

# **Access of Muslim Children to Education**



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## Acknowledgement

The days have gone when education was the privilege of a bunch of dominant people whose decisions influenced the nature and contents of education.

Today access of Muslim children to education is a social issue, in Nepal. Educational problem will be solved only if education meets the needs of its recipients. It is important to note what kind of perceptions, attitudes and expectations the parents have with regard to the education of their children. We have to write textbooks with different groups of learners in mind. Literacy will not expand by blanket programmes and with the use the same textbooks throughout the country. Programmes will have to be developed based on needs of the communities.

BPEP has implemented special program for Muslim children. It is presumed that it will increase their participation in public school education. The monetary incentive has, however, not been effective.

This study focuses on the causes of low participation of Muslim children in public school education and suggests measures to increase their enrolment in public schools.

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Thanks,

H. Md. Zahid Parwez

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### **Glossary of terms**

Quraan	=	The great holy book of Islam
Hadith	=	Order and life account of prophet Mohamed
Molvi	=	Religious Teacher of Islam
Madrasa	=	Muslim Religious School
DDC	=	District Development Committee
VDC	=	Village Development Committee
Maktab	=	School for small children

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## **Executive Summary**

Over the past few decades universal primary education has been a major concern of MOES. For the last two decades BPEP has made a remarkable progress in this regard and, as a result, Nepal's literacy rate has increased to 53.7 as recorded in the 2001 census. But, in spite of this progress, a large number of children from social, economic and religious minorities are still educationally disadvantaged. BPEP has counted these groups as a special focus group (SFG) and implemented special incentive programmes to bring them into the mainstream of formal education. The Muslim children constitute one of the components of SFG.

The Muslim community forms 4.21% of the total population and it is the third religious minority of Nepal. (The 2001 census report does not explain the general ethnic educational status in the country). According to the 1991 census the literacy percentage was 22.41% Muslim community exist in every district of the country and the Muslim literacy percentage is deplorably low compared to the national average.

BPEP initiated the SFG incentive for the Muslim children in three VDCs of Rupandehi district, but it has not been adequately effective on the Muslim children.

Thus, it was necessary to identify the major factors impeding the participation of the Muslim children in education, which the public schools offer. These children prefer going to the Madrasas.

## **Objectives of the study**

The major objective of this study is to identify the obstacles to the participation of the Muslim children in public school education and suggest relevant policies and practices.

## **Methodology**

It is a field-based in-depth study. As it is intended to suggest strategies for bringing the Muslim children to participate in education, the data were collected from the Muslim communities. Muslim religious teachers political leaders, intellectuals, educationists and persons at the policy level were the key informants, the analysis has been done in terms of gender. The field sites were Bagaha and Tenhuwa VDCs of Rupandehi district. Information was collected by using of these tools (a) status survey, (b) interview with household heads, (c) interview with key informants, (d) focus group discussions and (e) in-field observation.

### **Major findings**

This study has identified several factors hindering the access of the Muslim children to education. These factors are:

#### ***1. Economic factor***

Economy is the one of the major hindrances. The Muslims were generally poor in both the sample VDCs. Their poverty has various reasons. They do not produce much from their farmland. For 82% of them the major occupation is agriculture work and 56% of them are agrilabourers. Again, 52% of the population are economically inactive and all women depend on men's income. Their family sizes are generally large.

## *2. Religious*

Religion is considered a way of life. Religious education is mandatory to every Muslim for everyday ritual. Muslim children participate in the Madrasa education in place of going to school because they want to learn religion first. It is compulsory for them.

## *3. Cultural*

To an average Muslim literacy does not mean anything if it does not teach Islamic cultural norms and values. The Muslims are very aware of their culture and codes of conduct. It is only the Madrasa where the codes of conduct of Islam are taught along a practical line. The codes of conduct comprise way of living eating, praying, permitted and prohibited food, dress style, system of hygiene and sanitation and many other social behaviours. So the Muslim prefer Madrasa education for their children to any other education.

## *4. Language*

All the Muslims speak the local dialect but all the textbooks are written in Nepali and the medium of instruction in public schools is Nepali too. The Muslims want their children to learn the Urdu language, which is the medium of teaching in the Madrasa. Having to learn through Nepali is one of the reasons for their low participation in general school education.

## *5. Mistrust*

The Muslims do not have a trust in general school education. To them this education is a way to government job in which they are discriminated. For them the government job is highly competitive while the Madrasa job is easily available. That is why they are inclined to Madrasa education.

## *6. Skill training*

The Muslims are not hopeful about access to job opportunities. They want income generating skills to be included in the curriculum of public schools. They feel that this will make them self-dependent. They prefer skills like tailoring, embroidery, knitting, etc. for their girls and mechanical skills for their boys.

## *7. Matches and mismatches*

Both the Madrasa and the public school have the same objective to educate children. But their targets differ contextually. Madrasa education as such provides religious education and training, whereas public schools provide secular education. In the Madrasa method of teaching, course content, teaching environment and code of conduct are all different. So the Muslims consider the Madrasa as an ideal school for their children.

## *8. Incentive distribution*

The SFG incentive is highly appreciated by every Muslim community. It is probably for the first time in Nepal's educational history that Muslim education and related problems received consideration. But it is found that incentive distribution mechanism did not work properly. The incentive did not reach the target group in monetary form; it did not reach the Muslims. Thus, it did not achieve the objective.



The study also comes up with some specific measures to encourage Muslim children to join schools. They were as follows:

### **Suggestions**

Four approaches have been suggested for motivating the Muslim children to public schools, which are as follows:

#### *1. Accommodating school culture*

The present public school curriculum is basically secular. The Muslim children want basic religious education to go side by side. The public school system does not fulfil their educational needs. So it is necessary to accommodate Islamic teaching in the primary curriculum of public schools. This might be a point of attraction for the Muslim children to join public schools. The following points may be considered in this direction:

##### 1.1 Integration of Islamic learning

A key informant of the district admits that the Muslim guardian/parents are greatly aware of their cultural tradition. According to them, the school is the main place where one could learn it. So it is essential that Islamic teaching be started in public primary schools.

##### 1.2 Motivational programmes

DEO, RPs, LDO, CDOs - all suggested a massive motivational program in every village (where the Muslims live in a sizable population) along with the incentive scheme. They also suggested integration of the Madrasa curriculum with the public school curriculum by mobilizing the social and religious leaders.

##### 1.3 Special incentive scheme

All the key informants, social and religious leaders, and teachers emphasized the need of a special incentive scheme for the Muslim children in every public school and in every Madrasa.

##### 1.4 Reservation in higher education needed

A FGD with the key informants concluded that in higher technical and vocational education, some seats should be reserved for the Muslim students. The informants believed that it would encourage the Muslim community.

#### *2. Massive Out of School (OSP) Program*

Despite several efforts of MOE/S a great number of school age children are still out of formal school. A large number of Muslim children go to the Madrasa to study the Quraan and Islamic religion, but they do not study the national curriculum there. There is a realization that the formal school has not been able to reach the Muslim children because the needs differ. The Muslim groups need specific strategies for reaching the 'unreached' Muslim children. This needs four things:

- (1) Integrated Islamic curriculum package for the Muslim children
- (2) Specific facilitator training to motivate Muslim parents/guardians to send their children to OSP classes.

(3) Making the Madrasa an avenue to OSP learning by mobilizing the Madrasa teachers and social workers.

(4) Involvement of Madrasa teachers as OSP facilitator for the Muslim children.

OSP is a full-fledged system parallel to the primary school. It is considered as an alternative form of education for school age children.

### *3. Bridging the Madrasa and the School*

There are two school systems, the Madrasa system and the public school system in many Muslim-populated villages in the Terai region of the country. The system have their respective curricula, so the students are unable to enroll in the general school after they complete the primary level of Madrasa. Therefore, it is essential that the gap between the two systems be bridged by introducing mainstream subjects in the Madrasa and religious teaching in the school. However, introducing an integrated bridge course for the Madrasa system will be better.

#### *3.1 Appointment of government teacher*

All the key informants of the local and district levels expressed the opinion that the government should appoint mainstream subject teachers for the primary level of Madrasa. They believed this would help the Madrasa students enroll in public schools according to their qualifications. They also wanted that the Madrasas be registered as educational institutions.

