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**Towards Universal Primary Education: A case study of US Development Assistance to
Education Reform in Pakistan**

By

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SOA- 3902

*A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree:
Master in Human Rights Practice*

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Spring 2012

Declaration

The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in the Dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed: Mahvish Inayat

Date: 22nd May 2012

Acknowledgement

I am very grateful to the Erasmus Mundus Programme, for providing me with the opportunity to undertake this MA HRP programme. Through the programme, I have had the opportunity to meet and work with an inspirational group of people, for which I am forever grateful. I would like to express my profound gratitude to all the programme convenors in all three universities.

Special thanks are due to my supervisor, Sidsel Saugestad. Her support and guidance have been invaluable throughout this study.

I would especially like to thank all the interview respondents who participated in this study, and spared their valuable time to answer my questions.

Lastly, I want to thank my husband, Nadir, for his patience, support and guidance.

Abstract

The inclusion of Universal Primary Education in the Millennium Development Goals; to ensure that by 2015, *Education for All* become a reality speaks volumes about the importance of education to development. Education permeates through a number of human rights, providing a basis for the education of human rights. For this reason, education is cited as a top priority in development policy. Pakistan is amongst a few countries which are struggling to achieve Universal Primary Education, and making Education for All a reality. The official literacy rate is estimated at 54%, however, independent sources place the literacy rate at 26%¹. Pakistan faces a number of challenges to raise literacy levels; primarily the lack of budgetary allocations. Numerous donor agencies have tried to support Pakistan's endeavour to raise literacy levels. USAID features quite prominently in the list of donor agencies, which operates large scale education programmes. USAID funded the Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) programme, in collaboration with Pakistan's Ministry of Education, which was implemented in Sindh and Balochistan. The programme aimed to improve the access and quality of education in Pakistan. However, ESRA was not able to achieve its goal, as it brought no significant improvement to the access or quality of basic education imparted in Pakistan. This study explores factors which contribute to ESRA's ineffectiveness. Primarily, the study argues for culturally conscious, and contextualised education reform interventions, which are inclusive of religious institutes/*madrassas*; an influential stakeholder in the Pakistani education system. The absence of *madrassas* did not only exclude an important stakeholder from the education reform process, but also alienated the populations growing demand for religious education. Taking the theory of cultural relativism into consideration, this study concludes that the inclusion of essential cultural and religious actors can make a consider difference in the outcomes of education reform interventions.

¹ See Chapter 1 for citation

List of Acronyms

CBO – Community Based Organisation

CCB –Citizen Community Board

DEP – District Education Plan

DIG – District Improvement Grant

DIP – District Improvement Plan

ESR – Education Sector Reform

ESRA – Education Sector Reform Assistance

GNP – Gross National Product

ICESCR – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

KPK – Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (Province, formerly known as NWFP)

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

NEMIS – National Education Management Information System

NGO – Non Governmental Organisation

RTI – Research Triangle Institute

SAP – Social Action Plan

SIP – School Improvement Plan

SMC – School Management Committee

UDHR – Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UPE – Universal Primary Education

USAID - United States Agency for International Development

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights declares basic education a fundamental human right;

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.” (UDHR)

Prominent human rights scholars propound that the right to education permeates through a number of human rights, and provides a basis for human rights education (Smith, 2010). In addition, education has been described as the silver bullet in the fight to end poverty (Results, UK). Yet Pakistan’s current literacy level presents an abysmal picture (Appendix C). According to UNDP’s Human Development Report, Pakistan ranks 145 out of 187 on the Human Development Index²(UNDP: 2011), and 68 on the Human Poverty Index³ (UNDP, 2000, 151). The overall literacy rate is estimated at 54%, while for females it is 41.75%. Independent sources, however, place the overall literacy⁴ rate at 26% and for females at 12%, contending that higher figures include people who can handle little more than a signature (Anjum et al., 2006).

The field of development economics has, over the years, produced a number of general principles to guide countries in their efforts at improving the life of the average citizen. The most pervasive principal being that poverty causes illiteracy and illiteracy causes poverty. The inability of individuals to gain functional skills, relevant to their environment and

² The Human Development Index is a summary measure for assessing long-term progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living. As in the 2010 HDR a long and healthy life is measured by life expectancy, access to knowledge is measured by: i) mean years of adult education, which is the average number of years of education received in a life-time by people aged 25 years and older; and ii) expected years of schooling for children of school-entrance age, which is the total number of years of schooling a child of school-entrance age can expect to receive if prevailing patterns of age-specific enrolment rates stay the same throughout the child's life. Standard of living is measured by Gross National Income (GNI) per capita expressed in constant 2005 PPP\$.

³ The Human Poverty Index (HPI) was an indication of the standard of living in a country, developed by the United Nations (UN) to complement the Human Development Index (HDI) and was first reported as part of the Human Development Report in 2007. It was considered to better reflect the extent of deprivation in developed countries compared to the HDI. In 2010 it was supplanted by the UN's Multidimensional Poverty Index.

⁴ Definition of Literacy according to the 1998 Census i the ability of a person to read a newspaper and write a simple letter in any language.

communities limits their life choices and helps to reinforce the poverty trap which dominates their lives. Amartya Sen would argue that limiting access to education, even at the most rudimentary, basic level, limits the capacity and possibilities for individual growth and development. Poverty limits access to literacy and illiteracy reinforces poverty. No country today better exemplifies this negative cycle than Pakistan (Looney, 2003). In fact, Pakistan remains a country where most education plans and policies have failed to make any significant contribution to increase literacy rates, improve employment opportunities, and enhance quality of life for the poor (Abbas, 2002) In turn, the country's poverty and underdevelopment has made it difficult to mobilize the funds needed to significantly upgrade the nation's educational system (Looney, 2003).

In addition, the quality of education being imparted through public sector schools which caters to 80% of school going children leaves a lot to be desired. Factors attributed to this state of affairs include lack of government funding, political and bureaucratic interferences, lack of internally comparable learning outcome standards, and a lack of quality teacher training. (Anjum et al, 2006)

The Government of Pakistan has taken various steps to improve the education sector and increase literacy levels, but their efforts have not achieved the desired outcomes. Pakistan's fight against poverty and illiteracy is complicated by two main factors; a high population rate of growth of roughly 2.4 percent per annum; and limited fiscal and human resources to devote towards education. Both of these factors have limited the Government's efforts of expanding educational opportunities to keep pace with a rapidly expanding youth bulge, a demography skewed towards the school going age. Only a very small proportion, around 2% of Pakistan's GNP goes to the education sector (Looney, 2003: 258).

Keeping in view the dismal situation of education in Pakistan, the former President, General Musharaf and his cabinet put forward a vision encompassing a set of reforms in all sectors of education in Pakistan, in 2001. The Education Sector Reforms (ESR) in Pakistan targeted all basic education objectives for primary schooling, adult literacy, and gender equality within the framework of the Dakar Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. The Education Sector Reforms was an action plan to improve education performance in the areas of access and quality at all levels of the education system. The action plan was derived from a systematic consultative process which began in December 1999. The consultation engaged

over 500 people comprising experts, civil society groups, private sector, NGOs, and provincial governments. (Anjum et al, 2006)

The action plan outlined three basic goals for Pakistan's education sector:

1. To promote quality education, enabling all citizens to reach their maximum potential
2. To produce responsible, enlightened, and skilled citizens; and
3. To integrate Pakistan into the global framework of human-centred economic development.(RTI, 2008)

In support of Pakistan's Education Sector Reform action plan, USAID signed a \$100 million Strategic Objective Grant Agreement with the Government of Pakistan in 2002. To support the Government of Pakistan's action plan and to broaden access to quality education, USAID/Pakistan designed its 5-year Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) program. The objective of the ESRA program was to provide the knowledge, training, and infrastructure necessary to help officials and citizens develop high-quality education programs for girls and boys throughout Pakistan (Audit Report, 2008, 3).

To contextualise the Education Sector Reform Assistance, and United States interest in Pakistan's education sector, it is important to look at the background. USAID had restarted their operations in Pakistan in 2002, after a sudden close down of all operations in 1996. This was crucial time for the United States to maintain relations with Pakistan, which was at the centre of the War on Terror that the United States initiated against an unseen enemy; terrorism.

According to Lisa Curtis, a Senior Research Fellow at The Heritage Foundation, the lack of adequate education opportunities in Pakistan has contributed to the development of extremist ideologies that have fuelled terrorism and sectarian tensions as well as stifled economic growth (2007). USAID felt that by fostering development and reforming the public education system, the United States will not only contribute to Pakistan's economic prosperity and social tolerance, it will help improve its image by demonstrating American interest in the human development of average Pakistani citizens (Curtis, 2007).

Despite this, the United States has not been able to meet its deliverables. A report on demographic trends indicates that approximately 37 per cent of Pakistan's population is under the age of 15, which, when perceived against the crumbling edifice of mainstream education in Pakistan paints an alarming picture. The US assumes that security exigencies alone necessitate a reformation of public education, thereby initiating the integration of largely cloistered students into regular society and undermining the lure of radical religious dogma (Neog, 2010). In this regard, the objective of the USAID education programme was to galvanize the country's education system through the provision of technical assistance, teacher training and infrastructure. However, as this study seeks to demonstrate, there is little to show for their efforts. The five-year Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) programme failed to generate significant results. It has been argued that ESRA has demonstrated tremendous success in terms of achieving measureable targets; training of teachers, creation of Schools Management Committees, and capacity building efforts for provincial and district education officers, among others. However, ESRA has not been able to achieve its goals of improving the quality of and access to education in Pakistan. Also, despite the massive allocation of funds, Pakistani schools have the lowest rate of enrolment in all of South Asia. Corruption is endemic, and uninterrupted neglect has contributed to the decay. Rampant teacher absenteeism perpetrates the existence of 'ghost schools'⁵, where teachers make an appearance only to collect their salaries. USAID's education sector programme fails to address problems of corruption and inefficiency within Pakistan's education bureaucracy (Neog, 2010).

Areas of focus and Research Questions:

As mentioned above, the US government aims to use a reformed public education system to counter extremism and anti-Americanism. However, as it is argued in this study, in their efforts, they overlook an essential institution which wields tremendous influence in the Pakistani society; the *madrassa*. In doing so, the USAID is antagonising an essential and influential stakeholder in the Pakistani society.

⁵ Ghost schools fall under numerous categories. Some were constructed not for the sake of children but as money-making endeavours for those involved in unscrupulous activities. This ranges from turning them into cattle pens, camps for flood-affected people, fodder storage centres and *autags* (guest houses). If one goes by government records, most of these schools appear to be functioning. The teachers employed for these schools stay at home or pursue other gainful professions. The entire process is facilitated by bribing the concerned superiors to ensure 'all year round uninterrupted payment of salaries'.

Madrassas have been part of the Islamic educational tradition for over a thousand years. The *Madrassa* system of education plays an important role in the provision of basic literacy in Pakistan as it has the important features of any campaign that aims to promote literacy, namely its sustainable nature, the acceptance of the institution in the community at large, its appreciation of values and beliefs of society and the provision of economic incentives in exchange for enrolment. *Madrassas* have been encouraged by the state to fill in a vacuum left by the latter's inability to provide basic literacy. It is also important to keep in mind that Islam forms an inherent part of the Pakistani identity. USAID's rejection of collaborating/incorporating *madrassas* into their education programme comes across as a rejection of the Pakistani cultural identity. Thus a secular education system threatens to alienate the general populations; which is more accepting of Islamic education as opposed to religious education.

