

# Education Reform in Pakistan

Asia Report N°257 | 23 June 2014

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## *Executive Summary*

In April 2010, the eighteenth constitutional amendment committed Pakistan to free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of five and sixteen. Yet, millions are still out of school, and the education system remains alarmingly impoverished. The madrasa (religious school) sector flourishes, with no meaningful efforts made to regulate the seminaries, many of which propagate religious and sectarian hatred. Militant violence and natural disasters have exacerbated the dismal state of education. Earthquakes and floods have destroyed school buildings in Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Punjab, disrupting the education of hundreds of thousands of children. Militant jihadi groups have destroyed buildings, closed girls' schools and terrorised parents into keeping daughters at home; their attacks made global headlines with the shooting of schoolgirl and education activist Malala Yousafzai in October 2012. The public education system needs to foster a tolerant citizenry, capable of competing in the labour market and supportive of democratic norms within the country and peace with the outside world.

More than nine million children do not receive primary or secondary education, and literacy rates are stagnant. Pakistan is far from meeting its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of providing universal primary education by 2015. The net primary school enrolment rate in 2012-2013 is a mere 1 per cent increase from 2010-2011. There are significant gender disparities and differences between rural and urban areas. The combined federal/provincial budgetary allocation to education is the lowest in South Asia, at 2 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

If Pakistan is to provide all children between five and sixteen free and compulsory education, as its law requires, it must reform a system marred by teacher absenteeism, poorly maintained or "ghost schools" that exist only on paper and a curriculum that encourages intolerance and fails to produce citizens who are competitive in the job market. Private schools, increasing largely in response to these shortcomings, account for 26 per cent of enrolment in rural areas and 59 per cent in urban centres but vary greatly in methodology, tuition and teacher qualifications.

The eighteenth constitutional amendment devolved legislative and executive authority over education to the provinces to make it more responsive to local needs. Given the scale of those needs, donors and the private sector must be key partners, but provincial governments need to become the principal drivers of reform. They should reverse decades of neglect by giving government-run schools adequate materials and basic facilities such as boundary walls and toilets. They should also tackle teacher absenteeism and curb nepotism and corruption in appointments, postings and transfers.

To counter the challenge from the private schools, and madrasas and religious schools of Islamic parties and foundations that fill the gaps of a dilapidated public education sector but contribute to religious extremism and sectarian violence, the state will have to do far more than just increase the numbers of schools and teachers. Curriculum reform is essential and overdue. Provincial governments must ensure that textbooks and teachers no longer convey an intolerant religious discourse and a distorted narrative, based on hatred of imagined enemies, local and foreign.

**Islamabad/Brussels, 23 June 2014**

# Education Reform in Pakistan

## I. Introduction

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In 2004, Crisis Group cautioned that Pakistan's deteriorating education system had radicalised many young people, while failing to equip them for the job market.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later, there have been some modest advances, including a new constitutional obligation to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of five and sixteen. Yet, Pakistan has the second highest number of out of school children in the world, with 22 per cent of those it is constitutionally obliged to educate still deprived of schooling;<sup>2</sup> and expenditure on education remains the lowest in its region.<sup>3</sup> This report focuses on a dysfunctional public school sector that educates the majority of children but fails to prepare a fast-growing population for the job market even as a deeply flawed curriculum contributes to the spread of violence and extremism.

Adopted in April 2010, the eighteenth constitutional amendment restored parliamentary democracy by removing constitutional distortions introduced by military regimes that had undermined parliamentary sovereignty. Addressing long-standing grievances in an overly centralised state ill-suited to an ethnically and regionally diverse polity, it also devolved power from the centre to the provinces by removing the "concurrent list" of subjects, including education, on which both federal and provincial governments could legislate.<sup>4</sup> Previously the federal government devised education policy and planning, while provincial authorities were tasked with implementing policy and administering the education sector. Since the amendment, provincial governments are free to devise education policy, planning and curriculum.

The federal government's education remit is now limited to federally administered territories, such as the capital, Islamabad, and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and to higher education. It is also responsible for inter-provincial co-ordination and implementation of international treaties.<sup>5</sup> Federal bodies such as the

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<sup>1</sup> For Crisis Group analysis of Pakistan's education challenges, see Asia Report N°84, *Pakistan: Reforming the Education Sector*, 7 October 2004.

<sup>2</sup> "Annual Status of Education Report-national", ASER-Pakistan, published by the South Asian Forum for Education Development (SAFED/Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA)), 16 January 2014. ASER-Pakistan conducts annual citizen-led household-based surveys of education indicators. Its partner organisations include the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), the Sindh Education Foundation and the education departments of the four provinces, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Gilgit-Baltistan.

<sup>3</sup> Pakistan's expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP is currently 2 per cent, compared to Bhutan's 4.8 per cent, Nepal's 4.6 per cent, India's 3.1 per cent, Sri Lanka's 2.6 per cent and Bangladesh's 2.4 per cent. "Economic Survey of Pakistan 2013-14", finance ministry, Islamabad, released by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on 2 June 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Crisis Group Report N°249, *Parliament's Role in Pakistan's Democratic Transition*, 18 September 2013.

<sup>5</sup> "Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment: Federal and Provincial Roles and Responsibilities in Education", Institute of Social and Political Sciences (ISAPS), 2011, pp. 17-19. ISAPS is an Islamabad-based research and training institute established by the Consumer Rights Commission of Pakistan, a civil society group.

education ministry and its curriculum wing have been dissolved.<sup>6</sup> Until the provinces devise legislation on education policy and planning, existing laws, regulations and curriculum remain in place.

The responses of provincial governments to their new responsibilities have oscillated between tangible efforts and political rhetoric. The lack of progress is partly the result of the slow passage of laws and regulations. In early 2013, Sindh and Balochistan enacted legislation borrowed largely from the National Assembly's Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2012) for the federal capital. That law stipulates that "every child, regardless of sex, nationality or race, shall have a fundamental right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school"; and reaffirms the state's responsibility to make such schools available (within three years of passage) and to impart quality education.

The federal, Sindh and Balochistan laws call for the establishment of Education Advisory Councils, with members, according to the federal act, chosen from "persons having knowledge and practical experience in the field of education, child rights and child development". The councils are to advise the government and take all necessary steps to ensure the act's implementation. The terms and conditions of appointment of members have yet to be issued.

In November 2012, Punjab's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government formed a committee to devise legislation on the right to education. The education minister said, "we want to make sure we have all the right implementation mechanisms in place before passing the act".<sup>7</sup> Adopted as an ordinance on 13 May 2014, it was presented in the provincial parliament three days later and sent to the standing committee on education for consideration.<sup>8</sup> Although similar to the federation's and other provinces' legislation, this Punjab Free and Compulsory Education bill does not provide for advisory councils and places responsibility for implementation on "government and local authority". By defining the latter as "a local government or an autonomous or statutory body of the government", it potentially minimises the role of civil society experts envisioned under the federal, Sindh and Balochistan laws. KPK is now the only province where legislation on free, compulsory education, though reportedly drafted by the provincial government, has yet to be presented to the legislature.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ahsan Rana, "Decentralisation of Education under the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment", *Monthly Economic Review*, 15 May 2014. An education, trainings and standards in higher education ministry has been created to oversee matters that remain under federal purview.

<sup>7</sup> Crisis Group interview, Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan, Punjab minister for education, sports, tourism, youth affairs and archaeology, Lahore, 25 February 2014.

<sup>8</sup> Mansoor Malik, "Free and compulsory education is now law", *Dawn*, 15 May 2014, and "On campus: education bill needs exhaustive discourse", *Dawn*, 20 May 2014.

<sup>9</sup> "Legislation: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Status: Formulation of the bill in progress", Right to Education (RTE). RTE is a civil society advocacy group for free, universal, quality education for children.

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## II. Curriculum and Textbook Politics

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Prior to the eighteenth constitutional amendment, the federal education ministry had designed the national curriculum. Provincial Textbook Boards developed teaching material, but it had to be approved by the centre. The provinces, which now have the final say, thus have inherited – and need to reform – a deeply-flawed national curriculum that promotes xenophobia and religious intolerance, clearly violating Pakistan’s international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it has ratified.<sup>10</sup> Reflecting the centralised state’s ideology, the curriculum also over-emphasises national cohesion at the expense of regional diversity. The histories of the provinces that comprise present-day Pakistan, and regional languages and cultures, are largely absent.

An over-emphasis in textbooks on Islamic interpretations, not just in religion classes but also in history, literature and the sciences, has been used to create a discourse on national identity that validates the politically dominant military’s domestic and foreign policy agendas. Control over the curriculum by military and military-backed governments has been used, for instance, to galvanise popular opposition to their main adversary, India, and support for jihadi proxies in Indian-administered Kashmir and Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup>

Although the devolution of education to the provinces creates opportunities for meaningful curriculum reform, it also generates new challenges. Conservative and Islamist parties were concerned that differing curriculums would weaken national unity. Educators were more concerned about the adverse impact on the quality of education. According to Alif Ailaan’s campaign director, Mosharraf Zaidi, “during discussions on the eighteenth amendment, the PML-N, Jamaat-i-Islami [JI] and PML-Q [Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid] expressed concerns on two points of education decentralisation: national cohesion [language and ideology] and standards”.<sup>12</sup> A senior educator and former Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) legislator, Shahnaz Wazir Ali, said, “curriculum devolution is not just about the curriculum; it’s a standards setting instrument; it impacts the scheme of studies, what’s taught at what level and where. It has pedagogical and administrative as well as political ramifications”.<sup>13</sup> These include a province potentially opting (discussed below) to revise the curriculum to encourage religious intolerance and legitimise violent extremism.