#### *3.2 Promoting Forces for Schooling the Muslim Children*

In the Muslim culture, "religious and cultural capitals" were the major forces which drive the children to the Madrasa system. Belief in the Quraan, holy book of the Islamic believers, was the religious capital. The lived culture of the Muslims was yet another force to promote education in the community. 'But, with the passage of time', said a well educated Muslim, 'the "alien" public and private boarding school emerged in the vicinity. These schools put pressure on the Muslim community to transfer their religious as well as cultural capital to the alien school system, showing the hope of future employment. He further said, "Those with better income are sending their children to school." And yet the Muslims were sending their children to the Madrasa in the morning, usually before 9.30 and to public or private school then after. This somehow proves that the Muslims are gradually sending their children to general schools and also that they have maintained Madrasa must be the entry point for their children. The inclusion of subjects like Nepali and English in Madrasa school system is another effort in this direction. These gradual moves towards modernization yield some questions. How can we help students learn five languages (Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Nepali, and English besides their home language Bhojपुरi) simultaneously ? How can we make the Madrasa curriculum transferable to the public school system and vice versa ? How can we ensure regular exchange of school teachers and Molvis between two different school systems ?

### *4. Madrasa and EFA Initiative*

'Education for All' is a global initiative. In pursuance of the Dakar Declaration in 2000, all the countries concerned have committed themselves to the fulfilment of the goal of EFA. HMG/Nepal as a signatory to the Declaration has implemented various

programmes to achieve the EFA goal. To achieve this goal by 2015, the government has launched many programmes.

The prevailing Madrasa system of education is a potential educational institution. It does not need extra resources. It may be reorganized and used as a major support to the EFA initiative. This support may be utilized for the achievement of the EFA goal.

#### **Formative measures**

Studying the economic, cultural, and social capitals of the Muslim communities, the researchers have come up with some formative measures, which are as follows.

- a) Rescheduling the time: Madrasa starts at 7 in the morning and runs to 4 in the evening. This time collides with the school start time-10 in the morning. This situation demands a rescheduling of Madrasa and school time. This rescheduling activity can be done in consultation with the Madaris and Molvis of the Madrasa system and the SMCs and teachers of the school system private as well as public.
- b) Using Molvis for compulsory schooling initiative: Molvis are the reverend persons in the Muslim communities because they have the knowledge of the Quraan and Hadith and motivate the people for learning and training. In consideration of this the Molvis can be mobilized for (i) the creation of data base of the Muslim children (ii) launching awareness raising program (iii) donation collection, and (iv) guest lecturing on the Muslim code of conduct.
- c) Exchange of experiences: Schoolteachers and Molvis do have their own experiences of teaching. They have both good and bad things to share. This is where thematic exchange programmes can be organized. The programmes may include: (i) keeping the students in discipline (ii) language transfer to the students (iii) keeping and maintaining students' progress record, and (iv) organizing special support program for the needy children, and (v) finding out areas for reciprocal undertaking and collaboration.
- d) Development of language clues for easy learning: Muslim children are supposed to learn five languages, Abadhi at home, Arabic and Urdu at Madrasa, and English and Nepali at school. Each language has its own features. However, there are rooms to develop clues to language transfer and skill. The possible clues are developed from the Arabic alphabet. These clues are to be tested and refined on a larger sample.



## Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 Background

In Nepal literacy is a basic pre-requisite for educational development. The national literacy rate is 53.7% (2001 census) with high illiteracy among disadvantaged groups. Over the past few decades universal primary education has been a major concern. UNESCO identified the characteristics of the disadvantaged population groups. It formulated strategies for popularizing and universalizing primary education among them. But the Muslim children, who are educationally disadvantaged, are till now unserved. The Dakar declaration clearly defined the purposes of Education for All. One of the purposes was to meet the basic learning needs of the children. Basic education should be provided to all children and an active commitment must be made to remove educational disparities. The under-privileged, the poor people of rural and remote areas, and the nomadic, ethnic, racial and disadvantaged minorities should not be kept subject to any discrimination with regard to access to education.

BPEP has, for the last two decades, made remarkable progress in providing access to primary education to school age children. As a result, there has been good increase in student enrolment and teacher number. But, inspite of the efforts made by MOES, a sizable population of the country is still educationally deprived.

The government has implemented various programmes in response to the Dakar declaration on Education for All. But the Muslim communities are still unserved. The Muslims have their own educational institutions called Madrasas run with the help of the community people. In Nepal, Muslims send their children first to the Madrasa and then to the mainstream school. Parents send their children to the Madrasa, where they learn the basics of Islam and the Muslim code of conduct. It is a social pressure.

With the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1990, promotion of basic and primary education was given the first priority. BPEP has been devising different strategies to ensure access to education. These strategies include pre-school education, scholarships for girls and the Dalits, out of school program for educationally disadvantaged groups, adult education for women, recruitment of female teachers, and preparation of teachers for community development.

The Muslim community of Nepal is an educationally disadvantaged population. It is one of the special focus groups of BPEP. It is the third religious group in terms of population and constitutes 4.21% of the total population of the country (2001 census). Although the Muslim are scattered over all districts of Nepal, their major concentration is in the Tarai region (the southern belt of the country).

Islam has ever been advocating knowledge and wisdom to its followers. According to Islam, the first man Adam was taught knowledge of the universe and dignity of human beings.

Islamic faith is founded on two things: understanding the holy Quraan and going the way prophet Mohammed has shown. One cannot be a true Muslim by birth or by performing rituals. The Quraan repeatedly commands its followers to understand the realities of the world and to seek knowledge and wisdom. **The Quraan says that a person who does not have the knowledge of the world is worse than animal.** Thus, supremacy of knowledge is manifest in the words of God. God will raise the

ranks of those who believe in Him and have knowledge. According to IBNE-Abbas, a prominent companion of Prophet Mohammed, "a learned person ranks seven hundred grades higher up than a simple believer". There are Quraanic commands that drive the believers to seek knowledge of the world, the environment and the ecology.

Prophet Mohammed ordered his followers to seek knowledge, no matter what it cost. He said knowledge led one to paradise. According to him, knowledge is a sealed treasurer house of inquiry, with keys to it. "Inquire, therefore; for there are rewards for the four- the-inquirer, the learned, the auditor and the admirer."

The excellence of teaching is also advocated. As learning and teaching are very important tenets of the Islam, true believers accept that the knowledge excels human attributes. Knowledge is description of God's perfection. Knowledge is way to true happiness and happiness is a means to achieve God. The activities of this world, according to Islam, derive from four basic categories.

- a) agricultural activity to meet the basic food and nutrition needs
- b) clothes and craft cloth
- c) transportation, tailoring, cooking and many other practical activities
- d) Most important of all, pursuit of knowledge and intellectual attainment.

Knowledge eliminates destructive and undesirable traits and leads to happiness. Intellectual activity are superior to any other profession. Intellectual perceptions lead a man to religion and take him to God. (Ghazali)

The Quraan and Hadith are written in Arabic. An average Muslim goes through the Quraan but understands little. An "Ilm" seeker Muslim must be literate. He cannot obey the Quranic Commands without being literate and having the Ilm. The Islamic educational tradition does not discriminate by gender or race. It teaches for happiness in this and the here-after world.

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The multiethnic characteristic of a country is a challenge to the national development. Moreover, the psychosocial characteristics of its religious minority groups are likely to make this challenge complex.

Inspite of the progress the country has no far made towards universalizing primary education it is important to note that a greater majority of school age children of the Muslim community are still not enrolled in the school. Obviously, the non-enrolment and illiteracy relate to the section that comprises the chore hard, and the disadvantaged religious minorities. It was essential to look into the causes of low participation of this section in education and to make endeavours to address its educational needs.

Though the Muslim population constitutes 4.21% of the total population, the literacy rate was 22.41/ and the women literacy percentage was 10.67% (\*1991 census), which was lower than the national average. The Muslims have their own identity and their own education system called Madrasa education system. The Madrasa runs basically on community donation. Some Madrasas are residential and others are non

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\* The educational status of religious groups within the district is not yet available in the 2001 census report.

residential limited to local students. In spite of this system of education, free lodging, free food and free education, the Muslim, of Nepal are far lagging behind in education.

BPEP has paid special attention to the enrolment of the children of special focus groups in school. They are provided special incentives. To implement the incentive program, BPEP selected a few pockets for each group. Rupandehi was selected as a pocket for the Muslims where in three VDCs a special incentive program was implemented.

