

# The Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and the Importance of Non-Formal Education (NFE) Centers in Pakistan.



Being a developing nation and one with an exponentially developing populace, Pakistan faces a wide range of socio-economic issues, yet the hidden reason for these is the issue of education. The government spends under 3% on education<sup>1</sup>, which is as of now a deficient value for taking into account the necessities of an extensively vast population. It is a fact that nations who neglect education lag behind in the march for development and suffer from the consequences later. It is important to also acknowledge that factors hindering equitable and sweeping provision of education are not just issues of state management and resources, but also embedded in the social culture as well. Major socio-economic factors that impede rates of enrolment include poverty, illiteracy of parents, and misplaced religious values regarding female participation outside the nuclear family.

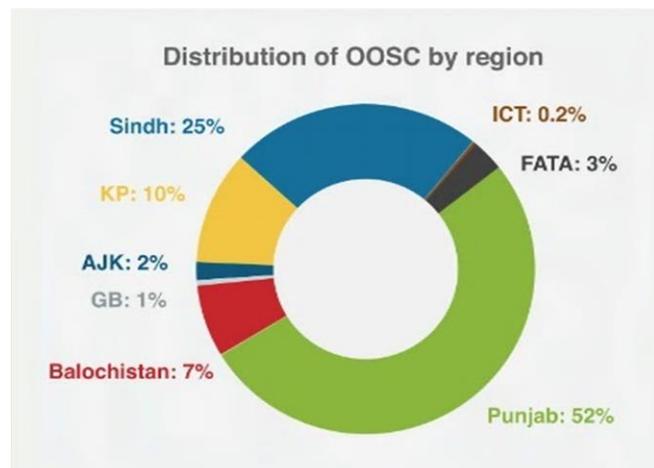
Education is a universal right for which everyone shares a global responsibility. Unfortunately, Pakistan has the third highest out of school population in the world with 22.6 million children failing to enroll<sup>2</sup>. Despite the increase in access to education, nearly 50% of Pakistani children drop out of school before the age of 15. Currently, over 23 million children or one of three have not even completed their

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1335342>

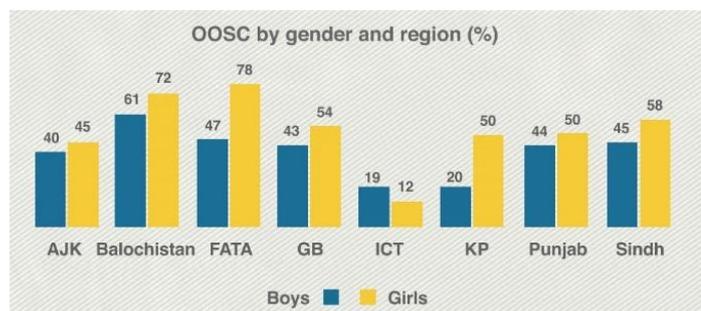
<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1319300>

primary education. Girls drop out at twice the rate of boys, lowering female literacy rates in some areas to 8%<sup>3</sup>. The figure below shows the percentage of out of school children (OOSC) by each province<sup>4</sup>:

School education is divided into three divisions such as the primary, secondary and higher education, all three divisions have their own importance. In Pakistan, more than 50 million people above the age of 10 years are illiterate, while the literacy rate is 58%<sup>5</sup>. Access and even the quality of education are far behind that of satisfactory level. Pakistan today faces an education crisis of unprecedented proportions. There are about 22.6 million boys and girls who are out of school, which is nearly half (44%) of all children in the country and out of those children who do have access or go to school, a big majority receive poor quality education. Furthermore, 43% of government schools are in a dangerous or dilapidated condition and lack basic facilities such as furniture, bathrooms, electricity and running water<sup>6</sup>. A large number of respondents of the Pakistan Social & Living Standard Measurement (PSLM) 2004-15 survey were critical of the low quality of government funded schools and expected more from the state, particularly addressing the high number of students per class, low quality of the facilities and unmotivated teachers.<sup>7</sup>



In many rural areas, there is no single elementary school in the vicinity. There are 21% government primary schools which are operating with single teacher and 14% with a single classroom<sup>8</sup>. The gap of literacy rate between urban and rural areas is tremendously high (e.g. In Punjab, near the capital city of Islamabad, there is 80% literacy rate where as in the rural it is about 30%)<sup>9</sup>. The situation worsens as the budget allocations for education are insufficient and funds that are granted are not spent efficiently. The figure above shows the percentage of OOSC by gender and region<sup>10</sup>.