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<sup>10</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Reforming the Education Sector*, op. cit. State parties, under Article 29, agree that education should be directed to the “preparation of the child or responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all people, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin”. Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by UN General Assembly Resolution 44/25 (20 November 1989), entry into force 2 September.

<sup>11</sup> For analysis of the military’s control over domestic and foreign policy, see Crisis Group Asia Reports N°224, *Pakistan’s Relations with India: Beyond Kashmir?*, 3 May 2012; N°178, *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA*, 21 October 2009; and N°164, *Pakistan: the Militant Jihadi Challenge*, 13 March 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 6 February 2014. Alif Ailaan, [www.alifailaan.pk](http://www.alifailaan.pk), is funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID). It uses an advocacy campaign to focus the attention of policymakers on the education crisis. The PML-Q was created by General Musharraf largely out of defectors from the PML-N. The Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) is the most organised and politically active Islamist party in Pakistan.

<sup>13</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, 13 February 2014.

In 2012, the Punjab assembly created the Punjab Curriculum Authority (PCA) to prepare “schemes of studies, curricula, manuscripts of textbooks, standards of education and schedules”.<sup>14</sup> The Punjab Textbook Board (PTB), responsible for overseeing textbook design and production, complained that produced a confusing overlap of responsibilities.<sup>15</sup> In early 2014, the Sindh government formed an advisory committee on curriculum and textbook reform, co-chaired by the education secretary, the senior bureaucrat in charge of the sector, and the head of Agha Khan University’s institute for educational development, to promote linkages and communication between the province’s curriculum and textbook boards. It is also tasked with incorporating local context in textbooks, including material on disaster management and resilience in a region that has experienced massive floods every year since 2010<sup>16</sup>.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the Awami National Party (ANP)-led government had introduced a degree of local context in the curriculum, including a textbook chapter on Pashtun secular nationalist leaders. “We didn’t mean to obliterate other content but felt it was essential for children to familiarise themselves with their own history as well”, said senior ANP member and former provincial Education Minister Sardar Hussain Babak.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in 2013, Balochistan’s government brought Baloch and Pashtun nationalist leaders into the curriculum, including Baloch nationalist leader and former Governor Nawab Akbar Bugti, killed in a controversial military operation in 2006.<sup>18</sup>

Because the provinces were ill-prepared to present alternatives, they agreed to follow the federal education ministry’s 2006 national curriculum in the interim. Educators and most donors and education officials believe the 2006 version, in content and teaching methodology, improved on that of 2003. It discarded rote learning for a greater focus on analytical thinking and marked a modest move toward removing hate material or glorification of war, ensuring greater gender balance and including references to local culture in textbooks. Introduced by a military regime, so still aimed at promoting a muscular national identity, it did not, however, remove the falsification of historical facts and the political use of religion.

An authoritative study of the revised 2006 curriculum found that books on social sciences “systematically” misrepresented Pakistan’s history and included “distortions and omissions”, with history “presented in a way that encouraged students to marginalise and be hostile to other social groups and people in the region”. It also found that the curriculums and textbooks “were insensitive to the religious diversity of Pakistanis’ society” and “heavily loaded with teachings of Islam”. The curriculum for classes nine and ten, for example, emphasised the “basis of Pakistan’s ideology, with particular reference to the basic value of Islam and economic deprivation of Muslims in India.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “The Punjab Curriculum Authority Act 2012”, 30 July 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Crisis Group interview, PTB officials, Lahore, 26 February 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Crisis Group interview, Dr Fazlullah Pechuho, secretary, Sindh education and literacy department, Karachi, 14 February 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Crisis Group interview, Peshawar, 22 January 2014. The ANP lost the 2013 elections. The Sindh government is now headed by Imran Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in coalition with the JI.

<sup>18</sup> Syed Ali Shah, “Bugti among leaders to be included in Balochistan curriculum”, *Dawn*, 30 November 2013. Crisis Group Asia Report N°119, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan*, 14 September 2006; Briefing N°69, *Pakistan: The Forgotten Conflict in Balochistan*, 22 October 2007.

<sup>19</sup> A.H. Nayyar, “A missed opportunity: continuing flaws in the new curriculum and textbooks after reform”, draft study prepared for the Jinnah Institute, Islamabad, June 2013. By ratifying the Con-

Even the modest changes made in the 2006 curriculum to revise some of this content are unacceptable to many detractors, including within the education bureaucracy. A senior teacher trainer in Lahore said, “the 2006 curriculum promotes individualism at the expense of collective identity. We now have to teach children that they are global citizens, that they’re no different than anyone else. Children should be learning they are part of the *umma* [Islamic community]”.<sup>20</sup>

Textbooks in most schools are, in any case, still based on the 2003 curriculum, since the provinces have not yet produced enough new textbooks in a timely manner and sufficient numbers. Balochistan has developed only a few based on the 2006 curriculum, while Sindh did not introduce them in public schools until April 2014.<sup>21</sup> A teacher trainer at an international organisation working with the Punjab government said, “we use the latest government-approved textbooks for the public sector in our training but often find that the teachers haven’t seen them before. Many are still using textbooks based on the 2003 curriculum”.<sup>22</sup>

Poor quality and outdated textbooks have prompted many in the private for-profit sector and NGO-run schools to rely on supplementary material. In public schools, however, that is rarely available and too costly to purchase. I. A. Rehman, secretary general of the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), said, “all kinds of books should be published, translated and made accessible. The curriculum should not be the only part of learning”.<sup>23</sup>

To improve quality and cost efficiency and infuse greater transparency into the bidding process, the National Textbook Policy 2007 opened design and production of government-sanctioned textbooks, until then the sole domain of the boards, to private-sector bidding.<sup>24</sup> However, education authorities can choose only one textbook per subject per class, which still deprives teachers and students of a diversity of sources and views.<sup>25</sup> The greater the diversity of material, the more it would benefit teachers and students. If the private sector were also allowed to produce textbooks, competition could potentially improve the quality of education.

Although provinces have yet to make substantial changes to the syllabus, a number of civil society members, activists and politicians, including in the ruling PML-N, are concerned that curriculum decentralisation could hamper the state’s ability to regulate the quality of education.<sup>26</sup> HRCP’s Rehman said, “everyone within the country must be entitled to the same rights. There should be a cell under the Council of

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vention on the Rights of the Child, op. cit., Pakistan is obliged, under Article 30, to ensure that the child enjoys the right “to profess and practice his or her religion”. In its most recent Universal Period Review, the working group at the UN Human Rights Council recommended that Pakistan “take all appropriate measures to combat and prevent discrimination against children belonging to religious or other minority groups, including by removing educational material which would serve to perpetuate discrimination”.

<sup>20</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 26 February 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Dr Fazlullah Pechuho, secretary, Sindh education and literacy department, Karachi, 14 February 2014; and Dr A.H. Nayyar, education expert, Islamabad, 15 May 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Crisis Group telephone interview, March 2014.

<sup>23</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 25 February 2014.

<sup>24</sup> “National textbooks and learning materials policy and plan of action”, curriculum wing, education ministry, Government of Pakistan, 13 June 2007. The textbook boards became regulating and monitoring authorities, rather than textbook-producing bodies.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. Crisis Group interview, Dr A.H. Nayyar, education expert, Islamabad, 15 May 2014.

<sup>26</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, February 2014.



Common Interests (CCI) that says each curriculum should have a set of common elements; the rest is up to the provinces, but the basic core should be the same”.<sup>27</sup>

Meeting in February 2014, the CCI opted for a National Curriculum Council in which federal and provincial education authorities would meet quarterly and report to the inter-provincial coordination committee. A senior bureaucrat, representing the Sindh education ministry at the CCI, said, “we decided that provinces should not work in isolation; we want to bring parity. When we adopted the National Education Policy 2009 in September 2011, the conference declaration had said that there should be some coordination regarding the curriculum”.<sup>28</sup> While it is important that the core of curriculums should be common, the province should be allowed to also introduce local content that would reflect the country’s ethno-political and regional diversity, long denied by centralised authoritarian regimes.

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<sup>27</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 25 February 2014. Originally mandated to regulate policies on which the federal and provincial governments could both legislate, the CCI, after the eighteenth amendment, was given a permanent secretariat and required to meet at least every 90 days. It is chaired by the prime minister, with the four provincial chief ministers and three federal cabinet ministers chosen by the prime minister as members.

<sup>28</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, 12 February 2014. Also, “National Education Policy 2009”, education ministry, Government of Pakistan, 1 August 2009; “Government to set up National Curriculum Council: minister”, *The News*, 7 March 2014.

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### III. The Language Controversy

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#### A. *National vs. Local*

The state imposed Urdu, the language of the mohajirs who dominated the ruling Muslim League and bureaucracy at independence, as the national language and mode of instruction for a largely non-Urdu speaking population.<sup>29</sup> Prioritising Urdu at the expense of regional languages fails to value Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity, creates an additional learning barrier for children whose mother tongue is different and hampers the involvement of their parents, particularly mothers, in their education.

To be sure, the use of local languages in education and government has often been highly politically charged. Mohajirs responded violently to the decision of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Sindhi-dominated PPP government to make Sindhi a compulsory subject in secondary schools and the province's official language.<sup>30</sup> The language controversy largely receded after the Sindh government allowed instruction in the mother tongue, while the regional or national language was taught as a subject. According to provincial education authorities, Sindhi-medium state-run schools teach Urdu as a subject in Sindhi majority areas, while Urdu-medium public schools, generally in the urban areas of the province, teach Sindhi as subject.<sup>31</sup> Private-sector schools, however, still resist teaching in the mother tongue. According to the Sindh education ministry, more than 500 private schools in the non-Sindhi-speaking areas of the province do not teach Sindhi as a language.<sup>32</sup>

In 2012, the ANP-led KPK government passed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Promotion of Regional Languages Authority Act, for the promotion of regional languages, including by "recommend[ing] to government a curriculum and syllabus for the gradual teaching of the regional languages spoken in the province". The government made Pashto a compulsory subject in public and private primary schools in majority-Pashto speaking districts. For the 2013/2014 school year, it also introduced four other regional languages (Seraiki, Hindko, Kohistani and Khowar) to be taught in pre-primary classes where these are the mother tongue of a majority of children, aiming to make such language classes gradually compulsory throughout primary school.<sup>33</sup> Implementation has, however, lagged, partly due to confusion regarding the proposed changes. Many teachers and even provincial education department officials have reportedly misunderstood the plan to introduce regional languages as a separate subject as an attempt to adopt them as the medium of instruction.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Mohajirs refers to Urdu-speaking refugees, migrants and their descendants from India. Bengali, Punjabi, Sindhi and Balochi were the languages spoken by the majority of newly-independent Pakistan's population.