BPEP has launched the incentive program to bring the Muslim children to the mainstream school of education for the last three years. But the FRP (phase I) study reported that a majority of Muslim students were still out of school and went to religious schools Madrasas for learning. The study recommended identification of the non/low participation in the general schools.

In this context, it was essential to find out the factors. BPEP provides Rs.500/- each to out of school children for school dress and Rs. 300/- for educational materials. But the Muslim children did not benefit from this. So it is essential to find out the parents'/guardians' perceptions and expectations in this regard. It is also essential to devise alternative measures which could bring the Muslim children to the mainstream of formal schooling.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to identify the main obstacles hampering the educational participation of the Muslim children in the general schools and to suggest relevant policies and practices in this regard. The specific objectives of the proposed study are:

- a) To study the socio-economic status of the Muslims in the study area.
- b) To examine the educational status of the Muslim in the study area.
- c) To identify the causes of low educational participation of the Muslim children in the general school
- d) To suggest ways to increase this participation.

To fulfill the above mentioned objectives the study has basically tried to the following research questions:

- 1 What are the socio-economic situations of the Muslims whose children go to schools? What do they expect by sending their children to schools?
- 2 Why are the Muslim children not motivated to join public schools?
- 3 What are the factors which prevent the Muslim communities from benefiting from the existing school system?
- 4 What do parents/community members perceive about the school education system?
- 5 How are the Muslim children treated in schools?
- 6 What are the anomalies that exist between the home environment and school environment of the Muslim children?
- 7 What kind of incentive schemes will help the Muslim children participate in school education?

- 8 What factors would help increase participation of the Muslim children in school education?

#### **1.4 Methods of the Study**

This is a field study, based on primary data. Necessary secondary data were obtained from DOE, VDCs, school and health post. Primary data were collected from the sample VDCs and fieldwork.

##### *1.4.1 Site Selection*

The study was conducted in two different VDCs of the Rupandehi District, Tenhuwa and Bagaha. The VDCs were sampled out on consultation with DOE and Muslim leaders. The criteria for the sample selection of were:

- Incentive-implemented VDC ( Bagaha)
- Non incentive and highly Muslim populated VDC (Tenhuwa)

##### *1.4.2 Rationale of the selection of the study area*

The Basic and Primary Education Programme (phase II) has identified the Muslims as a special focus group, and presumably the incentive will increase their motivation to send their children to school. In this respect the Department of Education has implemented its incentive programme for Muslims in three VDCs of Rupandehi. Therefore, Rupandehi has been selected as a sample district for this study. Bagaha is an incentive implemented VDC, where the Muslims occupy 60% of the total VDC population.

Tenhuwa VDC was selected because here the Muslims occupied 80% of the total VDC population. In this VDC every ward have one Madrasa or Maktab and it is considered as highly educationally aware Muslim- populated VDC of the district.

##### *1.4.3 Selection of Sample*

A total of 25 households was selected from each VDC using the purposive sampling method. The households were selected on schooling and non-schooling children background with the help of local teachers.

Respondents, from both types of households were selected for interview. Priority was given to the head of the household. If the head of the household was not available at the time of the survey, another adult member of the household, able to respond to the questionnaire, was interviewed.

##### *1.4.4 Data Collection Tools and Techniques*

Different tools and techniques were used in the study. The main data collection techniques employed in this study include status survey, interview, focus group discussions, Key informant interview and observation.

##### *1.4.5 Status Survey*

Household and school surveys were conducted to find out the literacy rate, and the enrolment and retention trends, of the Muslim children. The literacy rate was obtained through the household survey. The enrolment and retention trend were identified through record analysis. All the schools in the sample VDCs were



surveyed to obtain information the enrolment and retention of the children (grade 1-5) in the last three years.

#### *1.4.6 Interview*

The heads of the sample households were interviewed, using open-ended questions asking about their problems in education, their source of orientation towards education, their expectations from the education of their children. Additional questions were asked to measure the depth of their responses. This mode of data collection gave freedom to the respondents to express themselves; especially to fill the lacunas between the school culture and home culture.

#### *1.4.7 Key informant interview*

In each VDC the study team interviewed a number of individuals as key informants in order to collect information on Muslim culture, religion, religious education and religious values and on Madrasa education, teaching methods and school education, Muslim perceptions of school education, educational needs, awareness of the factors that promote and hinder children access to education, reasons for low participation of Muslim children in school, social structure, government policy of education, incentives to Muslim children and their effectiveness, incentive distribution, and so on. The key informants included village elders, social and political leaders, religious leaders, intellectuals, schoolteachers, Molvis, CDO, DEO and a few people knowledgeable in their fields.

#### *1.4.8 Focus group discussions*

Focus group discussions (FGDs) of people were organized and conducted. The discussion participants included leading Muslim personalities and social and religious leaders of the district. A detailed guideline for FGD had been prepared to find out if they opted for monetary or non-monetary incentive four separate group discussions were arranged in each of the sample District. They were 6 to 10 people in each group discussion. The four group discussions were conducted in different places of the district with the district level key informants.

#### *1.4.9 Observation*

After selecting the study sites, the team visited the Muslim community and established good rapport with the local people. The team observed the settlement pattern, cropping, house structure, local clothing, food habits, teaching methods in (Madrasas as well as public schools), student discipline and regularity of teachers, teaching environment, number of students (Madrasas and schools) and social interaction of religious groups of the study area.

### **1.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation**

The study team used the qualitative approach. At the same time, some basic quantitative techniques were also used for situation analysis of the educational status. The data from field survey and interview were analysed descriptively.

The findings were interpreted in terms of the educational problems of the Muslims. The findings suggested strategies for improving the Muslim education scenario.

## Chapter 2 SOCIO- ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

### 2.1 Social Status

The determinants of the social status of a particular community vary contextually. The rural social structure of the Terai belt, where multicultural practices are dominant, is generally determined on the basis of local economy, power and functions of local self-governance units such as VDC, DDC and other local organizations. Personalities in politics and persons in civil service, who have a higher status, in the community and population composition also, play a significant role in the determination. Here in Bagaha VDC the Muslims constitute 60%, and in Tenhuwa 80% of the total VDC populations.

In both the VDCs their participation in civil service is virtually nil. Participation in politics is very high. In both the VDCs Muslims hold a higher social status in the neighboring VDCs.

#### Involvement of Muslim in Decision-making Level

Tenhuwa VDC	Number of person in decision making level	Bagaha VDC	Number of persons at decision-making level
Chairman	1	VDC Vice chairman	1
VDC member	9	VDC member	6
DDC member	1	DDC member	1
SMC chairman	2	SMC chairman	2
Health post chairman	1	Health post member	1
Lumbini Development Committee member	1		

The above table shows their social status as decision-makers at local level as well as at district level.

### 2.2 Economic status

The economic status of a rural family is determined mainly on land holding occupation and the yield of farming. Eighty-two percent of the people have agriculture as their major occupation and 96% have some farmland, but 50% of the land farm holding families do not produce as much grain food as their actually need for a year. Men are engaged in farming while females do household work inside and outside home.

Muslim people are generally poor. Eighty-two percent work in agriculture and 66% work as labourers. They have no other income generating skills. The yield of farming is 4 quintals in average per bigha. Again, 52% of the population is economically inactive even though their families are quite large. The children of poor families are deprived because they need help their parents to buy a proper school dress, they are subject to child labour.

## 2.3 Population distribution

Table 1: Household size, age, and sex composition of the Muslim population (Tenhuwa VDC)

Age Group	Sex				Total	
	Male		Female		Number	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
0-4	21	7.0%	19	6.3%	40	13.4%
5-9	25	8.4%	31	10.4%	56	18.8%
10-14	21	7.0%	21	7.0%	42	14.1%
15-19	16	5.4%	13	4.4%	29	9.7%
20-24	11	3.7%	7	2.4%	18	6.0%
25-29	17	5.7%	5	1.7%	22	7.4%
30-34	9	3.0%	7	2.4%	16	5.4%
35-39	13	4.4%	13	4.4%	26	8.7%
40-44	10	3.4%	5	1.7%	15	5.0%
45-49	4	1.4%	4	1.3%	8	2.7%
50-54	1	0.3%	3	1.0%	4	1.3%
55-59	4	1.3%	3	1.0%	7	2.3%
60-64	5	1.7%	3	1.0%	8	2.7%
65+	4	1.3%	3	1.0%	7	2.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>54.0%</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>46.0%</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Average household size=11.9(298 divided by 25)						

Source: Field Survey, 2003.