Pakistan seems to require a lot of support from non-formal and informal sectors to be part of the education globalization. The term “Non-formal Education” (NFE) emerged in 1950’s when it was established that formal education was insufficient to meet the demands and needs of population growth. NFE is mostly prevalent in low-income countries for remedial purposes where formal education systems are weak or are not able to educate all their citizens. Similarly, Pakistan’s formal education framework has been battling in conveying quality education and guaranteeing access to education to Pakistani children.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dil.org/our-programs/why-education-and-why-pakistan/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1139423>

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.jica.go.jp/pakistan/english/activities/activity02\\_22.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/pakistan/english/activities/activity02_22.html)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1189190>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/pakistan-social-and-living-standards-measurement>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.alifailaan.pk/pakistan\\_education\\_crisis](http://www.alifailaan.pk/pakistan_education_crisis)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.jica.go.jp/pakistan/english/activities/activity02\\_22.html](https://www.jica.go.jp/pakistan/english/activities/activity02_22.html)

<sup>10</sup> <http://i.dawn.com/primary/2014/10/54464f76ca84f.jpg?r=2004892363>

NFE is a fundamental part of a lifelong learning idea which guarantees that young people and adults procure and keep up with modern day skills, abilities and demeanors needed to adapt to a continuously evolving environment. It can be obtained on the personal initiative of each individual through various learning exercises occurring outside the formal educational framework. An important part of non-formal education is carried out by non-governmental organizations involved in community and youth work. Combs, Prosser and Ahmed (1973)<sup>11</sup> best described non-formal education as “any organized educational activity outside the established formal system – whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity – that is intended to serve identifiable learning clientele and learning objectives”. Non-formal Education is a training separated from formal establishment – as it is a set of classes that are given in various forms such as workshops, training, courses and individuals participating are learning by doing, by watching and by working with various techniques. This assortment of methodologies in non-formal training guarantees members to procure psychological, enthusiastic and particular abilities and aptitudes, distinguishes and heed their gut feelings and in addition creates trust in their one of a kind learning process<sup>12</sup>.

Taking into account the flaws in education, it becomes evident that there have not been any initiatives in improving education for all. In Pakistan, non-formal education schools would play a key role in enhancing the present primary participation rates and reducing future illiteracy. These schools would offer the formal school primary course in areas where either regular schools are non-existent or where the enrolment rates are low. The development of a proper education framework is very important for nation building factor, which eventually result in social and civic development. According to a study by Fazalur Rahman, Nabi Bux Jumani and Khadija Bibi to create awareness among the masses, there needs to be a proper campaign for community mobilization. Secondly, it is important to impart proper training for teachers of NFE centres. In order for that to happen, appropriate services structure should be introduced to attract talented teachers<sup>13</sup>.

In recent years, the role of education in countering violent extremism (CVE) has gained prominence among policymakers and practitioners. Tackling violent extremism through education is reflective of a larger international shift towards terrorism prevention and the need to recognize the permitting environment for extremists to spread their ideologies and recruit supporters.

Education can play a critical role in helping young people distance themselves from extremism and resist the ‘pull factors,’ that may drive them to recruitment. These pull factors can be contrasted by education through awareness raising, creating and maintaining cultures of harmony and exchange of ideas and generating veneration for others. However, quality education alone is not sufficient to prevent violent extremism, and that all education is not CVE work. Broadly effective education policies and interventions with the specific goal of refuting violent extremism should be focused on societies where youth are vulnerable to violent extremism and specifically tailored to fit the local framework. Continually, it is through NFE in Pakistan that the masses can be targeted rapidly with education. The benefits of education equip individuals of all ages with the skills and knowledge needed to be successful global citizen. Education elevates literacy levels, it increases income and wealth creation in a society. This means if an individual has education, it is likely for them to find a job and hence be financially stable. There are many other severe issues that grow with a lack of education, such as poverty, crime and counter violence extremism (CVE). However, there are limitations to this statement as having a good education, job may not necessarily stop individuals from becoming violent, even though education makes a significance difference in an individual’s way of thinking.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/go.php?q=non-formal%20education>

<sup>12</sup> [http://europa.eu/youth/hr/article/54/21492\\_en](http://europa.eu/youth/hr/article/54/21492_en)

<sup>13</sup> <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED522938.pdf>

Radicalization or violent extremism can refer to both the expression of extreme views as well as the actual exercise of violence. The U.S. Office of International Development (USAID) characterizes radicalization as the act of upholding, taking part in, getting ready or generally supporting ideologically spurred or legitimized viciousness to further social, economic and political goals. The U.K. Division for International Development (DFID) considers radicalization as terrorism and characterizes it as the utilization of and assistance of brutality focused on regular citizens as a method for correcting grievances, genuine or perceived, which form the basis of increasingly strong exclusive group identities<sup>14</sup>.