This research analyses the historical relevance of *madrassas* to education in Pakistan, and the contemporary form *madrassas* have taken. Efforts of *madrassa* reform initiated by the Government of Pakistan are also explored; examining reasons why the reform efforts did not yield desired results. In addition, the research examines the reasons why USAID's programme ESRA did not include *madrassas*, and the gaps that left in implementation.

Due to the enormity of the programme, there have been a number of evaluations of the programme, conducted by RT and USAID. However, this study further explores the causes of failure of USAID's programme, by investigating and identifying gaps which may be contributing factors to the ineffectiveness of the programme. Thus leading to the formulation of the research question:

“What are the reasons for USAID funded education programme's failure?”

Some of the sub-questions that help to better understand the larger question are:

- What sort of resistance USAID as a multilateral donor agency experience in the provision of a basic right?
- How is the USAID (as a donor agency) perceived by the general population?
- Does this perception aid or hinder their development agenda?
- What is the political motive behind funding an aid programme in Pakistan?

- How does the USAID's rejection of *madrassas* (as a parallel education system) impact implementation and consequent results of the education programme?
- Why is the USAID reluctant to incorporate *madrassas* into their education reform programme?

Chapter Overview:

Chapter 1 sets out the background of the issue, discussing the context in which the study is conducted, and identifies the research questions.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework on which this study is based. It also details the methodological approaches used to collect and analyse data. It also highlights the limitation of this study, and some ethical issues.

Chapter 3 provides a synopsis of the significance of education to development, the right to education, and the instruments which provide validity to this right, in the local and international context.

Chapter 4 discusses the history of USAID in Pakistan, and the scope of USAID's interventions in Pakistan. In addition, the chapter elaborates the aims and objectives of the Education Sector Reforms introduced by the Government of Pakistan, and presents a discussion on USAID's involvement, with a summary of ESRA, and its programmatic evaluations.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of this study, through analysis of data, collected through interviews with a number of development practitioners and academics. The chapter also presents an analysis of the findings, in light of researches conducted on ESRA.

Chapter 6 provides a historical context for the relevance of *madrassas* to education in Pakistan, with a synopsis of the Government's reform efforts. The chapter discusses the exclusion of *madrassas* from USAID's education reform programme, and the consequent impact the exclusion had. In addition, the chapter outlines the importance of including

madrassas in any/all education reform initiatives, given their significance in the Pakistani context.

Chapter 7 presents a synthesis of the research findings, in light of studies and researches conducted on the topic, drawing some conclusions, and puts forward some recommendations for future interventions, with scope for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

Methodologies:

The overall methodological approach taken for this research is qualitative, which emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data (Bryman, 2008: 698). In a limited way, the research also draws on the general inductive approach to qualitative data analysis. The inductive approach is a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data where the analysis is guided by specific objectives (Thomas, 2003). Thomas notes that while employing the general inductive approach, data analysis is determined by both the research objectives (deductive) and multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data (inductive). Thus the findings are derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher(s) and findings arising directly from the analysis of the raw data (2003:3).

Case Study:

The study looks for reasons why donor funded aid programmes fail. In order to analyse and understand why development programmes fail, USAID's ESRA programme has been used as a case study. A case study entails a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. Bryman (2008) notes that case studies tend to be associated with qualitative research, as proponents of case studies choose qualitative methods of research, such as unstructured interviews, as they are seen to aid the process of detailed analysis. Bryman explains that researchers employing case studies argue that they aim to examine a single case in relation to which they then engage in theoretical analysis.

Yin (2003) distinguishes between numerous types of case studies. However, for the purpose of this study, a representative or typical case is being used. Bryman (2008) refers to this as an exemplifying case. According to Yin (2003), by using a representative case study, the objective is to capture circumstances which are a frequent occurrence, and provide a broad context for certain research questions to be answered (Bryman 2008). In addition, representative cases allow key social processes to be examined. This research aimed to answer the following question:

“What are the reasons for USAID funded education programme’s failure?”

- What sort of resistance USAID as a multilateral donor agency experience in the provision of a basic right?
- How is the USAID (as a donor agency) perceived by the general population?
- Does this perception aid or hinder their development agenda?
- What is the political motive behind funding an aid programme in Pakistan?
- How does the USAID’s rejection of *madrassas* (as a parallel education system) impact implementation and consequent results of the education programme?
- Why is the USAID reluctant to incorporate *madrassas* into their education reform programme?

In addition to focusing on the programme; its different components, various evaluations, conducted after the completion of the programme, were analysed to establish the reasons why ESRA was unable to meet its objective of improving the access and quality of education in Pakistan.

Interviews:

Primary data for this study was collected by conducting interviews with ESRA staff members, RTI staff involved with the implementation of ESRA, and academics and scholars who have conducted research on various components of ESRA. Qualitative, unstructured and semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide (Appendix A). Burgess (1984), notes that unstructured interviews are very similar to a conversation, where the researcher uses a set of points/questions to deal with a range of topics. Some semi-structured interviews were also conducted as some of the interviews were conducted over the telephone and via email, for which an interview guide was prepared and used. A total of eight

interviews were conducted; six of which were conducted with ESRA/RTI staff, and two with academics, who have researched issues in education in Pakistan, and the ESRA programme specifically. The respondents were selected on the basis on their involvement with the design and implementation of ESRA, as most of the RTI/ESRA respondents interviewed had acted as Chief of Party or Team lead for any one of the programme's components.

Theoretical Framework:

Due to the vastness of the topic, a number of theoretical frameworks and approaches have been employed to analyse why development programmes fail in general, and why ESRA programme failed in particular.

However, the theoretical framework employed can be divided into two broad areas; human rights discourse, which discusses theories of universality versus cultural relativism, propounded by Jack Donnelly (1984) and Michael Freeman (2006). The theory discusses the validity of culture to rights. Taking the right to education as a human right, it has been argued that the education intervention used as a case study for the research was not very culturally conscious. Linked to theory of cultural relativism and significance of culture to development, is literature on culture and development. Haggis and Schech (2008) note that scholars are increasingly recognising culture's interconnectedness with varied economic, political and social changes which developing societies are experiencing. They also argue that it is impossible to appreciate these changes without taking the 'cultural factor' into account. Modernization studies take for granted that development was accompanied by acquisition of Western cultural traits and values, which would result in developing societies eventually resembling Western Europe and the United States (Haggis and Schech, 2008: 51). It is important to note that in the debate between dependent development and neoliberalism, culture was shelved from the mainstream development agenda. However, new fields of study using analytical tools to explore development, provided more dynamic and broad definition of culture, as a 'network of representation', which shapes every aspect of social life (Frow and Morris, 1993). Other theories which have been employed focus on development paradigms, including development theories, and academic researchers on aid failure. Proponents of aid failure, such as Moyo (2009) argue that aid continues to have disastrous consequences of political and economic nature, across the developing world. Primarily, the

dependence aid creates on the exhaustible financial resources, which are withdrawn at the end of any given intervention, impedes the growth, development, and self-sufficiency for relevant government and non-government organisations.

As this study focuses on an education funded programme, and highlights the donor agency's implementation gaps, this study also makes use of academic research which focus specifically on the inclusion of *madrassas* in education reform programmes. Scholars Robert Looney (2003), C. Christine Fair (2008, 2012), Kevin R. McClure (2009), and others are proponents of *madrassa* reform as an important tool for education reform intervention. In addition, this study draws on Matthew Nelson's studies (2006, 2008) on local consumer demands, and religious education trends in Pakistan.

Limitations and Ethical Aspects:

Although the chosen topic and the ESRA programme have been extensively researched in the past, researchers have focused on individual components of programme, as opposed to researching the programme in a more holistic fashion. Some aspects of the programme have not been researched at all, for which data collected through interviews has been relied on. In addition, the programme evaluation report available have been either been produced by the implementing organisation, RTI or have been conducted by independent organisations commissioned by RTI. As RTI was the primary implementing organisation for ESRA, the evaluation reports they have produced do not reflect any shortcomings or gaps in programme design or implementation. This has been an obvious limitation while analysing reports, as the reports misrepresent some of the shortcomings in a rather positive light.

In addition, as discussed above, some of the interview respondents were previously RTI/ESRA staff, most of them still working with RTI and/or USAID. Their responses could be slightly biased in some cases, because of their personal involvement with the programme design and implementation.

Chapter 3: Deconstructing the right to education in Pakistan

Education for Development

The role of education in economic development emphasises issues such as the contribution of education to economic growth, the return on investment in schooling, and the effects of education on unemployment and income distribution. Research and historical evidence concludes with an optimistic assessment of the contribution of educational investment to the development process, especially when such investment is targeted at basic education, primary schooling, general education, and improvements in the quality of instruction (Psacharopoulos, 1988).

Education has been termed the silver bullet in the quest to fight poverty (Haddad et al, 1990). Research has found that investment in education proves to be the vessel leading many developing nations towards prosperity. Education has been recognized as the cornerstone of economic and social development. Development in all its forms; economic, social, and cultural will depend increasingly on knowledge-intensive industries, agriculture, and services (Haddad et al, 1990). Technological advancements and the increasing penetration of the forces of globalisation place new demands on educational systems worldwide; the continuing economic crisis has jeopardized the ability of many countries to maintain the current levels of fiscal allocations and quality of their educational services. Many countries are falling further behind in providing the education and training needed by their youth to create and adapt available knowledge to their environment. A widening gap in service provision has serious implications for the prospects of future economic development of those countries falling behind. As a result, they may be increasingly hindered in efforts to enhance and shape their own economic and social development process (Haddad et al, 1990).

Education as a Human Right:

While numerous scholars and researchers have established the significance of education to development and growth, it is important to consider education in light of the international

rights discourse. The right to education features prominently in the following international human rights instruments, articulating education as a human right. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights states,

“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.” – Universal Declaration on Human Rights

Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights further elaborates on the right articulated under Article 26 of the UDHR, stating;

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize that, with a view to achieving the full realization of this right:

(a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all; - International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

In many respects, the key to securing the universality of human rights lies in the right to education. According to the Vienna Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, “education should promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly relations between nations, and all racial and religious groups”. General comment 1 (2001) of the committee on the rights of the child consider education ‘an indispensable tool for each child’s efforts to achieve in the course of his or her life a balanced, human right-friendly response to the challenges that accompany a period of fundamental change driven by globalisation, new technologies, and related phenomenon’. Education plays a pivotal role in disseminating information to people about their rights as well as promoting the Shangri-La of human rights – a world in which the right to be different in a *sine qua non*, a world in which all peoples ‘practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours’. (Smith, 2010: 317)

The right to education straddles the division of human rights between civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights, elements of each according to Katarina Tomasevski, the former UN special rapporteur on the subject (Smith, 2010: 318).

Satisfactory completion of a prescribed education programme is an essential prerequisite for many opportunities of growth and development. Education is viewed as a gateway to success. Strong parallels can be drawn between the right to education and the development of the respect for human dignity.

Supporting the Right to Education in Pakistan

The right to education permeates through a variety of human rights instruments. The right features in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, Cultural Rights, in addition to a number of protocols. Article 13 of the ICESCR holds the state responsible for the provision of free and compulsory primary education. Pakistan became signatory to the ICESCR in September 2004, and ratified it in April 2008, with a general reservation to interpret the Covenant within the framework of its constitution (United Nations Treaty Collection)

In addition to human rights instruments, various international commitments by UN agencies, support states in their efforts to provide free and compulsory primary education. One of the most prominent of these are the Millennium Development Goals, which features Universal Primary Education, which is to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary education (MDG Report, 2010). Through the MDGs platform, the international community reaffirmed its support and commitment to the achievement of UPE. Along with the rest of the world, Pakistan also pledged to meet the MDGs. However, the Education Emergency report published in 2011 stated that achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015, in Pakistan, is out of reach. The report also highlighted statistics according to UNESCO, which state that 30 percent of Pakistan' citizens live in extreme education poverty – having received less than a year of education.