Table 2: Household size, age and sex composition of Muslim community (Bagaha VDC)

Age Group	Sex				Total	
	Male		Female		Number	Percentage
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
0-4	17	6.5%	14	5.4%	31	11.9%
5-9	19	7.3%	17	6.5%	36	13.8%
10-14	24	9.2%	31	11.9%	55	21.1%
15-19	9	3.4%	10	3.8%	19	7.3%
20-24	15	5.7%	14	5.4%	29	11.1%
25-29	8	3.0%	4	1.5%	12	4.6%
30-34	7	2.7%	10	3.8%	17	6.5%
35-39	7	2.7%	2	0.8%	9	3.4%
40-44	5	1.9%	10	3.8%	15	5.7%
45-49	4	1.5%	4	1.5%	8	3.1%
50-54	8	3.0%	5	1.9%	13	5.0%
55-59	2	0.8%	-	-	2	.8%
60-64	5	1.9%	6	2.3%	11	4.2%
65+	3	1.1%	1	0.3%	4	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>50.7%</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>49.3%</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
Average household size =10.4 (261 divided by 25)						

Source: Field Survey, 2003.

This study started a total of 559 (298 in Tenhuwa VDC and 261 in Bagaha VDC [Tables 1 and 2] households. The average family size is of more than 10, which is higher than the national average. In Tenhuwa 55 percent are males and 46 percent females. The female population is lower than the male population. In Bagaha 50.7 percent males and 49.3 percent females, here the male population and the female population and female are almost at par.

Younger age groups (particularly age groups of 0-4 to 10-14) constitute the highest proportion in both the VDCs. (Tables, 1 and 2). The fertility rate and birth rate are fairly high.

## 2.4 Economically active and inactive populations

The extent of economically active (working or independent) and economically active (dependent) were examined in terms of age groups.

Table 3: Distribution of population by economically active and inactive groups

Age Group	Tenhuwa VDC			Bagaha VDC		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0-14	22.5% (67)	23.8% (71)	46.3% (138)	22.9% (60)	23.8% (62)	46.7% (122)
15-59	28.6% (85)	20.1% (60)	48.7% (145)	24.9% (65)	22.6% (59)	47.5% (124)
60+	3.0% (9)	2.0% (6)	5.0% (15)	3.1% (8)	2.7% (7)	5.8% (15)
Total	54.1% (161)	45.9% (137)	100.0% (298)	50.9% (133)	49.1% (128)	100.0% (261)

Source: Field Survey, 2003

The above table provides information on working population and dependent population by sex. The working age population is 48.7 percent in Tenhuwa VDC and 47.5 percent in Bagaha respectively. The proportions of males and females are not equal. Twenty-five percent males and 25.8 females (total 51.3 percent) are dependants in the Tenhuwa VDC, and 26 percent males and 26.5 percent females, (total 52.5 percent) are dependents in the Bagaha VDC. In the study area the proportion of dependent is higher than the proportion of the independents.

## 2.5 Economic Condition

### 2.5.1 Occupation

The main occupation of the study area is agriculture (82%). The cereal crop farming is the major occupation in both sample VDCs. Women engage in household works, such as house keeping, children's take care and other activities.

Table 4: Occupational Distribution of Respondents by VDCs

Occupational category	Tenhuwa VDC		Bagah VDC		Total (Both)	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Main occupation:</b>						
Agriculture	20	80%	21	84%	41	82%
Trade	-	-	1	4%	1	2%
Labourer	2	8%	3	12%	5	10%

Madarsa Teaching(molvi)	3	12%	-	-	3	6%
Total	25	100%	25	100%	50	100%
<b>Secondary occupation:</b>						
Trade	1	4.8%	4	20%	5	12.2%
Govt. service	-	-	1	5%	1	2.4%
Tailoring	-	-	2	10%	2	4.8%
Private Service	2	9.5%	2	10%	4	9.8%
Agri/labour	14	66.7%	9	45%	23	56.0%
Labour in Saudia		-	1	5%	1	2.4%
Madarsa Teaching	2	9.5%	1	5%	3	7.3%
Shoe maker	1	4.8%	-	-	1	2.4%
Medical store	1	4.8%	-	-	1	2.4%
Total	21	100.0%	20	100.0%	41	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2003

The main occupation of 82% is agriculture while 56% works as agricultural labourers (secondary occupation). A majority the 66% of the total population work as labour (main or secondary occupation). They have no other source of income. Six percent are teachers in the Madrasas and only 2% are traders. Thus, Table 4 shows that they are bound to work as labourers.

### 2.5.2 Land holding size

A majority of the rural inhabitants are peasants. Most of the sample households owned some farmlands. Of all the sample households in Bagha VDC only two were found land less.

The economic status of the rural community is highly primarily based on land holding and occupation. Table 5 below shows that 96% of the people have some farmland. Only 2 respondents are land less in Bagaha. Four respondents (3 in Bagaha and 1 in Tenhuwa) have more than 7 bighas of land. In the sample VDCs the land measurement system is also different; 3 bighas of land are equal to 1 standard bigha.

Table 5: Land holding size of the Respondents (in Bigha)

Land Category	Number of percentage of landholding families					
	Tenhuwa VDC		Bagaha VDC		Total(Both VDCs)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Under one Bigha	4	16	7	28	11	22
1-3 Bigha	14	56	13	52	27	54
4- 7 Bigha	6	24	1	4	7	14
Above 7 Bigha	1	4	2	8	3	6
Landless	-	-	2	8	2	4
Total	25	100.		100	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2003

The above table shows that 4 percent households are landless, 22 per cent have less than 1 Bigha and 54 percent between 1 to 3 Bighas. Only a few (6%) households own more than 7 Bighas of land.

### 2.5.3 Food sufficiency

Land holding, is undoubtedly a fixed asset. Land holding does not mean anything if it does not provide food grain to the tiller.

Table 6: Food sufficiency from farm land of respondents

Food sufficiency status	Number and percent of family with food sufficiency status					
	Tenhuwa VDC		Bagaha VDC		Total(Both VDCs)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Sufficient for whole family	13	52	9	36	22	44
Insufficient for whole family	10	40	11	44	21	42
More than sufficient	-	-	3	12	3	6
No product from the land (Job)	2	8	2	8	4	8
Total	25	100.	25	100.	50	100

Source: Field Survey, 2003

The parents who suffer from insufficiency of food grain send their children out to work as labours in agriculture and for income earning in nearby towns for the survival of the family. That is why their children become educationally disadvantaged. Farming does not yield sufficiently for lack of irrigation and due to the traditional system of farming. The produce of the field varies from 3 quintals to 6 quintals per bigha.

### Chapter 3

## EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MUSLIM AND CAUSES OF LOW PARTICIPATION OF MUSLIM CHILDREN IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

### 3.1 Educational Status

This chapter deals with Madrasa and Maktab literacy. It is the Madrasas and Maktabas that provide Muslim children easy access to education. There is a Madrasa in every ward of Tenhuwa VDC. The forthcoming tables show that the literacy percentage of the Muslims is higher (58.8%) than the national average (53.7%). The reasons for this is that access to a Madrasa is easy and Madrasa education free. There is a seven decade old Madrasa which created the Madrasa educational environment. Currently, there are 40 Madrasa (higher) educated Molvis in that VDC and none of them are unemployed. They work as teachers in Madrasas in their own and surrounding villages. The Madrasa teachers also work as missionaries to educate Muslim children, so there is social pressure on the Muslim children to join Madrasas. This social pressure has its religious background. The Muslim more or less follows the religious command. Here literacy does not mean Quranic literacy; it means literacy in Urdu, Hindi etc.

The Quraan emphasizes the importance of education. It gives an educated person a higher status. The Muslims have their own educational institutions in the form of Madrasas but their low participation in Nepali (i.e. general) education system present another reality. Here questions may arise: Why do the Muslim children not go to a Nepali educational institution? It is because they feel discriminated? Does the Nepali education system pose a threat to their religious belief or value system? Is there no proper motivation for them? Do they feel that their educational needs are not fulfilled?

