to the success of this work has been ICRD’s willingness to take the time to build trust. Rather than forcefully pushing for change, ICRD has quietly allowed its work to speak for itself, relying on the enthusiastic endorsements of the involved madrasa leaders. This has led to the program’s acceptance and the active solicitation of other madrasa leaders for similar treatment, to the point where far more requests for training are being received than can possibly be accommodated at the Center’s current level of resources.

A key lesson learned through this work is that when engaged on the above basis, madrasa leaders often become passionate about implementing change and improving the education at their schools. The central challenge at this point, then, is not that of overcoming resistance to change, but of meeting the expectations that have been created. In other words, ICRD has completed the crucial “winning the hearts and minds” phase and has laid the necessary groundwork for taking the effort to the next level.

This monograph explains the model and methodology of ICRD’s madrasa engagement program, the activities conducted, the challenges faced, the results achieved, the next steps that are envisioned, and the implications for the future engagement of madrasas, both in Pakistan and in other parts of the world.
Chapter 2

Background and History of the Madrasas

What is a Madrasa?

The Arabic word “madrasa” can refer to any type of school. The use of this word differs from place to place within the Islamic world. In countries like Egypt and Lebanon, it refers to any educational institution—state-sponsored, private, secular, or religious. In South Asian countries, especially Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, it generally refers to the Islamic religious schools that provide both free education and oftentimes free boarding and lodging for their students. As noted by Peter Bergen and Swati Pendey in a recent Washington Quarterly article, “Madrasas vary from country to country or even from town to town. They can be a day or boarding school, a school with a general curriculum, or a purely religious school attached to a mosque.”

A Short History of Madrasas

The madrasa as a separate institution did not exist in the early history of Islam. In the first four centuries, for example, the mosque and the madrasa were unified in a single building. Many Islamic scholars, especially those affiliated with madrasas, suggest that the first madrasa was the Darul Arqam, established by the Prophet Mohammed in Mecca. However, the Jamiat al Qarawiyyin, located in a mosque in the city of Fez, Morocco, is considered by many to be the oldest degree-awarding madrasa in the Muslim world. This school was established in 859 A.D. by Fatima Al-Fihri, daughter of the wealthy merchant Mohammed Al-Fihri.

Many Muslim scholars and other researchers contend that the madrasa really evolved in the eleventh century from existing education centers, both religious and secular. One of the first institutionalized madrasa systems was established in Baghdad in the eleventh century by

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Nizam ul-Mulk, an Abasid vizier of Baghdad. This Madrasa Nizamiya was the first to provide free education along with food and lodging for the students. Under this “Nizamiah” madrasa system, the purpose was to teach scholastic theology to produce spiritual leaders, and earthly knowledge to produce government servants who would be appointed in various regions of the Islamic empire.  

The Nizamiah system was endowed and controlled by the rulers of the empire. The ruling caliph had the authority to confirm the appointment of instructors and approve the curriculum. The madrasas received funding through a system of state patronage under the institution of the “waqf” (trust), through which the schools were financially supported. The madrasas received their operating funds, teacher salaries, and student stipends from this waqf. Thus, madrasas were under the direct control of the state.

The early madrasas proved remarkably capable of producing religious scholars, jurists, and civil servants. Based on this success, Nizam-ul-Mulk established other madrasas in Naysabur and other towns throughout the Islamic empire as a method of further extending the influence and control of the caliph. Nizam-ul-Mulk came to be recognized as the “Father of the Islamic public education system.”

For several hundred years, Islamic educational institutions, including madrasas, mosques, and universities, realized many notable accomplishments. Madrasas from Andalusia (the southern region of Spain) to the Indian subcontinent trained many great thinkers in science, math, philosophy, and medicine while maintaining a firm religious base. These institutions were also the centers for preserving and promoting the knowledge and works of the great classical empires of Greece, Rome,

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Persia, and Gallic Spain. Encouragement of independent reasoning or “ijtihad” was a main characteristic of those madrasas.\textsuperscript{17}

Many of the greatest innovations came from Middle Eastern madrasas during the Abbasid period (750–1258), including early ideas on evolution; important contributions to the philosophy of science; the first forms of non-Aristotelian logic; and the introduction of temporal, modal, and inductive logic. Such advances played a central role in the subsequent development of European logic during the Renaissance. Indeed, throughout the Middle Ages, Christian scholars travelled to the Islamic world to study the advanced learning available in the madrasas. The first college in Europe was in fact founded by Jocius de Londoniis, a pilgrim newly returned to Paris from the Middle East.

As noted by one prominent scholar, Al-Azhar University in Cairo, one of the oldest and greatest madrasas, “has good claim to being the most sophisticated institution of learning in the entire Mediterranean world during the early Middle Ages. The very idea of a university in the modern sense—a place of learning where students congregate to study a variety of subjects under a number of teachers—is generally regarded as an innovation first developed at Al-Azhar.”\textsuperscript{18} Even concepts such as having "fellows" holding a "chair," or students "reading" a subject and obtaining "degrees," as well as practices such as inaugural lectures, the oral defense, and even mortar boards, tassels, and academic robes, can all be traced to the past practices of madrasas\textsuperscript{19}.

**The Rise and Decline of Madrasas in South Asia**

Islamic rule overtook the Indian subcontinent when the Arab warrior Muhammad bin Qasim (695–715) captured the Sindh region of modern day Pakistan. Small madrasas began to appear, and in the early thirteenth century, Sultan Qutubuddin Aibek established a number of mosques to provide religious as well as modern education. This system


gradually developed into formal madrasas during the Moghal rule. It is said that during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1324-1351) there were close to 1,000 madrasas in Delhi alone. At this time there was no set curriculum, and different teachers used different textbooks. However, the madrasas generally taught subjects such as Qur’an, “hadith” (sayings of the Prophet), and Arabic grammar, as well as calligraphy, poetry, alchemy, astronomy, and geography. Most books and commentaries used in madrasa teaching were written in Persia or Central Asia between 1100 and 1600. The flowering of knowledge in India from the 16th century to the 18th century was in large part due to Islamic influences from Central Asia and Safavid Persia.

In the 18th century, a curriculum known as Dars-e-Nizami, devised by Mullah Nizamuddin Sihalvi, became the widely-used standard syllabus. Rote memorization of the Qur’an became the highest scholastic achievement under this syllabus, though the curriculum also emphasized the rational sciences (such as logic and philosophy) and stressed reason and understanding. The syllabus drew heavily on Persian and Central Asian scholarship from the previous 600 years.

The center of learning presided over by Nizamuddin Sihalvi attracted students from all over India and across the Muslim world, including Sunnis, Shias, and Hindus, who came to Lucknow to study the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum. As a testament to its influence, the scholastic tradition of the Dars-e-Nizami was studied at Al-Azhar University and in the 19th century was used in an attempt to revive the rational sciences in Cairo.

The madrasas of the Indian subcontinent appear to have reached their peak from the 16th century to the 18th century, when the Dars-e-Nizami syllabus was consolidated. The curriculum was cutting-edge for its time in its emphasis on logic, philosophy, and critical thinking.

When Muslim rulers began concentrating on expanding their territory and strengthening their power, the focus on educational institutions began to shift toward political and military institutions. Through the combination of military and economic expenditures required to defeat their rivals (especially during the European Crusades), the eventual loss of Andalusian Spain, internal Islamic political strife, and colonization, the Islamic tradition of learning and scholarship suffered a slow decline and eventual collapse.

The defeat and humiliation faced by the Muslims led the Muslim “ulema” (scholars) of the day to shun any pursuit of worldly knowledge and retreat to their religious core. In many cases, this closed the door to ijtihad or independent reasoning. This darker time in Muslim history had a profound impact on the function and philosophy of the madrasas throughout the Muslim world. Many abandoned the pursuit of rational sciences and focused exclusively on the teachings of Islam as prescribed in the Qur’an, in order to preserve Muslim identity and to counter the influence of the West.

The European colonization of Muslim lands also contributed to the decline of the madrasas. The forced implementation of European secular education systems in which Islamic content was excluded served to alienate Muslims in their own countries.  

The dominating influence of the colonial powers contributed to the sense of hostility felt by religious leaders toward the West and to the growth of the madrasa system.

The madrasas of South Asia saw the British colonial presence as the greatest threat to their religious identity, and thus removed the “secular” subjects from their curriculums in order to focus solely on Islamic education.  


adopted a form of the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum and established a system of free education, boarding, and lodging. In order to maintain their independent status, madrasas refused any sort of state funding or supervision, a practice that has continued to this day. These madrasas met their resource needs by soliciting donations from the general public, relying on the “zakat” tax (that is collected to support the poor) and other charitable giving.

Thus, the madrasas became institutions that focused only on producing graduates capable of dealing with religious matters. The abilities of the students were thus intentionally narrowed in order to continue providing imams and teachers for the mosques, and students were generally discouraged from getting involved in other fields. Although some madrasas introduced other content into their curriculums from time to time, they remained mainly tied to the notion of safeguarding the religion and religious values.

Over time, global politics also influenced the madrasas and further contributed to their decline. In the late 1980’s, especially in Pakistan, madrasas were used by various external forces to achieve certain political ends. The United States and Saudi Arabia, for example, provided resources to madrasas to motivate and enable their students to fight against the Soviet forces that had invaded Afghanistan.

Today, madrasas continue to provide education, and often free room, board, and other resources, to children whose families could not otherwise afford it. However, not all students who attend madrasas are from impoverished backgrounds. A sizeable fraction are from families that are well off financially but who want their sons or daughters to have a “proper” religious grounding. As noted in a June 2003 USAID report on “Strengthening Education in the Muslim World,” many such families believe that Islamic scholarship will help reaffirm, strengthen, and preserve their children’s Muslim identity, which they perceive to be threatened by “the invading immoral influences of the modern world.”

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Madrasa Curriculums

Traditionally, the madrasa curriculum was divided into two areas: 1) Uloom Naqlia and 2) Uloom Aqlia. The former is known as the “Transmitted Sciences,” which focused on teaching the “revealed” knowledge of religion, jurisprudence, and Shariah (divine law). The latter refers to the “Intellectual Sciences,” which included subjects such as logic, mathematics, natural science, and philosophy.

When colonial powers began to establish rival secular schools, the madrasas generally stopped teaching the intellectual sciences. Certain Muslim rulers who patronized the schools also influenced the madrasa curriculum for political ends. Such rulers used the madrasas as instruments for propagating the state ideology and as tools of social control. In order to accomplish this, they deliberately modified the curriculum to eliminate free thinking and to focus madrasa teaching on subjects that instilled discipline and obedience. This control allowed the state to directly influence the ulema and indirectly, the masses.

Today, most madrasas in Pakistan generally teach the Dars-e-Nizami curriculum with modifications. Students also read selected religious texts which emphasize the perceived superiority of their own sect over the others. Similarly, students are taught to refute Western ideologies and other “heretical” beliefs in lessons on combating heresy and the dangers to Muslim thought and identity. Some madrasas also teach subjects such as English, social studies, and the use of computers, but the books and teachers of these subjects must be approved by the clerics.


Education at the Madrasas

A typical madrasa offers two types of courses:

-Hafiz-e-Qur’an Course: Under this type of course, students are trained in memorization of the text of the Qur’an without concentrating on its meaning and context. After completing this course, a student becomes a “Hafiz”—a person who has memorized the entire Qur’an. These people usually lead the daily prayers at various mosques.

-Alim Course: This type of course is designed to produce more learned Islamic scholars. The curriculum usually includes the Arabic language, “tafseer” (Qur’anic interpretation), Shariah (divine/Islamic law), hadith (the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed), “fiqh” (jurisprudence), “mantaq” (logic), and Islamic history. Graduates of these courses often become teachers at various religious as well as secular schools.

Madrasa Degrees/Certificates

A student of the Pakistani madrasa system normally undergoes 16 years of education. The table below shows a typical madrasa degree system:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Madrasa Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Level</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanivia (Aamma) Elementary/Secondary (10 Years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thanivia (Khasa) Higher Secondary (2 Years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ali’ya Bachelors (2 Years)</td>
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<td>Alimiya Masters (2 Years)</td>
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The State of Education in Pakistan and the Role of the Madrasas

The public educational system in Pakistan has been largely dysfunctional for the last 60 years and has suffered from neglect and politicization. The situation especially deteriorated after the 1980’s when General Zia ul-Haq took power and became instrumental in countering the Soviet army in Afghanistan. Today, the government continues to devote a disproportionate share of its resources to the military at the expense of supporting education and other important services. Economic deterioration and inadequate resources, political instability, and the larger geo-political situation have all played a role in the decline of Pakistan’s public education sector.

Today the country has three different educational systems:

**State-Run Institutions:** This system provides at least 16 years of education. Comprised of twelve years of main schooling and at least four years of college/university, it collectively enables a student to obtain a Masters Degree in his or her respective field. Urdu is the language of instruction, while English is taught as a separate subject. Many students are now given the opportunity to choose English as their language of instruction at the college and university levels. A few distinguished universities use English as the main medium of instruction. The state charges only a nominal fee, which is why this system primarily serves Pakistan’s lower and middle classes.

**Private Institutions:** In the late 1990’s, inspired by the few established institutions for upper class children, a number of new private schools and universities were opened throughout Pakistan. English is the language of instruction at these institutions. These schools follow the syllabi developed at Oxford, Cambridge, and other international institutions. Students pay a high monthly fee, which means that these schools are predominantly available only to the upper and upper-middle classes.

**Religious Institutions/Madrasas:** The madrasas provide education in Arabic and Urdu and operate under their own system of administration. Many function independently without any supervision or control by external authorities. This system provides schooling and often room, board, and other expenses to the students free of cost, making it the most feasible and often the only choice available to lower and lower-middle class families.
The diagram below illustrates the educational system in Pakistan. The circle in this chart shows the scope of state control over the system through the educational boards operational under the Ministry of Education.

**Figure 1: Pakistani Educational System**

Number of Madrasas in Pakistan

When Pakistan became an independent state in 1947, there were roughly 245 madrasas in the country. In April 2002, Dr. Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi, Minister of Religious Affairs, estimated that the number had grown to 10,000, encompassing some 1.7 million students. Different reports provide different numbers of madrasas in Pakistan today, which generally range from 20,000 to 25,000.

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The total number of madrasas sharply increased during the regime of General Zia ul Haq (1977-1988) owing to a combination of population growth and the involvement of madrasa students (especially of the Deobandi sect) in fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Islamic political parties are mindful of the benefits that accrue from controlling these religious schools. The headquarters of the Jamat-e-Islami (JI) in Lahore, for example, also serves as a madrasa where students receive a Qur’anic education with a distinctively political element. As conveyed by a JI party spokesman during a visit with author William Dalrymple in Lahore: “The political transformation our madrasas are bringing about is having a massive effect on the future of Pakistan. The recent success of the Islamic parties is very much associated with the work we do in our madrasas.”

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Madrasa Boards in Pakistan

Each of Pakistan’s five Islamic sects that sponsor these religious schools has an administrative board to oversee the management, create syllabi, collect fees, and administer examinations for their madrasas. The following chart shows the breakdown of madrasa systems by sect. (Because many madrasas in Pakistan are not registered with the government, the numbers in this chart do not represent the total number of madrasas.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sect</th>
<th>Name of Board</th>
<th>Year Established</th>
<th>Registered Madrasas (as of '07)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td>Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barelvi</td>
<td>Tanzim-ul-Madaris Ahle Sunnah wa Jama’a</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaat-e-Islami</td>
<td>Rabta-tul-Madaris Al-Islamia</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shia (Ithna’shri)</td>
<td>Wafaq-ul-Madaris Shia Pakistan</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahle-Hadith</td>
<td>Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Salafia</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Tariq Rahman, 2004 and Masooda Bano, 2007.)

The Ittihad Tanzeemat Madaris Deenia (ITMD) Madrasa Oversight Board oversees the five individual madrasa boards and wields enormous influence over the curriculums and teaching methodologies of the madrasas.

Sects Sponsoring Madrasas in Pakistan:

The following is a description of each of the five sects that sponsor madrasas in Pakistan:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sect</th>
<th>Founder(s)</th>
<th>Main Beliefs</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deobandi</td>
<td>Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833-1877) and Maulana Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905)</td>
<td>Oppose what they see as “folk” Islam in which intercession by saints occupies a major place. Deobandis argue that adherence to Shariah is the path to mystical exaltation and oppose celebrating the festival days of specific religious figures.</td>
<td>Dars-e-Nizami with special emphasis on Qur’an and hadith and opposition to “folk” Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barelvi</td>
<td>Ahmed Raza Khan of Bereilly (1856-1921)</td>
<td>Believe in the meditational and “custom-laden” Islam, closely tied to the intercession of the “pirs” (saints) of the shrines. The beliefs of the Barelvis are often challenged by Deobandis and Ahle-Hadith.</td>
<td>Dars-e-Nizami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahle-Hadith</td>
<td>Sayyed Ahmed</td>
<td>Inspired by the “Wahhabi” movement in Saudi Arabia and seeks to purify and reform Islam. The Ahle-Hadith have also been called “ghair muqallid” (one who does not follow a fixed path) or non-conformists by other Muslims because they follow no one particular school of</td>
<td>Dars-e-Nizami with emphasis on Qur’an and hadith and opposition to “folk” Islam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 Named for Deoband, a small town in Uttar Pradesh in India.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jamat-e-Islami</th>
<th>Abu Ala Maudoodi (1903-1979)</th>
<th>A revivalist political movement which believes in borrowing new knowledge and technology from the West in order to develop Islamic society. However, they also refute Western culture and intellectual domination.</th>
<th>Traditional texts as well as political science, economics, and history, with emphasis on preparation for confronting Western ideologies.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shia (Twelvers)</td>
<td>(Began around 621 at the original split between Sunni and Shia Islam)</td>
<td>Believe that the true successor to the Prophet Mohammed was Ali Ibne Abi Talib (his cousin and son-in-law), rather than the first three Caliphs whom Sunnis take to be his successors. Shias believe in the divine leadership of the Imam from the descendents of Ali after the Prophet.</td>
<td>Dars-e-Nizami, but follow a different text with alternate interpretation of Qur’an and hadith. Most Shia include the intellectual sciences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Inclusion of Militancy—Rewriting the Madrasa Curriculums**

Religious militancy was first introduced into the madrasa curriculum and education system during the late 1980’s and early 1990’s at the Education Center for Afghanistan (ECA) located in Peshawar, Pakistan. This center, operated by the “mujahideen” (“holy warrior”) groups fighting against the Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, published a series of textbooks intended to develop a new generation of holy warriors in order to wage war against the perceived enemies of Islam.

Dr. Craig Davis of Indiana University, Bloomington has documented the systemic fusion of hatred and militancy within the madrasa curriculum. Davis observed that the promotion of violence was not
confined to ideological sections of the curriculum, but was also present in subjects such as mathematics and the language arts. He quotes the following example from a fourth-grade textbook:

“The speed of a Kalashnikov bullet is 800 meters per second. If a Russian is at the distance of 3,200 meters from a mujahid [fighter], and the mujahid aims at the Russian’s head, calculate how many seconds it will take for the bullet to strike the Russian...”

During the Taliban era, these books were reprinted and used in the madrasas in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is ironic that this textbook series was underwritten by US government grants. As Davis notes, the Education Center for Afghanistan was funded by the University of Nebraska at Omaha under a $50 million grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which ran from September 1986 through June 1994.

Today, some madrasas still invite fighters from active conflicts (e.g. Afghanistan and Kashmir) to inspire their students to fight or actively send their students to participate in such conflicts.

Government of Pakistan and Madrasa Reform

The following chart shows an overview of attempts by the Government of Pakistan at madrasa reform.

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Overview of Pakistani Government Attempts at Madrasa Reform in Pakistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Reform Attempt</th>
<th>Ruler</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Challenges and Constraints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950’s</td>
<td>Dars-e-Nizami Jaiza (Review)</td>
<td>Gen. Ayub Khan</td>
<td>During the preparation of first-time voter lists, ulema and graduates of madrasas were not included as they were considered to be illiterate. This prompted the establishment of the Commission to review the madrasa curriculum.</td>
<td>Conflict between the madrasas’ desire to produce Islamic scholars and the government’s desire to promote the teaching of the “secular” subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of political will and weak administrative capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970’s</td>
<td>New Education Policy</td>
<td>Gen. Yahya Khan</td>
<td>Madrasas were officially asked by the government to include modern subjects in their curriculums.</td>
<td>Unfixed state-madrasa boundaries and limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No collective platform to sustain the reform initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980’s</td>
<td>Jaiza Deeni Madrasas (Review of</td>
<td>Gen. Zia Ul Haq</td>
<td>The government created a committee to modernize the madrasa system. It also recommended the inclusion of modern subjects as well as the establishment of a central government board to regulate madrasa affairs.</td>
<td>Influence of both internal and external spoilers and interest groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Religious Schools)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### 2000’s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Madrasa Reform Program</th>
<th>Gen. Musharraf</th>
<th>The government made various attempts to overhaul the madrasa system (described in more detail below).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Since the establishment of Pakistan as an independent state, there have been very few meaningful madrasa reform initiatives. Perhaps the most earnest effort came during the rule of the moderate Ayub Khan (1958-1969). Khan’s reforms targeted two critical components of the madrasa system: religious endowments and curriculums. The attempted reforms produced few changes and were rejected by most political parties. However, they did stunt the growth of the madrasa community—from 1960-1971 only 482 new madrasas were established.\(^\text{42}\)

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto’s politically-expedient appeasement of the religious community paved the way for a madrasa population explosion during the rule of Gen. Zia ul-Haq.\(^\text{43}\) Gen. ul-Haq (1977-1988) would become the most important political figure in the growth of Pakistan’s madrasa community. In 1979 he established a “National Committee for Deeni Madaris” with a charter to transform madrasas into a legitimate branch of the Pakistani education system. The Committee conducted a national survey of the madrasa community and produced the *Halepota Report* with recommendations for improving the economic conditions of madrasas and introducing modernization programs while preserving their autonomy. Ironically, these reforms were rejected by the clergy, who had been empowered by Gen. ul-Haq’s “Islamization” policy.\(^\text{44}\) During the last year of his rule (1988), thousands of new madrasas were established.

By 1994, roughly 6000 madrasas were said to be registered under the *Societies Registration Act of 1860*. However, that year, then-Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto closed registration to new madrasas, hoping to


control and possibly decrease their numbers. Instead, this resulted in a huge proliferation of unregistered and unregulated madrasas under both Prime Ministers Bhutto and Sharif. When Musharraf took power in 1999, he re-opened the registration process and tried to reform the madrasa system. However, by that time, the madrasas were strongly resistant to any government intervention and declined to register.

Despite the above, Musharraf’s notion of “Moderate Islam” did bring a renewed interest in madrasa reforms. The first step toward reform came in August of 2001 with the Pakistan Madrasa Education Board Ordinance of 2001. The ordinance created:

(a) The Pakistan Madrasa Education Board (PMEB) – An advisory/oversight board meant to design and implement a standard curriculum which would include non-religious subjects such as math, science, Pakistani Studies, and English.

(b) Three “Model Madrasa Institutions” in Karachi, Sukkur, and Islamabad which would use the curriculum devised by the PMEB.

Resistance from the Ittihad Tanzeemat Madaris Deenia (ITMD), the private Madrasa Oversight Board representing the majority of Pakistan’s madrasas, contributed significantly to the failure of this ordinance.

In June, 2002, Musharraf proposed the Voluntary Registration and Regulation Ordinance of 2002. This ordinance provided that:

- No new madrasa would be established without permission of the relevant district authorities.

- Existing madrasas were to register on a voluntary basis with their respective chapters of the PMEB within six months of enactment.

- Preaching of sectarian hatred and militancy at madrasas was to be banned.

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• Registered madrasas were not to receive any grant, donation, or aid from any foreign sources; nor were they to admit foreign students or appoint teachers without a visa and a ‘no-objection' certificate from the interior ministry.

• Madrasas that did not comply would not be eligible for zakat, grants, or any other government donation, and could face other punitive measures.

While the ordinance received initial Cabinet approval, it was never effectively enforced. Its provisions did not repeal the Societies Registration Act of 1860, because doing so would have negated the registration of the roughly 6000 madrasas that had already been registered under that Act.

In 2002, President Musharraf also launched a five-year, $113 million plan to bring the teaching of “formal” (secular) subjects to 8000 madrasas. The primary objectives of this plan were:

• To teach the “formal” subjects of English, math, Pakistan Studies/social studies, and general science from the primary to secondary levels (4000 and 3000 madrasas respectively) and English, economics, Pakistan Studies, and computer science at the intermediate level (1000 madrasas) in order to bridge the gulf between madrasa education and the formal education systems.

• To open the lines of communication with the religious leaders who run the madrasas in order to facilitate formal education in addition to religious education in the madrasas.

• To provide training to madrasa teachers in formal subjects through workshops in different parts of the country.