Article 25a – Constitution of Pakistan

In November 2010, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan came into force, as an important step forward for the parliamentary system in the country. It promises more autonomy to the provinces — a popular demand put forward by a number of political parties

(Siddiqui, 2010). Apart from the political restructuring it mandates, the amendment also holds some major implications for the country's system of education. Through it a new article 25A, has been inserted into the constitution that reads: "Right to education: The state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of five to 16 years in such manner as may be determined by law." Article 25a makes the Right to Education, a constitutional right. However, the consequences of this amendment are yet to be seen.

The following chapter discusses US assistance to Pakistan, through its development agency, USAID pre and post 9/11. In addition, the Government of Pakistan's Education Sector Reforms are discussed, with USAID involvement through the Education Sector Reform Assistance Programme. The programme is summarised, using evaluation studies completed by implementing organisations, and other researchers.

Chapter 4: US Assistant to Pakistan – Past and Present

The United States – Pakistan development assistance partnership goes back decades, and has evolved considerably since the partnership's inception. Since 1961, the United States Agency for International Development is said to have provided nearly USD 7 billion (USAID, Pakistan) to assist the Pakistani Government in achieving its development goals.

However, the relationship has been far from consistent, with the United States using economic and military assistance to leverage its foreign policy objectives. Aid was provided or restricted for numerous reasons over these 60 years. In some years, US aid would support balance in the region, vis-à-vis Soviet aligned India and containing Soviet expansionism; in other years, the US government would withhold aid because of nuclear weapons proliferation and lack of democratisation gains. US aid levels to Pakistan peaked in 1962 when Pakistan aligned itself with the West by joining two regional defence pacts, the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). President Dwight D. Eisenhower famously called Pakistan America's "most allied ally in Asia." In contrast, US aid to Pakistan was at its lowest level in the 1990s after the Soviet Army withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989, and President George H. W. Bush suspended aid to Pakistan in 1990 because of its nuclear activities. (Epstein, Kronstadt, 2012)

Historically, USAID has been one of Pakistan's largest contributors of foreign aid. In the 1960s, foreign aid provided by USAID totalled to over half of all foreign aid to Pakistan. USAID has provided assistance in Pakistan's efforts to boost agriculture, expand industry, and has invested heavily in Pakistan's infrastructure development.

During the 1980s, cooperation between the two countries was enhanced as they negotiated a \$1.62 billion programme. Pakistani institutions acted as implementing partners. Almost all projects were national in scope, with activities in all four provinces. To help meet pressing needs in less developed parts of the country, USAID funded several region-specific "area development" projects at the government's request (USAID, Pakistan). The goal was to respond to the priorities set by the government in its annual and five-year development plans. During this period, USAID continued to build on successful programs begun in earlier

phases. USAID also supported the expansion of private investment in Pakistan, issuing guarantees for housing loans to strengthen the housing market, mobilizing shelter resources and the Institutional Excellence Project (USAID, Pakistan).

From 1991-2001, the US government imposed nuclear non-proliferation sanctions, therefore, under humanitarian assistance regulations USAID worked with, and through, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on a number of issues including narcotics control, basic education and community-based learning; literacy and skills development; reproductive health (including family planning), maternal and child health care; income earning activities; strengthening of local NGOs and community organizations; and policy advocacy at the national, provincial, and local levels. However, the scope of these interventions and development aid was much smaller in comparison to direct interventions implemented through USAID presence in Pakistan post 2001 (Appendix B).

After a ten-year pause, USAID reopened its Mission in Pakistan in July 2002. The agency's strategy, developed in consultation with Pakistani counterparts, focuses on education, health, governance and economic growth. Currently, USAID has direct funding relationships with some 40 partner organizations covering all elements of the USAID portfolio in Pakistan. Nearly half of the projects implemented by those partner organizations are headed by Pakistanis.

In addition to its core development strategy, USAID has been providing support to Pakistan, responding to humanitarian disasters with relief, recovery, and reconstruction assistance. In response to the October 2005 earthquake, that devastated parts of northern Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, and Azad Kashmir, USAID provided humanitarian relief to provide earthquake resistant school buildings, and health facilities. This was followed by the conflict in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and KPK in 2009, which left millions of people displaced. USAID provided humanitarian assistance, in the form of IDP camps, make-shift schools, and other rehabilitative services.

Most recently, USAID played a critical role after heavy monsoon flooding struck Pakistan in July 2010, by providing nearly \$550 million for relief and recovery efforts. Complementing emergency rescue operations by the US military, USAID's assistance focused on providing shelter, food, water, health services, and essential supplies to affected communities, including displaced families. At the beginning relief efforts focused on staving off a major health crisis.

Today, USAID, in conjunction with the US Department of State, focuses assistance to Pakistan in five priority sectors: energy, economic growth, stabilization, education, and health within the current strategic and policy framework. According to USAID itself, Focusing USAID assistance in these five key areas will increase a national high visibility impact and effectiveness, as well as accelerate implementation (USAID, Pakistan).

Post 2001 – USAID in Pakistan:

In the post-9/11 period, assisting in the creation of a more stable, democratic, and prosperous Pakistan actively combating religious militancy has been central to US foreign policy objectives. Curbing terrorism in South Asia, which has global implications, and efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan, is a major concern for the United States. In addition, Pakistan's relation with India, the dispute over Kashmir, water resources and the rapid increase in nuclear weapons and their delivery systems in the region, is viewed by the US as key determinants of regional instability. It is also believed, that most of the world's jihadist terrorist plots have some connection to Pakistan based elements. (Esptein, Kronstadt, 2012) Therefore, the re-emergence of USAID in Pakistan in 2002 was seen as reaffirming United States' commitment to Pakistan's stability, through the provision of basic services, such as education.

Education Sector Reform

The state's obligation to provide free and compulsory primary and secondary education was enshrined in Pakistan's 1973 Constitution. The Government of Pakistan developed the National Plan of Action for Education in 2001, and in December of that year, the government launched an Education Sector Reform (ESR) programme with seven main goals. These included the significant increase in the national literacy rate; providing universal education with increased completion rates and reduced gender disparity; improving education quality through curriculum reform, teacher training, and assessment reform. (Kronstadt, 2004)

With the advent of the Education Sector Reforms (ESR) Action Plan 2002–2006, Pakistan embarked upon an ambitious national education reform agenda, one that was linked to the Devolution and Local Government Plan 2000, the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2001–2004, Social Action Plan (SAP) II restructuring, and the National Commission on

Human Development. The ESR Action Plan 2002–2006 outlined three goals for the country’s education sector: (i) to promote quality education, enabling all citizens to reach their maximum potential; (ii) to produce responsible, enlightened, and skilled citizens; and (iii) to integrate Pakistan into the global framework of human-centred economic development. (RTI Report)

Mainstreaming of madrassas, by the inclusion of secular subjects such as science into madrassa curriculum was also one of the goals that the Education Sector Reform aimed to achieve. This started with the establishment of a Madrassa Education Board, which would form a network of ‘model madrassas’, and regulate all others. President Musharraf began by launching a five year plan to integrate the teaching of formal/secular subjects to madrassas, to which 8000 madrassas agreed. However, no concrete actions were taken as over a 100 madrassas were denied access to government assistance due to their alleged links to militancy.

ESRA: Programme Overview

As part of the Education Sector Reforms, the Education Sector Reform Assistance Programme, funded by USAID implemented a five year, \$100 million, bilateral agreement signed in August 2002, to increase access to quality education, with an emphasis on Balochistan and Sindh. ESRA accounted for more than three-quarters of the USAID-reported \$77.7 million budgeted to date. In this project, USAID contracted with the North Carolina based Research Triangle Institute to achieve the following:

- 1) Strengthen education policies and planning;
- 2) Increase the capacity of teachers and education administrators;
- 3) Improve youth and adult literacy;
- 4) Expand public-private partnerships to improve access to and delivery of education services; and
- 5) Establish teaching methods that instil democratic attitudes and behaviours among children and educators and draw families into the life of the school community. (RTI, 2008)

To achieve these goals various strategies were identified by the RTI

- (a) Awarding of grants to local NGOs to help support the program at the grass-roots level;

- (b) Carry out under the Whole District Initiative (WDI) a combination of reform functions focused within 9 districts of Sindh and Balochistan through engagement of all stakeholders;
- (c) Training of primary school teachers, school principals, and education officials;
- (d) Expansion of public-private partnerships to ensure that more schools and educational services are available; and
- (e) Strengthening of Pakistan's National Literacy Commission. (Anjum et al, 2006)

ESRA aimed to work at various tiers to bring improvements in the access to and quality of education imparted at the primary level. The interventions took place at the individual school level; where school management committees were activated to implement school improvement plans. With the help of school improvement grants, at the district level, district education officers' capacity was enhanced to develop district education plans and their implementation.

The provincial government were also targeted in a similar fashion, by creating reform support units, holding policy dialogues, to engage non-traditional actors in the field of education management. ESRA also bolstered the capacity of Government Elementary Teachers Colleges, the Boards of Curriculum, and the Provincial Education Assessment Centres (RTI, 2008: 12).

At the federal level, ESRA aimed to improve the policy environment in the education sector. In addition, ESRA worked with the Ministry of Education to improve the National Education Management Information System (NEMIS), which is now a regular feature in the Government of Pakistan, budgetary process.

The programme was divided into various components, which are briefly discussed below.

Policy & Planning

The policy component aimed at addressing key gaps identified in the education sector, which were, lack of; knowledge of systems effectiveness, accountability, and managerial efficiency. ESRA was presented as a support programme with a capacity building component to create widespread ownership, implementation capacity, and ability to support change. The component was a collaborative effort between various Pakistani think-tanks, carrying out

policy analysis and dialogue. In addition, the component enabled a closer working relationship with the government and the civil society, private research, and implementing contractors. Finally, this component would demonstrate the effectiveness of policy improvement through pilot projects.

Within the policy & planning component, the district government was to develop a District Education Plan (DEPs), which would serve as a macro-framework for sector wide development in the district education system. These plans were aimed to be followed by more project focused District Improvement Plans (DIPs), and need-based District Improvement Grants (DIGs). The purpose of preparing DEPs was to strengthen the District Offices of the target districts and build capacity of these offices to efficiently plan and execute the activities keeping in view the emergent educational requirements of the district. The exercise of preparing DEPs by RTI was aimed to develop planning skills in the district governments, at the grass root levels and to identify untapped resources.

Evaluations conducted by RTI, and other independent evaluators, revealed that as far as DIPs/DIGs are concerned, progress was satisfactory. However, the preparation and implementation of DEPs through district governments which were the core activities behind the whole initiative leading to its institutionalization are seen as inadequate. It is evident that once the DEPs were prepared, RTI concentrated its entire efforts towards the targets relating to DIPs/DIGs and the core purpose of DEPs which was the long term vision of the districts, was lost.

Public-Community Partnership (PCP)

PCP's work is aimed at putting in place and making functional, systems and mechanisms for public participation and support in school improvement, primarily through the government-notified School Management committees (SMCs). ESRA's Programme for public community partnership, aimed to devolve governance of education to the district, *tehsil*, and the union council level.