<sup>30</sup> Through the 1972 Sindh (Teaching, promotion and use of Sindhi Language) bill; Crisis Group Report, *Reforming the Education Sector*, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Crisis Group interview, Dr Jamaluddin Jalalani, additional secretary (schools 2), Sindh education and literacy department, Karachi, 12 February 2014.

<sup>32</sup> Hafiz Tunio, "Linguistic concerns: '500 schools not teaching Sindhi'", *The Express Tribune*, 4 February 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Mohammad Ashfaq, "Four more regional languages introduced in primary schools", *Dawn*, 18 April 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Peshawar and Abbottabad, February 2014.

## B. *English vs. Urdu*

Local versus regional has a different dimension in Pakistan, since the main educational divide is between schools where English is the medium of instruction and the rest. This contributes to maintaining and magnifying class divisions. The elite are educated in English private schools. The vast majority of the poor are schooled in Urdu public schools or in private schools that may claim to have English as the medium of instruction but generally provide poor education.<sup>35</sup> Without proficiency in English, the poor are disadvantaged, particularly when seeking higher paying jobs, even in the public sector. They are also disadvantaged in attempting to acquire higher education, since most university courses are taught in English.

In 2013, the KPK government swapped hands as the ANP were voted out in favour of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). In early 2014, the new administration announced the introduction of English for instruction from class one. The change is meant to be incremental, starting with only two subjects in 2014 and continuing as children move to higher classes.<sup>36</sup> The government says it has prepared new textbooks and plans to train 350 teachers, who will in turn train 23,000.<sup>37</sup>

There are, however, lessons to be learned from a similar initiative by Punjab. In 2009, it decided to introduce English for instruction in mathematics and science in state-run primary and middle schools. In 2013, acknowledging implementation challenges, notably teachers' poor English proficiency, the policy was partially reversed; English was introduced from class four onwards from the start of the school year in 2014.<sup>38</sup> Teaching during the first three years has now reverted to Urdu. The British Council is assisting Punjab in rolling out its "English as a Medium of Instruction" policy by providing language training to public primary and middle school teachers. It aims to reach all 300,000 public sector teachers by 2018. In March 2014, it had just started training 950 district-level educators, senior teachers who will in turn train other primary school teachers.<sup>39</sup>

"The question should not be when to introduce English but how to teach in English", said the chairperson of the Society for the Advancement of Education (SAHE).<sup>40</sup> The vast majority of teachers in the Punjab experiment lacked proficiency in English and continued teaching mathematics and sciences in Urdu, using English only for specialised terms.<sup>41</sup> As a result, the use of English may actually have hampered learning.<sup>42</sup> Teaching the language adequately as a subject in its own right

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<sup>35</sup> Crisis Group interviews, teachers, teacher trainers, civil society activists and government officials, Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Haripur, Abbottabad and Mingora, February 2014.

<sup>36</sup> Crisis Group interview, education department, Peshawar, 26 February 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Umer Farooq, "New bags, new books: going back to school takes on a new meaning – in English", *The Express Tribune*, 6 January 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Abbas Rashid, "Ease up on English ... at least up to Grade-3", *The Express Tribune*, 26 February 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Crisis Group phone interview, Sobia Nusrat, project manager, Punjab Education and English Language Initiative (PEELI), British Council, Lahore, 13 March 2014. The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.

<sup>40</sup> Crisis Group interview, Abbas Rashid, Lahore, 27 February 2014. SAHE, a non-profit, specialises in research and advocacy to promote education reform.

<sup>41</sup> In 2012, a British Council study found that 62 per cent of teachers in Punjab's private sector and 59 per cent in its public sector schools lacked basic knowledge of English. "Can English medium education work in Pakistan? Lessons from Punjab", Lahore, November 2013.

<sup>42</sup> "Policy and practice: Teaching and learning in English in Punjab schools", SAHE, 2013.

rather than as the medium of education may prove more effective in helping students compete in the job market.

Learning instead to read and write in their mother tongue would boost children's learning capacity and analytical skills. SAHE's Rashid said, "children already know roughly 3,000 words by the time they go to school. So, in most of Punjab, if you're teaching in a language that's different than Punjabi, they are not learning to think in any language".<sup>43</sup> Yet, reflecting the views of many parents on the pros and cons of education in the mother tongue, a Sindh provincial assembly member said, "language is an emotional topic. I insist that my children speak in Sindhi, but if we're only taught in Sindhi at school, we're unable to compete nationally".<sup>44</sup> A former legislator and educator also pointed out: "There's ample pedagogical evidence for learning in one's mother tongue. But when you have such diversity nationwide, you need a mixed contextualised language policy".<sup>45</sup>

Given Pakistan's educational apartheid, it is not surprising that most parents want their children to study in English-medium schools that are seen as providing access to higher education and meaningful employment. Any language policy must, however, be driven by the child's best interest. Moreover, while the language in which students are taught matters, what is taught in school is even more important, particularly if the tide of religious intolerance and extremism is to be stemmed.

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<sup>43</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 27 February 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, 14 February 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Crisis Group interview, Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Karachi, 13 February 2014.

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#### IV. Religious Indoctrination and Education Reform

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To further its Islamisation agenda at home, aimed at legitimising authoritarian rule, and to justify interventionist ambitions in Pakistan's neighbourhood, including India and Afghanistan, General Zia-ul-Haq's regime (1977-1988) made political Islam an integral part of the public education curriculum. Seeking to consolidate his rule with the support of Islamist parties after the 1977 coup, Zia made Islamiyat (Islamic studies) and Arabic mandatory. Addressing a national conference to reassess the basic aims of the education sector, he said, "[our children] must imbibe the lofty ideals and principles of Islam".<sup>46</sup> Sunni orthodoxy permeated the curriculum, historical facts were distorted and social as well as physical science teaching was aimed at fostering religious intolerance and xenophobia. Violent jihad and religious martyrdom were extolled. Resistance to Indian rule in Kashmir was portrayed as a religious duty and that all Hindus were enemies of Pakistan.<sup>47</sup>

More recently, the government under General Musharraf, dependent as it was on the Islamist parties for survival, chose to appease them by backtracking on pledges to delete jihad from textbooks.<sup>48</sup> Even after the restoration of democracy in 2008, much of the Zia regime's Islamisation of the curriculum has remained intact. Pressured by the Islamist parties and their sympathisers or motivated by political opportunism, successive governments have been hesitant to remove content that promotes religious intolerance. Warning about the implications, HRCP's secretary general said, "education must be separate from religion. At present, it is obstructing Pakistan's realisation of its objectives. If our objective is peace, its taking us further away from it; if its reducing extremism, its creating more. Public schools are as dangerous training centres for jihad as madrasas".<sup>49</sup>

Two committees that produced the National Curriculum 2006 and National Education Policy 2009 made reform efforts. History now covers the pre-Islamic past and mentions both major parties (All India Muslim League and Indian National Congress) that spearheaded the struggle against colonial rule. Yet, the revised national curriculum still prescribes teaching of Islamic ideology and rituals in subjects such as Urdu literature and general knowledge that are mandatory regardless of a student's religion. The nation is still defined almost exclusively in terms of Muslim identity. Many textbooks, based on the 2006 curriculum and introduced by some provincial authorities since 2012, continue to propagate inaccuracies that alienate non-Muslims.<sup>50</sup> The National Education Policy 2009 envisages an education system that "develops[s] a self-reliant individual, capable of analytical and original thinking, a responsible member of society and a global citizen" and "create[s] a just civil society that respects diversity of views, beliefs and faiths". But it still emphasises "infusing Islamic and religious teachings in the curriculum, wherever appropriate".<sup>51</sup>

This pandering to the educational preferences of the Islamist parties has much to do with their capacity to mount often violent, albeit limited, opposition.<sup>52</sup> According

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<sup>46</sup> Quoted in A.A.H. Nayyar and Ahmed Salim (eds.), *The Subtle Subversion: The State of Curricula and Textbooks in Pakistan* (Islamabad, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Reforming the Education Sector*, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Crisis Group interview, I. A. Rehman, Lahore, 25 February 2014.

<sup>50</sup> A.H. Nayyar, op. cit.