• To provide direct and indirect incentives such as subsidized equipment, textbooks, salaries, and sports facilities.

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• To provide one-time grants to madrasas for the improvement of their libraries.

• To have examinations conducted by the relevant Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) at the Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels in the formal subjects.

• To make the education departments in the provinces responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of the madrasas.

However, no concrete action was taken until June 2002, when 115 madrassas were denied access to government assistance due to their alleged links to militancy. Musharraf set a December 31, 2002 deadline for such schools to register with the government or face closure. By 2004, the PMEB was exposed as a cosmetic measure by the government to address international concerns, its only noteworthy activity in three years of operation being to distribute questionnaires to local madrasas in order to obtain voluntary information.48 The Board’s three model government-run madrasas, whose curriculums were meant to inspire reform elsewhere, were and remain inadequately funded and supported.49 Today these models have the capacity to educate only a very limited number of students. Throughout this period, many madrasas continued to resist government interference, oversight, or resources.

In 2005, an amendment (Section 21) to the Societies Registration Act of 1860 was passed at the direction of President Musharraf, which set forth the following:

21. Registration of Deeni Madaris (Urdu plural of “religious school”):

(1) All Deeni Madaris, by whatsoever name called, shall not operate without getting themselves registered: Provided that the Deeni Madaris, which are established after the commencement of this Act, shall get themselves registered within one year of their establishment. A madrasa, having more than one campus, shall need only one registration.

(2) Every Deeni Madrasa shall submit an annual report of its educational activities to the Registrar.

(3) Every Deeni Madrasa shall have its financial accounts audited and submit a copy of its audit report to the Registrar.

(4) No Deeni Madrasa shall teach or publish any literature that promotes militancy or spreads sectarianism or religious hatred: Provided that nothing contained herein shall bar the comparative study of various religions or schools of thought or the study of any other subject covered by the Holy Quran, Sunnah, or the Islamic jurisprudence.

As this Amendment was applicable only in Islamabad, the provincial governments of Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh were made to issue similar ordinances.

In 2005, the government tried to engage the ITMD more formally as a negotiating partner. However, the ITMD strongly opposed the Section 21 amendment (cited above), particularly its requirements for financial auditing and its perceived restrictions on sectarian teaching. Then-Secretary of Religious Affairs Vakil Ahmed Khan recognized that the Ministry of Education was not trusted by the madrasas and was creating greater tension with the ITMD. He thus tried to work directly with the ITMD. The latter part of the amendment—“Provided that nothing contained herein shall bar the comparative study of various religions or schools of thought or the study of any other subject covered by the Holy Quran, Sunnah, or the Islamic jurisprudence”—was added to address the strong concern of the ITMD that the madrasas would be prevented from teaching the ideologies of their individual sects. It was only after this language was included that the ITMD consented to the new registration procedures. The ITMD also persuaded the government to change its plan for financial auditing to require only disclosure of their income and expenditures, without including their sources of income.

According to the US Congressional Research Service, as of January 2006, approximately 7000 madrasas had registered with the Pakistani

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authorities, while by January 2007 over 12,000 had registered. However, many of these madrasas were previously registered under the Societies Registration Act prior to the 2005 amendment and did not feel beholden to the new regulations.

In addition, the International Crisis Group (ICG) reported that the government’s program was unable to fund more than a handful of madrasas, and in mid-2006, the government took back the unspent funds it had transferred to provincial education departments for disbursement to the madrasas. In a June 2006 statement to the National Assembly, the Minister of Education announced that no further government money would be given to madrasas for curricular reforms and related supplies until the madrasa boards signed an agreement with the government to abide by certain terms. These included law enforcement’s vetting of madrasas applying for assistance and registration forms that required more operational information than most madrasas felt comfortable in revealing. The ICG argues that the Government of Pakistan’s madrasa reform initiatives have “become a victim of madrasa resistance and official ambivalence. This is best demonstrated in Sindh Province and its capital, Karachi. After three years of efforts by the Sindh Education Department to help ‘mainstream’ the province’s madrasas by including secular education in them, Islamabad asked provincial education authorities in mid-2006 to return more than $100 million in unspent federal money. . . In February 2007, this reform program is in shambles.”

Recently, the Pakistani government and the ITMD began to discuss a new madrasa reform package, including the development of a new Inter-Madrasa Board which would be created to oversee the “mainstreaming” of the madrasas in accordance with federal educational guidelines. However, at the time of this writing, these discussions have stalled, in part because of the political turmoil in Pakistan following the fall 2007 state of emergency, the February 2008 parliamentary elections, and the

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resignation of President Musharraf. ICRD has been working to facilitate an agreement between the ITMD and the Government of Pakistan on a final reform package that can be signed into law.
Chapter 3
ICRD’s Model and Philosophy of Madrasa Engagement

Why Engage Madrasas?

Many who support educational reform in Pakistan have advocated strengthening the public school system rather than devoting resources to enhancing the madrasas. Others also favor isolating or marginalizing them, or even closing them down entirely. Yet recent history has shown that trying to shut down the madrasas or pressuring them to adopt government reform has only led to their explosive growth.

ICRD’s strategy, on the other hand, is to inspire madrasa administrators to improve the institutions themselves by helping them see the benefits of teaching subjects like science and social studies, and by incorporating tolerance and human rights in their lessons.

Madrasas by and large are supported by their local communities because they are viewed as institutions that answer real human needs by providing education, food, and shelter to many children who would otherwise go without. Even parents who can afford to send their children to private or secular schools sometimes send them to madrasas to be schooled in Islamic principles. Some send them to both. Madrasas will not disappear any time soon, so it is imperative that their leaders be engaged in the effort to create a better future for all of Pakistan’s children.

With adequate enhancement, the madrasas can also play a powerful role in the global effort to defeat religious militancy and extremism. The hearts and minds of those who commit acts of terror in the name of Islam are best changed not by persuading them to be less pious Muslims, but by helping them understand the peaceful intent of their theology. In a context in which religious legitimacy trumps all, the best antidote for bad theology is good theology. As religious educators and community leaders, madrasa leaders are in a pivotal position to champion this effort.

Madrasa leaders inspire thousands in their Friday sermons in the mosques, and are educating impressionable young people who will
become the next generation of religious leaders. Because they occupy positions of respect and influence, madrasa leaders can play a critical role in discrediting violent interpretations of Islam and promoting peace. This is particularly true in the tribal regions, which have seen the greatest proliferation of violence.

Appealing to Islamic principles to discredit terrorism and engage those who see themselves as defenders of Islam in peaceful conflict resolution is a powerful tool. It strengthens, rather than threatens, their identity by appealing to their better nature.

Cultural Context and Implications for US Policy

ICRD’s experience and understanding of the historical and cultural context of the Indian subcontinent were critical elements in developing the model used for madrasa engagement. In Pakistani culture, and the madrasa environment in particular, religious leaders have warned Muslims not to trust the West. In recent years, many have come to view those warnings as valid and prophetic. Much of Pakistan’s population almost reflexively opposes the United States, feeling anger and alienation. A major failing of US policy has been the assumption that Pakistanis will agree with American perceptions of reality, and that it has been unnecessary to win Pakistanis’ hearts and minds through respect and honest cooperation.

The Pakistani government considers itself a US ally, and has made significant sacrifices to please the United States. But because madrasa leaders feel that certain elements in the US government oppose them, this alliance has contributed to a growing estrangement between the Pakistani government and its own madrasas in the last few decades. Madrasa leaders have come to feel that if they cooperate with the Pakistani government, they will ipso facto be cooperating with the United States.

This has led Pakistanis to view the US effort to fight terrorism with a large degree of skepticism. Because extremist groups have been able to manipulate local grievances in their attempts to recruit jihadists to fight the Pakistani government and US interests, it is urgent that America counter the popular perception that it does not live up to its own values and actually seeks to dominate Pakistan. Pakistani religious leaders, especially madrasa administrators, can play a vital role in minimizing this extremist recruitment.
Aid, Perceptions, and Cultural Challenges

Despite the best intentions of the United States, its aid to Pakistan has been largely limited to the Pakistani government and political elites. The delivery of much of this aid has been based on the expert advice of Pakistanis who have graduated from Western-style schools in Pakistan or abroad. In contrast, the majority of Pakistanis attend public schools or madrasas, where educational standards are often comparatively low. By and large, Pakistani elites rarely demonstrate an interest in reforming these schools, as their children either study in the West or in Western-style schools in Pakistan.

Most policymakers in the West interact with Western-educated Pakistanis, who are able to write reports and advise the policy community on how to engage the people of Pakistan, but who are themselves generally disengaged from the average Pakistani. Consequently, aid packages to Pakistan have tended to support elite agendas while barely addressing the people who need that aid the most. Unsurprisingly, the people who attend madrasas or public schools, or who are unable to attend school at all, tend to have the strongest anti-American attitudes. They perceive that their lifestyle and security have been compromised by Pakistanis who do not represent the majority of the population.

These perceptions pose real challenges to international security. When the US government urges military action in the tribal areas, seeks to close madrasas, and carries out situational military strikes on them, many Pakistanis conclude that America is actually fighting Islam. Similar differences in perception exist with regard to the Taliban, which is seen by many in Pakistan not as any real threat to national security, but more simply as a disgruntled group that is angry at America for having used them and then discarded them once the Soviets were evicted from Afghanistan. In simply isolating and demonizing those seen as extremists, the United States loses any leverage it might otherwise have in influencing their behavior.

The United States seeks to defeat the proponents of terrorism, but the defeat of one or more terrorist groups will not by itself solve the problems of Pakistan as long as the conditions that led to the development of extremism remain. What is needed are genuine reforms
from within that effectively address problems of poverty, illiteracy, and political discontent.

Despite concerns in the United States about the madrasas and their links to extremism, no one has seen fit to conduct a serious study to determine how many madrasas exist, the number of students enrolled, the motivation of the clerics who run the schools, or the curriculums that are being taught. Nor have the underlying causes for the strong demand for religious education in Pakistan been examined. In addition, because of a political agreement with former President Musharraf, the United States has until very recently refrained from allocating any of its educational aid to the madrasa system.

As the average Pakistani sees his or her quality of life deteriorating, billions of dollars in military and other forms of US aid are only sowing additional seeds of discontent. With the Musharraf agreement no longer in force, a small fraction of this aid could be used to engage and reform madrasas to good effect. Applied wisely, such support could ultimately empower madrasa students to become champions of change who could help bring peace and prosperity to their country.

With a serious cultural engagement program that responds to Pakistani perceptions of US policies and actions, the United States could demonstrate its interest in a serious, long-term partnership. ICRD’s madrasa project is representative of this kind of engagement.

**Basic Assumptions Underlying ICRD’s Madrasa Engagement Model**

The ICRD effort to enhance madrasa education and promote social change in Pakistan is based on the following assumptions:

- Muslim clerics play a critical role in both legitimizing and challenging violence and extremism.

- Social change will be more sustainable if the individuals and communities most affected assume a high degree of ownership in the content and implementation of new policies.

- Communication for social change should be empowering and “horizontal” (versus “top-down”), provide a voice for previously unheard members of the community, and favor local content and
ownership. Communities need to become agents of their own change.

- An emphasis on outcomes should address not only individual behavior but also the broader social norms, policies, and culture.

**How to Engage Madrasas—Methodological Principles of ICRD’s Madrasa Engagement Model**

In successfully engaging and enhancing Pakistan’s madrasas, it has been critically important to:

- **Develop personal relationships of trust with madrasa leaders and other respected local actors.** After decades of mistrust between religious leaders and political leaders, trust-based relationships are critical.

- **Demonstrate respect for madrasa leaders and a sensitivity to their cultural norms.** Perceptions of respect or disrespect are critical determinants in a madrasa leader’s willingness to trust and engage.

- **Show respect for religion and religious principles, and demonstrate a credible track record of engagement with the Muslim world.** A key reason ICRD was invited to work with Pakistan’s madrasas and eventually came to be trusted by madrasa leaders was its status as a faith-based organization that had developed a high degree of credibility in working with Muslim communities in Kashmir and Sudan.

- **Ground all activities in Islamic or other religious principles.** Madrasa leaders have responded positively when approached on

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55 Examples of key aspects of culture that differ from Pakistan to America are highlighted later in this chapter.
56 During the 21-year civil war between the Islamic North and the Christian/African Traditionalist South of Sudan, ICRD brought together high-level Sudanese Christian and Muslim leaders to work out inter-communal problems and to enhance inter-religious cooperation in reestablishing a culture of peace. This contributed to the eventual signing of the 2005 agreement that brought a close to the war. For more information, see [www.icrd.org](http://www.icrd.org).
a religious rather than a political basis, even when approached by non-Muslim actors such as American Christians.

- **Inspire madrasa leaders to expand their horizons by drawing upon Islamic history.** Invoking historic examples of tolerant behavior toward other religions, especially in Moorish Spain, has encouraged madrasa leaders to reflect on how they can practice the peaceful principles of Islam and provide improved moral guidance to their students and communities.

- **Do not characterize the initiatives as “reform” but rather as “enhancement.”** Madrasa leaders often exhibit a reactionary resistance to the word “reform,” which can convey a pejorative image with respect to their current practices and suggest a need for foreign models to induce needed change.

- **Encourage madrasa leaders to take significant ownership of the change process, thereby enabling them to view the initiative as their own, rather than something imposed from the outside.** ICRD’s training programs have focused on empowering madrasa administrators to become active change agents themselves, rather than lecturing them on what they should do.

- **Be inclusive.** ICRD’s programs have engaged madrasa leaders from each of the sponsoring sects and from all four provinces, as well as the northern tribal areas.

- **Build consensus.** ICRD has worked to build consensus among the various madrasa groups and other stakeholders on how the madrasa system might be improved. This consensus has been key to alleviating suspicion and preventing sabotage by others who haven’t been engaged.

- **Engage multiple stakeholders at various levels of society.** ICRD’s program has engaged such diverse actors as madrasa teachers and administrators at the grassroots level; the ITMD Madrasa Oversight Board; Pakistani government officials at the provincial and national levels; the media; the US government; and a number of other religious, civil society, and business leaders.

- **Partner with appropriate indigenous actors and organizations.** ICRD began its work in Pakistan at the invitation of a respected
indigenous Islamic think tank with strong ties to the madrasa community. It has since partnered with a variety of indigenous madrasas, educational organizations, and religious leaders. Ownership develops when partners fully understand the benefits of participation and are willing to play a key role in formulating and implementing the project.

- **Support transparency.** Transparency is critical to building trust and maintaining security. During one training workshop, for example, some madrasa leaders expressed suspicion at the placement of ICRD’s headquarters in Washington, DC, and accused ICRD of working with the US government through the Departments of Defense and State. Rather than becoming defensive, the ICRD representative acknowledged that the organization has, on various occasions, held discussions with US government agencies. The representative subsequently opened his laptop and pulled up a presentation he had delivered to US government audiences. The madrasa leaders were impressed that ICRD was able to present such issues to US government officials, and that the officials were willing to listen. They began to see the merits of such meetings and encouraged ICRD to conduct more briefings with the US government that would convey their own viewpoints back to Washington. Ultimately, ICRD’s transparency about its actions increased the madrasa leaders’ trust in the organization.

- **Honor identity.** Denigrating or demeaning the religious or cultural nature of the madrasas, which already feel threatened and looked down upon both by the Pakistani elite and the US government, would only increase their sense of being under attack.

- **Practice active listening and empathy.** Madrasa leaders’ deep-seated feelings of historical oppression and suffering must be openly acknowledged and addressed in order for them to feel sufficiently empowered to move forward.

- **Create a safe and nurturing environment in which madrasa leaders can explore the idea of embracing change without feeling undue pressure from others or any fear of losing face.**
Motivate involved madrasa leaders to engage others through their own outreach. In ICRD’s experiences in Pakistan, outreach by madrasa leaders has consistently occurred at the leaders’ own initiative (without any pressure from ICRD), and has been more credible and effective as a result.

After engaging with the madrasas, sustain that engagement by remaining involved; do not abandon them or raise expectations that cannot be met. Once they have bought into the concept and process of change, madrasa leaders often become passionate about improving the education at their schools. However, if engagement and support do not continue, this passion can easily turn to bitterness and resentment.

Even more important than resources is the will to create social change. To sustain this change, multiple levels of society must be systematically engaged. The diagram below illustrates the various levels of this engagement.

**Figure 1: Levels of Engagement to Sustain Madrasa Reform**
Sensitivity to cultural nuances and context is particularly important for any madrasa enhancement effort.

Most US initiatives are grounded in Western-centric values. If not culturally attuned, Western efforts to reform, change, enhance, or enlighten can carry a heavy price of resentment. Assuming that one’s own ways are normal, correct, and natural can convey the impression that the other culture in question is either deviant or wrong. Acting on one’s own values of social mobility, individual rights, and getting the job done can create roadblocks in shifting the necessary ownership to indigenous cultures for self-development and reform.

Differences in cultural attitudes toward constructs such as time, communication, learning, and “face-saving” can lead to misunderstandings and consequent failure. The table below highlights some of these differences.

**Table 1: Differences in Key Cultural Assumptions between Pakistanis and Americans**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Assumption</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>America</th>
<th>Challenges for Madrasa Engagement Efforts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Time is holistic. One cannot control time. <em>Inshallah</em> (if God wills it) is a common phrase to indicate lack of human control.</td>
<td>Time is linear. Time can and should be controlled and managed. <em>Don’t waste my time. Time is money.</em></td>
<td>While Americans tend to expect quick, sequential, and tangible results, Pakistanis (both religious and secular) view this effort as a long-term process of change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Indirect. High-context: Meaning is inferred from the context of the communication rather than</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Americans may expect quick consensus and direct follow-through (for example, on matters such as condemning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Orientation</td>
<td>Lecture-style.</td>
<td>Interactive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rote memorization.</td>
<td>Developmentally-focused.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical.</td>
<td>Participatory.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict obedience.</td>
<td>Reflective.</td>
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While American educational programs tend to encourage self-expression, participation, and self-directive learning, Pakistanis expect to be directed by the teacher/trainer and are often uncomfortable with interactive and group-centered learning.

<table>
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<th>Emphasis on face-saving.</th>
<th>Emphasis on honesty through direct expression.</th>
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<td>“Shame” culture.</td>
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concerned with “saving face” (i.e. preserving respect and identity), both of self and others. This can lead to a reactionary “face-saving” response to perceived criticism.

The Need for Transformational Engagement

At the heart of madrasa enhancement is the challenge of understanding differing worldviews and ensuring that conflicting viewpoints do not result in aggression. The foundation of every culture is based on its worldviews and understanding of the nature of civilization, and the manner in which this understanding is transmitted to the next generation57. The worldviews of madrasa leaders have often been shaped by an environment where historical grievances create resentment and hostility toward others, thus stifling alternative voices of innovation, modernity, tolerance, and change from within. Thus, each madrasa generation tends to adopt the worldview of the previous generation. These worldviews are often extremely difficult to change.

Worldview transformation requires patience, persistence, holistic thinking, and an integrative approach. The ways that societies view and interact with the world typically fall into one of three categories: (1) authoritative—force is used to ensure compliance with the dominant viewpoint or system, (2) identity-based—people exclusively protect their own identity group against perceived outside threats, or (3) transformational—rights, opportunities, and consciousness exist to enable people to transform their own lives and societies inclusively, without forcing their views on others.

Because religions generally seek to transform the human consciousness, the transformational approach should come naturally to a religious leader. Yet in Pakistan today, the identity-based view is clearly dominant. The strong concerns of individuals, groups, and particularly madrasas with regard to protecting their particular religious, national,

and ethnic identities have led to an “us vs. them” mentality, social and political power struggles, and sectarian conflict. The challenge is thus to create a climate of genuine trust, respect, inclusiveness, and cooperation that will support the engagement of religious leaders in effecting transformational social change.

Figure 2: Evolution of Societal Approaches to Interactions with the Other

As is described in the following chapters, ICRD has taken a transformational approach to madrasa engagement by working to create and support change from within. By providing madrasa leaders with the space and skills to discuss with their colleagues the issues that concern them most (e.g. social injustice, political corruption, social immorality, educating disadvantaged children), ICRD has helped them discover how Islam can be used transformationally to address these issues peacefully.

ICRD’s Model for Madrasa Enhancement

Guided by the foregoing principles, ICRD developed the Pakistan Madrasa Project to facilitate madrasa enhancement. The following chart summarizes the principal components of this madrasa enhancement
model. It describes a dynamic and interactive process which begins with a catalyst (in this case, ICRD), which in turn leads to reflection and dialogue within the madrasa community, “buy-in” by the madrasa leaders to the concept and process of positive change, and initiative and collective action on the part of the madrasas to facilitate educational enhancement, eventually in partnership with other segments of society.
The following chapters describe how ICRD uses this model in progressing toward each of these goals:

Goal 1: To expand the curriculums of the madrasas to include the social and scientific disciplines, with a particular emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights.

Goal 2: To inspire changes in pedagogy to support the development of critical thinking skills among the students.

Goal 3: To equip newly-trained teachers with the skills to train other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders in the above areas.
Chapter 4

Madrasa Training Workshops

The central component of ICRD’s Pakistan Madrasa Project is its system of madrasa teacher training workshops, which provide an entry point and means of sustained engagement with the madrasas, while developing their capacity for enhancement. These workshops:

- Build relationships with various stakeholders,
- Create buy-in, confidence, and ownership in the enhancement process by removing barriers, clarifying misperceptions, and sustaining engagement,
- Build consensus on the most pressing issues,
- Provide madrasa leaders with a safe space (often for the first time in their lives) to discuss Islamic principles of peace, coexistence, human rights, and education with leaders of other sects,
- Equip madrasa leaders with the knowledge and skills to enhance their educational and pedagogical practices and to integrate principles of religious tolerance, human rights, and peace and conflict resolution into their lessons, and
- Link the participants to sustained engagement through follow-on activities.

The training approach is built on the following principles:

- **Training is an interactive process of action-reflection**, in which the madrasa leaders are encouraged to participate actively and experientially, to question and reflect on deeply-held biases and assumptions, and to apply the lessons learned in their schools and communities.

- **Training is a transforming process** which enables diverse members of Pakistani society to interact in a safe
environment, creating synergies and collaboration among conflicting parties.

✓ Training is a long-term process; long-term engagement is critical to sustain the madrasas’ commitment to continuous development.

A key objective of the workshops is to create “buy-in” among leaders of the madrasa community, inspiring them to believe in the enhancement process and to take ownership of it. ICRD’s model for establishing buy-in and facilitating subsequent change focuses on developing the following components:

- Awareness of the need for change
- Desire to participate in and support the change
- Knowledge about how to change (e.g. necessary skills and information)
- Ability to implement new skills and behaviors to facilitate change (e.g. removing obstacles to enacting new behaviors)
- Reinforcement to keep the change in place
These workshops acquaint madrasa administrators and senior faculty with the importance of the scientific and social disciplines and with issues of religious tolerance and human rights, emphasize interactive pedagogical techniques, teach conflict resolution and problem-solving skills, and facilitate dialogue and discussion among madrasa leaders in addition to critical analysis. ICRD’s approach encourages madrasa leaders to reflect on their own values and goals and to explore ways they can work together to live up to the principles of Islam and to provide improved moral guidance for their students and communities.

In addition to building practical skills, a key goal of the training programs is to stimulate curiosity and a love of learning within the madrasa environment, among both teachers and students. In an environment where many madrasa leaders still believe that memorization of the Qur’an and hadith are sufficient for education and that wider
knowledge might “corrupt” the students, it is necessary to foster a desire and enthusiasm for a wider area of learning, in accordance with the Islamic principle that a Muslim should seek knowledge wherever it may be found.

Figure 2 describes key principles of the strategic training approach employed in the workshops.
Guaranteeing PRINCIPLES
Confidentiality, respect, listening, openness, agreeing to disagree

COMMITMENT TO UNDERSTAND
Oneself, one’s faith, one’s culture, and other faiths and cultures

Prejudices can only be effectively undermined through the constant discipline of questioning one’s emotional response to differences and one’s ability to reflect upon one’s own culture and religion. The key to a constructive dialogue with others is the ability to first reflect upon how one has been affected by one’s own culture and religion.

Every human being finds it difficult to sustain contradictions and live with them. Instinctively, we either try to destroy what is opposed to our understanding of truth, or we deny its existence. It takes a high degree of maturity to let opposites co-exist without pretending that they can be made compatible.
Pilot Program

When ICRD began planning its initial pilot training workshop in 2004 under the leadership of Azhar Hussain, ICRD’s Vice President for Preventive Diplomacy, there were many significant challenges. Included among these were the madrasas’ resistance to the idea of reform, their negative association of modernization with secularization and Westernization, their particular distrust of America and American organizations, and their general distrust of the “outside world.”