Devolution plans put special emphasis on community empowerment and participation to improve social services. In education, SMCs have been made responsible for ensuring access

to and quality of education at the school level. These committees were made functional under the Local Government Ordinances.

Under this component, participating communities were required to visualize an improved school, develop plans to realize those visions, and set up priorities based on their perception of the most immediate needs. Finally, ESRA funded School Improvement Plans (SIPs) based on the prioritized needs of the community, which in some cases helped them look for alternative sources of finance to fund the other components of the SIPs; such as provincial government funding and other multilateral funds.

The idea behind forming SMCs, and equipping them with skills to prepare SIPs was to enable these committees to take the form of Citizen Community Boards, and Community Based Organisations, which would be able to access provincial government funding. Under the SIPs, activities such as construction of classrooms, toilets, boundary walls, and access to water supply, procurement of desks, benches, and water coolers, took place. During the programme, over 7000 schools developed SIPs in the target districts.

Although, evaluations conducted by RTI (2008) cite ESRA's PCP component as relatively successful, reaching out to thousands of schools, involving parents, teachers, and students, the programmes sustainability was not addressed adequately. As a result, it was not sustainable after ESRA closed.

The future of the SMCs needed to be carefully looked into and efforts should have been made to assess the level of maturity of these institutions to transform them into CBOs or SMC associations. Through this SMC creation and strengthening process, this component could have been considered as a pilot phase which would lead to the development of more extensive forums, such as CCBs. However, it was seen that adequate efforts were not made towards the institutionalisation of SMCs for future sustainability.

Professional Development Infrastructure

Training was a central and ubiquitous feature of ESRA. Over the course of the programme's nearly five-year run, ESRA trained teachers, teacher trainers, head teachers, district,

provincial, and federal officers, managers, administrators, planners, information specialists, inspectors, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), school management committees, and local community members (Anjum et al, 2006).

Training was carried out through a variety of mediums, including participant training, extensive in-service training, 1–2 day workshops and seminars, shoulder-to-shoulder “technology transfer,” and interactive radio instruction. The number of individuals trained through ESRA is not insignificant. By the time the ESRA programme closed in September 2007, it trained 45,679 teachers, head teachers, mentors, and master trainers; members of 7,596 school management committees; parents and community members of 7,596 schools; and hundreds of government officials. (Healey, 2008:2)

However, the results and impact of these trainings varied, based on the area where they took place. For instance, not much effort was made to understand local factors that constrain teacher training in Balochistan, especially for female staff, so as to devise strategies to enhance enrolment for training programmes and to make teachers’ classroom performance more effective and to improve learning outputs. Other constraints and shortcomings were also identified. Some of them were identified during mid-term evaluations, however, no efforts were made to make alterations to improve results and/or overcome identified shortcomings. According to Healey, if trained personnel cannot or will not use their training to improve public sector performance, that training serves no purpose. Further using examples of pegs; where training is about developing square pegs, it must also be about the creation of a square-holed environment, which according to him, ESRA failed to create.(Healey, 2008)

In addition, some researchers have highlighted gaps with regards to policy communication of capacity building initiatives. Ali’s (2011) research revealed that in the selected districts there were many programmes for building capacities of teachers as well as managers. Despite the availability of these programmes, around half of the educational managers did not participate in any formal training programme. Capacity building was mainly seen as formal training and workshops. Those who attended the training programmes did feel some improvement at both personal and interpersonal levels. These were visible but fragmented improvements which would not yield system improvement. Therefore the desired outcome of improved educational management at district level and overall system improvement did not happen in the way envisaged (2008:4). Due to barriers of communication and because the policies are

mainly communicated through office orders and memos, the understanding of the policy implementers get distorted. For example the criteria for selection of candidates for capacity building get distorted due to fragmented understanding of the educational managers. This results in selecting unsuitable people for any training course. Ali's research revealed that in Sindh, a good number of managerial staff never attended any capacity building courses. At the same time some managers had been to more programmes than needed (2008).

Youth and Adult Literacy

ESRA's literacy component was responsible for ensuring integration of adult literacy activities within the overall programme and establishing linkages throughout the education sector, by working through the district structure. The literacy programme was built on a flexible approach, without a single standardised model or methodology (Anjum et al, 2006).

This component involved various stakeholders taking ownership of literacy strategy, and capacity in managing literacy efforts, so as to contribute to sustainability. To help engender widespread ownership for a national literacy strategy, national literacy workshops were conducted, and working groups were established to develop and manage major aspect of the strategy.

The component's objective was to increase adult/youth literacy from 47% to 62%, by increasing accessibility. These programmes were designed increase participants' capacity to read and write a simple text in Sindhi/Urdu and solving two digit mathematical problems. It also aimed to strengthen district based NGOs, CBOs, and the district government itself to deliver effective literacy services (Anjum et al, 2006: 33).

Curriculum reform

Efforts to modernise Pakistan's public school curriculum as part of ESR/ESRA encountered strong opposition, prompting the Government of Pakistan to step back from revisions that would remove religious instruction from science subjects at the upper primary levels. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education strongly backed revising the curriculum. Following this, the Ministry renewed its efforts by organising an independent task force of experts in

mathematics, science and social studies to conduct a comprehensive review and make recommendations for the entire curriculum (USAID, 2005). An example of the efforts made at the provincial level had been in Sindh where the teaching of English had been mandatory at the beginning with the first grade, with a new grade added each year. The province of Balochistan had also declared teaching of English mandatory in 2004, again starting from the first grade. Early in 2004, the Ministry of Education approved an integrated curriculum for grades I-III covering subjects including science, Islamic Studies, and Urdu in a single textbook (USAID, 2005:134). This effort was subject to modification as part of the comprehensive curriculum review.

Conclusively, there is no evidence to suggest how each of the components discussed above improved the quality of and access to education in Sindh and Balochistan. There has not been any recorded increase in enrolment rate, completion rate, or improvement in assessments, as a result of the intervention. In addition, the programme lacked mechanisms to monitor improvement and/or impact of the interventions, such as pre and post training evaluations. The absence of needs assessment, and base line survey leaves many question marks in terms of achievement of the interventions, and assessing any change ensuing from the interventions.

Consequently, the audit report prepared by the Office of the Inspector General for USAID (2008) clearly states that due to inadequate monitoring of the programme, its progress and achievements could not be assessed.

“For example, the mission did not have supporting documentation for its approval of RTI’s monitoring and evaluation plans, which should have included the program results, indicators for measurement of progress, method of data collection, and targets for each year. Nor did the mission have support for its approval of RTI’s work plans, which describe the activities to be conducted during the life of the award and serve as the road map for how the program description would be achieved”. (2008:5)

The following chapter discusses the findings of the study, and details the interview respondents’ views on why ESRA was unable to achieve its stated objectives.

Chapter 5: Findings

Primary data for this research was gathered by using a structured interview process. The respondents/informants included development practitioners who have been associated with the implementation of ESRA as RTI/ESRA staff. However, their involvement with the development sector in general and in the field of education in particular goes beyond the scope of ESRA. These individuals have been involved in designing and implementing numerous donor funded education programmes. Therefore, their reflections on the development/aid paradigm may not be limited to the implementation of ESRA, but definitely has relevance for overall discussion on programme effectiveness.

This study aims to answer an important question; *What are the reasons for USAID funded education programme's failure?* Most of the individuals interviewed during data collection, stated that this researcher should not look at any one programme's failure or success in isolation. Time and again, this researcher was directed towards the paradigm and discourse of development aid, and how or why it fails to create its desired impact.

This section focuses on the respondents reflections on why development aid is ineffective, and why USAID's ESRA programme failed in particular. These have been divided into two broad categories for the purpose of this research; programmatic attributes, and state-donor dynamics/donor politics.

Programmatic Attributes

With regards to ESRA, one of the primary reasons that most of the respondents cited was the programme lacked an efficient *mechanism for accountability*. This was due to an absence of an adequate monitoring mechanism for both programmatic activity, and funding allocations. Due to this, there was a lot of room for mishandling of funds, which were accounted for. The absence of an adequate monitoring mechanism is substantiated by the Audit/Evaluation report conducted in March 2008 by the Office of the Regional Inspector General. The report states,

“This audit could not determine whether USAID/Pakistan’s ESRA program achieved intended results because the audit team could not rely on the mission’s monitoring of the ESRA program or on RTI’s reporting of the program’s achievements against the targets. The mission did not support its approval of RTI’s monitoring and evaluation plans and work plans and did not adequately oversee the program through site visits and maintenance of work files. In addition, the mission did not take appropriate follow-up actions stemming from program evaluations and did not require RTI to adhere to reporting requirements critical to monitoring the program performance. Therefore, the mission could not demonstrate ESRA program’s accomplishments and attainment of targets.” (USAID, 2008:5)

Another cause identified of failure was constant change in programme focus. According to Ms Izza Farrakh⁶, this would impede the progress of any development intervention, however in ESRA’s case, it was detrimental. She added that this problem was not limited to ESRA; most USAID funded programmes face similar short comings. She related an example from another USAID education programme she is currently involved with; ED-Links. ED-Links, links to learning is a USAID funded project that supports the Government of Pakistan to enhance student learning, and learning environment, improve teachers’ professional development, classroom instruction and strengthen education leadership, governance, and information systems. The project is being implemented by a consortium of local and international non-profit organisations. ED-Links works closely with government education departments in Sindh, Balochistan, Federally Administred Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khayber Pakhtunkhwa. The project also supports rehabilitation of flood affected schools in Sindh, Balocistan, and Malakand Division (EDLinks, Pakistan). ED-Links commenced in 2007, which was two years after a massive earth quake flattened parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Kashmir. Although, relief and rehabilitation funds and efforts were contributed from the world over, USAID decided to divert Ed-Links funds towards school reconstruction in some of the earth quake affected areas. This was cited as an example of USAID’s spur of the moment change in programme design and policies. Surprisingly, changing programme design is cited as an example of best practice in a ‘Best Practices, Success Stories, and Lessons Learnt during Program implementation’ (2008) report published by RTI for ESRA. The report states,

“During five years of program implementation, USAID/ESRA experimented with various strategies and apparatus for effective delivery of its support to the Ministry of Education in policy work, system strengthening, and service delivery. Through this process, some practices were altered by experience, others were refined, and some were discarded

⁶ See Appendix D

altogether. Program design was continuously revised and restructured with an aim to achieve targets in the most effective, cost efficient, and sustainable manner.” (RTI, 2008: 8)

Some would perceive USAID’s *continuously revised and restructured* programme design as an effective implementation strategy. However, in the absence of a comprehensive, extensive, intensive needs assessment, a constantly changing programme design is to be expected. The lack of needs assessment resulted in a changing programme design which did not reflect ground realities and the community needs where the interventions were taking place

Needs Assessments

In terms of needs assessments, there were mixed opinions from respondents. For the purpose of this study, ‘needs assessments’ refers to a systematic process for determining and addressing needs, or "gaps" between current conditions and desired conditions or "wants".

The discrepancy between the current condition and wanted condition must be measured to appropriately identify the need. The need can be a desire to improve current performance or to correct a deficiency (Kizlik, 2010). However, upon asking questions regarding needs assessments being carried out, most respondents mentioned the assessments carried out before the grants were disbursed to School Management Committees. None of the respondents made clear reference to needs assessment conducted by the Ministry of Education, the donor agency, or the implementing organisation, RTI in this case.