<sup>51</sup> "National Education Policy 2009", op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N°216, *Islamic Parties in Pakistan*, 12 December 2011.

to a civil society activist, “the religious right has street power; it can disrupt the status quo, unlike left-wing civil society. So, for the government the cost-benefit analysis is simple. Why should it put itself on the line by removing religious indoctrination in the curriculum when it can just do nothing with little political cost?”<sup>53</sup> Islamist parties can also influence educational institutions, particularly the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) through its strong presence in education departments and government-run teacher training programs.<sup>54</sup>

Some efforts at reform have been undermined by political developments, such as the JI’s participation in the KPK government following the 2013 elections. After the devolution of curriculum design to the provinces, the then ANP-led government, according to Vice President Bushra Gohar, “included indigenous history, human rights, peace and religious tolerance” in the curriculum and removed “historic distortions, hate material, and harsh sentiments against non-Muslims”.<sup>55</sup> Curriculum reforms included (as noted above) introducing Pashtun secular nationalist leaders and movements to students, thus providing an historical narrative different from the “stereotypical image of a gun-toting Pashtun steered into action by his ‘honour’ and love of Islam”.<sup>56</sup> The updated social science textbook for fourth grade not only teaches about Pashtun nationalists, but also introduces other KPK historical figures and ANP political opponents such as Mufti Mahmud, founder of the Islamist Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), and Pakistan Muslim League leader Abdul Qayum Khan.<sup>57</sup>

Since the ANP’s electoral defeat, however, the JI, the PTI’s main coalition partner in the current KPK government, has threatened to undo this attempt to inculcate tolerance in the region hardest-hit by militancy and extremism.<sup>58</sup> Accusing the ANP of attempting to remove Islamic content from the curriculum and promoting its Pashtun nationalist leaders, JI’s provincial secretary said, “our homeland is under threat. It is being droned by American forces, and we have to defend ourselves against the Americans. In these circumstances, is teaching our youth the ideology of jihad a sin?”<sup>59</sup>

Provinces with more liberal governments have yet to change the curriculum, including Balochistan, currently headed by a Pashtun-Baloch coalition. In Sindh, run by a PPP-led coalition, most textbooks were still based on the 2003 national curriculum until the situation began to change in early 2014. The Pakistan studies’ text-

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<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 27 February 2014.

<sup>54</sup> Crisis Group interviews, teachers, public and private sector teacher trainers and civil society activists, Haripur, Lahore and Karachi, February 2014.

<sup>55</sup> Zia ur Rehman, “KP schools will teach jihad again”, *The Friday Times*, 23-29 August 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Crisis Group interview, ANP leader, Peshawar, 21 January 2014.

<sup>57</sup> “Muashrati Uloom Chauthi Jamaat Ke Liye” [“Social sciences for grade 4”], Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textbook Board, Peshawar (Crisis Group translation).

<sup>58</sup> Crisis Group interviews, ANP leaders and education specialists, Peshawar, January 2014.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Ghulam Dastageer, “Textbook politics”, *Herald*, January 2014; see also Yousaf Ali, “Possible changes in KP textbooks trigger controversy”, *The News*, 21 October 2013. Defending the reforms, the head of the Baacha Khan Trust Education Foundation said, “[t]he ANP-led government, for the first time, provided space for Pashtun figures in the curriculum, but to avoid controversies their political significance is not mentioned. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, a Pashtun nationalist and proponent of non-violence, is presented as the founder of *azad* [free] schools, a network he helped set up throughout the Pashtun belt. His son, Ghani Khan, is lauded as a renowned poet [though] his texts critical of the clergy in Pashtun society go unmentioned”. Crisis Group interview, Khadim Hussain, Peshawar, 21 January 2014. The Baacha Khan Trust Education Foundation is a non-profit that runs education programs in KPK and FATA.

book for classes nine and ten, published in 2013 for Sindh's schools was replete with historical distortions. It depicted Pakistan's creation as a series of struggles against conspiring non-Muslim forces – Sikhs and Hindus – and blamed not just India but also the U.S. and Soviet Union for Bangladesh's creation.<sup>60</sup> In January 2014, PPP patron-in-chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari strongly criticised the teaching of “wrong history” in Pakistan studies and the distorted portrayal of religion in Islamic studies. The PPP government has now started introducing more secular and balanced textbooks.<sup>61</sup>

The PML-N government in Punjab appears hesitant to eliminate textbooks' historical biases and distortions<sup>62</sup> and has reversed some efforts to modernise the curriculum. In spring 2013, provincial education authorities withdrew a new Urdu literature textbook for class ten, approved by the curriculum authority, after a journalist objected to its absence of Islamic teachings.<sup>63</sup> In September, the government barred the private Lahore Grammar School (LGS) from teaching (pending investigation) comparative religion, a subject it had introduced in addition to, not, as a television talk-show host alleged, a replacement for Islamic studies.<sup>64</sup> Reviewing Pakistan studies' textbooks, the curriculum authority committee reportedly directed the publisher to include mentions of jihad and emphasise the religiosity of Pakistan's founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnah.<sup>65</sup> The Textbook Board is now working on reducing repetitions in textbooks and overlapping themes across subjects, but according to one of its senior specialists, “if we manage to reduce the prevalence of religion in the syllabus, it will have been by default, not by design”.<sup>66</sup>

The distorted version of Islam taught to children contributes to intolerance and sectarian tensions.<sup>67</sup> In the view of an educator, the provincial government and civil society should work collectively to reinvent “a narrative for Pakistan”.<sup>68</sup> Only then will education help children become informed citizens, who reject the lure of jihad and support peace within the country and in its region.

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<sup>60</sup> Madiha Afzal, “The ‘evil’ in our textbooks”, *The Express Tribune*, 31 August 2013.

<sup>61</sup> “In the name of Pakistan Studies”, he said, “we have been taught the wrong history. In the name of Islamiyat, the shape of our religion has been totally changed”. “Text of PPP patron's speech – Sindh festival's closing ceremony”, PPP, 15 February 2014. Ali K. Chishti, “Textbooks and tolerance”, *The Friday Times*, 23-29 August 2013; Crisis Group interview, Sind education secretary, Karachi, 14 February 2014.

<sup>62</sup> Madiha Afzal, “Understanding the world through our (new) textbooks”, *The Express Tribune*, 2 October 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Pervez Hoodbhoy, “Banning a textbook – the Punjab government panics”, *The Express Tribune*, 5 April 2013.

<sup>64</sup> Xari Jalil, “Comparative disadvantage”, *Herald*, January 2014, pp. 96-97.

<sup>65</sup> Madiha Afzal, “A failed curriculum reform”, *The Express Tribune*, 15 January 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 26 February 2014.

<sup>67</sup> Nayyar and Salim (eds.), *The Subtle Subversion*, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group interview, Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Karachi, 13 February 2014.

## V. Militancy, Counter-Insurgency and Education

Militancy has claimed thousands of lives in hundreds of terror attacks. Haphazard military efforts, swinging between peace deals with violent extremists and heavy-handed operations, have failed to counter it effectively, even as they adversely affect hundreds of thousands of children's education in the FATA and KPK conflict zones.

Any schools, but particularly girls' schools, are considered soft targets to further the militants' ultra-orthodox agenda. In KPK's Swat district, for instance, successive military-devised peace deals (May 2007, May 2008, February 2009) enabled the Sunni extremist Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), the Swat faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, Taliban Movement of Pakistan), to impose its obscurantist views on the population. Strongly opposed to formal education, especially of girls, in December 2008, the TNSM threatened to bomb their schools if Swat's 120,000 female students attended class and followed up on such threats by destroying 400 of some 1,600 schools, around 70 per cent of them girls' schools.<sup>69</sup>

Although the military operation that followed the breakdown of the 2009 peace deal weakened the militants' hold over the region, the TNSM leadership and much of the organisation were left intact. Between 2009 and 2012, militant attacks on schools in KPK and FATA were estimated between 838 and 919.<sup>70</sup> In October 2012, Mullah Fazlullah, then leader of the TNSM, ordered the killing of fourteen-year-old Malala Yousafzai for standing up for girls' right to education.

The fact that Malala's assailants could attack her in broad daylight in Mingora, Swat's capital, spoke volumes about insecurity close to four years after the military operation ended and the risks children, particularly girls, and teachers continue to face in KPK and FATA. With Fazlullah, now the TTP leader, reportedly operating out of bordering Afghan territory, the militants have escalated attacks, including on schools in KPK and FATA, such as the 5 February bomb outside a girls' school in the former's Bannu district in which eleven people were injured, most children.<sup>71</sup> The TTP and other jihadi groups have threatened teachers and pupils attending coeducational or girls' schools, prompting parents to keep children home, teachers to request transfers and many schools to close for a few weeks to years.

Though Malala has become a worldwide symbol of defiance against jihadi obscurantism and a source of inspiration for school children in Pakistan, educators, fearing retaliation, are reluctant to recognise her contribution. The All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association, for instance, banned her book from its 40,000 affiliated schools.<sup>72</sup> Institutions such as the Punjab Curriculum Authority failed to condemn the move; some commentators, echoing the narrative of religious extremists, labelled the child a representative of the West, implying that education for females is a Western concept.<sup>73</sup> Malauna Samiul Haq, head of his eponymous faction of the Islamist JUI (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Samiul Haq-JUI-S), alleged that "they [Western powers] are rubbing salt on the wounds of Muslims by using Malala

<sup>69</sup> Crisis Group Report N°242, *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in PATA*, 15 January 2013.

<sup>70</sup> "Education under attack 2014", Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2014.

<sup>71</sup> "Bomb wounds eleven outside girls' school in Bannu," *Dawn*, 5 February 2014. Fazlullah replaced Hakimullah Mehsud, who was killed in a U.S. drone attack in November 2013.

<sup>72</sup> "Pakistani private schools ban Malala's book", *Dawn*, 10 November 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Aroosa Shaukat, "To ban or not to ban: curriculum authority washes hands of 'I am Malala' ban", *The Express Tribune*, 12 November 2013.