A first step in overcoming such obstacles was to partner with an indigenous Pakistani organization with respected ties to the madrasa community. The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), an Islamic think tank in Islamabad, became ICRD’s first indigenous partner. IPS is a nongovernmental organization that contributes to policy development at the national, regional, and international level and has been conducting research on madrasas for more than 20 years. IPS has a well-established credibility in the madrasa community. It was IPS that first proposed a partnership with ICRD to develop training programs for madrasa teachers and administrators.

The first pilot program conducted in February 2004 was a two-week workshop in Islamabad on “Islam and Contemporary Thought” for madrasa leaders from each of the five sects that sponsor madrasas. At first, there was great skepticism about the program on the part of the madrasa leaders. Many attended only because they had been directly invited by a respected elder and said they had planned to stay only for the first day or two. However, not only did all of the madrasa leaders stay for the full two-week course, but many of them requested further training, and invited ICRD to conduct trainings in their respective madrasas.

Formal Engagement Effort

Based on the positive feedback from the pilot program, ICRD began to formally engage. The need for an initial consensus from the major stakeholders—policymakers, academicians, and the media—that there was a willingness among madrasa leaders to begin teaching contemporary subjects was recognized and obtained early-on. Five policy seminars were subsequently held to attract these audiences, with each seminar attended by prominent madrasa leaders from the earlier
fourteen-day pilot workshop. These seminars created increased awareness and the tacit approval of the major stakeholders for engaging in the madrasa enhancement effort that was to be initiated.

ICRD and IPS subsequently conducted five ten-day workshops for madrasa leaders from all five sects and recruited them from all major geographic areas of Pakistan. The goal was to engage a diverse a mix of participants in order to expand awareness and to reduce the chances that any single ethnic or sectarian group would attack another for trying to become “Western” or “modern”. ICRD played a low-key role during these early programs, as any overt notion of American involvement in madrasa enhancement would have embarrassed our partner and potentially derailed the effort.

However, after a year into the process, ICRD began to receive requests for training from leaders of the Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith sects—a significant development in light of the fact that these two groups are considered to be the “hardest-line” sects in Pakistan. ICRD developed special training workshops on separate tracks for leaders of these two sects. Additionally, ICRD conducted Master Trainer workshops to equip earlier workshop graduates with the skills to train other madrasa leaders. These Master Trainers then went on to conduct their own one-day workshops for previously uninvolved madrasa leaders.

Throughout the process, ICRD collaborated with other Pakistani educational trainers to facilitate the training programs, including university professors and organizations such as the Teachers' Development Centre in Karachi.

A Typical ICRD Madrasa Training Workshop

ICRD workshops are designed to give participants the opportunity for extended interaction. For this reason, all participants are lodged in a single location. Islamic prayer times are posted, and there is a space for participants to pray in one group. The agenda and expectations of the workshop are communicated to the participants prior to their arrival.

The workshop begins with an opening activity in which participants are asked to interview one another and then introduce each other to the group. All are asked to share one expectation and one concern that they
have about the workshop. Sessions on the workshop objectives and process elicit ground rules that all participants agree to observe.

Each session includes time for processing, reflection, and discussion. At the close of each day, participants gather to process the day’s activities and discuss the best ways to implement desired change and to respond to lingering questions. The participants focus on the “art of possible” and on coming up with concrete solutions to the challenges they have identified.

**Overcoming Barriers to Change**

In the early stages of the workshops, it is critical to address the fears and anxiety that many madrasa leaders feel about change. In addition to fearing secularization and Westernization, teachers who do not have the skills to teach subjects like math and science fear that they will become irrelevant and lose their jobs if these subjects are added to the curriculum.

*One madrasa leader voiced the concerns of many: “The government wants us to leave our jobs. Where are we going to go? Why wouldn’t I want to teach our kids science? But what will happen to my three daughters if I lose my job?”*

Many madrasa teachers are also afraid that they might lose face and be seen as incompetent by their students if they are unable to answer students’ questions in the course of implementing new techniques or courses.

Much of what is regarded as madrasa intransigence and rejection of change is often largely based on fear, exacerbated by the fact that few alternatives have been offered to the madrasa leaders up to this point. A key principle of ICRD’s model is to seek to understand and engage this mindset, not condemn it. In order to promote curriculum change, it is crucial to first create a sense of security for the madrasa leaders, to get beneath their fears and help them to realize that they can be overcome. The objective is to create a safe and nurturing environment where they can explore the idea of embracing change without feeling pressured or fearing a loss of face.
One challenge that emerged early in the trainings was the madrasa participants’ resentment that they are being pressured to change, while Pakistan’s public schools also suffer from many deficiencies. The ICRD trainer acknowledged the feelings of the madrasa teachers and responded, “Yes, I agree that the public and other schools also need much change, and I would love to work toward this. However, I don’t have the resources to work in this area, and our mission is to work with you. Do you want to wait until the public and other schools change, and then you can implement changes after that?” When responded to in this fashion, the madrasa leaders realized that waiting for others to take the first step would actually be postponing benefits to themselves, and said they wanted to begin the process of change within the madrasa environment.

Other barriers to change include self-isolation, the lack of opportunity for personal development, and the need to constantly deal with external criticism that consumes much of one’s energy. For madrasa teachers there is very little opportunity for promotion or employment elsewhere. The madrasa system provides few incentives for a teacher to take an active role in his professional development. These factors combine to detract from a madrasa teacher’s motivation to improve and desire for learning. Hence, a large part of this work involves unlearning dysfunctional behavior and overcoming barriers to alternative ways of looking at the world.

ICRD has been able to overcome resistance among madrasa leaders by adapting each workshop, in both content and process, to the participants, and by asking the madrasa leaders themselves what issues are of greatest importance to them. This stands in stark contrast to other approaches that start by telling the madrasas what their problems are and how they must change to resolve them. Such an approach creates additional defensiveness among the madrasa leaders and a tendency to deny that any problems exist. ICRD, on the other hand, facilitates discussion among the madrasa leaders about issues that are important to them. In the course of doing so, madrasa leaders themselves begin to admit to the existence of problems and to ask for assistance in addressing them.
Honoring Islamic Achievements and Tradition

Early on in the workshop, the accomplishments of past Islamic civilizations in areas of educational achievement, promotion of human rights, and religious tolerance are emphasized and celebrated. As described earlier, there is a rich history of scientific and mathematical breakthroughs that have originated from the Islamic world, without which much of the technology that the West and other societies now take for granted would not have been possible. The educational achievements of the madrasas in the Middle Ages (when Islam was at its peak) are explored, with facilitators emphasizing achievements in the physical and social sciences and in the early promotion of tolerance and coexistence.

Connecting the madrasa teachers to their past and instilling in them a sense of pride about the work of past Islamic scholars motivates them to strive for similar achievement. Participants share how painful it is to be looked down upon as extremist, unsophisticated religious mullahs by the international community, and worse, by the elite of Pakistan. As they internalize the historic accomplishments of earlier madrasas, however, they begin believing that perhaps they can do better through curriculum and pedagogical change. Exploration, reflection, and modification become the name of the game.

In discussing early Islamic educational systems, participants began to grasp that modernity and the teaching of contemporary subjects have long been a part of Muslim history and tradition. Discussions on this subject typically continue through dinner and late into the night. As the current failures of educational systems in Islamic countries are discussed, the madrasa leaders start recognizing the challenges of their own system and express a strong desire to address them.

Presentations by respected Islamic scholars provide greater legitimacy to the process of change. During one workshop, for example, a scholar of India’s Muslim history gave an overview of the madrasas’ history on the subcontinent, noting the many changes in curriculum over time and describing the past efforts to update and reform the system from within.

In promoting openness to change and to new ideas, the workshops explore the concept of “ijtihad” (“reinterpretation”) in Islam. This term refers to the periodic reevaluation of how one’s religious values should
inform one’s daily walk in light of major changes in the external environment. Similarly, workshop leaders discuss how Western and Islamic thought have drawn upon one another over time, with an emphasis on the benefits of this cross-fertilization.

In discussing these topics, the madrasa leaders usually come to conclude that Islam requires one to gain knowledge from any source, wherever it may be, and that expanding their education is actually a way of embracing rather than violating their tradition. By the end of this session, most participants are asking for the teachers and resources that would enable them to teach contemporary courses in their madrasas.

**Promoting Tolerance and Appreciation of Others**

The next session focuses on promoting tolerance for others and appreciating different points of view. After a short lecture on Islamic teachings on tolerance, experiential activities are conducted that enable participants to become aware of their own personal biases and to explore the various means for overcoming them. The final stage of development depicts the condition of having moved beyond bias and having gained a true appreciation for others.

Participants explore the ongoing debate among Muslim religious leaders with regard to which verses in the Qur’an should be emphasized in madrasa teaching. Great emphasis is placed on the many Qur’anic verses that emphasize tolerance and peaceful coexistence and on quotations such as the following to demonstrate how the selective teaching of texts can promote either tolerance or hatred:

*A man told his grandson: "A terrible fight is going on inside me - a fight between two wolves. One is evil, and represents hate, anger, arrogance, intolerance, and superiority. The other is good, and represents joy, peace, love, tolerance, understanding, humility, kindness, empathy, generosity, and compassion. This same fight is going on inside you, inside every other person too." The grandson then asked: "Which wolf will win?" The old man replied simply: "The one you feed." (Anonymous)*

Participants are asked to share their feelings about this quotation. The activity is designed to elicit acknowledgement that the content and
method of one’s teaching can promote tolerance or intolerance. Most of the madrasa leaders share their belief that Islamic teachings can engender great personal commitment and passion, expressed as caring, love, respect, and support for others, and that these teachings can motivate believers to dedicate their lives to the alleviation of suffering and need. However, they also agree that such teachings can be used to motivate people to dislike followers of other faiths. The methods by which intolerance can be taught are examined, as are the ways in which biases can be formed.

The most important first step in overcoming social and institutional bias involves raising self-awareness about one’s own intolerant attitudes and behavior. A handout is distributed that provides writings by various Muslim authors, such as the below:

- “Islam orders its adherents not only to tolerate the opinions and creeds of others, but also to have a firm belief in the orthodox principles of all heavenly religions. A Muslim who disbelieves the other apostles (such as Jesus or Moses) is not a true Muslim. Islam forbids the ill treatment of the followers of other religions and regards it as sinful to do them harm.”
- "Not only that the Muslim history is so remarkably free of the inquisitions, persecutions, witch hunts, and holocausts that tarnish history of other civilizations, it protected its minorities from persecution by others as well. It protected Jews from Christians and Eastern Christians from Roman Catholics. In Spain under the Umayyads and in Baghdad under the Abbasid Khalifahs, Christians and Jews enjoyed a freedom of religion that they did not allow each other or anyone else."
- "...Exemplary tolerance is built into Islamic teachings. The entire message of Islam is that this life is a test and we have the option of choosing the path to hell or to heaven. Messengers were sent to inform about the choices and to warn about the consequences. They were not sent to forcibly put the people on the right path. The job of the Muslims is the same. They must deliver the message of Islam to the humanity as they have received it. They are neither to change it to make it attractive, nor to coerce others to accept it. In addition, the results in the hereafter will depend upon faith. For all good acts are
meaningless in the absence of the proper faith. And faith is an affair of the heart. It simply cannot be imposed."

(Khalid Baig, "On religious tolerance," at: http://www.youngmuslims.ca/)

The problem of developing inner biases is then explored along with the stages of becoming conscious of one’s own prejudices. After the following handout is passed out, each participant is asked to identify, reflect upon, and then write a paragraph about the stage of consciousness at which he feels he is functioning. Participants then discuss their responses in small groups, after which each group presents the stage at which they think the madrasa as an institution is functioning.
Developmental Stages of Consciousness

- **Denial**: In this stage, a person denies that religious and cultural differences exist. This denial takes the form of believing that: “If they only accept our way of life and religious beliefs, they will be ‘good people’. Other than that, they should be avoided or are not to be trusted. If they force us to live with them, then we should eliminate them.”

- **Defense**: Here a person or community acknowledges the existence of differences in religious groups, but because these differences are threatening to his reality and sense of self, the individual constructs defenses against those differences. This stage operates at a level where negative stereotyping of other religions and the overt superiority of one’s own are promoted. This stage could lead to aggressive measures against other religions or cultures with very little provocation.

- **Tolerance and Acceptance**: Other religious and cultural groups are acknowledged, and there is an attempt to be inclusive toward these groups. This stage is “tricky”, since it can also be called a **compliance** stage, where people are tolerating each other because of social pressures, legal requirements, or benefits gained from these groups by conditionally accepting or tolerating them. At this stage, individuals or groups value “other religious or cultural groups” without evaluating the differences as positive or negative.

- **Respect**: At this stage, an individual is able to communicate effectively with various religious leaders and organizations. He is able to see the personal benefits in striving to understand better the perspectives of others.

- **Appreciation**: At this stage, an individual values a variety of religions and cultures, and strives to interact and to find ways to bridge gaps with others for the betterment of humanity. Such individuals are constantly defining and reflecting upon their own religious and cultural identity. Individuals in this stage evaluate their behaviors in order to be more empathetic to others.
The workshop activity then moves to a much higher level of risk in which each stage is put on a flip chart and the participants are split into five groups, with each group assigned to one of the stages. The participants are then asked to respond to hypothetical scenarios (given them by the facilitators) as though they were at that particular stage of development.

Example of Scenario Responses:

- President Bush just made a comment about (XXX). Please respond according to your stage of consciousness.

- **Denial Stage:** Group One writes on the flip chart: “The enemy leader is bent on destroying us . . . We now know that Americans should be destroyed wherever they are, and if we don’t destroy them they will show up in our country and take our way of life . . . Whoever supports America, we will destroy him too . . . I hope you are hearing this, Musharraf.”

- **Defense Stage:** Group Two writes: “We are now prepared to defend ourselves from these forces of America, as the enemy of Islam has declared war on us . . . We would never hurt anyone, but now is the time for us to defend ourselves from these infidels . . .”

- **Acceptance Stage:** Group Three: “We must be prepared for anything, but we must not lose our anger as these American policies are our worst enemy . . . But American people should rise against their evil government . . . They are decent people, how can they allow their president to say such a thing? Let us pray that Americans can come to their senses before it is too late for all of us.”

- **Respect Stage:** Group Four: “We must not react harshly for the actions of a few people. Christians and Westerners are our friends. We must take action that will not hurt us or them, but we must take action so this does not happen again. *Let us demand from our media and government that they make it clear to America that it is wrong . . .”*

- **Appreciation Stage:** Group Six: “We must pray and fast as this is a very difficult time. Americans are angry about 9/11, and we have to give them some time to see things in
perspective. I am not sure how we would act if we had to go through what they are going through. Let us see if we should involve the American Embassy in responding to this statement. We should support our fellow humans in this time of difficulty. We need to talk to them more often . . .”

Each group is rotated to the next flip chart and given a new scenario so that each group can work experientially with each of the stages. The madrasa participants generally enjoy this activity, as they get to role-play a larger societal dynamic in Pakistan. When processing this activity, the facilitator takes extra time to explore the nuances of the responses from the participants. At this stage of the workshop, participants generally acknowledge that many religious leaders and madrasas are still functioning at the first two stages, while some are at the third or fourth stages. The rest of the day is spent discussing how to move to the Respect and Appreciation stages. Some of the questions that are used as action planning tools for implementing what has been learned include:

- What should we do about this issue of taking madrasa and religious leaders to the next level of consciousness?
- What can we do individually and as a group to improve relationships among ourselves and with the international community?
- Of all the ideas shared, which two or three seem most practical and implementable for us as a group?
- What is our plan for implementing these ideas, and who will volunteer to do what?
- At what stage is Pakistani society? If religious leaders function in at least the Respect Stage, will that help Pakistani society? How?

This activity not only enables the participants to reflect on the current spectrum of behaviors that exist within the madrasa environment, but to experience how word choice, tone, and personal attitude can transmit either hope or incitement. It enables participants to develop a vision and model for appropriate behavior for religious leaders.
Exploring Identity and Teaching Conflict Resolution Skills

By the third day, the participants are ready to delve into issues of “identity”. After a short lecture about identity, an attempt is made to increase their awareness about different identities that they themselves hold (e.g. father, brother, husband, teacher, ethnic representative, religious leader, Sunni, Shia, etc.). Participants are then asked to identify their most important identity. Most choose their religious sect. Participants then share within their groups how they feel when that identity is appreciated and how they feel or would feel if that identity were attacked. What would they do? How would they respond?

The identity activities last for almost a full day as they get to the heart of ICRD’s mission, which is to engage religion and religious leaders in resolving identity-based conflicts. When the participants present their responses to the above questions, it is clear that the feeling that one’s religious identity is being threatened produces a type of “do or die” mental state. Participants usually share their willingness to sacrifice themselves, and their generations, because they feel that without their religious identity there is nothing left that has any meaning.

“If I lose who I am and what I believe, then there is nothing else left to live for,” said one madrasa leader. Another stated: “It is our duty to protect Islam, and we will do whatever it takes to protect it . . . We may be poor, and do not have weapons like the ones Americans have, but we have our tradition and iman (faith); if they take this away then there is no negotiation but jihad.”

Many participants recite Qur’anic verses to justify their stance; others cite hadith and the Prophet’s companions, who waged jihad to protect Islam. They discuss deeply-sensitive issues such as the perception that the Pakistani government wants to transform madrasas into secular institutions, the Danish cartoons, President Bush’s statement about a “crusade”, Israel, and 9/11, which they see as evidence of a conspiracy to take over Muslim countries like Iraq (for oil) and Pakistan (for nuclear power). It is clear that these madrasa leaders feel their religious identity is threatened and have generalized this to the perceived larger Muslim struggle—that of Islamic identity under threat.
Because madrasa leaders see their “opponents” as immoral in addition to feeling threatened by them, conflicts that arise from this type of perceived identity threat are particularly difficult to resolve. When the madrasa leaders feel threatened, they express a loss of respect and dignity: “They want to take away the most meaningful aspect of our lives . . . What are we to do but fight for our rights?” Hence, the madrasas’ reactive and aggressive response to past attempts at reform. Through this and other activities, the fundamental issue begins to come to the surface—the religious leaders’ worldview.

Here, the madrasa leaders are provided with a handout that defines identity as follows:

“Conflicts occur when a person or a group feels that his or her sense of self . . . is threatened, or denied legitimacy or respect. One's sense of self is so fundamental and so important, to not only one’s self-esteem but also to how one interprets the rest of the world, that any threat to identity is likely to produce a strong response. Typically, this response is both aggressive and defensive, and can escalate quickly into an intractable conflict . . . Identity conflicts can be especially difficult to resolve. The opponent is often viewed as evil—even nonhuman—and their views and feelings not worthy of attention. In addition, sitting down with the opponent can be seen as a threat to one's own identity, so even beginning efforts at reconciliation can be extremely difficult. Nevertheless, identity conflicts can be moderated, or even reconciled if the parties want such an outcome and are willing to work for it over a long period of time.” (www.BeyondIntractability.com)

Participants are then asked to write a response to the questions on the following handout:

Handout

Please write a short response to the statements below. Be specific to your environment (Pakistani society, madrasa environment, etc).
Identity-based Conflicts: For the conflict to occur, the opponents must have a sense of collective identity about themselves and about their adversary. Each side is convinced that the fight is between “us” and “them”. The person is often subsumed into non-negotiable aspects of identity (ethnicity or religion), thus making the conflict intractable…

1. Please provide your insights:
   What are some issues/characteristics related to religious identity that lead to intractability? You can simply create a list.

2. Many scholars and theorists believe that identity-based conflict often leads to intractable (perpetual) conflicts. This can happen because the person is wholly focused on fear of losing his/her self-worth (religion, ethnicity, tradition, etc.) and for that reason cannot negotiate with the opponent. Please write a statement reflecting on the society you live in and what role religious leaders play in reducing such conflicts. Please provide evidence from Islamic teachings.

3. Write three actions you will take to learn more about identity and its impact on madrasas and their teaching methodology. Please be prepared to share the response from this question at the evening discussion.

In the evening discussion, all participants share their written responses to the third question. Often participants indicate that they had never realized that their religious identity has impacted them in such inflexible ways—they had always thought they were open to resolution as long as others stopped their “covert plans to undermine our religion.”

In further small group discussions and presentations to the larger group, a realization emerges that there may in fact be no covert plan to destroy Islam, and that as religious leaders, they have to start dealing with opponents through exposure, engagement, negotiation, and dialogue. Most of the participants express a commitment to resolving any and all conflicts they may have. Below are a few examples of views expressed in the group presentations:

1. “We were shocked to discover that we have been teaching Islam all day for the last 10-20 years and missed the point
that it is calling Muslims to live, work, and share life with others who are different from us. We have been fighting to be left alone and live in isolation . . . No wonder people are so suspicious of madrasas, because we are convinced that they are there to destroy our way of life.”

2. “We think that madrasa leaders should develop a mechanism of exchange with academicians, scholars, politicians, and businesspeople. Our group thinks madrasas need to open the door for all our society to interact with us. We also have to reach out to other madrasas because Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith and others do not interact with each other . . . and that keeps the conflict alive.”

3. “As leaders and teachers, we are so shocked to learn that our teaching methods can promote fear of losing our way of life and Islam . . . We keep thinking of these grand conspiracies about the others . . . What we need to do is build more confidence and trust in our students so they can trust the world they live in instead of rebelling against it. But we don’t even know how to do that anymore . . . We are asking you to give us more training in those kinds of skills.”

These discussions help participants become more aware of how their actions affect others, and illustrate how madrasa leaders as teachers can shape the attitudes of their students when they respect or, conversely, denigrate the identity of others.

Another key component of this approach involves asking the madrasa leaders to reflect on the core Islamic values of peace and tolerance, and the ways these values were upheld when Islam was at its peak a thousand years earlier. Workshop leaders emphasize the ways in which Muslims and non-Muslims have historically lived together in peace, and cooperated in governance and education, in Muslim-ruled societies.

Workshop sessions have also explored concepts such as the fundamentals of conflict, active listening, communication, mediation,
and negotiation. These sessions help the participants develop conflict resolution skills that they can apply in their own communities and schools.

**Developing Awareness and Integration of Human Rights**

Another major component of the training workshops is a discussion of human rights principles and how they can be integrated into the madrasa curriculum. In addition to facilitating dialogue about the basis for promoting human rights in Islamic law, the workshops incorporate elements of “reverse psychology” to stimulate reflection on whether Islamic principles of human rights are currently being upheld.

*On certain occasions, an ICRD trainer who is a practicing Muslim of Pakistani descent has said to the madrasa participants, “I don’t really see where the Qur’an speaks about giving rights to women. Does Islam really support women’s rights?” The participants then typically become animated and begin to give numerous examples of Islamic teachings that promote and protect the rights of women, filling up almost an entire flip chart with these teachings. Following this, the trainer then asks them, “Now, how many of these rights are actually granted and protected in your society today? And more importantly, how much time do madrasas spend teaching these rights?” The participants then come to realize the wide discrepancy between Islamic teachings about women’s rights and the degree to which those rights actually exist in their society.*

This approach promotes human rights not from a foreign viewpoint, or from the perspective that Islam must change in order to support human rights, but rather from the view that promoting human rights in one’s classroom is strongly supported by and consistent with the true teachings of Islam.
Enhancing Teaching Methodology, Pedagogical Skills, and Foundational Knowledge

The workshop enters one of its most crucial stages when the focus shifts to methodology and equipping the participants with enhanced pedagogical skills and educational knowledge. The participants then begin to explore how they can integrate concepts of curriculum expansion, tolerance, pluralism, identity, conflict resolution, and human rights learned thus far into their teaching methodology and impart these principles to their students.

A significant touchstone in this process involves examining the developmental stages of children. Participants are given the opportunity to briefly revisit their first experiences as students attending a madrasa. The workshop then explores how shame, fear, and intimidation can impact a child’s ability to learn.

Trainers have discovered that making these concepts clear, and facilitating a discussion about the use of fear and shame-based discipline, elicits a robust response from the madrasa teachers, who often voice deeply-felt frustration on the topic. “I am so angry because I have been shamed all my life,” said one participant. “No wonder we take so much anger out on our students . . . we are trying to get even for the way we were treated.”

One of the most significant comments was made by a madrasa leader from the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), who said, “I am blessed that I have been so angry all my life. This rage has protected me from the emotional pain of the shame and suffering I lived through.”

Subsequent sessions focus on human relationships and the role of the teacher, student, and educational institution in providing a balanced education. Workshop sessions have explored topics such as educational objectives, educational and child psychology (including empathy and child-conditioning), ethics and responsibilities, concepts of punishment, how to create an environment that is conducive to learning, comparative methods of teaching, interactive and student-centered learning, co-
curricular activities, and developing critical thinking and analytical abilities.

Participants learn to critically evaluate their own teaching styles, assess their students’ learning styles, and adapt their teaching methodologies accordingly. They are also tutored on the value and art of giving, encouraging, and receiving feedback in a constructive way. The sessions are participatory and interactive in nature and allow the participants to learn through doing, giving the teachers hands-on experience in small group discussion, critical thinking, problem solving, and conflict resolution. Some workshops sessions have focused on images of Muslims in the West, leading to stimulating discussions about the importance of separating fact from fiction and using one’s critical skills to move forward, rather than remain reactionary.