According to the Quraanic command, seeking knowledge is an obligatory to every Muslim male or female. In the Quraan and the Hadith, the word 'Ilm' has been used as a synonym of 'knowledge'. Ilm is an Arabic word which 'means to know', to know an unknown thing and be familiar with it. And education means systematic instruction. In fact, education is a physical mental and moral training which produces in cultured men and women capable of discharging their duties well, serve the Almighty, and are inspired even to sacrifice their secure for his pleasure. ["Ihyaul Oloom Ghazali"]

The purpose of education differs in different systems. At present an educational system is generally divided into religious and secular education (mainstream education) or categories.

Islamic education in its true sense is system of education which exposes one to the precept of Islam on that one may perform all activities of his life in conformity with the Quraan and Hadith. In the Islamic system of education the whole idea of text books of physical, biological and human sciences deal with the concept of God and His creation.

Thus, the Quraan urges people to explore the mysteries of creation and understand them. It is a scheme of education that encompasses the entire gamut of Muslim life and it does not allow any branch of knowledge to be cultivated independently of another. So it can justly be said that branches of learning such as atheism, dancing and singing, which are not non-Islamic, are included in Islamic learning.

Table 7: Literacy Rate of the population by VDC and sex (6 years and above) of sample families

Categories	Tenhuwa VDC			Bagaha VDC			Total (both)	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total %	Number	Percent age
Literate	90 (37.2)	65 (26.8)	64.0%	73 (32.3)	47 (20.8)	53.1%	275	58.8%
Illiterate	42 (17.4)	45 (18.6)	36.0%	41 (18.1)	65 (28.8)	46.9%	193	41.2%
Total	132 (54.6)	110 (45.4)	242 (100)	114 (50.4)	112 (59.6)	226 (100)	468	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2003

Note: Number in parentheses indicates percentage.

The male and female literacy rates of Tenhuwa VDC are higher than Bagaha VDC. In both the VDCs, the female literacy rate is lower. The main reason for the lower literacy of the females is the religious and cultural values and early marriage (at the age of 14-16). Women are not allowed to do job and girl children are forced to participate in household chores.

Table 8: Literacy rate of the respondents by VDCs

Categories	Tenhuwa			Bagaha			Total(Both VDC)	
	Male	female	Total%	male	female	Total%	Number	Percentage
literate	12	-	48%	12		48	24	48
illiterate	13	-	52%	11	2	52	26	52
Total	25	-	100.0%	23	2	100.0%	50	100.0%

Source: Field Study, 2003

The literacy data suggest that 40 percent of the total respondents are literate in both the VDCs, lower than national average. Only 2 female respondents in Bagaha were illiterate. It shows that the educational attainment level of the Muslims is gradually going up because of easy access to Madrasa education.

### 3.2 Educational Attainment:

The table below (table 9) shows the educational attainment of the two VDCs. It also shows gender discrimination prevailing in the communities. Islam does not have this discrimination in education but the practice is just the opposite. Another cause of this discrimination is the social attitude, which looks upon girl education as wastage of investment. There were 40 Madrasa educated men, but not a single woman of this status in Tenhuwa. This proves the practice of gender inequity in education in these Muslim communities.

Table 9: Educational Attainment by sex (From the whole VDC)

Educational level	Bagaha VDC		Tenhuwa VDC		Total (Both VDC)
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
SLC	4	-	26	-	30
I.A	4	-	6	-	10
B.A	3	1	3	-	7
M.Sc./M..A.	1	-	2	-	3
Graduation level of Madrasa (Higher)	3		40	-	43
Total	15	1	77	-	93

Source: Group Discussion, 2003.



### 3.3 School-going and Non-going Children:

Girls' participation in the Madrasas is nearly at par in that of boys (71 boys and 65 girls). But girls do not get access to education in general schools because basic Islamic education which is essential for every Muslim (to perform daily religious rituals) which can only be achieved in the Madrasas.

Table 10: Distribution of school going and non school going children

Categories	Bagaha VDC			Tenhuwa VDC			Total(Both VDC)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
School Going									
Primary school going	10	3	13	7	2	9	17	5	22
Madrassa school going	33	32	65	38	33	71	71	65	136
NonSchool-going	7	1	8	5	1	6	12	2	14
Total	50	36	86	50	36	86	110	72	172

Source: Field Survey, 2003

There are both categories of the school system in the sample VDCs. But the Muslim children prefer Madrasa education. As the table shows only 22 children went to school while 136 children went to Madrasa (children from simple families). Only 5 girls out of 22 were in school as where 65 girls out 136 were in Madrasa. The proportion of boys and girls children in Madrasas one almost equal while, it is not so with the schools.

The Muslims think it is useless to invest in girl's education because the girls will not go in for higher education or join government service. According to the Quraanic norm, women are dependent on men and are not bound to earn if they do not like.

### 3.4 Parental perception and expectation from education

All the respondents looked at education positively. But they perceived education as multifunctional in different ways. They took literacy not only as a skill but as a social practice with many specific manifestations. Parents also equated mainstream education with prosperity and dignity of their children in future. Even the parents who were completely illiterate also viewed that education made their children wise and capable to solve life problems and grapple to their challenges of day every life. But they perceived mainstream education as a ladder to government job or any other prestigious job. All guardians / parents also opined that education did not mean any thing if it did not teach the basic Islamic code of conduct. They viewed that Islamic teaching was essential if one wanted to be a true Muslim and live the Islamic way. All the guardians/parents said that schools provided opportunities to acquire skill with which to improve their income. Parents whose children have not gone to school also shared this view. But their perception about girls' education was not found encouraging. They perceived that girls should not be employed in government jobs. Their education should be limited to religious education and in-house income generating skills. The informants on the other hand pleaded for girls' education, saying it was as essential for them as it was for boys.

The respondents were very positive towards school education as a means of government job and towards Islamic education for value preservation. They did not like separating one from the other and stressed the needs for comprehensive

(combined) education. It became clear from a FGD that the Islamic education for children, especially girl children, was a must for matrimonial in an Islamic environment on this side and on the other side border. For the Muslims literacy without knowledge of the basic Islamic code of conduct, norms and values was no good for the Muslim children. Muslim could not maintain their identity without cultural education, although being illiterate was something of prestige.

Poor parents express the view that after completing, a definite level of education their children would get some job in government offices or would start some income generating activities on their own. Some parents wanted the girls to become teachers, (from key informant discussion). The expectations of Muslim guardians/parents was that sons' education in Madrasa would give a quick return, because after completion of Molvi course, they easily get employment in Maktab or Madrasa. The Madrasa teachers, Molvi hold a high status in the society. Generally, Molvis are not unemployed.

There was enthusiasm in parents' responses about their childrens' education and prospects. They could expect quick return from their boys' education and so they sent their girl children to Madrasa instead of sending them to school. They were pessimistic about opportunities for their educated girls in the rural areas. They looked at school education as a never-ending process. They commented that the government was reluctant to provide Muslim students opportunities for higher technical/vocational education and in government jobs. This last view was strongly supported by the FGD of district level key informants.

There are some factors which restrict the Muslim children from joining general schools (public or private). The factors are explained in the paragraphs that follow:

### **3.5 Causes of Low Participation**

#### *1. Compatibility*

The most important factor which prevents Muslim children from joining the general (public) school is their need of religious education. All the respondents (100%) and even those whose children did not get religious education, regarded religious education as something essential for every Muslim whether a boy or a girl. Religion does not discriminate gender is education, according to the Command of Prophet Mohammed. But the girl children are discrimination in practice due to cultural problem of co-education. In Nepal today there are several girl Madrasas of higher education run under the management of female teachers in Banke, Kapilvastu, Sirha and Sunsari districts. In these Madrasas only female teachers employed. Islamic educations, in true sense teaches the precept of Islam and motivates one to perform all activities of life in conformity with the Quraan. The contents the textbooks center on the concept of God and His creation. But the needs of, Islamic education are not fulfilled in public schools the Muslims children rush to religious school (Madrasa). All the guardian and parents perceived education as something very positive. They wanted both religious and mainstream education but they gave priority religious education.

#### *2. Difference in cultural settings*

The Muslims of Nepal constitute a religious minority. They want to preserve their culture and maintain the Islamic code of conduct. They live with a distinct identity. All guardian parents opined that their children must receive cultural education

(theoretical as well as practical) in an Islamic environment. The girl children should not be allowed to study in non-Islamic environment. There is no Islamic orientation in public schools, and so the children are enrolled in Madrasas.