However, Dr Matthew J Nelson’s research on education demands presents a different picture. According to Nelson, “prominent education-sector donors in Islamabad, including the largest, “Educational Sector Reform Assistance” (ESRA) funded by USAID, have made little discernible attempt to publish any systematic or disinterested assessment of local educational demands even though they claim that their work is “demand-driven.” In fact, when I inquired about the strategies that ESRA used to collect empirical data regarding the nature of local demands, I was told that the office had no time for “ethnographic research.” This is surprising considering the complex nature of this matter and its potentially important political and public-policy ramifications.”(Nelson, 2006: pg 719-720)

The absence of needs assessments, leads to creation of unsuitable objectives. One of respondents pointed out that although, some objectives of the programme were fulfilled, it

doesn't necessarily reflect that those objectives fed into the larger goal of the programme, which was to raise literacy levels in Pakistan. One of the Chief of Party Mr HFH⁷, for ESRA stated,

“Many [programmes] do achieve their objectives. The problem is that they have the wrong objectives. An objective may be to train 1,000 teachers. That can be easily done, but what good is that if they train them in the wrong way, or if these trained teachers can't or don't utilize their skills in the classroom, etc.”

Other reasons have included issues such as frequent staff turnover and change in leadership. Each component under ESRA had an individual Chief of Party, and most components, the Chief of Party, changed thrice over the five year project period. These were usually RTI staff, recruited from both US and Pakistan. Each new person had a different management style, different approach to how they felt they wanted to address the issues. This was also one of the reasons why programme design continued to alter; to suit changing leadership. This is often a problem with most USAID programmes; frequent senior management turnover affected policy consistency, according to Farrakh and HFH. This impedes progress, and consequently leads to bad evaluations for development interventions. Most evaluations cite the project's inability to make in-roads with recipient provincial governments to sustain the intervention. Respondents have stated this is attributed to changing managements, altered relations established with government departments, making it difficult for new people to maintain relationships, and carry out the project on a similar pace.

Another interesting shortcoming that was raised by many of the respondents deals with the donor agency and implementing partner's interaction with the Pakistani Ministry of Education. As mentioned before, this limitation is not only associated with ESRA, but occurs in a number of development projects. Most development projects aim at developing/enhancing capacity of the relevant ministry/government institution to increase their efficacy to develop and implement policies; and become more efficient while allocating resources. However, in doing so, donor agencies actually decrease institutional capacity, when the provision of human and financial resources are phased out with the end of the project. The government institution becomes dependent on the donor-provided resource (human/financial), and experiences diminished capacity when the project ends. It is important to highlight that this is an oft-cited critique of development aid, that it creates dependency, and hinders development of institutions.

⁷ See Appendix D

For instance, under the policy and planning component, RTI was collaborating with the Ministry of Education to strengthen education sector policy and planning. The aim was to enable the ministry to produce coherent policy to streamline education in Pakistan. Although, the National Education Policy was formulated, which led to the establishment of the National Education Management Information System; a database for education related data nationwide, it was not a policy which the Ministry of Education developed independently. It was developed with the assistance of foreign consultants, who were the brains behind the operation. So, the objective of building ministry's capacity was not fulfilled, and like most developments projects, the money went back to where it came from.

Curriculum & Training

Dr. Marie Lall⁸ conducted a study on the curriculum reform component, under ESRA. Whilst discussing the reasons why ESRA was unable to address the education needs it aimed to, Dr Lall mentioned the same reasons which account for the failure of most development projects. According to Dr Lall, most development projects are activity based; and evaluations, success, failure is gauged on the parameters of activities' completion. She gave the example of ESRA's policy and planning component where a certain number of policy dialogues were a prerequisite to evidence civil society/government engagement; what was not evidenced was the outcome of the engagement.

Dr Lall also pointed to the absence of needs assessment before deciding upon project design and implementation plans. Without sufficient needs assessment, a project can meet its objectives, however in ESRA's case, where the goal is to increase the quality and access to primary education, such goals cannot be addressed until root causes are identified. In particular she addressed the issue of US involvement with education reform in Pakistan, at a time when people were particularly sceptical of American intensions towards Pakistan, and questioned whether the US was a reliable ally or not. According to Dr Lall, education reform could have been successfully implemented had there been no direct US involvement. US

⁸ See Appendix

involvement, especially in areas such as curriculum reform, which is quite sensitive and controversial, raised a lot of eyebrows, and led to non-cooperation on the part of school management, district and provincial officials. She also noted that while ESRA was being implemented, the dedicated website's curriculum section actually read, "encouraging Pakistan to have a liberal curriculum" or something to the effect, which could be perceived negatively.

Dr Lall also discussed how the training component could have been improved, had it been modified according to the Pakistani context. Female teachers from Balochistan and Sindh were expected to travel to America to attend training courses, as part of the Professional Development Initiative. Pakistani society in general and Balochistan in particular are quite conservative. Keeping that mind, conducting training in Pakistan would have been a much more suitable option, as opposed to expecting female teachers to travel to America.

ESRA was extensive in scope: it dealt with basic education, the professional development of teachers, policy and planning at federal government level, adult and youth literacy, public and private partnerships, in two provinces – Sindh and Balochistan. The programme reached out to 30,000 primary school teachers, through 300 hour programme of teacher training some of which was conducted in the US, and with national partners such as the Aga Khan University (Lall, 2009:190). However ESRA was seen at the national level as an American funded agency's programme, which is interfering in the Pakistani Education system. Whilst Musharraf's call for de-Islamisation of curriculum in early 2000s would not have had support of religious parties, it would probably have wider support. However, after ESRA, it was widely seen as a policy implemented on US orders. The issues of education for development and education for greater secularisation and democratisation were blurred. It did not help when in 2005; ESRA printed a copy of the old Pakistani curriculum with an ESRA, a government of Pakistan, and a USAID logo on to be sent to schools (Lall, 2009).

The reasons for programme failure discussed above are specific to ESRA and donor funded education programmes. The following section focus on more general development issues, including internal and external politics, and how it impacts aid administration; donor-state relations; state-donor reluctance to work with *madrassahs*, etc.

State-Donor Dynamics/Donor Politics

Lack of political will

It was striking to hear that the respondents unanimously agreed that the Government of Pakistan lacked the political will to make Universal Primary Education a reality, and therefore, donor efforts may never succeed if the government doesn't whole-heartedly want them to. According to Mr IM, a noted academic, and one of the Chief of Party for ESRA, a literate population is in the interest of democracy; however, where a pseudo democracy exists, the government doesn't feel the need to create literate voters to validate its existence. Only when the government feels that in order to be democratic, for legitimate governance, they need literate voters to make informed decisions, only then will they develop the political will to achieve universal education. According to IM, at the moment, it doesn't affect the government if 80% of the population is illiterate.

Many of the respondents also felt that Universal Primary Education itself is a very modern concept, and came into being with modern, western states. States that realised the need to achieve UPE had evolved to the point where their citizens could demand UPE and the state was equipped to respond to their demands. Governments in countries like Pakistan make education a constitutional right, to prove to the rest of the world that they are modern states. They don't see it as a priority in reality, and don't feel it impacts their political status, in fact in one way or another, it perpetuates the status quo, they are working so hard to maintain.

In terms of ESRA's performance, it is important to keep in mind why donors fund any development programmes. According to IM, the development agenda and policies are devised according to the internal developments within a donor country, its domestic agenda and its foreign policy towards a recipient country. He also added that the US started funding education programmes in Pakistan post 9/11 as a way to appease their tax payers that they were doing something to counter terrorism in Pakistan by funding education programmes, increasing literacy, etc. He said that sometimes it is not particularly relevant to the aid agency if the money they've invested has had any real impact, as long as they can account for it to be

invested towards the development agenda they've chalked out. And looking at it specifically from a monetary point of view, more than 30% of this money goes back in the form of overhead costs. The figures that appear in news paper articles and Memorandums of Understanding are not the actual figures that go into implementation. There are various ways in which the money is re plugged into donor agency's economy or system. And when the money is not going back in the form of overheads and administrative costs, it goes back by other means; expensive high end foreign consultants, who charge astronomical amounts of money to prepare teacher training curriculums, draft policy documents, write evaluation reports, etc. In ESRA's case, the programme was implemented by RTI, which is an American organisation. So money always flows back in one form or the other⁹.

Another important thing to consider while looking at development programmes is that they take a very simplistic world view. Interventions are addressed towards social problems of herculean proportions; illiteracy, poverty, gender inequality, lack of governance, and there is an expectation that a five year intervention will make a difference. For education programmes, enrolment is to the easiest of indicators for which information is easily available. However an increase in enrolment doesn't suggest long term qualitative improvements in literacy, instead it indicates mere presence in an area designated as a school. Where states have failed over the long run, short term interventions of foreign donors cannot be expected to alter the educational landscape. Another interesting fact about development projects' timelines is that they never seem to reconcile with the recipient country's timeline. That has a huge impact on how the project fares. For instance, while ESRA was being implemented, Pakistan had an ally of the US and a key player in the war against terrorism. Pakistan, as a country was dealing with multiple issues due to its geo-political situation, and with Afghanistan being attacked post 9/11, the surge in militancy, and refugees.

When it comes to the delivery of basic rights, at the end of the day, the responsibility falls upon the state. It is essential that we consider the contingent nature of rights, including how rights 'fulfilment' is contingent on bureaucratic functioning, infrastructure, local political economy. This is where the government's actual desire to fulfil a certain right comes in. As argued above, the Pakistani state lacks the political will to fulfil its obligations towards the Pakistani people.

⁹ Interview with IM

On *madrassas*

Many of the respondents felt that it would be difficult for USAID to justify working with *madrassas* to US tax payers, to congress, and to the common US citizens, who have been repeatedly influenced by media output suggesting a clear link between *madrassas* as a breeding ground for terrorists. According to Ijlal Hussain¹⁰, even to the broadest minded American, it would be very difficult to explain that their hard earned tax money is being spent towards *madrassas*. One would argue that the money is being spent towards de-radicalising or reforming them, but it would come off as something negative in the first instance. Secondly, USAID is a multilateral donor agency, which works with governments of developing countries. In the case of ESRA, USAID was working with the Ministry of Education. Even if they wanted to work towards mainstreaming *madrassas* into education programmes, which government institution or body would they have contacted or worked with? There isn't an institution that represents *madrassas* in an official capacity. Some of respondents did mention the *Wafaqulmadaris*, however, it is not a coherent body. Again, USAID could not provide firm/concrete justification for working with a non-government body. And most importantly, there wasn't any inclination from the Ministry of Education to work with *wafaqulmadaris*, or any *madrassas*. Perhaps if the Pakistani Government had expressed an interest in including *madrassas* in the education reform intervention, the donor agency could have considered it. The fact of the matter is that Government of Pakistan wouldn't touch *madrassas* with a ten feet pole¹¹. As part of the Education Sector Reforms, President Musharraf's curriculum reform committee suggested minor alterations to the *islamiyat* syllabus. This resulted in a huge outcry from right winged religious parties and groups; so the change wasn't carried out. This study however suggests that a government that couldn't implement an alteration in the syllabus would struggle to implement *madrassa* reform with the aid of an American donor agency.

The respondents felt that the Pakistani state wants to retain the support of right wing religious parties and groups. The whole moderate image, 'Enlightened Pakistan', is an act, to appease the international community to show that Pakistan is at the fore of fighting the war against

¹⁰ See Appendix

¹¹ Interview with IM

terrorism, where in fact any government, be that military or so called democratically elected, will do anything to remain in power. Even if that means, allowing institutions like *madrassas* to breed hatred, and in some cases fuelling sectarianism, they'll do it, as long as it allows for them to remain in power.