Teaching students to think critically and reflectively and to form their own opinions is not only a crucial part of education, but of peacebuilding as well. One former member of a radical group led by Al-Qaeda’s second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was quoted as saying, “the suppression of my critical thinking was the most important factor that trapped me in the path of [radical/violent] Jihadism . . . It is vital that our educational systems teach young Muslims the value and skill of critical thinking.”

In Pakistan, some militants have taken advantage of the system of rote memorization and unquestioning obedience to one’s teacher found in many madrasas to exploit vulnerable youth. Some militant organizations actively recruit students who have memorized the Qur’an in Arabic but may not fully understand what the passages mean (as their native language is Urdu), and who have little ability to question or challenge militant interpretations which are passed off as authoritative. A key component of the training workshops is thus to equip madrasa teachers to develop reflective and critical thinking skills in their students through the above activities.

Integration and Experiential Exposure

In the final sessions of the workshop, participants are encouraged to learn from one another and from non-traditional speakers with whom they would normally not interact, and who expose them to new ways of teaching and learning. These activities give the madrasa leaders the
opportunity to put into practice concepts learned in the training, such as
tolerance and acceptance of different points of view. They also
experientially address fears that are commonly held by madrasa
administrators and teachers—e.g. that modernity and the influence of
women or “outsiders” will somehow sabotage their ability to be effective
Muslim leaders. Workshop sessions have included presentations by
female Muslim scholars to all-male audiences, as well as by leaders of
other Muslim sects, Christians, and Americans.

One workshop brought a female human rights activist to speak to Ahle-Hadith and Deobandi madrasa teachers. This woman had been vehemently hated by madrasa leaders, to the point that some had staged a mock funeral for her. However, her speech to the workshop participants was so well-received that she ended up speaking over an hour instead of the allotted 20 minutes. The participants subsequently apologized to her for their misunderstanding of her, and several invited her to give seminars at their own madrasas. The activist likewise expressed amazement at the respect she received and indicated that, in turn, her view of them had changed as a result of the experience.

During another workshop for Deobandi madrasa leaders, participants visited a Christian madrasa in Karachi. There, the head of the school, a priest, spoke about the Christian perspective on religion, and how religious education is imparted at a Christian school. The participants subsequently engaged in an enthusiastic and open discussion with the priest. For many of the madrasa leaders, it was their first visit to a Christian school, as well as the first time in their lives they had listened to live music (the school’s singing group sang a holy song during the visit), as most consider musical activity to be forbidden in Islam. Some madrasas even expressed an interest in having their students attend Bible classes at Christian seminaries.

The emphasis on tolerance and understanding others has also led to
greater curiosity about America on the part of many of the madrasa
leaders.
On their own volition, madrasa leaders asked ICRD to conduct a workshop session on “Understanding American Culture.” During this session, American culture and values were discussed at length, with a particular focus on personal and familial relationships and the work ethic in American culture. Two specific points generated much discussion: giving value to time (e.g. “time is money”), and future-oriented thinking (“don’t cry over spilt milk”). In contemplating these two qualities, a new realization emerged on the part of the madrasa leaders that “unless we think through and move on from past grievances and adopt futuristic thinking, we won’t be able to move forward.” The idea that culture is not static and can be learned, changed, and improved was another point of discussion.

Some workshops have also included the sharing of a book of messages of peace and friendship from Americans to the people of the Muslim world, compiled by the American-Islamic Friendship Project. The impact of the American overtures of friendship on the madrasa leaders was overwhelming, and actually moved some leaders to tears. Madrasa leaders were particularly touched by a message from a six-year-old American girl, which led one to respond that “if American children are writing to express love, we must do the same, not only to say it but to live it.” Many madrasa leaders did respond by writing their own messages to the American people.

One madrasa workshop participant remarked, “This week, a lot of my misperceptions have melted away. We had a lot of bad information about our own political and religious leaders. I am angry I believed this. Just as the West has bad information about us, we had bad information about the West.”

While these represent significant steps forward, distrust and hostility toward America remain prevalent, and are a challenge to be overcome in working with madrasas. ICRD has often turned expressions of anti-Americanism that do occur into opportunities to stimulate greater reflection on the part of the madrasa leaders.

During one workshop, madrasa participants asked the ICRD facilitator if he was “against America.” Rather than becoming either defensive or vague, the facilitator responded in the following manner: “Well, I try not to be against any whole country or people. I mean, you could oppose Pakistan’s President Musharraf, for example, and not be against Pakistan as a country or the Pakistani people, right? Countries are so complex, and if I am against a whole country, that means being against millions of people. I don’t think the Prophet Mohammed, though he did dislike certain people and certain things people did, was ‘against’ the entire nation of Arab people who weren’t Muslims, was he?” By turning the question back to Islam’s prophet, the ICRD facilitator engaged the madrasa leaders in a process of internal reflection as Muslims, in which they remembered that Islam does not sanction enmity toward an entire nation. Through this process, they eventually began to say that they could not hate America and still be following Islam’s true precepts. The ICRD facilitator then engaged the madrasa leaders in a discussion of the specific issues that were upsetting to them, helping them to deal with these specific issues rather than being hostile to America as a whole.

For many of the madrasa leaders, the training workshop is the first opportunity they have had to discuss Islamic principles, education, and philosophy with educators from other sects, and to reflect on the past successes of Islamic education. This has given them a non-threatening space in which they can challenge current curriculums and teaching through an examination of past Islamic societies and educational practices. Facilitating self-reflection and internal dialogue among the madrasa leaders has been a cornerstone of ICRD’s engagement.
This approach also promotes better relationships between members of the different sects, as they are able to interact at a human level, share ideas with one another, and build greater understanding and respect for one another. ICRD emphasizes the role that religious leaders should play in ending historically-accepted traditions that do not serve the higher calling of religious values. Just as religious institutions played an instrumental role in abolishing slavery, they can also champion the abolition of such practices as intolerance, institutional bias, and religiously-based violence. Madrasa leaders are encouraged to envision how the world can be improved through steps they can take today.

Specialized Training Workshops

ICRD has also conducted special training workshops specifically focused on peace education and the Islamic basis for democracy. In April 2007, in partnership with the United States Institute of Peace, ICRD facilitated a five-day workshop in Islamabad on peace education that presented madrasa administrators and educators with theoretical and practical training in conflict resolution and peace education.

The workshop focused on increasing the ability of madrasa teachers to educate their students in peace studies and conflict resolution by focusing on the diverse historical approaches to peacemaking in the Islamic tradition. As an outgrowth of this workshop, some of the program graduates are now working collaboratively to develop a madrasa peace education curriculum.

In December 2007, shortly before Pakistan’s historic parliamentary elections, ICRD conducted a special series of civic education workshops for Pakistani madrasa leaders and imams about Islam, democracy, and elections. These workshops, which were supported by a grant from the Asia Foundation, focused on (1) increasing awareness of the electoral process among madrasa teachers and students; (2) increasing religious leaders’ participation in the democratic process; and (3) motivating religious leaders to become advocates of the democratic process and of increased women’s participation in the process. Participants in this program included madrasa teachers and imams in the provinces of Balochistan and Sindh, including some female madrasa teachers.

The workshops facilitated discussion and critical thinking on the challenges related to Islam and elections, and highlighted the importance
of democracy and electoral participation by all. A major issue in engaging these religious leaders was the fact that many of them had previously learned about the relationship between Islam and democracy from a single source—a book that condemned democracy as un-Islamic. Once a reflective discussion on Islam and democracy was initiated and various cases made for the importance of democracy from an Islamic perspective, the participants quickly recognized the Islamic basis for democratic involvement and became champions of democracy.

More detailed demographic data on these workshops is provided in Appendix 1.

Master Trainer Workshops

ICRD’s Master Trainer workshops are key both to empowering madrasa leaders to promote change and to expanding the reach of the project. These “training of trainers” programs equip promising madrasa leaders with the skills to train other leaders in areas of pedagogical and curricular enhancement and the promotion of religious tolerance, human rights, and conflict resolution. The Master Trainer graduates of these workshops are provided with special skills and materials that equip them to hold workshops for other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders.

Among other topics, Master Trainer workshops include in-depth coverage on theories of the learning process, different ways of learning (including peer learning), lesson planning, conflict management, and experiential practice. Each participant gives a presentation demonstrating how he would deliver a training workshop to other madrasa teachers, and agrees to conduct a certain number of one-day training workshops each year for other madrasa teachers. Once trained, ICRD continues to engage and support these Master Trainers.

During the Master Trainer program’s early stages, these workshops have been conducted on separate tracks for madrasa leaders of both the Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith sects. In August 2008, ICRD conducted its

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59 Within the context of the ICRD Pakistan Madrasa Project, the term “Master Trainer” refers to those workshop graduates who have received additional training that equips them to train other madrasa leaders. It is not equivalent to the term “master trainer” as used in the broader academic sense, i.e. a level of mastery that typically takes many years to achieve.
first second-level Master Trainer workshop, which provided more advanced training to graduates of both the Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith Master Trainer workshops on a joint basis. This first inter-sectarian Master Training of its kind provided a further opportunity for madrasa leaders to overcome sectarian differences and to put into practice principles of religious tolerance at the experiential level. ICRD has received requests to conduct additional Master Trainer programs, particularly in Pakistan’s volatile Northwest Frontier Province, and is working to secure the resources for doing so.

One-day Workshops by Master Trainers

As of December 2008, graduates of the Master Trainer workshops have conducted over 100 one-day workshops for other madrasa leaders in Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh, and the Northwest Frontier Province. The proliferation of the one-day workshops is not only bringing more madrasas into the madrasa enhancement process, but is creating greater empowerment within the madrasa community.

Madrasa Teacher Training Institute

The success of ICRD’s training model and the demand for further training programs from the madrasa community have enabled ICRD to begin taking steps to institutionalize this training on a deeper and more systemic level. Thus, ICRD is now working to create a Madrasa Teacher Training Institute in Pakistan. While there are many teacher training institutions in Pakistan, none are currently dedicated to providing professional development training and certification to teachers of madrasas in Urdu, and no qualification standards exist to which madrasa teachers are required to adhere.

The Madrasa Teacher Training Institute currently under development will conduct specialized teaching certification programs for madrasa educators. Teachers graduating from this institute will develop an in-depth understanding of educational philosophy, teaching methodology, classroom management, ethical educational principles, and other important aspects of the educational process.

Several Pakistani universities have expressed an interest in working with ICRD to develop this Institute. The participation of these universities will be key to facilitating the integration of the madrasas into
the larger Pakistani educational system. Currently ICRD is developing
the Institute’s initial six-week pilot program through the University of
Karachi, which, after announcing the program, received some 780
expressions of interest from madrasa faculty. In November 2008, ICRD
initiated specialized training for University faculty who will be
conducting this six-week program.

ICRD intends to negotiate multi-year agreements with multiple
universities to deliver the initial six-week Madrasa Teacher Training
Institute programs throughout Pakistan. Such programs are planned for
at least one major university in each of Pakistan’s four provinces.
Discussions are also underway with Allama Iqbal Open University
(AIOU), which holds educational courses throughout Pakistan wherever
there are sufficient interested students, to facilitate additional six-week
Institute courses. ICRD is also engaged in discussions with the Pakistani
government—through the Higher Education Commission—and with the
ITMD Madrasa Oversight Board to elicit their support and cooperation in
developing this Institute.

The primary goal of the initial six-week courses will be to equip
madrasa teachers with practical competencies that will enable them to
effect change in the madrasas’ educational environment. At the same
time, they will develop an in-depth understanding of (1) educational
philosophy; (2) teaching methodology; (3) classroom management; (4)
the teacher as a role model; (5) emotional intelligence; and (6) principled
human development. Additionally, the curriculum will have an emphasis
on promoting principles of diversity/pluralism, tolerance, peace, and
human and gender rights. It is envisioned that the teachers who graduate
from the six-week courses will then qualify for and undertake the
extended subject-specific coursework that will be required for full
certification.

The proposed curriculum currently being developed for this initial
course focuses on enabling the participants to develop the following
competencies:

Weeks 1 and 2:
• Foundational understanding—in-depth understanding of the role of
  education, learning, knowledge, and child development
• *Self-assessment and student assessment*—the ability to evaluate one’s own teaching and learning styles, the classroom environment, and students’ learning styles

**Week 3:**
• *Teaching methodology*—skills in improving teaching methodology, with an emphasis on facilitating interactive learning and developing reflective and critical thinking skills among the students

**Week 4:**
• *Principled human development*—the ability to understand warning signs and deal constructively with destructive behavior and violence; the ability to integrate principles of diversity, tolerance (particularly religious tolerance), human rights, and peace into their lessons

**Week 5:**
• *Educational materials and practicum*—the ability to develop appropriate educational materials; participants will also teach for short periods at non-madrasa public or private schools in order to receive feedback on their teaching performance from the university faculty

**Week 6:**
• *Implementation of educational enhancements*—the ability to envision a new madrasa culture and construct a plan for integrating the above skills into the educational experience
Chapter 5

Other Components of the Pakistan Madrasa Project

As illustrated in Chapter 3, ICRD’s model for madrasa enhancement includes numerous components beyond the activities of the training workshops. This chapter highlights some of the major initiatives that are either currently underway or planned for the Pakistan Madrasa Project.

Curriculum Enhancement

Consistent with ICRD’s approach of creating “buy-in” within the madrasa community around the idea of curricular enhancement, it has enlisted madrasa scholars in designing model curriculums for the future use of madrasa leaders that are based on best practices from throughout the Muslim world.

Originally, ICRD had planned to enlist American Muslim scholars in designing alternative madrasa curriculums. After further reflection, it became clear that engaging Pakistani madrasa leaders directly in producing their own recommendations would ensure the greatest likelihood that these recommendations would be accepted. This process will also enhance madrasa credibility within the secular and intellectual communities and is a precursor to greater integration within the larger Pakistani educational system.

ICRD began this initiative to engage madrasa and religious scholars in conducting research on the best practices to be found in Pakistan and elsewhere. One scholar each from the Deobandi, Ahle-Hadith, Barelvi, and Shia sects was selected to participate. ICRD at first planned to engage scholars who met various academic qualifications in drafting the curriculums. However, through the course of the project, ICRD was able to build relationships directly with the leaders of the ITMD (Madrasa Oversight Board). Through these relationships, and a partnership with a highly respected scholar, Dr. Abdul Rashid of the University of Karachi, some of the ITMD leaders agreed to conduct the research and draft the

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60 Because the more politically-oriented Jamat-e-Islami sect largely follows the Deobandi school of thought theologically, it was decided that engaging a Jamat-e-Islami scholar in drafting the recommendations would not be necessary.
curricular recommendations themselves. This significant breakthrough has facilitated far greater madrasa ownership of the process.

While the focus of the scholars’ research was on Islamic education in Pakistan, efforts were made to look at Islamic curriculums and teaching methodologies in other countries. ICRD had hoped to bring the scholars to other countries, including the United States, to study Islamic education and to gain a firsthand look at Islamic teaching that follows a contemporary curriculum and which produces graduates who can compete in the global marketplace. Limited funding has precluded such visits at this stage, but with additional resources, this will become possible. The curricular recommendations of the scholars engaged in this program are included in Chapter 7.

The next step is to work with the ITMD, the Government of Pakistan, and various other stakeholders to facilitate development of the final curriculums and their implementation within the madrasa system. Again, it will be necessary to provide the necessary training and resources for this to happen.

Curricular Materials for Peace Education

Separately, ICRD is pursuing development of a peace education module for madrasas, as an outgrowth of its training workshop on peace education conducted in conjunction with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in 2007. This workshop focused on historical approaches to Islamic peacemaking as a means of increasing the capacity of madrasa teachers to educate their students in conflict resolution. Several months later, ICRD met with several madrasa leaders who had attended the seminar to discuss the creation of specialized curricular materials for peace education. The meeting resulted in an interim work plan to prepare a peacemaking text. A draft outline for the book is as follows:

(1) Religion and Peace Education
(2) Concepts of Peace and War in Islam
(3) Rights and Responsibilities
(4) Diversity and Pluralism in Islam
(5) Democracy, “Shura”, and Justice
ICRD and USIP personnel will likely assist in developing some sections of the module, including the sections on Conflict and Violence, Communication, and Psychology/Counseling. Despite the lack of funding for this initiative, the selected madrasa scholars are committed to producing the model text and have already drafted several hundred pages. ICRD is in the process of negotiating a partnership agreement with USIP and the Al-Noor Foundation for Education & Research at Allama Iqbal Open University to secure the necessary funding to support the production of the peace education text. Upon completion, the module will be presented to the ITMD and other Islamic scholars for review and feedback, prior to an official launch of the module. At least one ITMD leader has already expressed direct support for the creation of such a peace education module.

Female Madrasa Engagement

As a result of the success of our male training programs, ICRD is now receiving numerous requests from both male and female madrasas to conduct training for female teachers of girls’ madrasas, something that male madrasa leaders had previously refused to allow but are now eagerly requesting. Because female influence is such a critical determinant in the development of a country’s social mores, and because women, particularly in the rural areas, are often more conservative and less tolerant of differences than men, it is critical that the women be included in the educational enhancement process. In a country with an extremely low rate of female primary school enrollment and one of the highest rates of female illiteracy in South Asia (64%)\(^61\), inclusion of the female educators is crucial.

ICRD is in the process of creating training programs specifically designed for female teachers of girls’ madrasas. It is envisioned that this

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\(<www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/pk.html>\)
initiative will begin with 12 core training programs, three Master Training programs, and at least 45 one-day workshops conducted for other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders by the newly-trained female trainers.

ICRD is exploring university partnerships for this initiative, including the University of Karachi, the University of Peshawar, the Lahore University of Management Sciences, the University of Balochistan, and the Fatima Jinnah Women University. Initially, it was envisioned that female madrasa leaders would participate in six-week training programs conducted under the auspices of these partners. However, in the current conservative climate in Pakistan, it has proven too difficult for these women to come to the universities for such training. Thus, the strategy has been changed to incorporate shorter training workshops conducted either within the madrasas themselves or at local facilities nearby.

A 2007 visit to girls’ madrasas in Punjab Province by Rebecca Cataldi, ICRD Program Manager for the Pakistan Madrasa Project, helped lay the groundwork for engaging the women’s madrasas. Following her visit, one of the largest, oldest, and most influential Ahle-Hadith women’s madrasas in Pakistan contacted ICRD to say: “It is concluded that your organization is the only one for which our new department and its faculty is in need of.” The director of another female madrasa said, "We need to teach peace education and interfaith dialogue, as well as subjects like English and vocational training. You have done many workshops for men, but we women need this training too. Why have you not done workshops for us? We will even offer our school auditorium for you to conduct these workshops."

Cataldi also visited the Red Mosque in Islamabad, which at the time was running one of the largest female madrasas in the world, the Jamia Hafsa. Administrators there had sent their students to occupy public property, kidnap those they accused of un-Islamic activity, and threaten suicide bombings, if the government did not implement Islamic Sharia law in Pakistan. This visit by an American, Christian female was only made possible through ICRD’s strong relationship with its Ahle-Hadith
partner, a highly-respected religious and political leader. The following are some excerpts from Cataldi’s Trip Report:

“Two teachers who spoke some English sat with me and translated for the Principal . . . At first she did not seem to want to talk to or even look at me. When I asked if might be able to see some of their school, she refused, saying that visitors who come to the school often see things only from their own point of view and go back and write very negative things about them. People in the West, especially in America, just see madrasas as terrorists, she said.

I just sat and listened to them for a while, and when the opportunity came, told them a little about ICRD, that we work for peace through religion, and that we respect madrasas and have worked with men’s madrasas. I told them that I wanted to learn more about the religious education of women and that I had come because I wanted to understand their point of view. I also said I wished to bring a message of peace from America, and that Americans like all people and do not desire any conflict.

‘We also have no problem with Americans,’ one of the teachers said. ‘Our religion says to love all people. We are just against the US government policy.’ . . .

[The Principal then] asked me if I would like to see some of their classrooms. Having refused my initial request, they now sounded almost eager for me to see some of their school, and took me through the hallway where I saw a couple classrooms [and students] . . .

They took me back to the Principal and I gave the gift [I had brought for their school] to her—a small desk decoration that said “Peace” and “Peace on Earth”. When she understood the meaning, a big smile came onto her face and she looked genuinely happy. I started to thank her for letting me visit her

school, and she stopped me from speaking, motioned for the English-speaking teachers to come back over, and had me start again so they could translate what I was saying. “May God bless you and your school and your students,” I said, which also seemed to make her happy.

The whole experience seemed to be a testament to the power of engaging people in a respectful way and of listening before speaking, and to the way that this can start to build a little bit of personal trust. I could see a transformation in the way they interacted with me at the beginning and the way they did at the end, and the fact that the Principal went from barely looking at me to smiling at me, and from refusing to let me visit to inviting me to visit her school, is perhaps an illustration of the impact of personally approaching people in an open and respectful way.”

Three months later (in July of 2007), a violent confrontation between the heavily-armed madrasa and the Pakistani government resulted in the destruction of the women’s school and over 100 deaths. This was followed by an increase in suicide bombings in various parts of the country that continue to this day. Such tragic events only demonstrate all the more the necessity of engaging madrasas in developing peaceful ways to address conflict and of empowering them to use their influence to prevent violence.

**Engagement of the Ittihad Tanzeemat Madaris Deenia (ITMD) Madrasa Oversight Board and Visit to the United States**

While acceptance of the need for change by individual madrasa leaders is critical, the support of the madrasa oversight boards is also needed. ICRD achieved a breakthrough in June 2007 when the leaders of the top Madrasa Oversight Board, the Ittihad Tanzeemat Madaris Deenia (ITMD), along with the Pakistani government’s Secretary for Religious Affairs, agreed to visit the United States to study religious education in America and to discuss educational enhancement. The ITMD oversees the individual madrasa boards which, in turn, oversee each of the five sects that sponsor madrasas and determine examination and accreditation requirements for the madrasas affiliated with these boards. Because its purview constitutes the majority of Pakistan’s
madrasas, the ITMD is the body with the greatest power to institute reforms within the madrasa community.

The ITMD visit was a unique opportunity for Pakistan’s highest madrasa officials to be made aware of how subjects like math and science are integrated with religious subjects and principles of tolerance and human rights are implemented in Islamic education in America. It also enabled these leaders to demonstrate to Americans their willingness to implement reforms.

The delegation consisted of the following members:

- Hon. Secretary Vakil Ahmed Khan, Secretary of Religious Affairs, Government of Pakistan
- Qari Muhammad Hanif Jalandhry, Member, Central Council, Ittehad Tanzeemat Madaris Deenia Pakistan (Deobandi)
- Maulana Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman, President, Tanzeemul Madaris Pakistan (Barelvi)
- Allama Riaz Hussain Najfi, President, Wafaqul Madaris Shia, Pakistan (Shia)
- Maulana Naeem ur Rehman, Nazim-e-Aala (Executive Administrator), Wafaqul Madaris Al Salfia Pakistan (Ahle-Hadith)
- Dr. Ata ur Rehman, Member, National Assembly of Pakistan, Rabitatul Madaris Islamia Pakistan (Jamat-e-Islami)

These madrasa leaders met with US government officials, educators, and religious leaders to discuss madrasa reform, religion and peacebuilding, and other topics. Those with whom they met included US State Department officials, members of Congress, and various officials of the US Institute of Peace, American University, Georgetown University, the International Reading Association, the Pakistani American Leadership Center, the Islamic Society of North America, the International Institute of Islamic Thought, the Inter Faith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, and the Congressional Research Service.

Themes explored during the week included:
• Islamic, religious, and public education in America, including how “contemporary” subjects such as math and science are integrated with religious education and how Islamic education and Muslim students are integrated in non-Islamic educational institutions

• Pluralism and diversity, understanding and accepting others, and the role of these principles in conflict resolution, child development, and education

• Perceived misperceptions of madrasas in America, and the importance of dialogue and cultural exchange in promoting mutual understanding and respect

• The life of American Muslims and their leadership roles in civil society

• The role of religion in peacebuilding and how religious leaders can peacefully affect social and political issues

• Interfaith dialogue

The ITMD visit successfully facilitated dialogue and cooperation on a level previously unseen, and opened the door to new possibilities for collaboration in the future. Among the specific accomplishments of the US visit were:

• The ITMD’s stated commitment to the madrasa reform package being negotiated with the Pakistani government: The package being discussed would include the development of a new Inter-Madrasa Board which would be created to oversee the “mainstreaming” of the madrasas in accordance with federal educational guidelines.