Yousafzai against her Muslim brothers” and called on her to distance herself from “the influence of Western powers [and] stop becoming part of their conspiracies”.<sup>74</sup>

While donor and government funds for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged and destroyed infrastructure, including schools, has been channelled in Swat through the civilian-led Provincial Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (PaRRSA), the army has been given the lead. Its role is justified on the grounds that KPK’s provincial and Swat’s district authorities lack capacity and know-how.<sup>75</sup> The pace of rehabilitating public education has, however, been painfully slow. With only about half the destroyed schools rebuilt by the end of 2013 and some still occupied by soldiers, children are swelling the capacity of the few still functional.<sup>76</sup> This has a particularly negative impact on girls’ education. A civil society activist in Swat said, “since schools are overcrowded or still damaged, some parents, who may not otherwise object to girls’ education, are unwilling to send their daughters to schools that are too far away or do not have proper boundary walls and hence security”.<sup>77</sup>

According to the federal minister for state and frontier regions (SAFRON), Abdul Qadir Baloch, 1,029 educational institutions in FATA were non-functional in December 2013.<sup>78</sup> As fighting continues in many FATA agencies, reconstructing the educational infrastructure is not a high priority for the military. In the absence of a functioning public education sector, private schools or madrasas are filling the gap both there and in KPK.<sup>79</sup> “Private schools usually don’t get targeted, since they’re not government-run”, said a FATA-based researcher.<sup>80</sup> In FATA’s Khyber agency, where militants have destroyed 85 schools since 2005, disrupting the education of 50,000 children, over 56 per cent of six- to sixteen-year-olds attended private schools or madrasas in 2013.<sup>81</sup>

FATA’s and KPK’s education sectors also suffer from administrative corruption, including failure to hold teachers responsible for absenteeism. Yet, many teachers are understandably reluctant to work in insurgency-hit districts due to lack of state protection. On 11 February 2014, three teachers were shot dead on their way home from their government-run primary school in KPK’s Hangu district.<sup>82</sup> Three months later, two public high school teachers were gunned down in the same district.<sup>83</sup>

Along with its role in rebuilding education infrastructure in FATA and KPK, the military oversees returns of internally displaced persons (IDPs), placing particular emphasis on schools as evidence of the resumption of peace and stability. In parts of South Waziristan agency, where the army has overseen IDP returns, children go to

<sup>74</sup> Suhail Kakakhel, “Malala ‘hijacked’ by anti-Islam forces: Sami”, *Dawn*, 8 October 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°111, *Pakistan: The Worsening IDP Crisis*, 16 September 2010.

<sup>76</sup> “PaRRSA at a glance: annual report 2013”, PaRRSA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, 2014; Crisis Group interviews, civil society activists, Mingora, Swat, 8 February 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Crisis Group interview, Mingora, Swat, 8 February 2014.

<sup>78</sup> There were 4,664 public schools in FATA in 2008. “NA question hour: over 32% schools in FATA destroyed”, *The Express Tribune*, 7 December 2013; Khawar Ghumman, “Military operations affected education in FATA: SAFRON”, *Dawn*, 9 December 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interviews, civil society activists and political party members, Islamabad, 2 February 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 6 February 2014.

<sup>81</sup> Ashfaq Yusufzai, “Taliban provokes new hunger for education”, Inter Press Service, 7 April 2014; also, “Annual Status of Education Report-national”, op. cit.

<sup>82</sup> “Three teachers shot dead in Hangu”, *Dawn*, 11 February 2014; “State of human rights in 2013”, HRCF, March 2014.

<sup>83</sup> “Two teachers killed in Hangu”, *Newsweek*, 13 May 2014.

schools rebuilt by the military or military-sanctioned contractors that are guarded by soldiers and hence tempting targets for the militants.<sup>84</sup> Officers even attend school functions such as Kashmir Day, when children are obliged to demonstrate patriotism by condemning India's occupation of the disputed territory.<sup>85</sup> Using them as props in propaganda exercises while ignoring the increased risk of attacks by militants, risks dissuading parents from keeping children in school in a region where education has already been severely impacted by conflict-induced displacement and natural disasters, including successive floods since 2010.

The education of hundreds of thousands has been disrupted after their families fled militant violence and military operations or abandoned flooded homes. Schools used as long-term shelters for IDPs are often damaged, further adversely affecting an inadequate educational infrastructure. Moreover, many poor households, faced with the loss of livelihoods, have taken their children out of school so they can contribute to the family's income.

Yet, displacements and returns have also increased access to or demands for education. Displacement, for instance, has raised awareness of what is available outside conflict zones such as FATA, where schools are vacant and teachers absent because of militant threats, military operations or bureaucratic corruption. Displaced children from FATA and KPK have been able to enrol in public, private or NGO-run schools in cities or IDP camps. In KPK's Jalozei camp, 40 per cent of school-going children are girls. UNICEF opened temporary learning centres for 105,000 displaced children from FATA and is handing them over to the government so they can be converted into permanent public schools. Responding to a KPK government request to assist in educating displaced children in IDP hosting areas so as to ease the burden on public schools, the agency is now working in the D.I. Khan and Tank districts. Elsewhere, as in rural Sindh, where schools were notable by their absence, displacement has created educational opportunities. Following Sindh's 2010 floods, an estimated 30-40 per cent of displaced children went to school for the first time.<sup>86</sup>

Indicators in the education sector are also gradually improving in areas of IDP return, motivated in part by increased parental exposure to the benefits of educating their children. Literacy rates, according to FATA's education department, have increased, with those of girls going from a mere 3 per cent in 2007 to 10.5 per cent in 2013, and of boys from 29.9 to 36.6 per cent.<sup>87</sup> Yet, the obstacles to providing education will remain as long as FATA's citizens, governed through the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), have little say in determining their own priorities, and militant violence and military operations continue to undermine security.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Despite a number of assisted return operations, few IDPs have returned. Qaiser Butt, "Displaced dreams: for the Mehsuds, there is no place to call home", *The Express Tribune*, 19 May 2014.

<sup>85</sup> Cyril Almeida, "Notes from south KP, SWA", *Dawn*, 31 March 2013. In Balochistan, where on-going military operations fuel Baloch resentment, the inspector general of the paramilitary Frontier Corps (FC), Major General Ejaz Shahid, told the standing Senate Interior Committee: "The flag of Pakistan is fluttering over many schools for the first time after we removed the flags of banned outfits... in many schools, anti-state literature was being taught at the state's expense". Zahid Gishkori, "FC ill equipped for challenges, says Maj Gen Ejaz", *The Express Tribune*, 23 January 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Crisis Group interview, Ehsan Ullah, information management officer, education cluster, UNICEF, Islamabad, 11 February 2014.

<sup>87</sup> "Socio-economic indicators", FATA, at [www.fata.gov.pk](http://www.fata.gov.pk). Also Mureeb Mohmand, "FATA prepares to boost literacy rate through enrollment drive", *The Express Tribune*, 8 September 2013.

<sup>88</sup> On FATA's governance challenges, see Crisis Group Asia Reports, N°125, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, 11 December 2006; and *Countering Militancy in FATA*, op. cit.

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## VI. Education for All: Meeting the Challenge

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### A. *Prioritising Education*

#### 1. Utilising funds

With free education for all children between five and sixteen now a constitutional requirement and authority transferred to the federal units, the provincial governments have declared education a priority and vouched to improve its abysmal indicators.<sup>89</sup> They have significantly increased allocations in their development plans for the fiscal year 2013-2014.<sup>90</sup> Islamabad devised a “National Plan of Action for MDGS (Millennium Development Goals) Acceleration Framework” (MAF) 2013-2014 that, among other objectives, commits the government to gradually increase allocations from an insufficient 2 per cent of GDP to 4 per cent by 2018, which is still far below the 7 per cent of GDP by 2015 target recommended in the 2009 National Education Policy.<sup>91</sup>

The bulk of provincial education budgets are for recurrent costs, especially salaries. In Sindh, these are 70 per cent of the budget, with only 18 per cent going to maintenance of primary and secondary schools; 43,000 government-run primary schools, 20,000 of which have only one room, 8,000 lack shelter, and 27,000 have no electricity.<sup>92</sup> The remaining 12 per cent, for upgrading existing and constructing new schools, is so small that millions of children cannot be enrolled in primary school.<sup>93</sup> Even with 40 per cent of its education budget dedicated to the maintenance and development of schools, Balochistan is hard pressed to improve some of the country’s worst indicators: 2,000 of its 12,600 primary and secondary schools are non-functional.<sup>94</sup>

Some provincial bureaucracies have performed particularly poorly in spending development allocations in education budgets.<sup>95</sup> In 2012-2013, Punjab utilised only 23 per cent of that part of the budget.<sup>96</sup> Many educators believe this is due to the low priority other parts of the bureaucracy give education. A senior provincial education department official said, “donors want to see progress in indicators before they disburse the money, but the finance department is too slow. They disburse the funds in March, in the last quarter of the financial year, when no one can do anything”.<sup>97</sup> Some donors react sympathetically. In KPK, where the education department spent

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<sup>89</sup> “Education emergency from 14<sup>th</sup>”, *Dawn*, 27 July 2013; “KPK govt takes lead in imposing health, education emergency: Sirajul Haq”, *The News*, 28 July 2013; “Balochistan CM declares ‘education emergency’”, *Dawn*, 4 January 2014; “Bilawal to ‘supervise educational reforms in Sindh’”, *The News*, 17 February 2014.

<sup>90</sup> For details, see “Economic Survey of Pakistan 2013-14”, op. cit.; “Public financing of education in Pakistan”, ISAPS, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> “National plan of action to accelerate education related MDGs 2013-16 – achieving universal quality primary education in Pakistan”, education, trainings and standards in higher education ministry, Islamabad, September 2013; “National Education Policy 2009”, op.cit.

<sup>92</sup> “Public financing of education in Pakistan”, op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> Crisis Group interview, Dr Jamaluddin Jalalani, additional secretary (schools 2), Sindh education and literacy department, Karachi, 12 February 2014.

<sup>94</sup> “Public financing of education in Pakistan”; “State of human rights in 2013”, both op. cit.

<sup>95</sup> Crisis Group interviews, donors and education department officials, Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi, February-March 2014.