There were five higher educated key informants in the district level FGD, who were in government jobs and whose children were studying in English boarding school in the town. Their children were however, being taught Islamic religion and culture in their home by an Islamic teacher. But five schoolteachers reported that their children went to Madrasa to learn the Quraan and culture because they could not pay home tuition fee to the Molvi.

This shows the need of cultural education in the Muslim community. Whatever a Muslim may be an intellectual social leader or a Molvi he gives priority to the cultural needs of education, which is virtually absent in public schools.

### *3. Poverty*

Most of the Muslims in the VDCs are poor, although they are not completely landless. But they have to earn for their survival. A great majority of Muslim (82%) is subsistence farmers. Fifty-six percent are seasonal agriculture labourers and 10 percent labourers work. Fifty-two percent are dependent. They need resources and so their children are forced to participate in agriculture work or be engaged as labourer in the nearby town the girls to participate in coeducation at the adolescence age, is a taboo and so they stay at home doing household chores. (See the table on economic status). Fifty- two percent families do not produce sufficient food in their farmlands.

It was also reported in the FGD that a majority of the Muslim families of the district were at disadvantage in either educational system owing to poverty. The key informants called special attention of the government for the educational development of the Muslim children.

### *4. Language problem*

Almost all the Muslims speak Bhojpuri. Their cultural language is Urdu, which is the medium of instruction in Madrasas. Urdu is understood, more or less by every Muslim and they are bound to learn Urdu for cultural purposes. The medium of instruction in general schools is Nepali and thus the language of instruction is also considered as a hindrance in order to enrolment of the Muslim children in schools.

### *5. Parental perception*

The Muslim has no good perception of school education. For them school education is for the rich and for those who are in political power and in bureaucracy. They claimed that their children were unable to get government jobs due to religious discrimination. So school education did no good to the Muslim children. It was useless for the parents to invest, time and money in school education. They also viewed that it was better for their children to acquire income-generating skills, for their economic survival.

### *6. Absence of income generating skills*

The Muslim parents/guardians wanted the inclusion of income skill training in the general school. They were aware that such skills would provide their children opportunities to be self-dependent. The women group severally emphasized the

need of income skill for the daughters. The key informants of local level also underlined the need of income skill training in the primary schools.

### *7. Match and mismatch*

Regarding match and mismatch of school and Madrasa, the following points came up during observation and in FGD.

#### Contents

Madrasa education contents are based on Islamic faith and code of conduct. The main objective of the Madras is to make the children true followers of Islam and enable them to lead their life in a true Islamic way. So the teaching-learning process and practice are Islamic. The students are bound to follow the Islamic code of conduct practically as long as while they stay in the Madrasa.

In Bagha VDC there are four Madrasas of nonresidential nature in 4 different villages. Every Madrasa is of the primary level and runs local Muslim support. It does not receive any outside (Muslim) support. In Tenhuwa VDC there are 8 Madrasas in 8 different villages of VDC.

#### Individual teaching

The teaching learning practices are traditional. The Molvis (teachers) have to teach each individual student separately. A student is taught the next lesson only after the teacher is confident that the child has digested the previous lesson. Thus in the Madrasa primary level learning occurs individually. This individualized nature of learning demands self- paced input. There is no grade set-up in the initial stage of teaching learning.

#### Gender seclusion

Gender seclusion is always valued in Islamic faith. It is practiced at home, work places and in public gatherings. A Madrasa also uses this system in sitting arrangement and in other extra curricular activities. The Madrasa uniform also maintains gender and cultural values of the Muslim society.

#### Timing

Traditional education system does follow the social-cultural norm in many ways. Madrasa generally runs from 8 in the morning till 5 in the evening with two hours break for (Namaz) ritual performances.

#### Discipline and Contact

From 8 to 12 and 2 to 5 every student has to be very particular about discipline and the Islamic code of conduct. Teachers watch their activities. Students are bound to digest the lesson. They are free to get help of the teacher in this respect. They may approach the teacher again and again for help.

#### Public school

The public school is a teaching unit secular education. It has an official curriculum to teach. The Madrasa maintain gender seclusion whereas the school promotes a mixed culture. Student- teacher relationship is maintained only in the classroom. Only occasional evaluations justify students' performances.

Islamic culture is highly concerned over pure and impure (Pak and Napak) students in many ways. Napak students cannot touch the Quran. A Pak student gets Napak if he did not use water after urination. This practice is not taught in the general school. Dress norms are also maintained in the Madrasa, as girls were not permitted to open hair and use of half pants is strictly prohibited during Quraan reading (for boys and girls both).

#### School regularity

Public school teachers do not seem to be particular about the presence and absence of the students, while a Madrasa teacher, due to individual contact, watches around and send a boy to bring his absent peer to school (even by force) and the peer is punished for his absence. Thus student regularity is maintained in the Madrasa. Unlike schoolteachers no Madrasa teacher is trained in teaching methodology. The student, who first attends the Madrasa and then enrolled in the public school, does better (as orally reported). However there are differences of school environment, course content, social interaction, teacher- students' relationship, discipline of students between the Madrasa and the school. The school being of a secular nature, the public school students are generally free. Dancing, singing and many other activities of this type are a taboo of Muslim parents. They said that they were unable to train their children in basic Islamic code of conduct at home for lack of time and because of their ignorance. So they sent their children to Madrasa.

There was a yet another difference. Public schools did not run properly. The teachers were neither regular and nor responsible. In the Madrasas teaching-learning was regular and the Molvis were devoted. The Madrasas was managed by the community people while the school was beyond people's approach. The Madrasa teachers were not employed permanently. They should to prove their worth (to the community) to continue in their jobs. So they were bound to prove their efficiency. This is not so in the government school system.

#### 8. *Social-cultural factors*

The Muslim community is socially isolated. A high degree of gender discrimination prevails in the Muslim community and the traditional religious education Madrasa education is easily accessible in the villages where Urdu, Arabic and religion are taught. Madrasa teachers do their best to attract Muslim children in the Madrasa education. There is also a psychosocial problem. The Muslims suffer from inferiority complex of a religious minority, so with them frustration is natural. There is no clear government policy and plan to raise the educational and social status of the Muslims.

The school is reluctant to attract Muslim children. Public school teachers are not particular about students' class regularity. The teachers are lesser in number and the physical facilities of the school are inadequate. Teacher-parents relationship is poor. In the Madrasa this relationship is good. Molvies have the status of preachers and reformers. A discussion revealed that Madrasa organizers wanted to register their Madrasas as educational institutions with integrated curricula.

## Chapter 4

### INCENTIVE SCHEME AND PROMOTING FORCES FOR SCHOOLING THE MUSLIM CHILDREN

This chapter deals with the incentive scheme and suggests measures to ensure Muslim children's access to school. The Muslims constitute a majority of population in both the VDCs they hold high social status and participates in VDC and SMC proceedings. Though a majority of the students in public schools Hindus (different castes and Dalits), the Muslim students are not discriminated by Hindu students, teacher's and SMC members. They are treated equally in all activities of the school.

All parents/ guardians as well as key informants were of the opinion that there was no caste-based religion-based discrimination against students and teachers. On this finding, this study assesses and suggests alternative incentive schemes. These schemes are mentioned in the following paragraphs.

#### 4.1 Incentive Schemes

The incentive scheme provided by MOEs for the Muslim children (part of the special focus group) in Bagha VDC of Rupandehi has not proved effective. School records revealed that the Muslim childrens enrolment was on the decrease and this dropout rate was very high especially in the case of girl students. In the first year of the incentive for the Muslims as a SFG, the district level authority distributed school dress to every student of the school, which was an attraction for the Muslim children. But in the following year, it was distributed in the form of stationery. The district level and local level IMCs did not follow the directives of MOES regarding the incentive distribution..

An analysis of the incentive program as implemented in public primary schools of Bagaha revealed a decrease in enrolment and dropout. In the 056 session, there were Muslim students (grades 1 to 5), including 36 girl students. There were 12 girl students in grade 1, of whom 10 out of 12 dropped after 3 months. Likewise, in the 057 session the Muslim student ratio decreased by 20%. Only 72 boys and 10 girls enrolled (grades 1 to 5) No girl student was enrolled in grades 4 and 5 in this session. There were 35 boys and 6 girls in grade 1, 19 boys out of 35 and 4 girls out of 6 drooped out.