• Impact on US policy and US-madrasa cooperation: In a meeting with US officials, the ITMD offered to revoke the affiliation of any madrasa proven to be involved in extremist activities and asked the US government to tell them which madrasas it suspects of radicalism. The ITMD also asked for the US government’s support in urging the Pakistani government to sign the madrasa reform package into law.
• **Endorsement and request for expansion of ICRD’s work by the Pakistani government:** Shortly after the US visit, Pakistani media reported the Government of Pakistan’s request for ICRD to conduct training seminars to educate madrasa teachers in “interfaith harmony, religious tolerance, human rights, and women’s rights.”

• **Educational enhancement and conflict resolution/peacebuilding skills:** The visit allowed the ITMD leaders to discuss new educational themes, including the role of the teacher in peacebuilding. One ITMD leader noted: ‘The way to settle disputes is to come together and negotiate, not through war—we have learned this here at American University. We need to accept differences and bring them to the table.’ Another ITMD leader commented, ‘We need to make it our business to teach peace—that’s one thing I [took away] from being in the United States.’

• **Greater understanding between America and Pakistan’s madrasas:** The ITMD visit provided the madrasa leaders and the various Americans with whom they interacted an opportunity to correct misperceptions and negative stereotypes and to develop a new understanding and respect for one another.

• **Empowerment:** At a time when many in the Muslim world feel that their feelings are ignored by the United States, this visit provided Pakistan’s most powerful madrasa leaders with the opportunity to tell their story to Americans, to voice their concerns about US policies to US government officials, and to be heard and respected.

• **Enhanced opportunities for expansion of madrasa training programs:** The ITMD has expressed interest in having ICRD build additional capacity and to conduct development programs with as many madrasas as possible, in addition to training its top madrasa administrators to train other madrasa leaders. It also indicated an openness to creating an official teacher training institute specifically for training madrasa teachers.

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Engagement of the Pakistani Government

The Government of Pakistan (GOP) is a critical stakeholder in the madrasa enhancement process, and its cooperation is essential for fully implementing these enhancements. ICRD has continually met with government officials at both the federal and provincial levels to ensure their support and to seek direct cooperation in specific initiatives. Most importantly, ICRD is working with both the GOP and the ITMD to facilitate new madrasa reform legislation that can be signed into law.

One of the first high-level government officials ICRD contacted was Mohammedian Soomro, Chairman of the Pakistani Senate. (Soomro acted as de facto President in then-President Musharraf’s absence, was named interim Prime Minister by Musharraf during the fall 2007 state of emergency, and became acting President following Musharraf’s resignation in August 2008.) After meeting with ICRD officials in 2006, Chairman Soomro expressed his support for ICRD’s work and stressed the need for madrasas to be integrated into the rest of Pakistani society. Following a second meeting with ICRD President Dr. Douglas Johnston in August 2008, he offered to assist ICRD’s work in any way he could. Chairman Soomro noted that madrasa leaders and others who had been mobilized to fight the Soviets following their invasion of Afghanistan were left without other options when the American and other forces pulled out following the Soviet withdrawal. These leaders, he said, are still highly energized and need to be re-assimilated into Pakistani society. Maintaining that Pakistan doesn’t have the resources to deal with this issue, he voiced the desire for US government support, and suggested that an American investment of a few hundred million dollars now could preclude the need to spend billions later. Other Pakistani government officials have expressed similar support for ICRD’s work and the desire for greater support from the US government.

ICRD has also discussed vocational training of madrasa students with Pakistani government officials. Following ICRD meetings with then-Secretary of Religious Affairs Vakil Ahmed Khan, the Secretary presented to the government various ideas which resulted from the discussions. These ideas, which included the provision of skill-based training for madrasa students (through which they would learn at least one vocational skill to help them secure employment following graduation), elicited a positive response. Khan was subsequently named Chairman of the GOP’s madrasa oversight board.
ICRD has also worked closely with then-Secretary Khan to secure resources for special vocational training in the province of Sindh. As a result, the Secretary committed $2 million dollars of federal money to incorporate vocational training into Sindh madrasas. ICRD then met with the Governor of Sindh to secure his support for this initiative, and also to explore how additional funding could be utilized for madrasa enhancement. Under the proposed plan, for the vocational training that would take place, equipment and instructors would be paid for by the government. Students would receive a stipend along with their training, and employment opportunities would be made available to them upon graduation. ICRD is working to have the training conducted in the madrasas themselves rather than in separate facilities when those facilities are too remote. A similar initiative is now under way in Punjab Province through the Punjab Vocational Training Council. This initiative has not involved madrasas directly, but many madrasa students have participated in the training. ICRD is working to have this effort expanded to other provinces.

Another milestone was reached in Balochistan, where ICRD was instrumental in getting 61 large Deobandi madrasas to accept and begin receiving Pakistani government aid. These madrasas can now receive money for textbooks and salaries for teachers of English, math, science, and social studies. As part of this system, the government can visit, monitor, and audit these madrasas, and oversee their expenditures. In addition, the students in these schools must undertake examinations in accordance with government standards.

Further, the then-Governor of Balochistan agreed to name ICRD’s Deobandi partner, the head of the Jamia Matleh Uloom madrasa, as the administrator and distributor of these funds to participating madrasas. Many madrasas in Balochistan began seeking this aid in order to implement the government reforms, signaling a major shift from the normal suspicion of government influence. ICRD’s Deobandi partner has also worked to include representation from other sects on the financial disbursement committee (calling for the inclusion of Shia and Barelvi leaders on the Deobandi- and Ahle-Hadith-dominated committee), drawing the ire of some of the other committee members but praise from the Governor. An increasing number of madrasas from the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Sindh Province are also participating in similar programs.
ICRD has also made special efforts to engage the ruling Pakistan People’s Party (PPP)—the party of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. In consultation with ICRD, the PPP added ICRD’s language of madrasa enhancement, including the promotion of human rights, tolerance, and the rights of minorities, to its Election Manifesto. PPP parliamentarian Makhdoom Amin Fahim participated in several ICRD madrasa training workshops and reacted favorably to the program.

Finally, ICRD has sought the support of Pakistan’s Higher Education Commission for the creation of a Madrasa Teacher Training Institute and has worked directly with the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, DC to promote awareness of and support for the project within the diplomatic community. In March of 2008, the Embassy hosted ICRD’s senior leadership for a briefing of members of the government, diplomatic, NGO, and academic community on the project. ICRD has also sought the support of the Pakistan’s Council of Islamic Ideology, a constitutionally-mandated government body that has influence over religious legislation and policies in Pakistan.

Engagement of the US Government

The US government also has a strong interest in the reform of Pakistan’s madrasas. US policy and actions have a great impact on the attitudes and behavior of the madrasas. For example, airstrikes by the United States in the Pakistani tribal areas—particularly those that have targeted madrasas—create great fear and hostility among madrasa faculty and students. This feeds madrasa perceptions that Islam and Muslims are under attack and that it is necessary to fight back. (For example, one religious leader “praised” the US airstrikes, saying that he had previously had difficulty in finding fighters for his battle against America. He said, “Because of you [ICRD] we hadn’t had a new recruit in three or four months. After that missile [fell on a madrasa in Pakistan], thanks be to Allah, it is easy for us to get many recruits now.”) Some of this can be attributed to the normal fog of war; but wherever the temptation arises to bomb a madrasa, it should be resisted owing to the inevitable ripple effects that often have disproportionately adverse consequences.

Because of former President Musharraf’s resistance to any US involvement with the madrasas, Pakistan’s ability to improve the madrasa educational system was limited by its own reluctance to make funding available on a large scale. In addition, American Muslims who
have wanted to support ICRD’s work in Pakistan have refrained from doing so for fear that they might be accused of supporting radicalism.

Many US officials in Washington DC have expressed strong support for ICRD’s Pakistan Madrasa Project. However, until President Musharraf stepped down, there was no opportunity for them to express that support in any practical way. In August 2008, however, shortly following Musharraf’s departure, a major breakthrough occurred when ICRD’s President Dr. Douglas Johnston and Pakistan Project Director Azhar Hussain met consecutively with Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs James Glassman, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for USAID’s Bureau of Asia Mark Ward, and US Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Patterson, to brief them on ICRD’s work with the madrasas. These officials were strongly supportive, and Secretary Glassman subsequently briefed President Bush on ICRD’s madrasa work.

**Overseas Study/Exchange Visits and Interaction with America and the West**

Person-to-person interaction with people of other faiths, sects, and cultures is an important part of building tolerance for others and overcoming negative stereotypes. Facilitating interaction and exchanges between madrasa leaders and Americans is particularly important for building better relations.

While great distrust and hostility toward the United States still exists in much of Pakistan, ICRD is showing another face of America to madrasa leaders and providing them with increased opportunities for understanding America’s culture, values, and people. Of particular help in this regard has been the willingness of ICRD’s madrasa partners to affirm that they are partnering with an American organization, despite the personal security risks to themselves. A number of madrasa leaders who formerly preached the need to fight America are now preaching the need for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.

American speakers have also been used in various workshops, including US government officials. One high-level USAID leader who met with madrasa leaders during a training workshop—many of whom were members of the former Taliban regime or Taliban sympathizers—was surprised at their receptivity to her and their new openness to
improving their educational system. Madrasa leaders understand the US government’s hesitation to give money to madrasas, and encourage as an alternative giving money to pay directly for textbooks, teachers’ salaries, or training. One madrasa leader even offered to post a sign outside his madrasa acknowledging that food and other aid to the school was donated by America.

Early on in the project, ICRD’s President, Dr. Douglas Johnston, along with two ICRD Board members, visited several controversial madrasas and met with various Deobandi and Ahle-Hadith administrators and senior faculty, providing many of these madrasa leaders their first encounter with Americans and their first real opportunity for dialogue and an exchange of views. During the exchange, Dr. Johnston quoted several passages from the Qur’an and then referred to the teachings of Jesus—who is highly honored as a prophet in Islam. He noted that if Jesus were in their midst, he would want them as Muslims and Christians to reach out on a faith-based basis and cooperate with one another in promoting peace. In a testament to the power of human interaction to change perceptions, one madrasa leader reacted by smiling, putting his hand over his heart, and proclaiming, “You have made me very, very happy. I thought all Americans hated us.” This same spirit took hold in each of the madrasas that they visited. This breakthrough in attitude was all the more remarkable in light of the rage that existed at the time over the conflict that was raging in Lebanon and over US foreign policy more generally.

During Rebecca Cataldi’s visit to Pakistan, the shared values of love of God and love of neighbor in Islam and Christianity were discussed with madrasa leaders. One madrasa leader advocated creating an exchange program to facilitate greater understanding and cooperation between Muslims and Christians and stated: “Osama bin Laden does not represent Muslims or Islam, and we are not such fools that we would follow him. We should have a [different] forum to express our opinions and grievances, like what you [ICRD] are doing. As Christians and Muslims grow in understanding of each other, we can defeat extremist ideologies like the ones propagated by bin Laden. We can start an exchange program—if people visit each other’s countries, we can build [such an] environment and clarify misperceptions.”

In addition to sponsoring the 2007 ITMD visit to the United States, ICRD has hosted its indigenous partners in attending the annual National
Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC. This visit enabled them to experience first-hand the religiosity of American culture and to share their own insights and opinions in speaking engagements at selected Washington think tanks and universities.

ICRD is currently seeking the necessary resources to support overseas study visits for a number of Master Trainers in order to study American Islamic and religious education, civil society, and culture. Among other things, this experience would enable them to provide their students with a more informed understanding of America and the West. In its recent independent, third-party evaluation of ICRD’s madrasa project, the Salam Institute for Peace & Justice reinforced this idea in its recommendation that ICRD organize exchange programs for selected madrasa teachers, administrators, and scholars from Pakistan, the United States, and other countries.

The benefits of such personal exchange initiatives are of critical importance. The following quotes are illustrative:

*A Pakistani cleric, who had previously taught his community to hate America for 20 years, said after visiting America: “I washed the anger off me. The best gift anybody can give to get rid of the hate is to travel to the place where the people they hate live.”*

*A Pakistani madrasa leader and politician who participated in a State Department exchange program said, “American people will transform Islamic leaders...when they (Islamic teachers) see that these people are just as decent and faithful as we are in Muslim countries...they will face the reality that America as a whole does not hate all Muslims.”*

ICRD’s Ahle-Hadith (Wahhabi) partner, having participated in several US visits, believes so strongly in the power of direct interpersonal and cultural exchange to improve attitudes and behavior that he has offered to raise part of the funding required to support an exchange program for Muslim educators.

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64 This evaluation is described in more detail in Chapter 6.
Media Engagement

Highlighting the accomplishments of the madrasas that ICRD has worked with in the areas of educational improvement and peacebuilding is an important way of demonstrating the merits of madrasa engagement and empowering them to do more. Because of the often-volatile security situation in Pakistan, ICRD has intentionally sought to minimize its media exposure. However, we are now at the point where we are able to engage with the media on a more substantive level in order to increase the public’s awareness of the merits of madrasa engagement. ICRD also plans to engage the editors of madrasa newsletters, which reach a wide audience and exert significant influence within their respective communities.

ICRD also intends to engage editors of various madrasa newsletters that reach a wide and influential audience within their communities. Even without such engagement, there have already been some encouraging pieces in these newsletters supportive of the enhancement effort. ICRD is also exploring opportunities to provide specialized training in objective journalism to madrasa journalists.
Chapter 6

Impact and Evaluations of the Pakistan Madrasa Project

The impact of ICRD’s madrasa project has been evaluated at multiple levels. Before beginning the project, ICRD utilized information from various scholars and institutions, both in Pakistan and the West, to assess the current situation with regard to the madrasas (see Chapters 1 and 2). These findings led ICRD to conclude that there was an urgent need for preventive intervention.

The findings also pointed to the necessity of engaging multiple stakeholders—e.g. academics, civil society, the media, and ultimately, government officials—as their support would be crucial for systemic enhancement of the madrasas. However, involving government and “secular” society at an early stage would run the risk of alienating madrasa leaders and arousing their distrust. This dynamic also played out in the need to be inclusive of various sectarian and tribal groups, without incurring the wrath of those groups that are actively involved in sectarian conflict. Thus, assessments of ICRD’s progress throughout various stages of the project have not only been a function of the impact on the engaged madrasa leaders, but on ICRD’s ability to work effectively with multiple, sometimes conflicting, priorities.

This chapter highlights the various levels of evaluation that ICRD has used. Here, it is important to note up-front the difficulties involved in “measuring a negative”—i.e. the fact that conflict did not occur because of something one did or that conflict which did occur was less intense than would have otherwise been the case in the absence of ICRD action.

Below is a presentation of four levels of evaluation of the project. These levels, which collectively represent the yardstick by which ICRD has gauged its progress, consist of post-program surveys, workshop observations, interviews, visits to madrasas, and an independent third-party evaluation conducted by the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice.
Evaluation Level I

At this level of evaluation, ICRD focused on evaluating the prerequisite attitudes, skills, and behaviors needed to develop deeper inroads within the madrasa environment for longer-term engagement and enhancement. Extensive post-training assessments were conducted to evaluate the project’s impact on the madrasa leaders’ attitudes toward teaching contemporary subjects and transforming their pedagogy, their willingness to acknowledge significantly different worldviews and various Islamic interpretations of issues, their ability to trust others having different religious or ethnic identities, their trust in the Islamic tradition of innovation and modernity, their ability to endure criticism by “outsiders”, and their development of empathetic listening, communication, and conflict resolution skills. The following are the results of ICRD’s post-training assessment and opinion surveys.

ICRD Evaluation Surveys

ICRD’s programs rely heavily on participant feedback, and great effort is made to elicit accurate and comprehensive responses whenever possible. Due to the sensitivity of the work, however, obstacles sometimes arise that create a risky environment for data collection. The culture of the madrasa environment (particularly in the tribal areas) is such that being asked to state one’s opinions can sometimes create distrust and a corresponding suspicion of hidden agendas. This can compromise not only the effectiveness of the training programs, but the security of the ICRD trainers as well. For these reasons, ICRD was unable to conduct evaluation and opinion surveys in all cases. However, the trends revealed in the responses to the surveys that were conducted are consistent with the verbal and anecdotal feedback received from other participants in the training programs.

The following section details the results of surveys conducted by ICRD among a sample of participants following the workshops. These surveys took two forms—(1) evaluation surveys designed to assess the reactions of the participants toward the ICRD workshops and the concepts and principles being taught, and (2) opinion surveys to assess participant attitudes toward various issues related to human rights, gender rights, tolerance, violence, and other topics. The section begins with a sampling of quotes from madrasa leaders regarding the ICRD workshops, which are indicative of the impact the programs are having.
Quotes from Madrasa Leaders

Before the Workshops . . .

Representative of the attitudes on the front-end of the workshops were the following comments by workshop participants:

“Islam is threatened and needs protection by real Muslims, not the Muslims who talk from both sides of their mouth.”

Madrasa Administrator

Madrasas must produce “ideal Muslims who will not hesitate to sacrifice their lives for the cause of Islam.”

Madrasa Oversight Board Member

“We have the power to mobilize masses that can make our government shake in its boots; these people trust us and will follow what we tell them, not what the politicians want…you can tell that to {the} Americans.”

Madrasa Oversight Board Member

“We must regain our culture and identity. We will have to keep fighting the foreigners who have taken advantage of us because we trusted them. We must never trust their intentions.”

Madrasa Oversight Board Member

After the Workshops . . .

Indicative of the attitudinal changes that resulted are the following reactions of workshop participants:

On new ways of thinking

“We feel motivated to think in innovative and creative ways. We have started looking at ourselves and our system. We have learned here how to plan things for a better future...what was our past...how are we faring today and what kind of planning do we need to do for the future? We have learned here that we need to help bring changes in our environment and our society.”

—Madrasa Teacher
“Attending the ten-day training gave me a new way of looking at the world. I feel I no longer react harshly toward my students . . . there would be peace in Pakistan if there were a way to have all madrasa administrators attend the workshop . . .”

—Madrasa Administrator

On curricular expansion and educational reform

“The importance of getting contemporary education has become all the more clear in our minds, thanks to this program. I personally feel it is essential to start teaching modern subjects in our madrasas”.

—Madrasa Teacher

“Before attending this program we had disrespect for science, but now we realize its importance. Learning and teaching of (physical and social) sciences is no doubt necessary.”

—Deobandi Madrasa Teacher

“Unfortunately the madrasa education system has deteriorated to the level, gradually, that we can hardly compare it with the system of education in Europe. We are not imparting quality of education in our madrasas. The reason we continue to be victimized lies in our negligence in education. It’s in our own benefit if we could start a kind of education to help our students understand the modern world and its requirements to grow and succeed. In my opinion, we should develop contacts with European and Western educational institutions and ask them what, why and how they are teaching so that we could improve our system by understanding theirs. Education is the only road that leads to success.”

—Ahle-Hadith Madrasa Teacher

On the desire for peace

“We feel motivated enough to realize that it is our duty to come forward and work for peace and stability in the world.”

—Madrasa Teacher

“We need to change ourselves in many respects for the sake of reaching reconciliation in the society.”

—Madrasa Teacher
On the need to promote tolerance

“Unfortunately the books we study or teach at madrasas contain arguments against other sects that make us intolerant to each other. Words have got sharp edges...we need to be very careful in using them so[as] not to hurt anybody. Difference of opinion is one thing...natural and well placed...but let’s not be on the extreme and let’s be good and gentle.”

—Ahle-Hadith Madrasa Teacher

“Tolerance and understanding are what is required when it comes to dealing with other religions. Every religion is good in its place.”

—Madrasa Teacher

“There are some ulama (religious leaders) who issue wrong fatwas against the common wisdom that demands us to keep good relations with the modern world.”

—Madrasa Teacher

“We must keep relations with non-Muslims and create opportunities to meet them more often. They are our brothers as well. Responsibility lies with ulema to make people understand this point.”

—Madrasa Teacher

On America and the West

“Before coming here we had apprehensions and suspicions particularly about the West and its culture. Now I think we can look beyond our prejudices and biases after attending this workshop.”

—Madrasa Teacher

“I felt all the anger and rage I have carried for so many years about the Americans washed away from my being . . . the ten days spent on learning and in reflections helped me put the pieces together to reach out in peace instead of constantly burning with anger.”

—Madrasa Administrator
**Evaluation Feedback Surveys of Madrasa Workshop Participants**

The following data comprises the results of evaluation surveys given to participants in 20 ICRD workshops conducted from February 2004 to August 2007. These workshops included madrasa faculty from each of the five sects and from all four provinces in Pakistan, as well as the territories of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Azad Kashmir (“Free Kashmir”, the name used for the Pakistan-controlled side of Kashmir).

**Overview**

Analysis of evaluation data gathered to date shows a highly favorable assessment of the workshops on the part of the participants, openness to devising ways for improving madrasa education and student development, and a desire for further training.

**Overall Response**

From the first feedback surveys conducted in early 2004, ICRD has received very favorable responses throughout the duration of the project. Overall, the program has been rated ‘Very Good’ or ‘Good’ by participants 92.5% of the time, with 65.6% of respondents reporting highest satisfaction in their experience; 2.9% and 4.7% offered ‘Reasonable’ ratings or ‘Don’t Know/No Response’, respectively.

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<th>Table 1: How do you rate the program overall? (Total)</th>
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<td>Don’t Know/No Response</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Due to rounding, figures on all tables may not add up to 100%.

130
The longer programs have always been particularly well received, achieving a 100% overall approval rating. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents gave the program a ‘Very Good’ rating, with 23% reporting a ‘Good’ experience. Although the longer format provides an opportunity to gather a greater number of suggestions and ideas for future topics and speakers, the programs have yet to receive any negative feedback.

With the additional questions in the feedback surveys, an attempt is made to determine what impacted the participants most and where improvement is needed.

**Duration and Pace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: How do you rate the program overall? (Long Programs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Is the duration of the program appropriate in your opinion, especially with respect to the topics covered in this training program?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration is appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration is insufficient to cover all topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration could have covered topics in less time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants often travel great distances to attend the workshops. This puts additional pressure on seminar coordinators and faculty to provide a complete experience, without overwhelming the participants.

Participants from six of the workshops were asked to rate the pace of the programs and to see if the variety of topics covered should be limited or expanded. Responses suggested a desire for greater focus on fewer topics, although the majority did feel comfortable with the duration.

As shown in Figure 1, participants were more likely to report dissatisfaction with duration in the medium-length workshops (3-5 days) than in the longer (6-10 days) workshops.
Participants were also asked to indicate the program topics that most appealed to them. As workshop topics varied according to the needs of the individual participants and the surrounding circumstances, it was difficult to determine the precise popularity of each topic, except for some of the most popular courses. Courses that focused on modern pedagogy and madrasa management were extremely well received, followed by programs on conflict resolution. It is interesting to note that practical subject matters share the top tier with ideological subjects.

Participants were also invited to suggest additional topics to include in future workshops. As Table 4 shows, participants expressed a strong desire for a continued focus on modernization.

---

66 Percentage represents portion of total responses (356).
Previous Experience

Participants were asked if they had previously been exposed to any similar form of organized enhancement programs. While some participants had taken part in previous workshops at different stages of our program, some had also participated in unaffiliated workshops. More than 50 of the 74 participants with previous experience had participated in workshops designed specifically to provide further training to instructors and faculty with whom ICRD had previously worked.

Extent of Enhancement

A key indicator of the program’s success lies in the extent to which participants feel that their knowledge has been enhanced. Only one respondent felt that his knowledge had not been.

Table 5: Have you attended similar programs before?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: To what extent do you think this program enhanced your knowledge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced very much</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced reasonably</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't enhance at all</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ICRD uses the most innovative instruction tools it can afford. Most of the equipment such as projectors, multimedia presentations, and whiteboards are quite common in developed countries, but many of the participants come from poorly funded madrasas, with no access to such instruments. By using modern tools of instruction, ICRD is able to present subject matter in a more compelling manner, and to expose participants to pedagogical innovation.

As Table 7 shows, the modern teaching aids were well received, with 63% of respondents indicating a strong preference for the modern aids and all respondents reporting some degree of satisfaction.

Table 7: How did you like the use of modern aids?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liked Very Much</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was Fine</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Like</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Like at All</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NR</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: To what extent do you think this program enhanced your knowledge?67

Modern Aids/Workshop Style

67 This graph reflects the difference in participant response to the longer versus the shorter workshops.
In addition to the modern equipment used for the workshops, an interactive atmosphere has also been beneficial. In many cases, the participants become eager to defend the tolerance of Islam when challenged. This often leads to a useful exchange of ideas, along with recitations of the most liberal and forward-thinking aspects of the Qur’an. This was found particularly useful in the area of women’s rights. As can be seen from Table 8, this interactive feature was also well received by participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8: How do you feel about the interactive style of the workshop in which participants were encouraged to ask questions freely and engage in frank discussion?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liked Very Much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was Fine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn't Like at All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Need for More Programs**

Participants were asked to give their opinions on the need for ICRD workshops for both faculty and students in order to gauge the effectiveness of the program and the perceived need for program expansion within the madrasa community. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of participants felt that there was a need for additional staff and faculty workshops and 92% felt that there was a need for student workshops.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9: To what extent is there a need to conduct these types of programs in your madrasa for teachers and administrators?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Much Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not particularly needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10: Is there a need to conduct such programs in your madrasa for students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Much Needed</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not particularly needed</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnecessary</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next Steps

The true impact of the project lies in actions rather than words. ICRD alone cannot improve the conditions of Pakistan’s madrasas; rather, the goal is to inspire instructors and faculty to do so when they return to their communities. Each participant knows best the weaknesses of his own madrasa, where he can make the greatest impact, and where he can employ the talents of colleagues.