<sup>96</sup> “Public financing of education in Pakistan”, op. cit.

<sup>97</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2014.

only 17 per cent of the Foreign Project Assistance (FPA, donor funding) it received in 2012-2013, a donor said, “by giving the education department \$33.6 million, we’re also showing other departments we have confidence in the education department”.<sup>98</sup>

## 2. The role of donors

After the federal education ministry’s dissolution, donors are better placed to push for meaningful reform, since they now work with provinces, which have closer links with and are more accountable to local constituents. In Punjab, for instance, donors’ push for better data management brought widespread teacher absenteeism to the forefront. Taking notice, Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif approved the Punjab Education Roadmap in 2010 that focuses, inter alia, on increasing teachers’ attendance. With the districts’ progress monitored every two months, absenteeism declined from 20 per cent to less than 8 per cent between 2011 and 2013.<sup>99</sup>

The federal and provincial governments in practice tend, however, to use donor funds to avoid their obligations to educate. As noted above, federal and provincial allocations combined are currently only 2 per cent of GDP. According to an informed observer, “the state uses donor money to finance its education budget, instead of using these funds to supplement it”.<sup>100</sup> To counter this, a donor representative said, “although it can be difficult to prove what part of the budget comes from government funds and what part comes from us, we make the release of additional ... funding conditional on whether the government’s education budget has annually increased and also on education departments’ improved capacity to spend the funds allocated to them”.<sup>101</sup>

While dispersed and/or non-transparent information about foreign-funded projects makes it hard to assess the extent to which the state relies on foreign assistance for education, undeniably donors fund a significant part of the development budget for education, so can be influential in shaping policy.<sup>102</sup> While donors can play a constructive role, some reform advocates are concerned that overreliance on foreign aid could be negative. An expert said, “education reform is externally driven; and it’s not just about the money but also the discourse. Our state goes through the motions of reform without any substance or ownership”.<sup>103</sup>

Provincial governments, however, insist they now have an enhanced role in planning and design, hence more control over donor engagement and greater ownership of education reform. A senior Sindh education official said, “until now donors were implementing their own agenda. Now that we have a provincial education sector

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<sup>98</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 13 May 2014. Also, “Public financing of education in Pakistan”, op. cit.

<sup>99</sup> “Teacher absenteeism reduced: report”, *The News*, 26 March 2013; Aroosa Shaukat, “Educational reforms: ‘Punjab has achieved milestones’”, *The Express Tribune*, 27 March 2013.

<sup>100</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, March 2014.

<sup>101</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 23 May 2014.

<sup>102</sup> According to ISAPS’ analysis of federal and provincial education budgets: “The development budget of Balochistan includes information about the allocations and expenditure on schemes funded through loans from foreign donors, which is mentioned separately under [the] Foreign Project Assistance (FPA) component. In the development budgets of the federal and other provincial governments, the information about foreign-assisted projects is either dispersed or hidden. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the FPA for all the provinces and the federal tier was not possible”. “Public financing of education in Pakistan”, op. cit.

<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 6 February 2014.

plan, they won't be able to anymore. We'll be able to coordinate better and tell them which areas we want them to focus on".<sup>104</sup> As part of its \$155 million five-year Sindh Basic Education Project, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supports the province's school consolidation policy.<sup>105</sup> Contained in the 2013-2016 education sector plan, that policy aims at consolidating public schools that are too close to each other, merging those that operate under different management in a single location and upgrading primary into secondary schools.<sup>106</sup>

Education department officials acknowledge that donor aid, including technical input, has helped to formulate such sector plans.<sup>107</sup> The UK's Department for International Development (DFID), with others, is helping KPK develop a better integrated education sector plan and budget, so as to improve the systems through which budget aid is provided via government channels.<sup>108</sup> Yet, without political ownership, no amount of donor help will translate into meaningful education reform.

### 3. Political ownership

Politicians often make pledge to prioritise education when they are contesting elections, but too often there is little follow up once in office. Elected representatives also tend to use populist schemes with few educational dividends to consolidate support, such as Punjab's Daanish school scheme and distribution of free laptops to students.<sup>109</sup> Launched in 2011 by Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, Daanish<sup>110</sup> schools aim to "empower the poorest of the poor through quality education", with students given free tuition and board.<sup>111</sup> An opposition legislator said, "Daanish schools are good, but you could have made better use of that money by providing scholarships to good existing schools and upgraded others. The laptop scheme again, that money could have been used for computer labs. This does more harm than good".<sup>112</sup>

Even when elected representatives are committed to providing equality education, the bureaucracy often is a hurdle. An adviser to a provincial education minister said, "as long as the (education) secretary (the senior bureaucrat) can bypass the minister, bureaucrats will have the upper hand".<sup>113</sup> Inappropriate mechanisms created

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<sup>104</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, 13 February 2014. According to the Sindh education department, the plan was designed with the participation of civil society representatives, media and donors. "Sindh education sector plan 2013-2016", June 2013.

<sup>105</sup> Crisis Group interview, USAID official, Islamabad, 7 May 2014; telephone interview, USAID official, Karachi, 8 May 2014.

<sup>106</sup> "Sindh education sector plan 2013-2016", op. cit.

<sup>107</sup> Crisis Group interviews, education department officials, Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar, February 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Crisis Group interview, DFID official, Islamabad, 13 May 2014.

<sup>109</sup> The "Punjab Chief Minister e-Youth initiative" aims to distribute free laptops to 100,000 higher education public sector and madrasa students in the province.

<sup>110</sup> "Daanish" means "wisdom" in Urdu.

<sup>111</sup> Fourteen Daanish schools have been set up in Punjab, educating 4,000 students from classes six to nine. 10 per cent of the students pay tuition and boarding fees; the rest are chosen from the poorest segments of the population. Crisis Group interview, Khalida Mehmood, deputy manager (academics), Daanish schools and centres of excellence department, Punjab government, Lahore, 27 February 2014.

<sup>112</sup> Crisis Group interview, Nausheen Hamid, PTI member. Punjab Assembly, Lahore, 28 February 2014.

<sup>113</sup> The adviser said, "the education secretary needs the minister's approval, but if something is refused twice, he can bypass him." Crisis Group interview, February 2014.

by military rulers, such as Musharraf's devolution scheme that many donors supported, created their own distortions, wasting scarce education resources without improving service delivery, their ostensible purpose.<sup>114</sup> According to a number of parliamentarians and provincial education department officials, district *nazims* (mayors) heading Musharraf's local governance system approved new public schools to please constituents, not according to needs.<sup>115</sup> A Sindh legislator said, "I have schools in my constituency [Shikarpur] today that shouldn't have been there in the first place. They were built for political reasons; they're too close to one another".<sup>116</sup>

Following the restoration of democracy, the provinces dissolved the local bodies in 2010 but were required by the eighteenth constitutional amendment to devise local governance systems.<sup>117</sup> They passed legislation that gives local governments a role in monitoring and maintenance of educational institutions within their jurisdictions, as well as in promoting enrolment and attendance. Punjab's legislation also calls for creation of separate district education authorities.<sup>118</sup> Such local oversight, if exercised responsibly, could improve service delivery and bolster accountability and transparency in a sector marred by corruption and nepotism.

## B. Teachers and Education Reform

An estimated 1.55 million teachers (around 1.27 million for classes one to ten in 2012-2013) constitute the education budgets' largest expenditure and, ultimately it is their professionalism and quality which will be key to ensuring that reforms are reflected in the classroom.<sup>119</sup> In addition, they are central to the success of the enrolment drive, an integral part of the federal government's National Action Plan to enrol 5.06 million out-of-school primary-aged children from 2013 to 2016. Meeting this goal, according to the plan's estimates, requires an additional 40,850 teachers.<sup>120</sup> Yet, increasing the numbers will not improve education quality unless their academic and professional qualifications improve, along with more stringent oversight of performance.

Teacher absenteeism is rampant in public schools as are corrupt practices, including bribing education department employees to obtain jobs and then sharing salaries with them.<sup>121</sup> Political links are also often a factor in appointments, postings and transfers. Since teachers are part of the civil bureaucracy, secure tenure, com-

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<sup>114</sup> On Musharraf's devolution, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°77, *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?*, 22 March 2004; and Briefing N°43, *Pakistan's Local Polls: Shoring Up Military Rule*, 22 November 2005; also, Crisis Group interviews, Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar, February-March 2014.

<sup>115</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Haripur, Abbottabad, Lahore and Karachi, February 2014.

<sup>116</sup> Crisis Group interview, Muhammad Shaharyar Khan Mahar, member, Sindh Provincial Assembly (Pakistan Muslim League-Functional, PML-F), Karachi, 14 February 2014.

<sup>117</sup> Balochistan held local elections in December 2013. Other provinces have not yet done so.

<sup>118</sup> "Balochistan Local Government Act, 2010", 13 May 2010; "Punjab Local Government Act, 2013", 23 August 2013; "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Act, 2013", 31 October 2013; and "The Sindh Local Government (Amendment) Act, 2013", 1 November 2013.

<sup>119</sup> The total number of teachers was estimated at 1.46 million in 2011-2012. "Public financing of education in Pakistan", op. cit. This is higher than the recommended international standard of 25 students per teacher, but teacher absenteeism in Pakistan undermines the quality of education.

<sup>120</sup> "National Plan of Action to accelerate education-related MDGs 2013-16", op. cit.