To mainstream *madrassas*, and reform the education system, and most importantly to ensure that the reformation is effective and actually beneficial for the country, it needs to be backed by political will. This is unlikely to happen until the government feels that they cannot remain in power if they do not meet certain requirements of the people. Therefore it is important to create and articulate demand for education, and to have a broader definition of encompasses education. The UN definition is fine, numeracy and literacy is important, but education needs to impart life skills. If education is narrowed down to some form of secular education funded by foreign donors, it will never gain the popular support to actually make Universal primary Education a reality.

All respondents felt that when programme implementation began, none of the local implementing partners felt any kinds of resistance from the community. This is primarily because programme components where community participation or interaction took place were delivered by local partners, the School Improvement Grants initiative for example. The programme was being monitored by the USAID ESRA Team, and with mission staff present, but they were local hires, and were cautious with the use of USAID logos in certain areas of Balochistan, in particular.

It is interesting to note that, although, most of the respondents agreed that it could have been beneficial to include *madrassas* in ESRA, no one stated that the exclusion of *madrassas* is actually leaving a vacuum for a particular target group. Some academics, and scholar, such as Andrabi, Das, and Khwaja (2005, 2011) believe that the number of students enrolled into *madrassas* is negligible, and therefore does not form an important target audience for development projects/donor aid to be directed to. However, scholars such as, Christopher Candland, contest such conclusions also made by a World Bank study which estimates that there are fewer than 475,000 *madrassa* students, and fewer than 1% of the secondary school going population attends *madrassas* (2005:152). Candland finds these assumptions used for estimates to be problematic. The report is based, in part, on a national census, and national household survey, neither of which are designed to gauge *madrassa* enrolment. Candland

notes that the Andrabi, Das, Khwaja study, was restricted to areas served by public schools, and this probably underestimates *madrassa* enrolment for Pakistan as a whole, which he adds, is poorly served by public schools (2005).

What also strikes as quite a difference in perceptions is Nelson's study conducted in Rawalpindi, gauging perceptions of local citizens and representatives of NGOs and INGOs, on religious education. In the study titled, Muslims, Markets, and the Meaning of "Good" Education in Pakistan, published in 2006, Nelson concludes a vast gap in perceptions of local educational demands of citizens, and INGOs, donor agency heads.

"This gap was particularly pronounced when it came to religious education and the role of *dini madaris* (private Qur'anic schools). Indeed, donors seemed to believe that an education system dominated by secular schools would suffice, but local citizens disagree." (Nelson, 2006:708)

According to Dr Nelson, USAID do not have the right training to think constructively about Islamic institutions. Their narrow human rights orientation, almost *laicite* in their approach to secularism, makes it extremely difficult for them to work in places like Pakistan. He agrees that working with *madrassas* is not easy. However, for USAID it is almost impossible. The problem is not the political sensitivity of the *madrassas*. Everything they do involves one form of political sensitivity or another. The problem is the vast ignorance of their staff and their implementing partners, RTI for example¹².

This chapter discussed the findings from interviews with a number of ESRA/RTI staff, and academics. From the research questions, *madrassas* and their cultural relevance to education in Pakistan was highlighted. The following chapter presents a detailed discussion on *madrassas*, their relevance to the Pakistani society, and therefore to education. The chapter also provides an analysis of the impact of *madrassa* exclusion on education reform interventions, with particular reference to USAID.

¹² Interview with Dr Matthew Nelson

Chapter 6: *Madrassa* Exclusion

Background

The debate over *madrassas* evokes images of *jihad*, warfare, terrorism and an archaic system of education. Most of these perceptions are a result of generalizations and oversimplification of a complex phenomenon. However, *madrassas* have a key place in Pakistan's religious and social life. (Looney, 2003: 258)

“*Madrassa*” which in Arabic literally means “school,” is not consistently defined. Several authors have employed a rather broad definition: “we define *madrassa* as schools that teach a religious curriculum instead of one prescribed by the Pakistan Federal Ministry of Education” (Andrabi et al., 2005). Broad definitions are not incorrect, as schools that promote Islamic curricula are in South Asia generally referred to as *madrassa* (Riaz, 2008).

A *Madrassa* (plural *Madrassas*) is a centre of Islamic learning. *Madaris* are institutions where religious scholars receive specialized training in the *Quran*, *Hadith*, *Sunnah*, Islamic Jurisprudence – the *Shariat*, amongst other religion based academic pursuits (ICG 2002: 2). *Madrassas* remain popular as they are considered “a cheaper, more accessible and more Islamic alternative” (Shah, 2006: 5) for education. Provision of free religious education, boarding, and lodging, acting as essentially schools for the poor insures its wide appeal amongst society (Shah 2006: Malik 2007: Method, 2003).

Throughout the Islamic world, *madrassas* have merged into modern educational institutions. However, over the course of the 20th century, especially over the last quarter of the same century “Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only Muslim countries where an active development of rural *madrassas* took place” (Roy, 2002: 155). Patronized by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, *madrassas* became centres offering lodging, recruitment, and training for the *Mujahedeen* to fight in Afghanistan.

Since the attacks on 9/11, western politicians, commentators and scholars have termed *madrassas* as “JihadU”, “Terrorist Training Centres” and “Centres of Hate”; and in the days

following 9/11 clear references to the link between terrorism and *madrassas* were made by US policy makers including Donald Rumsfeld (ICG, 2002; Malik, 2007, Shah, 2006). *Madrassas* especially those under the influence of the *Deobandi* school of Islam and its political arm *Jumiyat-i-Ulama-Islam* (JUI), “have endured much interference from various sources that have led to certain differences in operational style and function as compared to their historical predecessors” (Ali, 2007; Dalrymple, 2005). This interference by the highly militant, anti-American, and anti-non Muslim culture, JUI, has shaped *madrassas* by prioritizing political and military roles rather than their intended role as institutions of learning.

During the 1980’s the JUI actively interacted with state machinery, facilitated by its *madrassa* graduates employed in government agencies and state institutions. Graduates have gone on to become members of the National Assembly or the Senate, sit on the Bench of the Islamic Ideological Council and are generally in a position to influence state policy. This entrenchment of *Deobandi* influence in state organizations has flourished over the course of the 1990s and has strengthened the role of radical *madrassas* vis à vis the majority non-violent, traditional *madrassas*.

It is important to note that while some *madrassas* are **involved** in facilitating extremist activities, the majority of Pakistan’s *madrassas* remain simple, religious schools, filling a gap in the provision of social service created due state failure.

The transformation and spread of *madrassas* during the 1980s and 1990s owes much to geopolitics, sectarian struggles and technology, but their influence and staying power is derived from deep-rooted socioeconomic conditions that have so far proven resistant to change. (Haqani in Fair, 2008) Historically, *madrassas* were founded as centres of learning, for Islamic scholars and clerics. However, according to Singer (2002), during the 1980s the *madrassa* system changed significantly. As part of his *Islamisation* policy, the Zia regime stepped up funding for *madaris*. Simultaneously, the war in Afghanistan produced millions of refugees, which radicalised the jihad movement.

Today, *madrassas* are funded via private donations from Middle Eastern countries, and by *zakat*, a 2.5 per cent tax collected by the Government of Pakistan from the bank accounts of *sunni* muslims once a year. Foreign donations come mainly from philanthropists and charities

in Saudi Arabia, and other gulf states. As a result, countries like Saudi Arabia have a disproportionate influence on school curriculum and orientation, and therefore, many *madrassas* are dominated by a Saudi type *wahabiism*, and teach a more extreme version of Islam. (Looney, 2003:260)

Madrassas in Pakistan Post 9/11

In the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center, the perpetrators of this tragedy were believed to be members of al-Qaeda, an international terror ring that were at the time hosted by the former leadership of Afghanistan, the Taliban. It is also believed that since several Taliban leaders were educated in *madrassas* on the Afghanistan–Pakistan border, Islamic education has received dedicated attention from journalists and researchers throughout the Western world, chiefly in the United States (Looney, 2003). Whether for newspapers or policy papers, an overwhelming number of these writers have claimed that *madrassas* are spreading throughout South Asia, teaching Muslim children an extremist brand of Islam (McLure, 2009) In addition, journalists and academics alike have attempted to establish a link between poverty, lack of education and extremism, which leads to the development of Islamic fundamentalism, and intolerant, violent behaviour, cultivated through *madrassa* education.

For this reason, numerous attempts have been made at *madrassa* reform by the government of Pakistan since 2002 to mainstream *madrassas* and eliminate/decrease extremist elements from this fundamental educational facility. These efforts have focused on finding ways to regulate *madrassas*, in order to weed out extremist Islamic educators (Looney, 2003).

To borrow from one CRS paper, “in the long term interest of promoting moderation and democratic values in Pakistan, sector-wide reform of the education system appears vital” (Kronstadt, 2004:4). Echoing the 9/11 Commission Report and Congress, which recommends improving access in Pakistani education, US media has bemoaned the slow pace in which former President Pervez Musharraf and the Federal Ministry of Education have initiated reform to improve *madrassa* education (McLure, 2009)

Madrasa Reform

As part of the Education Sector Reform, introduced by President Musharraf, the reform efforts began with the Madrasa Registration Ordinance, approved by the federal cabinet in 2002, which came into effect immediately, to regulate *madrassas*, by bringing them under the formal educational system.

Madrasa Education Boards were established for all *madrassas* to register with. The purpose of registration was to provide legitimacy to *madrassas* in order to be eligible for *zakat* funds, grants and donations from the Federal and Provincial governments. A violation of the ordinance would result on the closure of or penalty to a *madrasa*. In addition, the government also attempted to persuade *madrassas* to add science, mathematics, and English to the curriculum. The government went on to suggest that only *madrassas* imparting ‘modern education’ would be able to access financial assistance and aid. *Madrassas* were required to maintain accounts, and submit annual reports to their provincial boards. No foreign donation and/or foreign student could get accepted without a ‘No Objection Certificate’ from the Interior Ministry.

However, the Ordinance and any reform effort were not well received by religious parties, and *madrasa* administrators. In fact, many religious groups were vehemently opposed to any government interference. The alliance of *madrasa* boards, the *Ittehad-e Tanzimat-ul Madaris-e-Deenia* (ITMD), backed by several political parties, resisted registration efforts because they believed these measures reduced their autonomy and was a clear example of government efforts to transform the character of *madrassas* and their approach to preserving Islamic heritage (Riaz, 2008). The mere idea of regulating *madrassas* rattled influential members of Pakistani politics, as they see such efforts as an attempt to interfere with religion and take this as evidence of Western hegemonic tendencies in South Asia (Kronstadt, 2004; Riaz, 2008). Thus, calls for regulation from the West are judged by “the ITMD and their supporters as an assault on Islam and Pakistani culture” (Riaz, 2008: 205).

Technically, the only penalty that *madrassas* could receive for not registering was becoming ineligible for government funding, which was non-existent to begin with (Looney, 2003)

Therefore, after failed attempts to lobby clergy leaders, the Musharraf administration decided to water down the ordinance, and the reform efforts have not been followed up by the current government.

ESRA & Madrassas

The *madrassa* reform attempts discussed above were featured in President Musharraf's Education Sector Reform in 2002. It was seen that modern educational facilities were available for the small elite in Pakistan, but the vast majority of Pakistanis did not have access to functioning public schools. Only half the population aged 10 and above had ever attended school, and more than 50 million children and adults were illiterate. A Congressional Report on Education Reform in Pakistan noted that parents with the least resources relied on religious schools/madrassas to fill this gap; a small percentage of these schools actively promoted extremism (USAID, 2005: 134).