In the 058 session the enrolments decrease by 10%. In this session the number of Muslim students was 60 only. There were 11 boys and 1 girl in grade 1. But 3 boys out of 11 and one girl student dropped out.

All the respondents (key informants included) did not have any information about the monetary incentive provision for the Muslim children as a special focus group were found unfamiliar. They were not been informed till now (by the concerned authority) about incentive scheme.

However, they informed that their children received stationery in place of money. They commented, saying that the incentive money had been mismanaged. They demanded the incentive money for the Muslims must be distributed to the Muslim students. They also demanded that this incentive amount be provided along with by school dress and stationery.

But DEO reported that the incentive amount, which was loan money, had been converted into stationery, which distributed to every school student. On behalf of the district level IMC decision, DEO said the incentive program would be continued.

All key informants reported that special incentive for the Muslim students was not distributed to the Muslim students only. In fact it was distributed to the children of other caste groups as well. This was done by the Incentive Management Committee with the consent of DEO. This implies that the incentive which was exclusively meant for the Muslims was distributed in the form of stationery to every student of the school (against the guideline of the ministry).

#### **4.2 Alternative Incentive scheme for Muslim Children**

MOE/s implemented a special incentive scheme for the Muslim children. The main objective of the scheme was to bring the Muslim children to general school education. A record analysis of the last 3 years (enrolment, retention and dropout) revealed that the incentive did not attract the Muslim children. In fact, the incentive money did not reach them, and no guardian/parent knew about this scheme. This indicates that the Muslim guardian/parents might be attracted to schooling their children, if the incentive money was distributed properly to the Muslims along with other motivating programmes.

However, monetary incentive alone would not possibly satisfy them. As they conceived education as a multifunctional event to fulfill their cultural and educational needs, they wanted their cultural education the mainstream education to go combined.

The Muslim parents suffering abject poverty demanded income skill education for their children. They said that their children must study first in Madrasa then in the school. They demanded the introduction of some mainstream subjects in the Madrasa so that their children could later enroll in public school as per their age and school qualification. Thus, it was found that monetary incentive could not fulfill their educational needs.

**Four incentive approaches were identified, which could be introduced as measures to increase the participation of Muslim children in public school education. The approaches are as follows:**

##### *1. Accommodating school culture*

Considering that the present curricula of public schools are secular, the Muslims want their basic religious education to go side by side. This implies that school system does not fulfill their educational needs. This also indicates that it is very essential to accommodate Islamic teaching in primary level of public school which might help to increase Muslim children's participation in public schools. For this, following points may be considered:

##### **1.1 Integration of Islamic learning**

The key informants of the district level argued that the Muslim guardians/parents were very aware of cultural preservation and the general school could be a place for this. So it is essential to start Islamic teaching in public primary schools.

##### **1.2 Motivational programmes for the parents**

DEO, RPs, LDO and CDO suggested the start of motivational programmes in every village with a sizable Muslim population. They also suggested the mainstreaming of Madrasa with an integrated curriculum (by mobilizing the social and religious leaders).

### 1.3 Special incentive scheme

Almost all of the key informants such as social leaders, religious leaders and teachers emphasized the need of a special incentive scheme for, the Muslim children in every public school and in the Madrasa.

### 1.4 Reservation in higher education

A FGD of key informants of the district level concluded that the Muslim children needed a reservation quota in higher technical and vocational education. They opined that it might motivate the Muslim community to educate their children.

## 2. *Out of School Program (OSP)*

OSP has been initiated to reach the unreached children. In spite of various efforts of BPEP, a considerable number of school age children are out of school for various reasons. But it is not easy to reach the unreached. Moreover, government programmes, although they are ethnic/caste target-focused are mostly of a blanket type while the problems differ from one group to another. Therefore, strategies with a specific aim of reaching neither to unreached groups has been adopted. Muslim children need specific OSP strategy. Because the present OSP package may not address their actual educational needs. The strategy requires three approaches:

#### 1. Facilitator training:

The facilitator should be so trained that he/she could build community trust in school education and obtain parental support. The facilitator should be trained to convince the Madrasa teachers conduct exchange programmes.

#### 2. Formulation of Special OSP Package:

The special OSP package should be so formulated that it address the specific needs of the Muslim children in an integrated manner.

#### 3. Use of Madrasa as a venue for OSP learning.

OSP is a full-fledged system parallel to the formal primary school. It is considered as an alternative form of education for school age children.

Madrasa-going children only study religion; but they do not study school subjects. This indicates that it is very essential to launch a out of school program in Muslim-populated villages (by mobilizing local social workers and Madrasa teachers). Thus, OSP can encourage Muslim children to enroll in public schools.

## 3. *Bridging the Madrasa and the School*

The Madrasa and public school curricula do not comply with each other. Consequently, the Madrasa children are unable to enroll in the school even after they complete the primary level of Madrasa education. Therefore it is very essential to bridge the gap between the two systems by introducing mainstream subjects in the Madrasas and religious courses in public schools. Alternatively a separate bridge course maybe a better help in this direction.

### 3.1 Appointment of government teacher in Madrasa

All the key informants (Local and district) demanded that the government should appoint mainstream subject teachers for the Primary level of the Madrasa. This would eventually motivate Madrasa students to enroll in public schools.



### 3.2 Promoting Forces for Schooling the Muslim Children

- Different capitals force people to education. In the Muslim culture, religious and cultural capitals were the major forces. Belief in the Quraan, was the religious capital to the Madrasa system. The lived culture of the Muslims was a 'force' to promote education in the community. But with the passage of time public schools as well as private boarding school emerged in the vicinity. These 'alien' school systems put pressure on the Muslim community to transfer their religious and cultural capital to the alien system. (Public or private) in the hope of to the future employment. Today the Muslims send their children to Madrasa in the morning (usually before 9.30) and to public or private school thenafter. This situation shows that the Muslims are now trying to 'mainstream' their children and side by side with preserving their cultural norm through the Madrasa. The inclusion of some of the subjects like Nepali and English in Madrasa school system is another effort in this direction. This gradual change towards modernization yields some questions: How to help students learn five languages (Arabic, Urdu, Hindi, Nepali, and English and their home language Bhojpuri) simultaneously? How to make the Madrasa curriculum transferable to the public school or vice versa? How to ensure regular exchange of school teachers and Molvis between the two school systems?
- Exchange of experiences: School teachers and Molvis could have own experiences to share between them. This is where the exchange programmes can be organized the programmes may theme on: (i) student discipline, (ii) language difficulties of students, (iii) transfer of language (iv) maintaining students' progress record, (v) of special support programmes for the needy children, and (vi) identifying areas of reciprocal undertaking.
- Development language clues: Muslim children are supposed to learn five languages. Avadhi at home, Arabic and Urdu in the Madrasa; and English and Nepali in the school. Each language has its own features. However there is room to develop clues to language transfer and language learning. The possible clues are developed from the Arabic alphabets these clues will have to be pre-tested and refined as required.

#### 4. *Madrasa and EFA Initiative*

Education for all is a global issue and through the Dakar declaration (2000) all the member countries expressed their commitments to fulfill the goals of EFA. HMG/ Nepal also has shown its commitment and so implemented various programmes to achieve the EFA goal. The recent commitment to achieve the goal by 2015 through various programmes launched for the purpose.

The prevailing Madrasa system of education is a potential educational institution. It does not need extra resources. It may be reorganized and used as a major vehicle for EFA initiative. Nepal is facing a lot of challenges to achieve this goal, particularly for lack of resources. If the Madrasas are used rightly and effectively, they will significantly help Nepal achieve the EFA goal.

## **Recommendation**

On the basis of the above findings, this study comes up with the following recommendations:

*(a) Creation of environment*

- 1 Government should make a provision for the teaching (in Urdu) of Islamic code of conduct in public primary schools.
- 2 BPEP should develop a bridge course (with mainstream subject) to help Madrasa educated students enroll in public schools.

*(b) Policy decision*

- 1 Government should provide at least one mainstream subject teacher to each registered Madrasa.
- 2 Government should provide an option to each Madrasa to register as an educational institution.

*(c) Teacher Molvi*

Motivational and trust building activities should be conducted regularly with the help of religious and social leaders.

*(d) Further research*

MOES should start a pilot study (in-depth) at least in 6 districts where Muslims occupy more than 10% of the populations. Example districts: Mohattari, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, Kapilwastu, Banke.