<sup>121</sup> Teacher absenteeism in Pakistan is estimated to vary from 10 to 20 per cent and is higher in rural areas. Masooma Habib, "Education in Pakistan's Punjab: Outcome and Interventions", *The Lahore Journal of Economics*, September 2013, p. 37. Also, "Economic Survey of Pakistan 2013-14", op.cit.; and Crisis Group interviews, education and civil society activists, Karachi, February 2014.

bined with the support of political and/or bureaucratic patrons, have made them a formidable obstacle to reform. A well-informed observer said, “teachers have huge street power, making any government reluctant to bring about significant change”.<sup>122</sup>

Some provincial governments attempt to make appointments on merit and postings and transfers on the basis of need. Provincial administrations are creating and/or updating school and teacher databases, a potentially powerful monitoring tool, to reduce absenteeism and non-functional schools.<sup>123</sup> Along with an effort to ensure better coverage and efficiency by merging schools, Punjab, for instance, has decided to make postings and transfers of teachers on a needs basis, including within home districts.<sup>124</sup>

Reform challenges are particularly acute in FATA, where an opaque, unrepresentative system of governance, bureaucratic restrictions and insecurity undermine monitoring and enable corruption.<sup>125</sup> A researcher from FATA said:

There are teachers ... who only go there when there's an official visit. They leave children to their own devices or sometimes pay someone from the community to give the children a semblance of education. And that's when the school building has not been occupied by the local strongman.<sup>126</sup>

“Even if teachers show up, so what? They're not showing results”, said Baela Reza Jamil, program director of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi and responsible for its annual status of education report (ASER). In 2013 that report found clear evidence of poor teaching and alarmingly poor learning outcomes. As in the previous year, about half of fifth grade students were unable to read stories intended for the second grade in either Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto.<sup>127</sup>

Efforts to introduce English as a medium of instruction in public schools, as mentioned, have also backfired, since few teachers are proficient in it. A senior education specialist at the World Bank said, “at the end of the day, regardless of the language of the curriculum or textbooks, teachers teach in whatever language they feel most comfortable in”.<sup>128</sup> Training teachers before and after they join the service could help, but current efforts have failed because they are poorly implemented.<sup>129</sup> “I was told to give passing grades in English to teachers even if they weren't ready, because they would be ‘teaching poor people anyway who didn't need to speak English correctly’”, said a former public sector English-language teacher trainer.<sup>130</sup>

To give teachers feedback on students' learning levels and authorities better understanding of which schools required more attention, Punjab has started testing public and private school students in classes five and eight through a provincial

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<sup>122</sup> Crisis Group interview, education expert and civil society activist, Islamabad, February 2014.

<sup>123</sup> Crisis Group interviews, provincial education department officials and donors, Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, February-March 2014.

<sup>124</sup> Crisis Group interview, Punjab school education department, Lahore, 28 February 2014.

<sup>125</sup> Crisis Group Report, *Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA*, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 6 February 2014.

<sup>127</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 25 February 2014. “Annual Status of Education Report-national, 2013”, op. cit. The Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi is a non-profit that promotes access to universal quality education through advocacy and programs such as citizenship education and professional development for educators.

<sup>128</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 3 February 2014.

<sup>129</sup> Crisis Group interviews, teachers and teacher trainers, Peshawar and Lahore, February 2014.

<sup>130</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 26 February 2014.

examination commission.<sup>131</sup> Yet, the results are poor indicators of learning levels and teachers' qualifications, since they are the outcome of rote learning. "We need a different type of teacher, one who enables learning", said ITA's Jamil.<sup>132</sup>

Regularly revising pay scales would help in appointing and retaining quality staff. Salaries, barely above the poverty line (and, depending on seniority, frequently below the national minimum wage) are unlikely to make the profession attractive.<sup>133</sup> Professional education and training would also help to improve teaching standards. As part of its pre-Service Teacher Education Program (pre-STEP), USAID helped to create two degree programs, a four-year bachelor of education and a two-year associate degree in education, with partner universities and colleges. The USAID Teacher Education Project works with the Pakistan government and the Higher Education Commission to help develop and implement curriculums and with provincial governments to create policies and standards for the implementation of the degree programs.<sup>134</sup> Changing recruitment rules, provincial governments are gradually making these qualifications mandatory, as well as setting clearer requirements for continuous professional development.<sup>135</sup>

Because teachers wield tremendous classroom influence, curriculum reform, including efforts to foster critical thinking and remove history distortions and appeals to religious intolerance, will likely fail unless they are pressured and/or persuaded to come on board. This will not be easy, since some teachers strongly oppose curriculum reform, convinced that it is part of an anti-Islam, donor-driven agenda. A senior public sector teacher trainer in Lahore said, "the donors' hidden agenda is to change the mind of our nation through education. They're trying to make us lose our soul, our identity".<sup>136</sup> Similar views are held in other parts of the education bureaucracy, where JI links and influence are strong. SAHE's Rashid said, "the Jamaat-i-Islami has always made a conscious effort to have a presence in education departments, in teacher training and in research on education".<sup>137</sup> Provincial governments should act against teachers who resist education reform, including of curriculum, and uphold laws against hate speech in public and private-sector classrooms.

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<sup>131</sup> The provincial government established the Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) as an autonomous body in 2005 and started testing class-five students a year later. In August 2013, the KPK government announced it was setting up a similar body.

<sup>132</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 25 February 2014.

<sup>133</sup> In Punjab, the salary band for a primary school teacher was revised from Rs. 3,820-10,720 per month (\$39-109) in 2008 to Rs. 6,200-17,600 (\$63-178) in 2011. While the national minimum wage increased from Rs. 8,000 (\$81) a month in 2011 to Rs. 10,000 (\$101) in 2013, teacher salaries were not revised in Punjab. In June 2014, federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar put the poverty line at \$2 a day (\$60 a month). "Status of teachers in Pakistan 2013", Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) and UNESCO, 2013; "Over half of Pakistan lives under poverty line: Dar", *Dawn*, 3 June 2014.

<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interviews, USAID, Islamabad, May 2014; "Professional Standards for Teachers in Pakistan", Policy and Planning wing, education ministry, Government of Pakistan, February 2009.

<sup>135</sup> USAID recommended that the federal and provincial governments pass legislation on teacher licensing to "provide an effective framework for incentivising professional development and promotion within a structured and motivational career path". "Teacher certification and licensing in Pakistan: a discussion paper", USAID teacher education project, 21 February 2013. Crisis Group interviews, USAID, Islamabad, May 2014.

<sup>136</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 26 February 2014.

<sup>137</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lahore, 27 February 2014.



### C. *The Private Sector's Role*

As the public education system flounders, private schools have grown, catering to almost 60 per cent of children in urban areas.<sup>138</sup> Though the literacy and numeracy skills of children enrolled in most such schools are often low, parents still consider them better than public schools.<sup>139</sup> Former Sindh Chief Secretary Tasneem Ahmed Siddiqui said, “free education doesn’t mean anything if there’s no one there to impart it, and the quality’s not there. The poor won’t waste their children’s time. Those who can afford it send their children to private schools”.<sup>140</sup>

Religious schools are proliferating in the private sector, such as the JI-affiliated Dar-e-Arqam’s 425, over 250 of the Minhaj Education Society schools (part of Islamic scholar Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri’s Minhaj-ul-Quran International) and 73 schools that are run countrywide by the International Islamic University in Islamabad.<sup>141</sup> As opposed to madrasas, according to an education expert, “these primary and secondary schools follow the standard scheme of studies but place special emphasis on creating religious sensibilities, aimed ultimately at making jihad a religious duty. If one cannot directly engage in it, one must at least support it”.<sup>142</sup>

Private schools range from expensive elite to low-cost establishments. There are a number of large nationwide chains; others are individually run, some teaching neighbourhood children in the room of a home for a few hundred rupees a month.<sup>143</sup> Though the vast majority claim to use English as the medium of instruction, the cheaper the price of education, the poorer the language quality and instruction. The exceptions are mainly in the non-profit sector. Among these, the Citizens’ Foundation (TCF), a private-sector funded civil society-led initiative, has provided the poor with quality education since 1995. It has around 1,000 co-educational primary and secondary schools in 100 localities countrywide. Targeting children in rural areas and urban slums, it heavily subsidises fees and costs for some 145,000 students. The syllabus follows the national curriculum but is adapted to encourage participatory learning. TCF schools use the mandatory, provincial textbook board-prescribed books, but have developed supplementary material and teachers’ guides.<sup>144</sup>

Attempts have been made to tap the corporate sector to improve public education, including by establishing provincial education foundations tasked with creating public-private partnerships in the early 1990s. The foundations were made autonomous by parliament in 2004. Programs such as “Adopt-a-School” seek “adopters” in the private sector, including philanthropists and corporate and non-profit organisations, local and international. Working with provincial education ministries, education foundations and stakeholders, they undertake to improve adopted public schools through activities such as infrastructure repairs, teacher training and performance monitoring and parent-teacher associations. In Sindh where the program

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<sup>138</sup> Private schools registered a 69 per cent increase between 1999 and 2008. “Private Sector Education in Pakistan: Mapping and Musing”, ISAPS, 2010.

<sup>139</sup> “Annual Status of Education Report-national, 2013”, op. cit.

<sup>140</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, 13 February 2014.

<sup>141</sup> 100,000 students, from five- to seventeen-years-old, are enrolled in JI-run schools in 150 localities. According to the International Islamic University’s website, the schools, in line with the university’s mission, aim at encouraging and promoting education “with special emphasis on Islamic learning”. See [www.dar-e-arqam.org.pk](http://www.dar-e-arqam.org.pk); [www.minhaj.edu.pk](http://www.minhaj.edu.pk); and [www.iiu.edu.pk](http://www.iiu.edu.pk).

<sup>142</sup> Crisis Group interview, Dr A. H. Nayyar, Islamabad, 15 May 2014.

<sup>143</sup> 100 Pakistani rupees equal about one U.S. dollar.