The Ministry of Education's ESR Initiative included the mainstreaming of *madrassas*, and mandated the teaching of English, Maths, Science, and Social Studies compulsory, among others. However, the US government's agreement with the Government of Pakistan, to support ESR, did not include *madrassa* mainstreaming.

Chapter five discusses some of the reasons for USAID's reluctance to work with *madrassas*. Most of the respondents interviewed suggested that it was difficult for a donor agency to work with *madrassas* in the absence of institutional structure. They added that the Pakistani government's inability to successfully implement reforms at *madrassas*, and the backlash it faced, discouraged donor agencies to intervene. According to the respondents, in such circumstances, a foreign donor would be reluctant or unwilling to intervene in such an environment.

Although, the reasons for USAID's unwillingness to intervene in *madrassa* reform appear to be justified from a donor agency's perspective, it still leaves a large gap in the education programme they themselves implemented.

Why inclusion of *Madrassas* is essential

As discussed earlier, Pakistan's *madrassas* have been a subject of much debate and discourse since the 9/11 attacks. The government of Pakistan also attempted to reform *madrassas*, however, the reform efforts could not achieve the desired results. This section discusses why it is essential to include *madrassas* in any education reform programme; whether they are implemented by donor agencies or the Government of Pakistan.

In recent years, the type of education *madrassas* impart has been identified as the crux of the problem. Some scholars argue that education that creates barriers to modern knowledge, stifling creativity and breeding bigotry, has become the *madrassas'* defining feature. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind, that not all *madrassas* are alike. While many offer only the most rudimentary math and science others are more sophisticated, aiming at the same level of education found in Pakistan's more-elite schools. An example of one of the better funded *madrassas* is the *Anjuman Faizul Islam* in Rawalpindi. Here boys and girls - nearly 700 of whom are orphans - study together up until fifth grade, and then continue their studies separately until grade 10. (Looney, 2003)

With this in mind, it can be questioned why an institution, which has historically been the largest philanthropic institution in Islamic history, and a source of knowledge for generations of muslim scholars, was not included in a large scale education reform programme. The objective of the USAID education programme was to galvanize the country's education system through the provision of technical assistance, teacher training and infrastructure (Neog, 2010).

Human rights theories of universalism and cultural relativism could explain why an essential stakeholder in the education system was not included in an extensive education reform programme. The theory of radical universalism suggests that culture is irrelevant to the validity of rights and rules, which are universally valid. (Donnelly, 1984) Whereas, radical cultural relativism purports that culture is the sole source of moral rights and rules. ESRA was implemented to increase literacy levels in Pakistan by improving the access to and quality of education imparted. Therefore, it was an intervention designed to assist the government of Pakistan, in the fulfilment of the right to education. However, USAID, as a

western organisation, has its own parameters, and characteristics, which dictated how an intervention to fulfil a right should be designed and implemented. In this instance, USAID appears to have taken a universalistic approach, excluding an important cultural, and religious institution, disregarding the fact that *madrassas* are religious schools, imparting religious, and in some cases 'modern' education as well. In the cultural context, the inclusion of *madrassas*, could have been seen as an encouraging initiative on part of the donor agency. According to Freeman, critics of the universalistic approach consider universality 'an illusion produced by western states over human rights discourse'. Critics of universality also call it an ideological disguise for 'cultural imperialism'. (Freeman, 2003:102) The exclusion of *madrassas*, an important social and educational institution, can be construed as a form of cultural imperialism. Regardless of what the local, cultural context demanded, USAID implemented an education reform programme, with inadequate appreciation of the local needs and context.

The Western understanding of *madrassas* in Pakistan evokes 'terrorist schools' as they were set up (and supported by US finance) to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan and later provided the backbone of the Taliban regime. This highly oversimplified description does not apply to 90 per cent *madrassas* across Pakistan as most of them teach children at primary level how to read and write as well as require them to study the Quran. There are different types of *madrassas*, most focus on basic literacy and religious education. (Lall, 2010)

The expansion of *madrassas* through village mosques was encouraged throughout the 1980s in order to make up for the shortfall of primary schools in villages. Today, the GOP offers financial assistance to *madrassas* which modernise and use mainstream textbooks. The government has also been pushing for more secular subjects to be taught in *madrassas* (Lall, 2009: 193) Keeping this in mind, USAID could have incorporated *madrassas* teachers into their capacity building efforts, thereby, including an essential stakeholder in education reform, and gaining community support by working with a well-established/trusted community institution, benefitting from existing infrastructure, and social capital accumulated by a pillar of the community.

Linked to the exclusion of *madrassas*, inadequate understanding of local cultural context and absence of sufficient needs assessment is the rising demand for religious education in Pakistan. Over the past decade several new kinds of schools, which either combine religious and worldly subjects or seek to provide worldly education in an Islamic environment, have

entered the market. Administrators of these schools believe that parents wanted their children to have both kinds of schooling. (Fair, 2008) This claim is consistent with empirical work of Matthew Nelson, whose interviews in Rawalpindi revealed a strong preference for religious education (Nelson, 2006).

Amid wild speculation about the burgeoning number of Pakistani *madrassas* and their supposed legions of aspiring terrorists, scholars and analysts also continue to misunderstand how parents make decisions regarding education. The 2005 study by Andrabi and others found that the vast majority (75%) of all households that send one child to a *madrassa* used a combinations of private and/or public schools for their other children. *Madrassa* education is not a road to great riches, but graduates are not likely to be unemployed. Many *madrassa* graduates obtain employment from other *madrassas*, mosques, or religious political parties (Fair, 2012).

Research reveals that Pakistani parents do not send their children to *madrassa* out of poverty alone, as is popularly assumed. In fact, household economic data from the FBS show that *madrassa* and public school children come from families with very similar economic profiles, with one major exception: *Madrassas* attract many more students from the wealthiest strata than do public schools. (Fair, 2012: 136)

The prevailing narrative that *madrassas* are schools of last resort not only erases the agency of Pakistani parents, but also demonstrates a lack of understanding of the country's educational market. Officials with the USAID, it has been shown, did not research into the demands of the educational market before intervening. This is unfortunate, for if we examine the data on parental choice, we find that Pakistani parents send their children to *madrassas* not for economic reasons, but because they want their children to have an Islamic education. In this sense, Pakistani parents are no different from parents in the United States and elsewhere who send their children to parochial schools or even choose homeschooling in order to shield their children from influences that they find objectionable (Fair, 2012).

Matthew Nelson's research reveals that although there is an evident push in the direction of the private sector, religious education plays an important role in the context of local consumer demands in education. Nelson's study is based on 750 qualitative interviews conducted in various parts of Pakistan, drawing special attention to data regarding existing

enrolment patterns focusing on religious versus non-religious school enrolment, and data regarding local religious education demands (Nelson, 2008).

With reference to local consumer demands in particular, Nelson's team asked respondents to identify their top two educational priorities from a list of five options, including (a) basic education, that is, basic literacy, (b) religious education, (c) vocational education, (d) liberal education, that is, education focused on the development of critical thinking skills and (e) civic education. In response, it was found that 'religious' education was selected nearly twice as often as anything else particularly among men and those with lower levels of education. In fact, overall, we found that more than 62% of respondents identified religious education as their 'top' educational priority. (Nelson, 2008: 595)

Increasing demand for religious education appears to be a substantial reason for USAID to include aspects of religious education into an education reform programme, in the form of *madrassas* inclusion. Failure to do so alienates local communities, reaffirming their apprehensions of allowing a foreign agency to carry out development interventions which are for the communities' benefit, as opposed to serving ulterior or nefarious motives.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study began by asking a range of questions in relation to donor funded educational interventions and their perceived failure in achieving their goals. To add context to our investigation, the USAID and its interventions, ESRA in two provinces of Pakistan is taken as a case study. Specifically, this study has sought to answer the following questions:

- What sort of resistance USAID as a multilateral donor agency experience in the provision of a basic right?
- How is the USAID (as a donor agency) perceived by the general population?
- Does this perception aid or hinder their development agenda?
- What is the political motive behind funding an aid programme in Pakistan?
- How does the USAID's rejection of *madrassas* (as a parallel education system) impact implementation and consequent results of the education programme?
- Why is the USAID reluctant to incorporate *madrassas* into their education reform programme?

This study explored the right to education as a human right, vis-a-vis the international human rights discourse, and then investigated the right to education in the Pakistani context, especially in view of 2010's constitutional amendments.

The ICESCR and other human rights instruments clearly define the right to education as the state's responsibility. States signatory to these international instruments, are obligated to provide their citizens free and compulsory primary education. However, recognising that some countries are ill-equipped and unable to fulfil basic rights such as primary education, for their citizens, the international community joined hands to support countries falling behind in the provision of basic rights.

The Millennium Development Goals was one such platform where the international community pledged their commitment to make Universal Primary Education a reality by 2015. In order to achieve UPE, President Musharraf introduced the Education Sector Reforms, to raise literacy and enrolment levels. The introduction of Education Sector Reforms coincided with USAID restarting their operations in Pakistan. Therefore, Education Sector Reform Assistance programme, funded by the USAID was aimed at improving the access and quality of primary education in Pakistan. However, evaluations conducted by the USAID suggested that the programme was unable to meet its core objectives. What is important to bear in mind is that, from the perspective of achieving measurable targets, ESRA could classify as a highly successful development intervention. However, this perspective fails to gauge the impact these measurable targets have, which in ESRA's case have not been assessed.

This study finds that the reasons why the programme failed to meet its objectives are not associated with ESRA alone.

In fact a number of issues identified through primary research pointed to concerns with development assistance and the way it is administered, which lead to its ineffectiveness. These primarily include the unsustainable nature of development assistance. A development intervention lasts for a specific period of time, and aims to achieve large scale goals, such as improvement in the access to basic education, which are not achievable in the short run. In addition, ESRA aimed at enhancing the capacity of the Ministry of Education to prepare development plans, and implement them. However, with the presence of foreign consultants preparing plans and the capacity development of Ministry staff at the Federal, Provincial and District level could not be determined. Many of the respondents pointed out that, interventions such as ESRA create a dependence of relevant ministries and institution on donor's resources, as opposed to making them more efficient. This dependence is created because the foreign consultants and the financial resources that accompany them are for a limited period of time.

Another important aspect which was highlighted through primary and secondary research was the lack of or absence of adequate needs assessments, to ascertain they way an intervention should be designed to maximise benefits reaped.

Nelson (2006, 2008) and Fair (2012) note that USAID did not research demands or needs of the Pakistani education before undertaking programmatic interventions on education. Nelson's study provides evidence that there is an increasing demand for religious education in Pakistan. In addition, according to Fair (2008:17), the Government of Pakistan acknowledged that it relies on religious education as a means to construct a "democratic, tolerant, and just society, as envisioned in the concept of Pakistan". In spite of the views of the Government, USAID's intervention did not include any aspect of religion, religious education or religious institutions.

More specifically, although the Government's Education Sector Reforms aimed at mainstreaming *madrassas*, USAID's ESRA did not include *madrassas* at all. From the findings, it appears that USAID does not consider *madrassas* as institutions imparting basic education, whereas in reality, most *madrassas* in Pakistan impart basic literacy and numeracy.

Interviewees discussed a number of reasons why USAID did not include *madrassas* in their education reform intervention, such as lack of institutional structure, the lack of acceptance or cooperation from *madrassa* administration towards Government's *madrassa* reform, and due to the negative perceptions attached to *madrassas* and the controversy that any association with *madrassas* could generate. However, given the influence that the institution wields in the Pakistani community, and the growing increase in the demand for religious education, this study has argued that it would be pertinent to include *madrassas* in any education reform interventions.