*(e) Incentive scheme*

- 1 Government should conduct awareness programmes on education, health, family planning and women education through joint efforts of GOs and NGOs in Muslim communities.
- 2 Government should provide school dress, stationery, and scholarship to motivate Muslim children to education.
- 3 The incentive scheme for Muslims (as a SFG) should reach the target groups rightly and on time.
- 4 Monitoring and evaluation of the incentive management should be done regularly.
- 5 Awareness campaign should be launched to motivate people to send their children to school with the help of village elites, Molvis, social workers, political leaders, religious leaders, school teachers etc.
- 6 Government should make Madrasa a venue for OSP/EFA.

**Access of Muslim Children to Education  
FRP/CERID**

Status Survey

Name of household head:

Age: Male / Female

Address:

Occupation:

Profile of the Family

SN	Name	Sex	Age	Literate	Illiterate	Educational Status				Madras	Mobility
						Primary	Low.Sec	Secondary	Higher		
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											

## Social Background

Participation in V.D.C. :

Chairperson  be Chairman  bers Wa  ember

Participation in School Management Committee:

Yes  No  Please specify ...

Participation in local organization of any kind:

Yes  No  please specify ...

## Economic Background

*Annual family income*

- Annual family food products: Sufficient for whole family   
Insufficient for whole family   
More than sufficient

*Family occupation*

- Number of earning family members

*Secondary occupation*

Trade  Govt. Service  Tailoring  Private   
Service   
Agri./Labour  Other

Bigha  Katha  **Landholding** Dhur  Landless

Type of house

Kachhi  Pakki

Vehicles electrical appliance

Tractor  Motorcycle  Bicycle  TV Radio   
  
Tyre cart  Bullock cart  Pumping machine

Domestic Animals

Buffaloes  Oxen  Goats  Other

Access of Muslim Children to Education  
FRP/CERID

Interview with Key Informants of Muslim Community\*

1. Why Islamic faith holding parents are sending their children in following learning institutes ?

	For son	For daughter
In school		
In Madrasa		
In NFE classess		
In Maktab		

2. Why some Muslims parents do not send their children to school ?

	For son	For daughter
In school		
In Madrasa		
In NFE classess		
In Maktab		

3. What are the Islamic Cultural forces that promote children's education ?

	For son	For daughter
In school		
In Madrasa		
In NFE classess		
In Maktab		

- 
- \* Local leader,
  - \* School teachers,
  - \* Molvis

4. What are the Islamic Cultural forces that make parents hesitant to send their girls children to school ?

	For son	For daughter
In school		
In Madrasa		
In NFE classess		
In Maktab		

5. In what way the culture of school is similar/different with Islamic/ Lived culture ?

Similarity	Difference

6. How the Muslim children are treated in school and in Madrasa ?
7. What differences you observed between school and Madrasa treatings ?
8. How can we make school friendly with Islamic culture ?
9. What can be done to educate Muslim children in the school ?
10. How do you assess the government's efforts in enrolling and retaining Muslim children in school ?
11. Please suggest any other effective ways to educate all the Muslim children in school?

**Access of Muslim Children to Education  
FRP/CERID Project**

**Interview Question for Key informants ( District Level)\***

Name : ... ..

Age : ... ..

Sex . Male / Female

Education : Primary  Secondary  Higher  Madrasa

*Occupation :*

*Designation:*

1. How can we educate every Muslim Child of the district ?
  
2. Are you familiar that government provides scholarship for Muslim students?  

Yes  No
  
3. How do you feel about the scholarship scheme for Muslim students?
  
4. In spite of the scholarship scheme enrolment rate of Muslim children is not increased, would you explain the reason ?
  
5. What are the main problems which Muslims are facing to enroll their children in govt. school?
  
6. How far the school / Madrasa have been able to meet the expected needs of the Muslim community ?
  
7. What strategies do you suggest to suggest some measures to enroll all the Muslim children in school ?

\* *Religious leaders  
DEO  
PC  
Community leaders  
Political leaders*

**Access of Muslim Children to Education**

FRP/CERID Project

Interview Question for Household Heads

**1. Where do you send your children for study ? and why ?**

	Son(s)	Daughter(s)
In school		
Madrassa		
NFE class		
Maktab		

2. Are you familiar that government provides incentive for Muslim student ?

Yes  No

3. Did anyone of your children receive govt. incentive ?

Yes  No

If yes,

Number of boys  Number of Girls

If received what is its kind ?

Dress	<input type="checkbox"/>	Details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	Details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food	<input type="checkbox"/>	Details	<input type="checkbox"/>
Text book	<input type="checkbox"/>	Timely / Late	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Are you capable to get incentive easily ?



5. If you don't send, what are the main problems?

	Son(s)	Daughter(s)
In school		
Madrasa		
NFE class		
Maktab		

6. What level of education you expect for your children ? and why ?

	Level of education for	
	Son(s)	Daughter(s)
In school		
Madrasa		
NFE Classes		
Maktab		

7. What kinds of difference you perceive by sending your children to ?

	Son	Daughter
In School		
Madrasa		
NFE Class		
Maktab		
Home		

8. In what do you think your expectations have been fulfilled by sending your children to learning institute ?

	Son	Daughter
From School		
From Madrasa		
From NFE Class		
From Maktab		
Home School		

9. How do you assess the teaching-learning of school with your personal/familiar religious values ? (Sons, daughters, school, Madrasa, NFE class and Maktab)

10. What changes in teaching learning practices would motivate to send Muslim children to the Madrasa and school ?

## Participants of F.G.D.

### Group A

#### Intellectual

1. Prof. A.K. Khan
2. Prof. Sayeed Mohammad Khan
3. Dr. S. Hamid
4. Mr. Mehdi Hasan
5. Mr. Isteyak Ahmed
6. Engineer Nayaz - Civil Servant
7. Abdul Kalam Khan - Civil Servant
8. Md. Rashid Khan - Teacher
9. Md. Mustafa - Civil Servant
10. Inamullah Khan - Teacher
11. Abdul Karim - Teacher
12. Hasan Raza -Teacher
13. Wasiullah - Teacher
14. Anwarul Haque - Teacher
15. Asraf Ali - Teacher
16. Mr. Mahfooz- Civil Servant
17. Mr. Badruzzma - Teacher
18. Mr. S. Bedi - Civil Servant
19. Mr. Abdul Razaque - Trader
20. Mr. Sadre Alam
21. Mr. Abdus Shakur
22. Mr. Abdul Gafoor
23. Mr. Sikandar Ali – Teach
24. Dr. Seraj Alam

## Participants of District Level F.G.D.

### Group B.

#### **Religious leader**

1. Maulana Siddique
2. Maulana Faizullah
3. Maulana Mahfuzur Rahman
4. Maulana Abid Ali
5. Maulana Azim
6. Maulana Abdur Rahim
7. Maulana Abdul Mannan
8. Maulana Farmuddin
9. Mualana Jaluluddin Reyazi
10. Mulana Asfaqurrahman

### Group. C.

11. Baifullah - Pol. worker
12. Md. Oais Khan - Pol. worker
13. Azmat Ansar - Pol. worker
14. Noor Mohamad - Pol. worker

15. Abdul Majid - Pol. worker
16. Sayeed Ahmad - Pol. worker
17. Abdul Qaiyum - Pol. worker
18. Jais Mohamad - Pol. worker
19. Mansab Ali - Pol. worker
20. Mustaque Ahamad - Pol. worker
21. Nasiullah - Pol. worker
22. Md. Yaqub – Pol. worker
23. Abdul Gofoor - Pol. worker
24. Md. Shafi - Pol. worker
25. Md. Serajuddin - Pol. worker
26. Qamruddin - Pol. worker
27. Abdul Latif - Pol. worker
28. Md. Aaiyub - Pol. worker
29. Abdus Shakur - Pol. worker
30. Shah Alam - Pol. worker
31. Subedar Mansoori - Pol. worker
32. Asif Ali - Pol. worker
33. Md. Wasiullah – Pol worker

#### **Glossary of terms**

1. Quraan = Religious Book of Islam.
2. Hadith = Order and life Account of Prophet Mohamed
3. Hereafter = Life after death
4. Molvi = Religious Teacher of Islam
5. Madrasa = Religious School of Muslim
6. DDC = District Development Committee
7. VDC = Village Development Committee
8. Maktab = School for small Children

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