Table 11: What two steps would you like to see implemented in your madrasa to improve the quality of your work after attending this workshop?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in teaching methodology</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional development</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement in the syllabus</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language (English/Arabic)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion of modern subjects</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student developmental activities</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of modern technology</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback has indicated an enthusiasm among madrasa teachers for putting into practice what they have learned. When asked what initiatives they wished to have implemented, responses included teaching English; computer training; group work and letting children learn from one another; promoting learning with “all the senses”; undergoing additional training programs both in Pakistan and abroad; and changing

\[68 \text{ Percentage represents portion of total responses (279).}\]
the teaching methodology and implementing “modern” teaching techniques.

Table 11 shows the most common enhancements the participants wished to see implemented in their madrasas. Language education and the inclusion of modern subjects are essential to broadening the world view of madrasa students. Rote memorization of the Qur’an in Arabic, without proper instruction in the Arabic language, does little to improve the student’s understanding of the complexities of Islam, and may in fact pose a danger by offering only a partial education. Being taught only to revere the Qur’an rather than understand it creates opportunities for manipulation. For example, the Qur’an expressly forbids torture, killing of innocents, terrorism, and aggression, but without critical thinking skills or a good understanding of Qur’anic Arabic, students are very easy prey to those who would misappropriate scripture in order to recruit these students to the militant cause.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal/moral/character development</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing educational efficiency/focused study</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of social sciences and contemporary issues</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training in time management and organization</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of modern techniques/ coaching in English</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More humane treatment/reduction of punishment/motivation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The workshops help madrasa teachers to realize the significant impact that they have on their students’ development. When asked for their ideas on how to aid their students’ personal development, responses included helping students take a genuine interest in their studies; including students in developing the lessons; encouraging questions; “letting children learn with freedom;” encouraging rather than criticizing or punishing students; taking steps to bring out student potential; devoting more attention to improving the students’ moral character; and “understanding modern needs”. Other participants responded resolutely, “I will start a new training system,” and “I will start teaching new books on the modern world.” Table 12 shows the most common participant responses.

---

69 Percentage represents portion of total responses (218).
English education and the inclusion of modern subjects create new opportunities for advancement. In the current environment, madrasa students graduate with little opportunity to earn a living outside of the religious community.

Facilities and Staff

ICRD’s trainers and management scored a rating of ‘Good’ or better 94.5% and 93% of the time, respectively, while 94.5% of respondents were satisfied with their fellow participants.

Table 13: Participant feedback on co-participants and staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Co-Participants</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Trainers</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Feedback for environmental factors relating to the workshops was also very positive, as the classroom and workshop environment received the highest rate of ‘Good’ and ‘Very Good’ evaluations at 97.6%. The hotel environment received the worst evaluation, although the majority found it favorable with 71.6% of respondents giving ‘Good’ or ‘Very Good’ evaluations.

Table 14: Participant feedback on environmental factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class room/ workshop</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Hotel Environment</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>75.6</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Bad</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opinion Surveys of Madrasa Workshop Participants

1.1 Overview

After some of the workshops, participants agreed to fill out opinion surveys. While many of the madrasa leaders felt uncomfortable putting their opinions on paper, a total of 415 were willing to do so. The following data comprises the results of opinion surveys given to participants in 19 ICRD workshops conducted from February 2004 to March 2007. These workshops included madrasa faculty from each of the five sects and from all four provinces in Pakistan, as well as the territories of the FATA and Azad Kashmir.

The surveys revealed positive attitudes on the part of most workshop graduates toward the inclusion of contemporary/mainstream disciplines in madrasa education, sectarian cooperation rather than conflict, rejection of the killing of innocents, respect for gender rights, and the obligation to help the oppressed. In other areas, such as the current effectiveness of madrasas, the desirability of relations with non-Muslims, and attitudes toward outside institutions, the responses were mixed.

1.2 Highlights

- More than 98% believed that religious leaders would be more effective if they were exposed to mainstream knowledge.

- More than 96% advocated the introduction of mainstream disciplines into the madrasa curriculum.

- Respondents unanimously agreed that it was incumbent on both males and females to seek education.

- Only 6.7% did not believe that killing innocents would necessarily be considered terrorism.

- While 87.5% believed that the participation of religious leaders in politics had significantly preserved religious values, 36.6% felt that this participation had hurt the religious leaders’ dignity.
• More than 92% felt that most of Pakistan’s national policies were influenced by America.

Survey Topics, Questions, and Responses

2.1 The Future of Pakistan

Statement: “The future of Pakistan is bright; there is no reason to lose hope.”

Respondents were asked to what degree they agreed or disagreed with the above statement. The overwhelming majority agreed with this statement; however, nearly 17% disagreed, with 7.2% responding that the statement was ‘Absolutely Wrong.’

Hope is an essential component if a country struggling with violence and poverty is to overcome these obstacles. If madrasa leaders can cultivate this optimism among their students, they will be less likely to fall prey to extremist organizations.

2.2 US Influence

Statement: “Most of Pakistan’s national policies are formulated under US influence.”

Overall, 92.3% agreed with the statement, with more than half (56.4%) of the respondents believing it to be ‘Absolutely Correct.’ Only 6.5%
of respondents disagreed with the statement.

The response to this question highlights the need to continue to build greater trust and mutual understanding between Pakistan and the United States and cooperation based on mutual respect.

2.3 The Role of Religious Leaders in Politics and World Affairs

Statement: Religious leaders’ participation in politics has contributed significantly to preserving religious values.

The vast majority (87.5%) of respondents agreed with this statement, but perhaps more surprising was the 10.1% of madrasa leaders who did not feel that the political activity of religious leaders had produced significant results in the preservation of Pakistan’s religious values.

**Table 17: Religious leaders’ participation in politics has contributed significantly to preserving religious values.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Correct</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Correct</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>39.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Wrong</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know/No Response</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statement: Participation in politics dented the dignity of religious leaders.

Despite the overwhelming approval of the impact of religious leaders in politics, the respondents had a mixed view of the impact of politics on religious leaders. Of the respondents, 36.6% agreed with the statement, while a slight majority (58.3%) disagreed.

**Table 18: Participation in politics dented the dignity of religious leaders.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Correct</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Correct</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Wrong</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know/No Response</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement: If religious leaders are exposed to mainstream knowledge, they can play their role more effectively.

The majority of the respondents, 68%, strongly agreed with this statement, which is a good indicator of the madrasa leaders’ willingness to embrace contemporary subjects for the improvement of their educational system.

Table 19: If religious leaders are exposed to mainstream knowledge, they can play their role more effectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Correct</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Correct</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Wrong</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Religious Education

Statement: Mainstream disciplines should be introduced in Religious Educational Institutions.

In this survey, 96.4% of respondents agreed that mainstream disciplines should be introduced to the madrasa curriculum. Stimulating such a willingness to embrace change and the teaching of modern subjects has been one of the key objectives of this project. As more and more madrasas express a desire to incorporate mainstream education into their curriculum, the challenge becomes one of securing the necessary resources and specialized content-specific training to enable them to do so.

Table 20: Mainstream disciplines should be introduced in Religious Educational Institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Correct</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Correct</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Wrong</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>415</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement: Madrasas are playing the desired role effectively; they do not require any change whatsoever.

While participants in the workshops have consistently advocated change in the madrasa environment, the response to this statement was mixed. A slight majority (53%) disagreed with this statement while 41.2% agreed. This statement also produced a disproportionately high ‘Don’t Know/No Response’ rate. If one looks at the sectarian breakdown of respondents, one finds a significant difference, with 58% of Deobandis (who are more influential than all of the other sects combined) expressing agreement compared to 27.2% of Ahle-Hadith respondents (who are in a distinct minority).

2.5 Treatment of Others

Statement: It is obligatory to help oppressed Muslims all over the world.
Statement: It is obligatory to help the oppressed even if they are non-Muslims.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 21: Madrasas are playing the desired role effectively; they do not require any change whatsoever.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement: Madrasas are playing the desired role effectively; they do not require any change whatsoever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 22: It is obligatory to help oppressed Muslims all over the world.</th>
<th>Table 23: It is obligatory to help the oppressed even if they are non-Muslims.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement: It is obligatory to help oppressed Muslims all over the world.</td>
<td>Statement: It is obligatory to help the oppressed even if they are non-Muslims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolutely Correct</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Correct</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Wrong</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absolutely Wrong</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>415</td>
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</table>

In these two statements there was only a 4.8% difference in agreement (98.55% - 93.73%) when the oppressed were non-Muslims.
The primary difference in these questions was that participants were 16.4% more likely to judge the statement to be ‘Absolutely Correct’ when the oppressed were fellow Muslims.

Statement: Killing innocents is terrorism, whether done by Muslims or non-Muslims.

| Table 24: Killing innocents is terrorism, whether done by Muslims or non-Muslims. |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|
| Absolutely Correct         | 288 | 69.4 |
| Somewhat Correct           | 85  | 20.5 |
| Somewhat Wrong             | 10  | 2.4 |
| Absolutely Wrong           | 18  | 4.3 |
| Don't Know/No Response     | 14  | 3.4 |
| Total                      | 415 |     |

When asked to agree or disagree with this statement, 89.9% of respondents gave the only answer consistent with the Qur’an:

"Nor take life -- which Allah has made sacred -- except for just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority (to demand retaliation or to forgive): but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life, for he is helped (by the Law)." [Qur’an 17:33]

ICRD’s madrasa project has always been firmly rooted in Islamic principles and has worked with madrasa leaders to promote greater adherence to these principles. Throughout history, terrorists have attempted to achieve credibility through divine mandate only to find in the end that divinity is their most powerful enemy. It is unfortunate that nearly 6.7% of respondents still cling to the notion that killing innocents may sometimes be acceptable.
2.6 Gender Issues

Statement: It is incumbent on both males and females to seek education.

The virtually unanimous agreement with this statement indicates a strong acceptance of a woman’s right to an education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 25: It is incumbent on both males and females to seek education.</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Absolutely Correct</td>
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<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
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Statement: The women’s rights given by Islam are, generally, not practiced in our society.

Almost 90% of respondents agreed with this statement, recognizing that the women’s rights sanctioned by Islam are not practiced in reality in Pakistan today. Recognition of this problem—and its contradiction with the true teachings of Islam—by madrasa leaders is critical to stimulating them to take action to change it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 26: The women’s rights given by Islam are, generally, not practiced in our society.</th>
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<td>Don't Know/No Response</td>
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2.7 Threats to Islam

Statement: Most NGOs try to misguide the new generation in the name of education and take it away from Islamic values.

The response to this statement reflects the distrust within the madrasa community of outside assistance, making the level of trust established with ICRD all the more remarkable.

| Statement: Most NGOs try to misguide the new generation in the name of education and take it away from Islamic values. |
|---|---|---|
| | Total | % |
| Absolutely Correct | 232 | 55.9% |
| Somewhat Correct | 124 | 29.9% |
| Somewhat Wrong | 21 | 5.1% |
| Absolutely Wrong | 15 | 3.6% |
| Don't Know/No Response | 23 | 5.5% |
| 415 | |

Statement: It is undesirable for Muslims to establish social relations with non-Muslims.

This was another statement that produced a very mixed response. Of the 377 participants that gave a response to this statement, about half thought relations with non-Muslims were permissible, while almost as many did not.

| Statement: It is undesirable for Muslims to establish social relations with non-Muslims. |
|---|---|---|
| | Total | % |
| Absolutely Correct | 93 | 22.4% |
| Somewhat Correct | 95 | 22.9% |
| Somewhat Wrong | 86 | 20.7% |
| Absolutely Wrong | 103 | 24.8% |
| Don't Know/No Response | 38 | 9.2% |
| 415 | |
Statement: The current trends in universities and colleges are leading students toward immorality.

The overwhelming agreement (87.9%) with this statement indicates that students of the madrasa community are not only leaving unprepared to pursue further education, but may also be biased against the university system.

2.8 Sectarian Relations

Statement: Regardless of the magnitude of differences among different schools of thought, they should cooperate and work collectively.

The overwhelming agreement with this statement shows the powerful desire for a retreat from the sectarian conflict that has plagued the madrasa community. Participants in the Deobandi workshops were far less likely to agree with the statement than participants in the workshops of the smaller Ahle-Hadith sect, who agreed unanimously.
**Figure 3: Regardless of the magnitude of differences among different schools of thought, they should cooperate and work collectively.**

**Evaluation Level II**

At this level, an effort was made to assess the participants’ desire to apply the skills and concepts learned through the project to the madrasa environment itself. Emphasis was also placed on indications of whether madrasas were or were not developing relationships of trust with other madrasas and with other segments of society. The ultimate indication of success at this level was the degree to which madrasas sought additional training to enhance their ability to implement the desired changes. The following are some specific highlights relating to this desire for further training and educational enhancement, attitudinal shifts, and efforts to reduce extremism and violence.

**Requests from Madrasa Leaders for Further Training and Educational Enhancements**

The greatest indication of the impact of the training programs is that the madrasa leaders, once highly resistant to the idea of change and distrustful of American organizations, are now constantly asking ICRD to conduct further training. This was almost unthinkable when the project began more than four years ago. Today, by contrast, the

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70 ICRD’s Project Director remembers contacting one particularly influential Pakistani religious leader at the beginning of the project, who hung up on him when he heard the Director was from an American organization in Washington, DC that was trying to engage madrasas. Recently, this same religious leader contacted the Director on his own volition, seeking to work with ICRD on madrasa enhancement.
demand for ICRD’s training has now reached the point where it greatly exceeds ICRD’s capability to respond at the current level of resources.

Particularly noteworthy is the fact that many madrasa instructors have expressed a desire for additional training in conflict resolution skills that will enable them to reach out in peace to other sects, religions, and cultures. Even the leaders of the ITMD Madrasa Oversight Board have asked for ICRD training for the teachers associated with the schools under their purview.

Equally of note, a number of these requests are coming from madrasas in the more “radical” areas, where the training workshops are also having an impact. Participants in one ICRD workshop in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) included faculty of a madrasa which is said to have trained most of the original Taliban leadership and still sends students off to fight on the Taliban’s behalf. In a significant breakthrough, this madrasa has now requested ICRD training for all of its faculty. At the end of this workshop, virtually all of the participants expressed a desire to “change their focus” and produce students who can engage in critical thinking, question authority, and effect positive social change. Other madrasas which have requested training include several influential madrasas in Binnori that could significantly reduce the level of sectarian violence in Karachi and Sindh Province (especially anti-Shia violence), and another madrasa which trained many members of the former Taliban regime. Its leader, who has participated in ICRD’s training, is now asking for assistance in teaching principles of peace and tolerance to the children of these Taliban members who are now students at his school. In another telling example, one remote village where sectarian violence had led to people being beheaded or burned alive is now hosting ICRD’s Ahle-Hadith workshops.

Numerous madrasas are also asking for ICRD’s assistance in securing the resources needed to modernize their facilities, including textbooks, computers, and salaries for teachers in the new disciplines.

Attitudinal Shifts and Acceptance of Others

Throughout the life of the project, there have been a number of significant attitudinal shifts. For example, during a training workshop for Deobandi madrasa leaders in Balochistan (the “hot zone” near the Afghan and Iranian borders), a famous Shia scholar was brought in to
address this Sunni audience. While Sunnis and Shia often consider one another as staunch adversaries, and periodic outbreaks of violence between these two sects are not uncommon, this Shia scholar was well-received by the Deobandi audience.

During another workshop, a group of university students had gathered outside with weapons after an altercation with the police. Although the conflict was unrelated to the workshop, the madrasa leaders feared that seeing leaders of different sects gathered together would further enrage the students, and ignite anti-Shia violence. Accordingly, the Sunni leaders formed a protective circle around the Shia leaders and walked through the crowd in that manner. When asked by the students who the unknown Shia men were, the Sunnis, replied, “They are our brothers.”

Throughout the project, it has not been unusual to see various madrasa leaders go out of their way to protect members of others sects and to alert them to threats, despite continuing ideological disagreements. After a Deobandi madrasa was bombed in late September, 2008, ICRD received calls from several Ahle-Hadith madrasas with whom it had been working, wanting to know what they could do to help.

Attitudes toward women have been similarly affected. During one workshop, for example, two female scholars spoke to an all-male audience of Deobandi madrasa leaders. Despite coming from one of the most radical areas of Pakistan, where tribal customs sanctioning violence against women still exist, at the end of the presentation several madrasa leaders asked if the women would be willing to come and speak at their own madrasas. One madrasa instructor frankly said, “I didn’t know that women can be so smart.” More significantly, madrasa leaders who formerly supported the practices of beating students and stoning women for specified offenses are now strongly opposing such practices.

Attitudinal shifts have taken place in even more far-reaching ways. At one workshop in which former members of the Taliban in Afghanistan were present, a discussion began about the conflict in Iraq. The ICRD facilitator posed questions such as, “Is it right for people who are perpetrating attacks there to disrupt the whole country just because they lost power and are humiliated?” Referring to the suffering being inflicted on the Iraqi people, these members answered no, and then
realized that the Taliban were creating the same situation in Afghanistan. The facilitator highlighted an opinion poll which showed that roughly 75% of Afghans did not support the Taliban, but did support Islamic law. The former members of the Taliban regime then came to see that the Taliban government may not be the best form of government, and that it would be possible for Islamic law to function in Afghanistan without Taliban rule.

Similarly drastic shifts in attitude occurred as a result of a series of December 2007 workshops on Islam, Elections, and Democracy. Some of the participating madrasa leaders had opposed democracy and refused to vote after reading the work of some prominent religious scholars condemning democracy and the electoral process. However, after participating in the workshop discussions with other Muslim scholars, they became convinced that voting was, in fact, a civic duty. With a reflective discussion on the topic, the participants quickly recognized the Islamic basis for democratic involvement and within a single day became champions of democracy. Acknowledging that the program had cleared up their misconceptions, participants pledged not only to participate in future electoral processes but to work to convince the public and the religious school students and teachers to vote. After the workshop, many of these madrasa leaders went on to give speeches at their mosques during Friday prayers about the importance of voting and democratic involvement. They passed out flyers on free and fair elections, posted large pro-democracy banners in their madrasas, and encouraged their students to engage in critical debate about Islam and democracy. Participating religious leaders also acknowledged the right of women to vote and the importance of women’s participation in the democratic process:

“We believe that . . . keeping the women out of the electoral process, who form more than half of the country’s population, is tantamount to disrespect for their opinion. We have decided to [be a] voice for the democracy in our preaching sermons and the Friday prayers . . . We will make our level best efforts to convince the people [to fully participate in the elections] . . . In this regard, the people related to the religious schools should also play their due role. We will also motivate the masses to go to polling stations and cast their valuable vote to the candidate who, according to their knowledge, is the best representative of the society and believes in service to humanity.”
As described in Chapter 5, there has also been growing support among those outside the madrasa community—e.g. officials in the US and Pakistani governments—who previously did not support madrasa engagement but who now are now demonstrating a willingness to engage madrasas and support ICRD’s efforts.

**Efforts by Madrasa Leaders to Reduce Violence and Radicalism**

Many madrasa workshop participants are using their positions of influence to speak out against extremism and to work toward reducing violence and radicalism in tangible ways. More madrasas are also taking a stand against militarism, intolerance, and violence in the name of religion. For example:

- During one workshop session at a madrasa widely known to be a major al-Qaeda feeder, a question was raised about whether attacks in Kashmir were permissible under Islam. After the moderator indicated that they were not, intense debate ensued among the madrasa leaders which, in turn, led to a consensus conclusion that the fighting was politically motivated but not religiously sanctioned. Now these same leaders are trying to figure out how to tone down the militancy of their graduates.

- Several months before the Red Mosque’s violent clash with the Pakistani government, one of its clerics appeared with three of his madrasa students at an ICRD workshop, threatening that these students were ready to become suicide bombers if the government did not submit to their demands. He also denounced the ICRD workshop and demanded to speak to its participants. The madrasa workshop participants stood up, told the cleric that he was not following Islam and was giving madrasas a bad name, and then escorted him out of the building.

- During the campaign of hardline cleric Maulana Fazlullah, whose militants fought the Pakistani army and took over areas of the Swat Valley in the Northwest Frontier Province, the students of one madrasa leader who had participated in an ICRD workshop were seen holding signs saying “Not in the name of madrasas.” This effort managed to keep
Fazlullah’s forces away from many of the madrasas in that area. Other madrasas have had intense campaigns against suicide bombing following ICRD workshops, teaching their students that those who commit suicide will go to hell.

- During one workshop, one madrasa leader related the following story: In his village in a remote area of Balochistan, where tribal traditions are dominant, a girl secretly made a telephone call to a boy she had met from a neighboring village. When this was discovered, tribal leaders decided they must be punished—the boy’s nose and ears were to be cut off, and the girl was to be killed. Such punishments are not uncommon; however, this madrasa leader said he felt compelled to challenge the decision on religious grounds because of a human rights discussion in which he had participated during the workshop. He went to the tribal leaders who had pronounced the punishment and used the conflict resolution skills he had learned to facilitate a dialogue. By pointing out that there are no prohibitions against women talking to men in the Qur’an and by emphasizing the principles of forgiveness also found in the Qur’an, he was able to resolve the situation without anyone being harmed. Hopefully, a precedent has been established for that village and perhaps others. This was a situation, though, in which religion trumped tribalism in a context in which even Muslims have trouble knowing where one ends and the other begins. And it is not always a given that religion will carry the day. As some tribal members are quick to point out, their tribal customs date back 3,000 years whereas Islam has only been around for 1400 years.

- The relationships formed with key members of the Pakistani madrasa community enabled ICRD and one of its indigenous partners to play an instrumental role in securing the release of the Koreans held hostage by the Taliban in the summer of 2007. The credibility and relationships of trust that have developed as a result of ICRD’s work in Pakistan have also

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begun to open doors to new opportunities in Afghanistan, including an initiative already in progress to bring that country’s religious and political leadership together in support of much-needed development assistance.)

Such successes have been largely due to the key principles underlying ICRD’s model: (1) empowering the madrasa leaders to help themselves (through giving them ownership in the process) and (2) basing all program initiatives on Islamic principles.

**Evaluation Level III**

At this level, the focus is on the degree to which madrasas are taking ownership and initiating programs on their own, including interfaith programs, and are committed to implementing difficult changes in their curriculum and pedagogy. Also of importance is the readiness of the madrasas to support large-scale infrastructural change and to compromise and collaborate with the Government of Pakistan. Here, a sampling of programs conducted by madrasa leaders on their own initiative is provided, as are the results of an independent, third-party evaluation of the ICRD madrasa project by the Washington-based Salam Institute for Peace and Justice.

**Programs Conducted by Madrasa Leaders**

As described in Chapter 4, a significant indicator of progress is the fact that graduates of ICRD’s Master Trainer programs are already conducting training workshops for other madrasa leaders, with more than 100 such one-day workshops conducted to date in Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh, and the Northwest Frontier Province.

Some madrasa leaders are also conducting specialized programs on their own initiative, without any prompting from or facilitation by ICRD. For example, one Ahle-Hadith madrasa leader who had undergone ICRD’s Master Training facilitated “circles of friendship” at his madrasa, where students and teachers meet and discuss issues such as the problem of intolerance in their society. Other madrasa leaders have formed their own inter-sectarian groups to facilitate dialogue on selected issues facing madrasas. Some madrasas have also begun exploring ways to bring local public school teachers in as volunteers to teach contemporary courses in math, English, or social studies during the evening hours.
One madrasa, which was previously linked in the popular media to the 2005 London bombers, is now conducting its own seminars on peace and interfaith understanding. Its leaders even invited ICRD’s President to participate in a special peace program to be held at their madrasa.

ICRD’s Deobandi partner, the Jamia Matleh Uloom madrasa, has shown great initiative in conducting several ten-day training workshops on its own for Deobandi madrasa teachers and administrators from Balochistan. Subjects covered included interfaith harmony, religious tolerance, and peace education; and special efforts were made to facilitate interaction between the participants and parties with whom they would normally have little interaction. Among the speakers in one workshop, for example, were a Muslim woman addressing the participants on the topic of human rights, an American political officer, and a madrasa leader who, after having visited America, spoke on the positive characteristics of American culture and the fact that most Americans do not hate Muslims. Workshop participants also visited a Christian study center as part of the program.