<sup>144</sup> TCF website, [www.tcf.org.pk](http://www.tcf.org.pk). Crisis Group Briefing, *Reforming the Education Sector*, op. cit.

was initiated in 1998, the Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) monitors 235 such “adopted” institutions.<sup>145</sup>

The foundations also subsidise education in selected low-cost private schools. SEF’s director (operations) Aziz Kabani said:

It’s a partnership between the public sector, which provides the funds, and the private sector, which delivers. We have 1,950 private sector-run schools that provide free education, and we’re planning to open 600 new schools this year or the next. They’re accessible, more cost-efficient and provide better services than government schools.<sup>146</sup>

The Punjab Education Foundation (PEF) similarly has 3,400 partner schools, with 1.4 million children.<sup>147</sup>

This support for private schools, however, detracts attention and resources from reforming the public school system which, ultimately, lies at heart of Pakistan’s education challenge. According to a former educator and politician, “private schools are growing by default. Unless the public school system improves, they and madrasas will keep growing. In essence, it’s an abdication of state responsibility, although it might not be conscious policy”.<sup>148</sup>

Many civil society activists, however, believe it is conscious policy, to avoid the obligation of providing quality education to all children, which requires both money and meaningful reform. “The system is cannibalising itself. Increases in private sector enrolment may not always in reality be increases in overall enrolment. These are children who are almost certainly leaving government schools”, said Alif Ailaan’s Mosharraf Zaidi.<sup>149</sup> A PEF study of the sources of admission from nursery to class ten in public schools found that 16.5 per cent of new admissions in 369 PEF-subsidised private schools came from government schools for the 2013-2014 academic year. Of newly admitted children from class two onwards, 20 to 50 per cent were from public schools.<sup>150</sup>

Support to the private sector figures prominently in donor education programming, including vouchers for low income households to send their children to low-cost private schools. Donors also support public-private partnerships that give the private sector incentives to operate schools with public funds, channelled through the provincial education foundations or, in Sindh’s case, DFID assistance through a non-profit, the Education Fund for Sindh (EFS). Donors are also encouraging the private management of government-run schools.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> “Adopt a school program”, Sindh Education Foundation, [www.sef.org.pk](http://www.sef.org.pk). Crisis Group interviews, SEF and Sindh education department officials, Karachi, 12 February 2014.

<sup>146</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, 12 February 2014.

<sup>147</sup> Crisis Group interview, Tanvir Ahmad Zaffar, deputy managing director (operations), Punjab Education Foundation, Lahore, 27 February 2014.

<sup>148</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, 13 February 2014.

<sup>149</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 6 February 2014.

<sup>150</sup> “Research study to explore the sources of PEF enrolment”, PEF monitoring and evaluation department, April 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Crisis Group interviews, reform support unit, Sindh education and literacy department officials, Karachi, 13 February 2014. Crisis Group telephone interviews, USAID official, Karachi, 8 May 2014; DFID official, Islamabad, 13 May 2014. Also, “Pakistan second Sindh education sector project: implementation status and results”, World Bank, 8 January 2014.

Some donors are concerned about the potential impact of such support on already troubled public schools. Reportedly at donors' request, the PEF's private sector partner schools are required to ensure that they enrol only out-of-school children.<sup>152</sup> According to a PEF donor, this "is not an ideological shift but intended to provide more accurate attendance figures and avoid double counting".<sup>153</sup> Yet, it could also have the positive benefit that private-public partnerships promote fresh enrolment rather than more children leaving public for private schools.

While some donors justify working outside government systems on the state's inability to improve public education, the private sector is no panacea. Not all private entrepreneurs deliver quality education. Many private enterprises are money-making factories as inefficient and corrupt as the public school sector. In some cases, donor funding has made their owners vulnerable to extortion. In Karachi, criminal networks are quick to identify donor-assisted schools, generally in poor, insecure neighbourhoods, and threaten their owners if they fail to give them a share.<sup>154</sup>

The private sector has a role but cannot resolve the education crisis; nor can citizens' endeavours, such as TCF. A former senior bureaucrat said, "TCF is a noble cause but can't solve the problem, given the scale of the crisis". In a country with a huge, fast-growing population, "the state needs to have a clearer vision".<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Tanvir Ahmad Zaffar, deputy managing director (operations), Punjab Education Foundation, Lahore, 27 February 2014; donor representative, Islamabad, May 2014.

<sup>153</sup> Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, May 2014.

<sup>154</sup> Crisis Group interviews, donor representatives, Islamabad, May 2014.

<sup>155</sup> Crisis Group interview, Karachi, February 2014. In 2013, 41 per cent of Pakistan's population was fourteen or younger. Total population is 188 million in 2014 and at the current fertility rate (3.2 per cent in 2014), is projected to reach 363 million by 2050. "Public financing of education in Pakistan", op. cit. Also, Rabbi Royan and Zeba A.Sattar, "Overview: The Population of Pakistan Today", in Zeba A. Sattar, Rabbi Royan and Jonathan Bongaarts (eds.), *Capturing the Demographic Dividend in Pakistan*, Population Council (New York, 2013).

## VII. Conclusion

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Since the eighteenth constitutional amendment devolved education to the federal units, provincial governments have taken some steps, with donor support, to meet their obligation to educate children. Yet, not all provinces have the required legislative apparatus, rules and regulations in place, and budgetary allocations, despite increases, are insufficient to meet growing needs. Millions of five- to sixteen-year olds, now entitled to free and compulsory education, are still out of school; the quality of education for those enrolled remains abysmal. Nepotism and corruption permeate the system, including in the employment, posting and transfer of teachers.

Poorly qualified and trained teachers and rote pedagogy discourage learning. Improvements in methodology have yet to make it to the classroom, and what is taught is as problematic. An unreformed curriculum continues to promote religious intolerance and xenophobia, as do the madrasas and religious schools that flourish in the absence of a credible public education sector. Private schools are also flourishing, but few, except those that cater to the elite, provide quality education. Attempts are being made, with donor support, to more constructively harness private sector support, including through partnerships and philanthropy, but the scale of the challenge requires a state-led approach and political ownership of reform.

The education crisis, if not tackled now, could become unsurmountable. The working-age population will continue to grow in a country with so many young people. Without substantial and urgent efforts to improve access to quality schools, illiteracy and poor learning outcomes will result in rising levels of unemployment and under-employment, hampering economic development and – if the most attractive jobs available are with the many jihadi forces and criminal groups – contributing to violence and instability.<sup>156</sup>

The rot can still be stemmed by reversing decades of neglect of the fast failing, grossly under-funded education sector and opting for meaningful reform of the curriculum, bureaucracy, teaching staff, and learning methodologies. Given the political will and resources, a reformed education system can still produce a tolerant citizenry, acceptant of religious, ethnic and cultural diversity, and help return Pakistan to its moderate roots.

**Islamabad/Brussels, 23 June 2014**

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<sup>156</sup> A British Council survey found that over half the youths who admitted to committing acts of violence identified unemployment or escape from poverty as the motivating factors. The survey was conducted among 5,271 eighteen to 29-year-olds nationwide, of whom 3 per cent admitted to such acts. “Next generation: insecure lives, untold stories”, Next Generation Task Force, 2014. Also, Crisis Group Asia Reports N°430, *Pakistan: Karachi’s Madrasas and Violent Extremism*, 29 March 2007; and N°36, *Pakistan: Madrasas, Extremism and the Military*, 29 July 2002.



## Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

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**ANP** – Awami National Party, a secular Pashtun-dominated party; headed a coalition government in KPK with the PPP from 2008 to 2013.

**ASER** – Annual Status of Education Report, a citizen-led household survey of education indicators published by the South Asian Forum for Education Development (SAFED)/Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi, and conducted with the support of partner organisations.

**DFID** – The UK's Department for International Development.

**FATA** – Federally Administered Tribal Areas, comprising seven administrative districts, or agencies, and six Frontier Regions bordering on south-eastern Afghanistan.

**FC** – Frontier Corps, a federal paramilitary force involved in counter-insurgency operations in FATA and Balochistan that falls under the interior ministry but is headed by a serving army officer.

**FCR** – Frontier Crimes Regulations (1901), a draconian, colonial-era legal framework retained after independence to govern FATA.

**HRCIP** – Independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

**JI** – Jamaat-i-Islami, the most organised and politically active Islamist party, currently the major partner of the PTI-led coalition government in KPK.

**KPK** – Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, previously known as Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP).

**PCA** – Punjab Curriculum Authority, created in 2012 to prepare the curriculum, approve manuscripts of textbooks and monitor standards of provincial education.

**PEF** – Punjab Education Foundation, a government-financed autonomous body tasked with promoting public-private provincial education partnerships.

**PML-N** – Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, led by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, currently heading the government at the centre and in Punjab.

**PPP** – Pakistan Peoples Party, founded by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1967. Since Benazir Bhutto's December 2007 assassination, it is led by her widower, former President Asif Ali Zardari, and son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. It led the coalition government in the centre from 2008 to 2013 and is currently the largest opposition party in the National Assembly and heads Sindh's provincial government.

**PTB** – Punjab Textbook Board, which oversees design and production of government-sanctioned textbooks and other learning materials in Punjab.

**PTI** – Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, founded by Imran Khan, currently heading the KPK government.

**SAHE** – Society for the Advancement of Education, a non-profit focusing on access to quality education in Pakistan through research and advocacy.

**SEF** – Sindh Education Foundation, a government financed autonomous body tasked with promoting public-private partnerships in the provincial education sector.

**TCF** – The Citizens Foundation, a citizen-led non-profit organisation, supported by philanthropists and industrialists.

**TNSM** – Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi, the Swat-based radical Sunni group took over Swat district in 2007 and adjoining Buner district in 2009, under the leadership of Mullah Fazlullah, now heading the TTP.

**TTP** – Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Taliban Movement of Pakistan), an umbrella organisation of predominantly Pashtun militant groups in KPK and FATA.

**USAID** – United States Agency for International Development, the U.S. government's international humanitarian and development aid agency.