It is also important to bear in mind the socio-economic reasons for including *madrassas* in any education reform intervention. Lall (2008) argues that it is not difficult to understand why parents, especially the poor and uneducated would send their child to a *madrassa*; they are free and provide boarding and food for their pupils. She adds that it would not be unfair to say that *madrassas* have had an impact on literacy levels in Pakistan. Baxter and Kennedy (2000) observes that while there is considerable unemployment of students completing their education at secular schools and colleges, *madrassa* graduates have never faced such problems, and have usually been able to find jobs commensurate to their training.

It is important to bear how US-Pakistan relations influence USAID's development agenda in Pakistan. The relationship between both countries is lop-sided, to say the least. Where donor-recipient relations are developed primarily for the benefit of the recipient, in US-Pakistan's case, the development agenda is dictated by the US foreign policy towards Pakistan. This has had a significant influence over how USAID administers aid, and how projects are implemented. One can argue, that USAID's approach towards development being influenced by its foreign policy, contributes to the failure of the development intervention's goals.

Recommendations

Given the vast infrastructure, social capital and a large national network that *madrassas* enjoy, to continue to ignore them in foreign funded educational interventions almost certainly insures any reforms processes failure. Therefore, it is pertinent for the success of education reform initiatives, to find new and suitable approaches to the inclusion of *madrassas*, as they form a vital part of the basic education to system in Pakistan.

However, there is also a need to appreciate the political and terrorism related concerns of foreign donors and their hesitance to engage with organizations often associated with terrorism at worst and socially regressive at best.

The following recommendations are aimed at setting the groundwork for educational reform, including *madrassas*, by taking tentative steps.

First, expectations regarding educational reform projects need to be managed. Interventions initiated by foreign donors, especially those backed by USAID come with aims and targets that are often lofty. Given the poor understanding of foreign specialist of micro level issues, many limitations are never accounted for which hinder the implementation of reform processes. Any reform process involving *madrassas* would need to have limited and achievable targets.

Exchange of possible practices and ideas between schools and *madrassas* within Pakistan and abroad can be facilitated by US and other foreign institutions. The role of Islamic seminaries in other parts of the Muslim world that have been able to provide a more inclusive and professionally attenuated curriculum should be considered. The experiences of some

Indonesian pesantren¹³ that have recently reformed their curricula internally may be particularly instructive (Ali, 2009: 6).

In addition, it is important to respond to any misinformation being circulated around madrassas. Especially, foreign donor agencies which consider engaging with *madrassas*, could review *madrassa* literature and respond directly to *madrassa* establishments to clarify any misunderstandings or erroneous information about foreign interventions policy.

Conclusively, donor agencies and recipient states should bear in mind that their relationship should be mutually beneficial, and should not be dictated by one or the other.

13 Pesantren or Pondok Pesantren are Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia

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Appendices

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Describe your role at RTI

Describe RTI's involvement with ESRA

Was the bidding process for the project competitive?

Did the Government of Pakistan approach the USAID to fund ESRA components?

How independent was decision making at the implementing partner organisation's level?

Was there any aspect of community involvement?

Was a needs assessment carried out prior to implementation?

What were the criteria to select the geographical areas of intervention?

On programming:

What sort of resistance did the donor agency experience?

- How the USAID and the programme it was funding was, perceived?
- USAID had a political motive to fund an education programme, how was it reflected in programme design and implementation?

What was donor agency's take on the inclusion of *madrassas* into the programme?

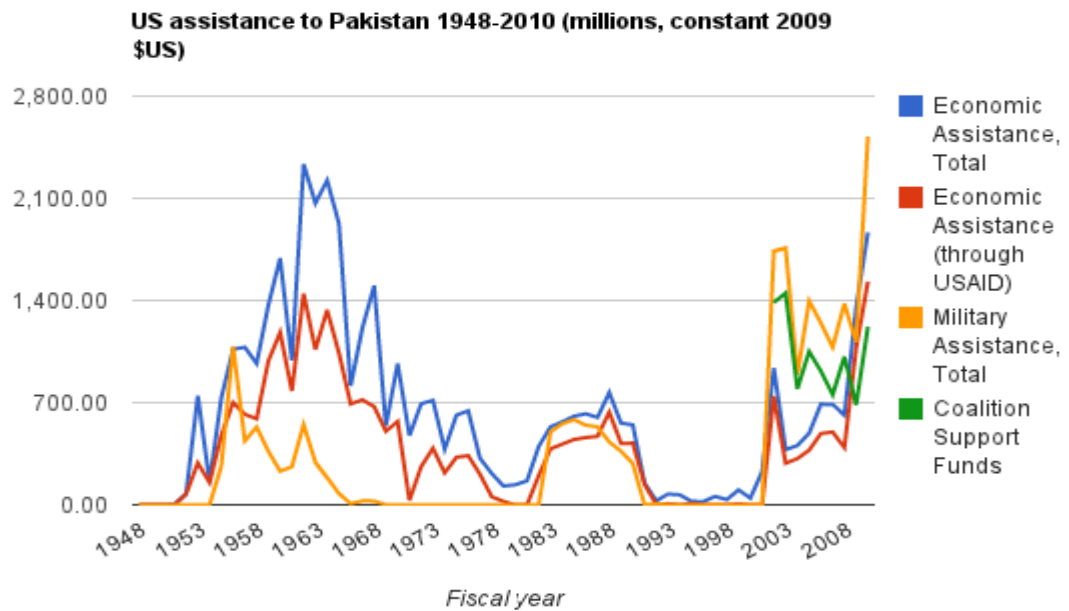
How does the USAID's rejection of/reluctance to include *madrassas* (as a parallel education system) impact implementation and outcomes of the programme?

In your opinion, would the inclusion of *madrassas* in the programme, result in a different outcome?

In a nutshell, what do you think, are the causes of programme failure?

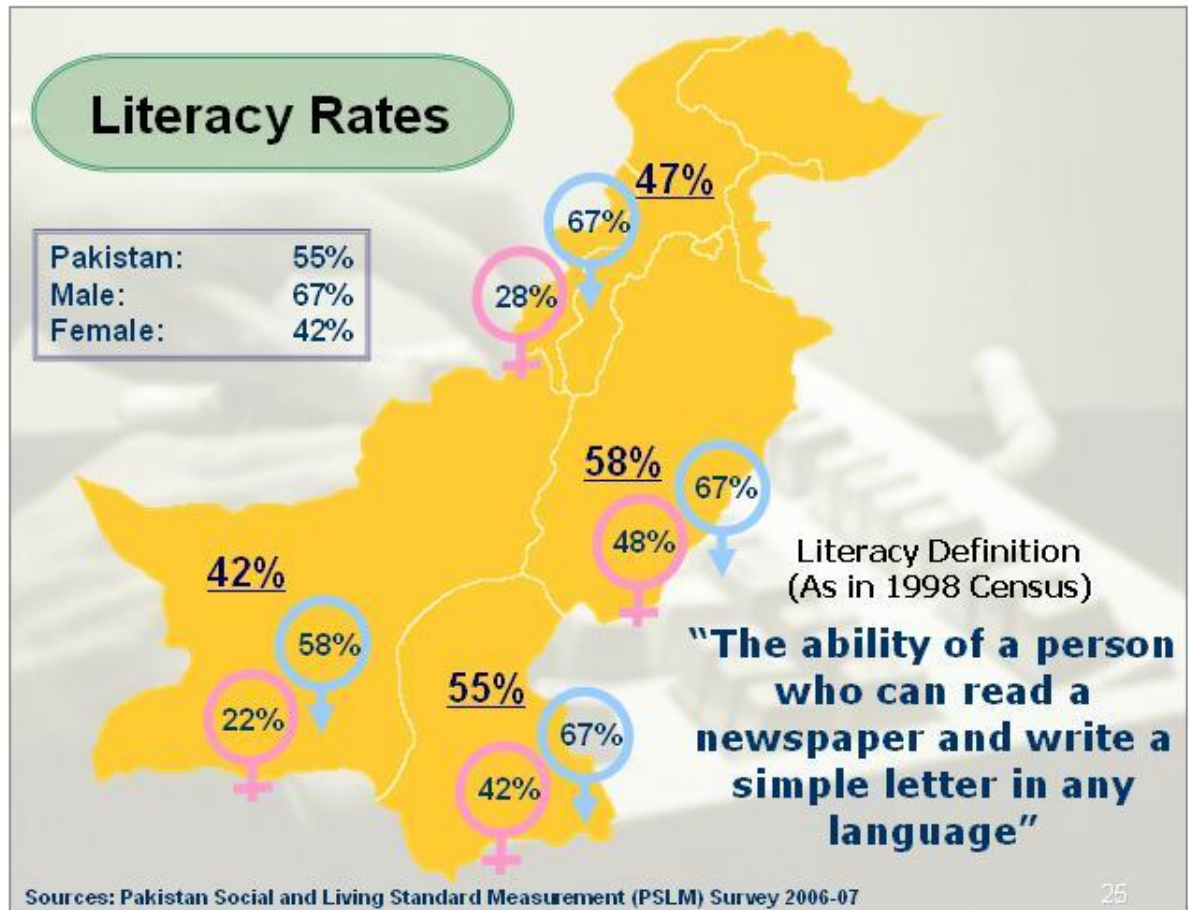
Appendix B

Source – The Guardian



Appendix C

Source - www.ilm.com.pk



Appendix D

Profiles of Interview Respondents

Dr HFH is a senior education scientist in international development at RTI. He works with education systems around the world and across the United States to design and implement policy/reform strategies aimed at widespread and sustainable development. Dr. H's areas of technical expertise include systems/policy analysis, institutional development, change management, strategic planning and visioning, and decentralized education finance. His work ranges from designing and facilitating national education strategies and visions, to the formation of policy measures aimed at improving classroom performance system-wide, to the development of organizational 'catalysts' of ongoing reform.

Mr IM is an educational researcher, a guest faculty member at Michigan State University and a Visiting Fellow at DPRC (LUMS). His current areas of scholarship include history of ideas in education and comparative history of education reforms. He also served as Director for the Office of Technical Support at RTI for ESRA.

Ms Izza Farrakh is Policy Specialist, specialising in community driven school improvements processes. She is currently working for USAID funded ED-Links in Pakistan. Izza worked as a Policy Specialist at RTI for ESRA.

Mr Fawad Shams is development practioners, who has been associated with the development sector for many years and specialises in the field of Education Development. He has worked on a number of large scale multilateral donor funded programmes and with numerous Pakistani and international development organisations such as The Aga Khan Foundation, The World Bank, and the American Institute for Research. Fawad Shams was Deputy Chief of Party for the Professional Development component for ESRA.

Mr Ijlal Hussain has been associated with the Aga Khan Education Support Programme for several years. Hussain was a Programme Lead for one of ESRA's components.

Mr Adnan Sattar is a human rights expert, and consults for a number of development projects in Pakistan. He was involved in ESRA in capacity of a consultant, and with the development training curriculum for the professional development component.

Dr Marie Lall is a lecturer in Education Policy at the Institute of Education, University of London and an associate fellow on the Asia Programme at Chatham House. Her research focuses on the politics of South Asia, in particular India and Pakistan, and on education policy with regards to gender, race, and social exclusion in South Asia. She also works on issues of political economy, geopolitics, foreign policy formulation in South Asia and diaspora politics.

Dr Matthew J Nelson is a Lecturer in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. His research includes South Asia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and India); Islam; Islamic law; Islamic institutions (courts, schools, etc.); institutional change; democratic theory; democratic practice.