A special initiative has also been undertaken by ICRD’s Ahle-Hadith partner who heads the Muslim Christian Federation International (MCFI). This partner led an inaugural interfaith workshop in conjunction with the Christian Chapter of the World Council of Religions. This three-day workshop, held in Islamabad, brought together six Christian leaders and a like number of Muslim leaders. Muslim imams and Christian pastors lived together, prayed together, discussed their faith and their personal experiences, and reflected on how they could work together to build a more peaceful society. Topics of discussion included the belief that all people are created by the same God and deemed to be equal in His eyes; the free will given to all humans by God and the duty to protect religious freedom; the role of religion in peacebuilding; the importance of loving one’s neighbor as one’s self; and the need for further interreligious dialogue and cooperation to end religious persecution.

The above initiative grew out of an ICRD workshop in which Ahle-Hadith leaders, after a spirited discussion of Islamic teachings on religious tolerance and religious freedom, concluded that Christians must be allowed to proselytize without threat or punishment. These Ahle-Hadith leaders subsequently told Christians that they would offer their
assistance if these Christians were ever told by any Ahle-Hadith that they were not permitted to proselytize.

This first Muslim-Christian workshop proved to be such a moving experience that the Ahle-Hadith leader said he wanted to make it his life’s work. Two more such workshops were held, and ICRD was subsequently able to secure funds for the facilitation of five more Muslim-Christian interfaith workshops over the course of the next year. The first of these was held on August 26-28, 2008, in Abbottabad (Northwest Frontier Province).

This workshop brought together 22 Pakistani Muslim and Christian leaders, who built relationships, discussed their respective problems, and developed an action agenda for addressing these problems on a joint basis. At the conclusion of the workshop, the MCFI leader called upon the participants to prepare themselves to confront terrorists through their peaceful activities.

Participants in a subsequent meeting of Muslim and Christian leaders decided on the following steps to promote peace and reduce extremism:

1. Small groups of religious leaders will be sent to “sensitive” areas, where they will hold meetings with key individuals to advocate interfaith cooperation and the reduction of extremism.

2. Following these meetings, programs will be designed to decrease the level of social support for religious extremists and militants.

3. Participants will work to halt the dissemination of militant and extremist messages in areas affected by terrorism.

4. The religious leaders also decided to “convince the masses to defy extremists instead of surrendering to their demands.”

Following the program, Christian and Muslim leaders visited mosques and churches together to speak to the congregations, and a senior Christian bishop hosted an iftar dinner for Muslims at a church. The Lahore Station of Radio Pakistan also invited Muslim and Christian religious leaders to participate in its 30-minute “Waqt Ki Pukar” (“Time to Raise our Voice”) program to discuss interfaith harmony on September 12, 2008. This helped to convey the participants’ message to
the worldwide Urdu audience of the state-run broadcast. The second in this series of interfaith workshops was conducted on Nov. 18-20, 2008.

**Third-party Program Evaluation by the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice**

To assess the effectiveness of ICRD’s efforts to facilitate reform of the madrasas of Pakistan, the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice was engaged by a private foundation to conduct an independent, comprehensive third-party evaluation of the project. The Salam Institute, which has a history of conducting successful evaluations of programs involving such themes as democracy, nonviolence, pluralism, human rights, and peacebuilding as they relate to Islamic societies, conducted a program evaluation of the ICRD Pakistan Madrasa Project in May 2008.

In addition to extensive participant observation and numerous interviews, the Salam Institute’s on-the-ground evaluation activities included seven focus groups comprising a total of 62 madrasa administrators, teachers, and university professors who had participated in the ICRD programs, as well as surveys to which a total of 57 responses were received\(^{72}\).

The Salam Institute recently released its final report detailing the findings of its evaluation, which are being used to inform the future development of the project. The following represent some of the key findings of this report\(^{73}\).

**Necessity and Effectiveness of ICRD’s Madrasa Programs**

- ICRD’s Pakistan Madrasa Project “came at an excellent time in a context and process of change and is very relevant as it addresses an urgent need in Pakistan.” In addition to the improvement of teaching methods (pedagogical aspects of the training), the ICRD project is one of the very few madrasa programs “that directly focuses on themes of human rights, democracy, women

\(^{72}\) Some questions allowed multiple responses.

rights, inter- and intra-faith dialogue, and conflict resolution [sic]. . . . [The project] is absolutely relevant to the existing needs and wants of the madrasa leaders.”

- Focus group participants noted that there are “no safe spaces” in Pakistani society to explore differences and interact with people from other sects to learn more about their views and beliefs. The ICRD project provided a safe space for participants from different sects to come together and discuss various issues, thus fulfilling an important function in Pakistani society.

- The majority of survey participants were satisfied with ICRD, as 63.2% found the program extremely useful and 96.5% found ICRD qualified to carry out these activities.

- Ninety-one percent (91%) of survey participants felt that their abilities as administrators/faculty were enhanced; 78.8% felt that the ICRD project provided them with critical skills for carrying out their administrative/faculty responsibilities.

- All of the teachers who attended the focus groups confirmed their need for faster change and more intense programs to reform their system of teaching.

**Curricular Enhancement**

- The majority of focus group participants said the ICRD training programs and seminars have reduced their fear and concerns about the inclusion of sciences and secular subjects.

- A total of 92.9% of survey respondents felt that they better understand the importance of incorporating social and scientific disciplines into the madrasa curriculum, while 61.4% are teaching (and encouraging others in their madrasa to teach) social and scientific disciplines.

- A primary contribution of the ICRD programs, according to many of the teachers, is that they have allowed them to discuss reform openly with outside experts and have provided an outlet
for their concerns and needs with regard to how their schools can be integrated into the Pakistani educational system.

- Many of the participants felt that ICRD was effective in introducing the necessity of integrating principles of peace, tolerance, and dialogue into their curriculums and in introducing conflict resolution skills. Some participants shared how they have applied these skills.

- Many of the teachers in the focus groups asserted that they have already accepted the need to incorporate secular disciplines such as mathematics, sciences, and computers. However, they continue to focus mainly on religious themes and lack the means to fully integrate these new subjects. The madrasas lack resources such as textbooks, manuals, and computers. One teacher stated, “We don’t even have soap to give to our students so they could take a proper bath.”

**Pedagogical Enhancement**

- The ICRD project was effective in introducing new pedagogical styles and approaches, including critical thinking and problem-solving skills, to madrasa administrators and teachers. Seventy point two percent (70.2%) of the survey respondents felt that identifying and employing new teaching materials and styles was the most effective outcome of the program.

- According to the surveys, 63.2% of respondents felt that the most effective feature of the ICRD program was the interactive and experiential teaching style.

- Additionally, 98.2% of the participants considered interactive and hands-on learning and teaching methods as important (68.4% considered these very important) and 92% considered critical thinking skills as an important concept of the program (with 49.1% viewing it as very important).

- Fifty-six point one percent (56.1%) of the participants stated that they increasingly employ interactive and experimental teaching styles.
Many of the focus group participants and interviewees stressed that ICRD was successful in the reduction of harsh punishment and the improvement of teaching methods for madrasa teachers. Reducing the use of corporal punishment in madrasas has been one of the key behavioral changes that has occurred as a result of participation in the ICRD programs. On various occasions, teachers stated that they have stopped relying on physical punishment and have begun opposing the use of “extreme forms of teaching” after hearing the opinions of experts. Quotes from participating teachers are indicative:

“I learned that a teacher must treat his students the way he treats his own children. And now by learning this each time I try to punish students, my children’s face appears in front of my eyes, and then I try to be polite and loving towards my students [sic].”

“I learned that when we teach we shouldn’t behave like dictators and we, the teachers, need to create an environment where students become friends with the teachers. I applied this learning and found it really wonderful as now my students frequently ask me questions”.

According to the surveys, 98.3% of the participants regarded understanding the psychology of the education process as one of the most important concepts that they were exposed to during the training.

Teachers in the focus groups provided examples of how they began utilizing new teaching methodologies as a result of the ICRD workshops. Some of the new approaches included the use of blackboards, taking breaks, using poetry to energize and engage students, and developing students’ writing capabilities (as the traditional focus has been only on reading). Participants stated:

“Our teaching methods became different, for example only one hour and then take a break so students can be fresh
“and can focus; learn to change the subject when students are bored or disengaged, then they became active.”

“Students in classes were encouraged to talk and express their views.”

“I learned through this program that a teacher should be very well-prepared before giving a lecture in his/her class, so to teach the best of the best in the classroom. Also, I learned how to focus on students who aren’t that good in studies, and that a teacher should give them extra time too.”

**Promoting Tolerance, Peace, Human Rights—Attitudinal Changes**

- Ninety-eight point three percent (98.3%) of survey respondents agreed that they better understand the role of Islam in promoting religious tolerance and dialogue as a result of the ICRD program, with 66.7% strongly agreeing.

- All of the survey respondents stated that promoting religious tolerance and dialogue was the most important concept they were introduced to during the course of the project. Many of the participants stated that now:
  - they are more open to meeting with others,
  - their perception about other sects and religious communities has changed, and
  - they have a better understanding of the West and the United States.

- Additionally, 82.5% of the survey respondents felt that the most effective feature of the ICRD program was the teaching of conflict resolution skills. In terms of outcomes, 78.9% felt that inclusion of concepts of peace, tolerance, and human rights into the curriculum was the most effective; while 64.9% emphasized listening and working together with non-Muslims to create a more peaceful society and 52.6% emphasized the change in negative perceptions about non-Muslims and Western society and culture. (Note: The rating scale permitted multiple responses.)
According to survey results, 78.9% of the participants felt women’s rights to be one of the most important concepts they were exposed to during the program, while 57.9% felt that change in perceptions about the education and role of women in Muslim society was the most effective outcome of their participation in the ICRD Program.

Seventy point two percent (70.2%) of the participants stated that if there were an opportunity to do follow-up activities and apply their learning from the training, they would choose to work on teaching and encouraging others to teach Islamic principles and practices of interreligious/intercultural dialogue, human rights, democracy, women’s issues, and conflict resolution. Forty-nine point one percent (49.1%) of the participants indicated that if they had the opportunity, they would organize seminars and invite other scholars and non-Muslim members of their community to talk about peace, tolerance, and coexistence.

Forty-two point one percent (42.1%) of participants said they had “frequently” visited members of non-Muslim communities as a result of the ICRD program; 19.3% said they had “sometimes” visited these communities.

Participant quotes are indicative of these trends:

“I learned that when we are teaching we shouldn’t be criticizing other religions and we need to teach more about inter-religious understanding and harmony.”

“[American attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq] caused hatred against the US among the local people. Religious madrasas and religious people were misinterpreted and [the] wrong image was given. [The] situation was worse and tourists were attacked (but they were stopped by local Muslims). But now [after the ICRD program] they are against agitation and they want to educate people to record their protest peacefully and to remove the misperceptions about them in the world.”
One of the contributing factors to these changes of perception was the understanding that “Christians do care about Muslims”, that there are mosques in the United States, and that Muslims are free to practice their religion. According to one focus group participant: “Our misperceptions about Europe and America were corrected. Before we did not know that they care for Muslims and have mosques or freedom. This made our hearts soft and we thought if they can do that, why we cannot do the same here... we also corrected their perception that not everyone with a turban is a terrorist [sic].”

- Now 61.4% of the participants feel that they are committed to staying involved with issues of dialogue and tolerance, pointing to the fact that they have traveled such long distances, under extremely difficult conditions and threats to their lives, as a strong indicator of this commitment.

- According to the surveys, at least 40% of the participants are interested in participating in exchange programs where they can meet with scholars and religious leaders from different parts of the world; they were particularly interested in meeting Muslim scholars and teachers from the United States, as they were surprised to hear that Muslims could freely practice their religion and teach in America. This finding was supported by focus group participants, who showed an eagerness to join such programs and to learn about different religious traditions and cultures. While many of these teachers are isolated, they are also anxious to interact with people from other sects and faiths. “There is now a momentum and a desire to interact with the outside world which creates a unique window of opportunity for developing long-term constructive approaches to engaging with these institutions.” One participant stated:

“The trained people of different countries should get a chance to visit one another. It will give them help in developing a better understanding of each other and relevant issues. Those educators who are running madrasas in the US should visit and have interaction with their
counterparts/colleagues in Pakistan which would help them in better understanding of their pedagogies.

**Impact on Behavioral Changes**

- Fifty-nine point six percent (59.6%) of the survey participants indicated that as a result of their participation in the ICRD programs, they have started teaching and have encouraged others to teach Islamic principles and practices of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.

- Forty-three point nine percent (43.9%) of the respondents indicated that they have organized seminars and invited other scholars and non-Muslim members of the community to talk about co-existence and peace among others. Some of the participants organized meetings and workshops with other sects.

- Participants shared that after their experience in the ICRD training, they “stopped referring to the other sects as zallin [those who went astray].” The well-known head of one madrasa stated that “after the training I issued a statement to all faculty in the madrasa to stop teaching extreme narratives about the other sects.”

- One interviewee related the following story:

  “When parliament issued new rules on women rights, the madrasas began shouting, but in training we proposed that they draft a more scientific and well-researched response and discuss it. They also sent it to the parliament and it was discussed and gained significant attention from politicians. They gave the advantages and disadvantages. Your role as madrasa is to perform such duty of giving a learned Islamic response to such issues. Parliament members do not know religion.[sic]”
Survey results indicate that participants feel they have had some success in making others aware of the themes they have been exposed to in the ICRD trainings—42.1% of the participants felt that they have made others “very aware”, 35% “moderately aware”, and 21.1% “somewhat aware.” Focus group participants also stated that they have recommended the ICRD program to other teachers and briefed their principals about it.

In addition to teaching and encouraging others to teach these themes, 66.7% of the participants stated that they have incorporated these themes into their Friday sermons and other lectures. Friday sermons are one of the more effective ways of influencing the congregations of these religious leaders.

The ICRD program appears to have had the largest impact on the individual level. For example, one teacher called the ICRD program “the most influential event in his life and it changed his entire views about madrasas and ways of teaching and working with his students [sic].” One focus group participant stated:

“I used to ignore my wife and not interact with my children. They were afraid of me. They never told me about their lives. After these programs it changed.”

It is less clear how these changes are being implemented in the madrasas as a system or structure. According to participants, application of these new conflict resolution and teaching skills, as well as incorporation of new sciences and others disciplines into the madrasas, has not been easy due to lack of funding, books, manuals, or lecture outlines. Participants asked for specific lesson plans, textbooks, manuals, and other tools that they could take with them to apply in their schools.

**Recommendations**

ICRD should continue with its exposure programs, but focus on localized regional training that can produce more institutional effect. Investing in fewer madrasas, but with a higher and more significant number of participants from each madrassa, will produce more effective long-term outcomes. Madrasa
participants should also play a greater role in the design of the programs to ensure that they are tailored to their specific needs.

- In recruiting training participants, greater focus should be directed to “strategic targeting” of influential individuals, decision-makers, and heads or principals of madrasas who both can have a larger and wider impact in disseminating these ideas and also have the authority to implement them, including initiating changes in the curriculum.

- Workshop participants should be provided with more training resources that they can take back to use in applying what they’ve learned in their schools.

- ICRD should develop a systematic mechanism for monitoring whether the workshop participants have been able to apply skills and integrate themes learned in the trainings into their classes, use these skills in solving problems in their community, and continue to work with members of other sects or religions, as well as the impact on students. A more structured mechanism for monitoring the workshops conducted by Master Trainer program graduates should also be developed.

- ICRD should initiate follow-up activities for workshop participants, including meetings where participants can meet other participants and discuss how the program impacted them, what kinds of activities they have been engaged in, what challenges they have faced, and how they addressed them. Mechanisms to provide support for those who are facing difficulties trying to apply these newly-acquired skills to their schools or communities should also be developed.

- Exchange programs should be organized where selected scholars from Pakistan, the United States, and other countries can visit each other and participate in seminars, conferences, and workshops. This would create an opportunity for madrasa leaders to meet other religious leaders in their own contexts, clarify misunderstandings and contribute to changing negative stereotypes, and provide an opportunity for participants to exchange ideas and learn from each other.
It is now necessary for the Pakistan Madrasa Project to move to its second phase—institutionalization. In the difficult and volatile environment of Pakistan, institutionalization is necessary to sustain the project and expand its impact. To institutionalize the project, government institutions, local NGOs, and universities must be engaged and partnerships must be enhanced. As lack of resources invested in NGOs by the Pakistani government was cited as a limitation on the training programs by focus group participants, this is an area that should be explored. ICRD should also open a local office in Pakistan to enhance its capacity on the ground.

At the policy level: “The evaluation process demonstrates that change of perceptions of the teachers and madrasas administrators through this project contributes to a more pluralistic and democratic environment in Pakistan and especially among the communities which are under constant pressure from the militant Muslim groups to fight. As such, the [ICRD Pakistan Madrasa] Project provides clear evidence to US foreign policy experts that engaging with madrasas through educational reform and training is far more effective in changing perception than the approach of calling to demolish or abandon this school system in Pakistan or the Muslim world more generally.”

These recommendations confirm ICRD’s own assessment that the time has come to take the project to “scale.” The Madrasa Teacher Training Institute currently being developed to provide systematic training for and eventual certification of madrasa teachers is a key first step toward this end. What is further needed is a commitment of adequate resources by Pakistan and the international community to enable full-scale implementation of this enhancement initiative.

The Ever-present Hard Realities

While most of the evaluation results have been highly positive, there is still far to go in order to achieve large-scale social change within the madrasa community. Even among the madrasa leaders who have been engaged with ICRD, there remain many who still have reservations about working with Western NGOs and who are suspicious of perceived
Western intentions to secularize them. It is also the case that madrasa leaders who come to trust ICRD may still distrust America or the West more generally. In some cases madrasa leaders even retain suspicions about ICRD’s intentions as an organization, despite having built close relationships of trust with individual ICRD trainers. Even after the workshops, one may hear such comments as:

“Western NGOs come here to corrupt us.”

“Isn’t this just an American agenda?”

By the same token, other madrasa leaders have voiced suspicions that ICRD will not follow through in supporting them once they have gone out on a limb and participated in the ICRD program:

“Of course you will start something and not finish it . . .”

Workshop participants have also criticized the lack of manuals or other training materials that could be provided during the ICRD workshops for them to take back for use in their schools:

“We have not received specific lesson plans, textbooks, or manuals. . . Without these things it is difficult for us to put into practice what we have learned in the workshops.”

“We need skills to be used in the classes—to go beyond the awareness phase of the training.”

In addition, and despite the significant ownership that madrasa leaders have in the training process, 96.5% of the respondents to the Salam Institute surveys indicated that they would like to “play a greater role in deciding the nature and programming of the ICRD Program.”

Finally, the constantly-changing dynamics of the geopolitical situation inevitably affect ICRD’s work at the micro-level. When a US drone strikes a Pakistani madrasa or a Western newspaper is perceived to be insulting Islam, madrasa leaders become less willing to work with a Western organization like ICRD. Consistent engagement, transparency, and sustained trust-building remain key to addressing such never-ending challenges.
**Evaluation Level IV**

ICRD will continue to evaluate the project at each stage to assess and enhance its impact. As the project progresses even further, future evaluations will assess the degree to which the madrasas are initiating educational enhancement. The ultimate successful outcome would involve madrasas engaging with their communities in solving problems and coming to be viewed as peaceful institutions that provide an excellent education with proper religious and moral guidance. Further, the international community and the government of Pakistan would provide the needed support and work with the madrasas in developing the institutional capacity to provide a quality education that meets agreed-upon standards. Robust exchange programs would be conducted for madrasa students and teachers to develop a greater understanding of other cultures and educational systems. Chapter 7 outlines ICRD’s recommendations for achieving these outcomes, both within and beyond the scope of its own project.
Chapter 7

Conclusion and Recommendations

While madrasas have come under great criticism, particularly in the West, they have exhibited an openness to change, a desire to incorporate contemporary subjects, and, under the right circumstances, a willingness to work for peace. After more than four years of working with these madrasas, ICRD has completed the “winning the hearts and minds phase,” and is now at a tipping point where sufficient momentum has been achieved to take the effort to scale. Doing so will involve:

(1) working with selected Pakistani universities to develop a series of university training programs for madrasa leaders that will provide the basis for certification of madrasa faculty,

(2) engaging madrasa leaders in developing and implementing curriculum changes that reflect best practices from throughout the Muslim world,

(3) securing the necessary funding to modernize the schools and to provide teachers and textbooks in the new disciplines,

(4) providing vocational skills training and associated job opportunities for the madrasa graduates (through working with chambers of commerce and selected industry leaders), and

(5) deepening the level of madrasa exposure to and engagement with others through overseas study and exchange visits, interfaith and inter-cultural initiatives, and various other activities.

Recommendations for Madrasa Enhancement and Engagement

Policy:

After its extensive involvement with madrasa leaders, ICRD has come to recognize that there is a strong perception within the madrasa leadership that even if madrasas agree to the Government of Pakistan (GOP)’s conditions for madrasa reform, it is unlikely that the GOP will meet its associated obligations. By the same token, the GOP shares a
similar fear that the madrasa leaders will not totally honor their part of
the agreement. In order to overcome this mutual distrust, the madrasa
leadership and the GOP should engage in confidence-building measures
similar to those already initiated by ICRD. The following policy
recommendations are offered with these challenges in mind:

- The Government of Pakistan (GOP) should build consensus
  within the various governmental ministries and interest groups
  on a policy of madrasa reform that will be acceptable to the
  madrasa leaders, which must then be clearly articulated to the
  public. This policy should include the following components:

  (1) Constructive engagement with the madrasas, rather
      than their marginalization, should be the centerpiece.

  (2) The GOP should make explicit that madrasas are not
      to be used by the military or any political party to
      advance militancy, nor should they be encouraged to
      teach extremist views about any other group, country,
      or religion.

  (3) The same goals and standards articulated in Pakistan’s
      constitution for the social and moral development of
      its citizens should apply equally to madrasa students
      and their teachers. This should include mandatory
      training in human rights and religious tolerance for
      everyone.

  (4) The GOP should seek the endorsement of the madrasa
      boards for any proposed madrasa reform program.

  (5) In light of the above recommendations, the new
      madrasa reform bill, which has been negotiated over
      the past several years between the ITMD Madrasa
      Oversight Board and the former GOP Secretary for
      Religious Affairs, Vakil Ahmed Khan, should be
      signed into law as soon as possible. Among other
      things, this bill would provide for the creation of a new
      Inter-Madrasa Board that would oversee development
      of the enhanced curriculums and monitor the
implementation of the curricular enhancements. Female madrasa leadership should also be included in this initiative.

- Funding should be provided for the necessary resources (textbooks, content-specific and pedagogical training of teachers, facilities, etc.) to modernize the madrasas and enable them to teach each of the curriculum courses effectively, in accordance with standards agreed to by both the madrasas and the Government of Pakistan.

- At the district level, scholarship programs should be created to enable madrasa students and teachers to attend public universities or vocational centers.

- The FATA region should be integrated into the larger Pakistani political and educational systems, which will allow for greater integration of the FATA madrasas into the larger madrasa enhancement process.

- The US government and the rest of the international community should support policies of madrasa engagement rather than marginalization.

- The United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan should work in greater cooperation with local religious and tribal leaders to promote security and stability in the region.

- Local issues of injustice that enrage madrasa leaders and motivate extremism should be addressed. For example, lack of accessible and affordable legal services, particularly in rural areas, has led some religious leaders to take the law into their own hands. The development of community-based legal councils that could provide free services at the village/town level would offer an appealing alternative to violence.

- The United States and other international donors should hold the Pakistani government accountable in its spending, and should channel more educational aid through competent and trusted Pakistani and international NGOs. This will help address
existing perceptions of ineffectiveness of US aid and the Pakistani government, which contribute to resentment and hostility.

**Research:**

- Greater research should be conducted at the national/international level in order to develop more comprehensive data on Pakistan’s madrasas\(^{74}\). The following topics should be included in this research:
  
  - *The number of madrasas in Pakistan*—There is great uncertainty surrounding the actual number of madrasas in Pakistan, with estimates ranging from 20,000 to 25,000 (or more) throughout the country. Even the Government of Pakistan lacks comprehensive data on the number of madrasas in the country.
  
  - *The number of students in Pakistan's madrasas*—There is also little reliable data in this area, with estimates ranging from 1 million to 2 million or more students.
  
  - *The actual courses and content being taught in current madrasa curriculums*—Despite various studies on madrasas, it has been extremely difficult for scholars to acquire accurate information on madrasa curriculums\(^{75}\).
  
  - *To what degree individual madrasas are actually teaching modern subjects effectively*—For example, while subjects such as math, science, and English have been officially included in madrasa curriculums, in reality most madrasas still lack the resources and

\(^{74}\) ICRD has learned much from its own experience in this regard, but it is neither a research nor an academic organization and has worked with fewer than 2000 madrasas. Thus, a more comprehensive and systematic research effort is also needed.

\(^{75}\) Even one of the most notable works in this field, C. Christine Fair’s recently-released *The Madrassah Challenge* (United States Institute of Peace: Washington, DC, 2008), relied on information on madrasa curriculums and texts dated from 2002-2003 and 1987, respectively (p. 103-114).
training (and in some cases the will) to teach these subjects effectively.

- The methodologies and pedagogies currently being used in individual madrasas to teach the courses.
- The motivations and goals of madrasa teachers, and their attitudes toward issues of education, peace, and violence.
- The reasons parents choose to send their children to madrasas.
- The degree to which the students themselves desire to attend madrasas vs. other education institutions.

- A comprehensive needs assessment for enhancing the madrasa system as a whole should be conducted in partnership with the madrasas.

**Pedagogy:**

- Greater emphasis must be placed on the systematic pedagogical training of madrasa teachers, beyond curricular enhancements. By itself, official inclusion of “contemporary” subjects in madrasa curriculums is insufficient to make a meaningful difference. Even more critical are (1) ensuring that all subjects are taught in a way that promotes genuine learning and skill development and (2) an educational environment that promotes tolerance, human rights, and peace and which works against intolerance and violence.

- A system of madrasa accreditation and teacher certification should be put in place to ensure that madrasas are meeting mutually agreed-upon educational standards. These standards should be developed in full cooperation with the madrasas to ensure their ownership in the process. Toward this end, ICRD is currently working with the University of Karachi to develop a series of university training programs for madrasa leaders that will provide the basis for certification and set the stage for full implementation of the madrasa educational enhancements. If
these initial programs prove successful, this initiative will be expanded to other universities throughout Pakistan.

- Pedagogical training programs should include thoughtful treatment of the following:
  
  o Educational philosophy

  o Teaching methodology, with an emphasis on interactive and student-centered learning, and development of critical thinking skills among the students

  o Ethical principles and how they can be imparted to students and applied in the classroom environment, including:
    - Tolerance, diversity/pluralism, and inter-/intra-faith relations
    - Human rights
    - Conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peacemaking

  o Classroom management and organizational development

  o Child development, psychology, and emotional intelligence, including the impact of fear and trauma on children and the influence of the teacher as a role model

  o Reflective practice and the ability to evaluate one’s own teaching style and the learning styles of one’s students and then to adapt one’s teaching accordingly

Curriculums:

- Place greater emphasis on principles of religious tolerance, human rights, peace education, and conflict resolution skills in the teaching of both the social sciences and the religious courses. Areas of emphasis should include:

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76 The following curricular recommendations include ideas of the madrasa and religious scholars engaged by ICRD and ICRD’s own recommendations.
The historical achievements of Islamic societies in promoting respect for and protecting the rights of others, and how these principles should be applied in today’s setting.

Principles of nonviolence and historical nonviolence movements (particularly in Islamic and religious contexts).

Historical conflicts, their sources, their consequences, and examples of successful conflict resolution initiatives.

Comparative studies of the principles and practice of human rights in various cultural and religious contexts.

Studies of world cultures, with an emphasis on intercultural communication and understanding.

International organizations and their roles in areas such as conflict, peacebuilding, and human rights.

The role of religion/religious institutions, civil society, and youth in peacebuilding.

Include/expand courses on the comparative study of religions, with an emphasis on promoting religious tolerance and interfaith understanding.

Madrasa scholars engaged by ICRD have suggested an emphasis on the study of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity in addition to Islam, and have compiled a list of specific topics of study for each religion and an accompanying list of suggested texts.

Madrasa scholars have also suggested an emphasis on comparative study of the following themes:

- Concept of God
- Concept of Prophet-hood
- Concept of Good and Evil
- Moral and Spiritual Values
- Place of Man in the Universe
- Man’s Relationship to God
- Concept of Worship
- Concept of Afterlife

- The study of other Islamic schools of thought should also be included.

- Interfaith/inter-sectarian dialogue initiatives should be facilitated with faculty and students of others sects/religions.

- Incorporate into the classes on Polemics/Debate/Refutation the principles of Dialogue.
  - Enable students to understand the difference between debate (which emphasizes argumentation, disagreement, and the refutation of other points of view) and dialogue (which emphasizes mutual understanding, the search for areas of agreement, and openness to other points of view) and to build practical skills in each.
  - Emphasize the development of communication and listening skills.
  - Facilitate hands-on experience in engaging in dialogue with people of other sects, religions, or points of view.

- Within the teaching of the social sciences, include a greater emphasis on history, geography, economics, and social development.

- Within the General Sciences, incorporate up-to-date content on technology, including the introduction of computer courses.

- Provide vocational training programs for madrasa students, emphasizing locally-relevant employable skills development. Partnerships with local business councils and leaders and existing vocational institutes can be explored for this purpose.
- Incorporate additional texts to complement (not replace) existing classical texts which are being used in madrasas, many of which are at least 500-700 years old or older.
  - Current texts are particularly needed in the areas of *ijtihad* (reinterpretation of Islamic traditions) and the sciences. Such texts can show the evolution of ideas on Islamic jurisprudence.
  - Books explaining various schools of thought should be incorporated into Islamic studies courses, with refutation texts balanced by texts that promote a better understanding of other points of view.

- An integrated curriculum should be developed that not only details the courses and content to be taught at each level, but also includes the criteria for the specific concepts, skills, and *values/principles* that students should develop at each level. This curriculum should include the following:
  - A philosophical statement for each course
  - Objectives for concepts and skills that students should develop in each course at each level
  - Objectives for values/principles that students should learn in each course at each level
  - Guidelines/Methodologies/Activities that should be utilized by teachers to achieve these objectives
  - Skills/Knowledge that teachers must have to put into practice these Guidelines/Methodologies/Activities
  - Suggested texts and supplementary materials for each course
  - Aspects of student/child psychological, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of which teachers should be aware at each level
In order to develop the above-described curriculum, selected madrasa leaders and scholars of each sect should: (1) undergo a program of in-depth training in research methodology, critical and reflective thinking and analysis, and comparative scholarship; (2) engage in a rigorous study of best practices in various educational fields and contexts, both in Pakistan and abroad; (3) develop the curriculum framework for each of their sects; and (4) work within a mechanism or subcommittee of the newly-created Inter-Madrasa Board to ensure that these curricular recommendations inform the development and enhancement of the madrasa curriculums on an ongoing basis. ICRD can facilitate a pilot program to create a model for this initiative which would become a sustainable component of curricular enhancement under the Inter-Madrasa Board.

Madrasas should make their curriculums more accessible to those outside the madrasa system in order to dispel suspicion and promote greater understanding between the madrasas and other academic communities.

*Exchange and Exposure Programs:*

The level of madrasa exposure to and engagement with others should be deepened through overseas study and exchange visits, interfaith and inter-cultural cooperative initiatives, and other activities.
Appendix 1

Data

The following section provides a summary of demographic data on the ICRD programs. ICRD is continuing to gather data on additional workshops that are currently being conducted by its indigenous partners.

Figure 1: Distribution of Activities (Workshops and Policy Seminars) by Province
Figure 2: Activity Participation*

*“Repeated” refers to the estimated number of people and madrasas who participated in more than one activity.

Figure 3: Total Activity Participation by Year*

*Numbers include “repeated” participants and madrasas.
Figure 4: Types of Activities

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<th></th>
<th>One-day Workshops</th>
<th>Core Workshops</th>
<th>Thematic Workshops</th>
<th>Policy Seminars</th>
<th>Master Trainings</th>
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<td>7.6</td>
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<td>5</td>
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Figure 5: Activities by Duration

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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 days</td>
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</table>
Figure 6: Activities with Partners

- USIP: United States Institute of Peace
- JMU: Jamia Millia Islamia
- MCFL: Muslim Christian Federation International
- AF: Asia Foundation
- IPS: Institute of Policy Studies

Figure 7: Sect Affiliation of Activity Participants*

- Jamat-e-Islami: 2%
- Shia Ithna'ashri: 2%
- Bareilly: 9%
- Ahle-Hadith: 36%
- Deobandi: 51%

*From a sample of 674 participants who reported individual sect-affiliation.
**Figure 8: Activities by Predominant-Sect Participation**

**This graph shows the breakdown of activities by the predominant sect of the participants, though individual sect-identification data could not be collected from all participants for each activity. Although not listed, many of these workshops included Shia and Jamat-e-Islami representatives.**

**Figure 9: Gender Breakdown of Activities**

**Percentage**  
- Deobandi: 65.5%  
- Ahle-Hadith: 19.3%  
- Mix: 13.8%  
- Bareli: 1.4%

**Total**  
- Female Madrasas: 1%  
- Male Madrasas: 99%
Appendix 2
Partnerships

The following organizations have worked in collaboration with ICRD to facilitate various aspects of the Pakistan Madrasa Project.

Pakistan
- Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)
- Jamia Matleh Uloom (JMU)
- Muslim Christian Federation International (MCFI)
- Teachers’ Development Centre
- University of Karachi

United States
- United States Institute of Peace (USIP)
- Salam Institute for Peace and Justice
- Asia Foundation (TAF)
- International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT)
- Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University
- International Reading Association
- Pakistani American Leadership Center (PAL-C)
- Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
- InterFaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC)
Appendix 3

Recommendations for the Pakistani Educational System

Although the public school sector has not been the focus of ICRD’s work, it is useful to understand why the overwhelming challenges confronting this sector have contributed to the explosive growth of the madrasas. A meaningful overhaul of the public sector would likely take upwards of 10-20 years to achieve. Once achieved, however, it would not in any case relieve the strong demand for religious education that exists throughout the country. Thus, while it is absolutely necessary to devote greater resources and attention to public education, this in and of itself would not address the deeper challenges posed by the madrasas.

While the problems described below are numerous and widespread, a number of highly dedicated people have been working to address them, within both the Government of Pakistan (GOP) and the international community. Further, the newly-elected GOP administration has a unique opportunity to take a substantial step forward toward this same end, if it will seize the moment.

The Public Sector

Overview

The challenges facing Pakistani public education have been well-documented. As summarized by Shahid Burki, former Pakistani Finance Minister and Vice President of the World Bank:

“There are in all 155,000 schools in the public educational system. Most of them are poorly managed, impart education of poor quality, use poorly written textbooks and use curricula that are not relevant for the needs of the 21st century. Reforming the entire system, therefore, is of critical importance.”

Despite the earnest efforts of domestic and international assistance agencies, overburdened teachers, concerned parents, and dedicated students, the educational prospects for many young Pakistanis are bleak, and improvement has been slow to occur.

A myriad of obstacles have plagued the system over the years, including corrupt bureaucrats, disinterested administrations, decaying and inaccessible schoolhouses, and a curriculum designed to encourage rote memorization of information that is often inaccurate and may even contain extremist ideology. All of these elements create an atmosphere that generally fails to encourage critical thinking and holistic development. Many parents, frustrated by deficiencies in public education, financial strains, or safety concerns, limit the education of their children or even deprive them of it entirely. The task of making quality education accessible to the nation’s children is both formidable and daunting.

**Education in the FATA**

While educational challenges exist throughout Pakistan, special attention should be given to those areas where the government has virtually given up. It is particularly critical to address the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), where education and literacy do not exist on any meaningful level.

The late Benazir Bhutto, during her political campaign on behalf of the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), petitioned for greater inclusion of the FATA in the political process. According to Bhutto, the political system in the FATA has been turned over to the madrasa- and mosque-based religious parties. The FATA is currently without real representation in legislative activity within Pakistan.

Educational infrastructure in the FATA is virtually non-existent. According to the FATA government website, overall literacy is 17.42%, while female literacy is only 3%.

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At present there is no over-arching strategic vision for the future of FATA being articulated by the ruling parties. Such a vision should be based on direct consultations with the people of FATA to bring the region into the fabric of Pakistan’s constitution and laws, offering them the same political, social and educational rights and opportunities that are available to all Pakistanis.\(^80\)

The Political Parties Act does not extend to the FATA, although residents were granted suffrage in 1997. Representation of the FATA in the National Assembly is quite unusual—while FATA legislators are allowed to vote on national matters, they are prohibited from voting on matters relating to the FATA.

Citizens of the FATA are also in desperate need of judicial reforms. As described by the International Crisis Group (ICG):

\[
\text{There is no right to legal representation, to present material evidence or cross-examine witnesses. Those convicted are denied the right of appeal to the Peshawar High Court or the Supreme Court of Pakistan.}\(^81\)
\]

The implications of this lack of political representation in the FATA on its educational infrastructure are profound. Public education in the FATA is not an indigenous program, and the concerns of its citizens are given no voice in policy-making. Promises of educational investment on a federal level have generally been cosmetic at best. Distrust of government institutions, especially those pertaining to education, is the logical consequence.

Were the FATA to achieve political representation, the education sector would be one of the greatest beneficiaries. The local population is aware of the non-existent social mobility of their children, and educational reform would be a high priority.


Funding of the Public School Sector

Government spending on public education in Pakistan is extremely low, but lack of investment is only part of the problem. The public education sector also suffers from bureaucratic complexities and corruption.

Table 1: Public Education Spending as a % of GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

In his 2005 testimony before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Shahid Burki highlighted some of the problem areas of the public education sector:

“It is well known that the state pays to a large number of ‘ghost teachers’ who don’t teach but turn up to collect their monthly pay checks. It is also well known that the annual recurrent cost in well-managed private schools that are able to provide high quality education is one-half the recurrent cost of public schools.”

The International Crisis Group’s 2004 report, Pakistan: Reforming the Education Sector, confirms some of Mr. Burki’s concerns:

“Political appointments in the education sector, a major source of state employment, further damage public education. Many educators, once ensconced as full time civil servants, rise through the system despite having little if any interest and experience in teaching. The widespread phenomenon of non-functional, even non-existent "ghost" schools and teachers that

exist only on paper but eat into a limited budget is an indication of the level of corruption in this sector. Provincial education departments have insufficient resources and personnel to monitor effectively and clamp down on rampant bribery and manipulation at the local level.”

Unfortunately, this climate breeds understandable concern and frustration among international donors. The Government of Pakistan has been slow to address the accountability vacuum in the public education sector, which discourages domestic and foreign investment.

**Conditions of Public Schools**

A public primary school in Pakistan is frequently housed in a sparse building, and many operate without electricity, restrooms, drinking water, or furniture. In some cases school buildings are considered “dangerous” or in need of major repair.\(^85\) The accessibility of schools is another problem, particularly in the rural areas where children often walk long distances over harsh terrain in order to attend.

| **Table 2: Conditions of Public Primary Schools** |
|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| **Number**      | **%**     |
| Primary Schools | 105,526   | 100%   |
| Schools w/o Electricity | 64,954 | 61.6% |
| Schools w/o Gas | 102,884 | 97.5% |
| Schools w/o Telephone | 100,778 | 95.5% |
| Schools w/o Textbooks | 24,870 | 23.6% |

*Source: Government of Pakistan*\(^86\)

These conditions produce a challenging environment for students and instructors alike, and many parents are understandably hesitant to send their children to such schools. In an interview with the International Crisis Group, social activist Aurangzeb Tanoli illustrates the difficult decisions a Pakistani family may face:

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\(^86\) As Cited by M. Bano. *Pakistan: Country Case Study* (UNESCO 2007)
“Families want to send their children to school. But they are not going to send them to school, especially girls, if it means the child has to walk for 40 minutes up and down a rocky hill. Or if it means that in the schools they’re thrown into one room like goats or sheep, with over 60 students in a single classroom.”  

With low budget allocations for non-recurrent expenses such as structural repair and new facilities, the conditions of Pakistan’s public schools are not expected to improve substantially in the foreseeable future, leaving students in a learning environment that is unsanitary at best and life-threatening at worst.

**Intolerance and Inaccuracies in the Public School Curriculum**

Another key challenge for the public school system is improving the quality of the curriculum. One study, *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan*, by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Pakistan, documents instances of inaccurate or inflammatory statements. The following are examples taken directly from public education lesson plans and documents.

Biased statements or intolerance against India and Hindus:

“*The religion of the Hindus did not teach them good things—Hindus did not respect women.*”

“*…India’s evil designs against Pakistan…*”

“*[The] Hindu has always been an enemy of Islam.*”

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Incidents of propagandistic or revisionist history:

In 1965, “the Pakistan Army conquered several areas of India, and when India was on the point of being defeated she requested the United Nations to arrange a cease-fire.”\(^93\)
(There is no evidence to support this statement.)

“Whitewashing” of events such as General Zia-ul-Haq’s coup and imposition of martial law:

“It was announced that elections will be held within 90 days and power handed over to the representatives of the masses, but the elections scheduled to be held in 90 days were postponed for unavoidable reasons”.\(^94\)

**Performance: Results and Trends**

Primary social indicators reveal the predictable results of a public education system facing such challenges. As shown in Table Three, literacy rates are not only significantly low, but vast discrepancies exist along gender and geographic lines.

The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) in Pakistan is lower than every other South Asian country with the exception of Afghanistan\(^95\). In

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindh</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWFP</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balochistan</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: GOP Ministry of Education*

\(^95\) As Cited by M. Bano, *Pakistan: Country Case Study* (UNESCO 2007)
secondary education, Pakistan’s GER levels are among the lowest in the world, significantly lower than many countries in conflict such as Sudan. Unfortunately, Pakistan has had little success to date in improving its secondary GER.

Table 4: Enrollment Ratios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross Enrollment Ratio, Primary</strong> (Total)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gross Enrollment Ratio, Secondary</strong> (Total)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

Regional/Gender Disparity

The state of Pakistan’s economy appears to have little impact on the public education sector. Even as Pakistan’s annual GDP growth rate averaged 7.5% from 1980 to 1985, the literacy rate of females in 1985 was a meager 19%; twenty years later the female literacy rate had increased to only 36%.

Those living under the poverty line suffer the greatest from the lack of educational infrastructure.

The enrollment rate in primary education is 40 percent among the poorest 10 percent of the population, while the children of the richest 10 percent have reached 100 percent enrollment. Moreover, nearly 40 percent of children belonging to the poorest quintile drop out of school by grade four. The comparable figure for children belonging to the richest quintile is only 12 percent. It can thus be seen that a majority of the children belonging to

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the poor families are not acquiring the basic skills that would equip them to participate in the country’s economic development while the children of the rich families are better off.  

Role of US Assistance

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has been making efforts to assist Pakistan in improving its public education system. Since 2001, 2% of total USAID funding in Pakistan has been directed towards education, with mixed results. Some programs, such as the $11.7 million FATA School Rehabilitation and Construction Program which has refurbished or built at least 50 public schools in the troubled region, attempt to fill a critical need (although they may be unable to address the underlying issues of bureaucratic corruption). More recent programs, such as the 2007 Links to Learning (ED-LINKS) program, should have a greater impact on the quality of education in Pakistan, to the degree that they address teacher education and professional development, student performance, and institutional governance. Another program, the Interactive Teaching and Learning Program, has been helpful in improving enrollment and retention in target schools.

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101 The Federally Administered Tribal Areas School Rehabilitation and Construction Program was implemented in May 2004 and completed in June 2008. More information on this program can be found on the USAID website: <www.usaid.gov/pk/education/index.htm>

102 The Links to Learning: Education Support to Pakistan (ED-LINKS) Program was launched in Oct. 2007 and is expected to run until Sept. 2012. It has a current funding allocation of $90 million and will affect the Sindh, Balochistan, FATA and Islamabad Capital Territory. More information on this program can be found on the USAID website <www.usaid.gov/pk/education/index.htm>

103 The Interactive Teaching and Learning Program was launched in Feb. 2006 with a $7.8 million budget allocation and will end in Feb. 2009. It is expected to affect more than 110,000 students attending 399 partner schools. More information on this program can be found on the USAID website: <www.usaid.gov/pk/education/index.htm>
**Private Education**

The role of private education is increasing, but the resilience of this sector has been historically weak in times of instability. In just eight years (1991-1999), the number of private schools in Pakistan grew from around 1,000 to nearly 8,000, with the sharpest increase coming in 1997-1999\(^{104}\). This period marked relative stability in Pakistan under Nawaz Sharif.

While the current enrollment share of private schools is a reported 36\%,\(^{105}\) female students are still underrepresented, and the quality of the prestigious, more expensive schools for middle- or upper-class students differs greatly from the poorer-quality schools for children of the lower classes. Private education is rare in provinces such as the NWFP and FATA where poverty levels approach 50\%\(^{106}\) and 66\%\(^{107}\), respectively. In these underdeveloped and impoverished regions, private education of even meager quality tends to either be physically or economically inaccessible.

**Recommendations for NGO Donors**

I. **Ensure that assistance is accompanied by unprecedented oversight**

The money must reach the children for which it is intended; aid without accountability encourages corruption. Independent verification that social investment is finding its intended target should be required.

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II. Consider in-kind donations

Donations such as textbooks, teacher training, and school repairs are desperately needed and easier to monitor.

III. Become familiar with the common forms of corruption

Develop an understanding of the existing forms of corruption. For example, caution is in order when funding the building of a school, since the school has the potential to become a “base” for politically appointed “ghost teachers” who visit the school only to receive their paychecks.

Recommendations for Foreign Governments and Multinational Organizations

I. Create verifiable benchmarks for progress

Foreign governments and organizations such as the United Nations and World Bank should require strict and independent reporting of benchmark achievements. Donors should verify that projects are being carried out in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

II. Develop realistic timeframes

Donor countries should be mindful of the unstable political climate of Pakistan and develop contingency plans for deteriorating relationships, intensified internal conflict, and shifting priorities. These circumstances are often difficult to predict and are clearly beyond the influence of donor countries. Projects should be designed to produce incremental progress, and should not rely on extended periods of stability. Pakistan has yet to experience a decade without a military coup or imposition of martial law.
III. Balance military and social assistance

In 2004, the Government of Pakistan spent $16 on its military for every $1 allocated to education.\textsuperscript{108} Congressman John Tierney, Chairman of the House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, pointed out in his opening statement during a May 9, 2007 hearing on “Extremist Madrassas, Ghost Schools, and US Aid to Pakistan: Are We Making the Grade on the 9/11 Commission Report Card?” that the United States gives Pakistan $15 in military assistance for every $1 in education aid.\textsuperscript{109} USAID’s education program provides $64,000,000 in assistance for Pakistan’s 55,000,000+ school-age children or $1.16 per child.\textsuperscript{110}

Recommendations for the Government of Pakistan

I. Address corruption wherever it may exist

Reform cannot occur without addressing the corruption that may exist among both teachers and officials who have appointed them.

II. Demand accountability for recurring expenses

Recurring expenses comprise an overwhelming majority of the overall education budget, with salaries taking the greatest share. This area poses a particular risk for corruption.

\textsuperscript{109} R.J. Tierney. Opening Statement, Extremist Madrassas, Ghost Schools and US Aid to Pakistan: Are We Making the Grade on the 9/11 Commission Report Card? 110\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} Sess. 9 May 2007
\textsuperscript{110} R.J. Tierney. Opening Statement, Extremist Madrassas, Ghost Schools and US Aid to Pakistan: Are We Making the Grade on the 9/11 Commission Report Card? 110\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} Sess. 9 May 2007
III. Increase funding for educational development and repair of institutions

The physical infrastructure of the public school system is in a shambles. Parents are hesitant to send children, especially female students, to dangerous schools. In many cases schools operate without a structure of any kind. Schools must be equipped with the necessary facilities to provide a safe and healthy learning environment.

IV. Provide quality training to teachers

Public education teachers are often poorly trained and ill-equipped to do their jobs. Teacher training centers exist, but are often of poor quality and rely on politically-appointed management. In addition to greater funding, such centers should adopt a merit-based system of management, seek affiliation with respected universities in both Pakistan and abroad to share expertise and facilitate teacher exchanges, and develop a system of accreditation to promote a more competitive climate.

V. Revitalize the curriculum

A modern and tolerant curriculum is necessary to give students the opportunity to participate in the global marketplace. The benefits of an improved curriculum would not be confined to the students; it would improve the national economy, reduce poverty and crime, and create a fertile environment for foreign direct investment.

VI. Create special schools for girls

Many parents, particularly in rural areas, are reluctant to send their daughters to study with male students or male teachers, out of concern for privacy and safety. They also hesitate to allow them to travel long distances in order to attend classes. Thus, separate and locally-accessible schools for girls should be created, especially at the elementary level and in the rural areas. These schools should be sanitary, well-equipped, and provided with certified teachers.
VII. Create channels of communication and cooperation between parents, teachers, and officials

The parents of students have to be engaged in the public education system, and their concerns must be addressed. Without access to decision-makers and school staff, parents may feel ostracized and powerless. Local governments in each district section should allocate specific funding for the creation or enhancement of Parent-Teacher Associations, which would conduct workshops to help parents understand how children learn, what they should expect from the schools, and the role of parents in a child’s education. These associations should be able to assume independent oversight of their local public schools within five years.