Now, there are significant limitations to accurately interpret and address the root of Violent Extremism, and policy makers can only draw tentative conclusions. There are also constraints in the information gathering process and additionally the data quality in fragile and high security areas. Regardless of whether lack of education in and of itself is a driver of radicalization, there is by all accounts a general agreement that education is one of the most important tools to reach young people and therefore can be used to address a portion of the “push and pull factors” that may drive young people towards violent extremism<sup>15</sup>. The figure below mentions the aspects behind the push and pull factors<sup>16</sup>:

At present, besides terrorism, the phenomenon of violent extremism in the form of religion, partisan and ethnic strife is one of the major challenges being faced in Pakistan. Recently, the rate of violent extremism is upsetting the social fabric as well as unfavorably influencing the national economy. In addition, Pakistan is facing a similar crisis that of in Syria, Yemen and certain sub-regions of the Middle East. Ever since its independence, Pakistan has seen periods of diverse but inter-related

Pull factors (individual motivations)	Push factors (conditions that are conducive)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual backgrounds (existential and spiritual search for identity and purpose, utopian world vision, boredom, adolescent crisis, sense of mission and heroism, a promise of adventure and power, attraction of violence, etc.)</li> <li>Identification with collective grievances and narratives of victimization that provoke powerful emotional reactions, which can be manipulated by charismatic leaders</li> <li>Distortion and misuse of beliefs, political ideologies and ethnic and cultural differences (the attraction of simple world views that divide the world into “us versus them”, etc.)</li> <li>Attraction of charismatic leadership and social communities and networks (i.e. charismatic recruiter providing access to power and money, a sense of belonging to a powerful group/ community, etc.).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of socioeconomic opportunities (poverty, unemployment, corruption, etc.)</li> <li>Marginalization, injustices and discrimination (including experience of exclusion and injustice, stigmatization, humiliation )</li> <li>Poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law (lack of experience in/exposure to processes of dialogue and debate, a culture of impunity for unlawful behaviour, violations of international human rights law committed in the name of state security, lack of means to make voices heard or vent frustration, etc.)</li> <li>Prolonged and unresolved conflicts</li> <li>Radicalization processes in prisons leading to the legitimization of violence</li> </ul>

conflicts of various sorts, resulting in violence. Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism, losing over 80,000 human lives, incurring economic losses of around 102.5 billion USD along with serious damage caused to its cultural and religious ethos<sup>17</sup>. CVE has damaged the country’s tolerant cultural and religious ethos. The killing of 132 school children in Peshawar on 16th December 2014 is a sobering reminder that extremism poses a great threat to Pakistan.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global\\_20170322\\_violent-extremism.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/global_20170322_violent-extremism.pdf)

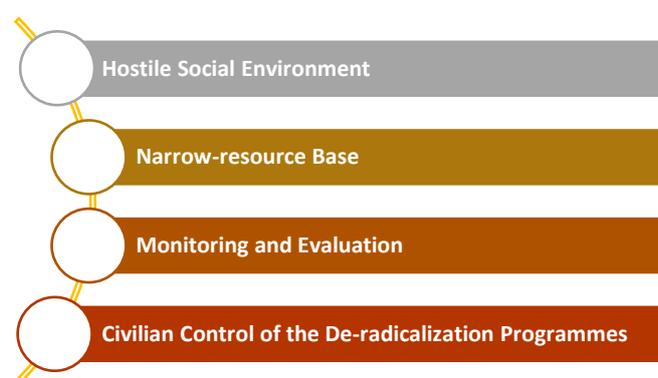
<sup>15</sup> Khalil, J. & Zeuthen, M., (2014). A Case Study of Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) Programming: Lessons from OTI’s Kenya Transition Initiative. Stability: International Journal of Security and Development. 3(1), p.Art. 31. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.ee>

<sup>16</sup> <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002477/247764e.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/3-art-s-15.pdf>

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2016, the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) organized a Roundtable Debate on the Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education at the United Nations in New York. The event brought together policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and activist to debate the role of education in the prevention of violent extremism. During the debate, Ms. Soo Hyang Choi, UNESCO, Director of Division of Inclusion, Peace and Sustainable development stated that education per se cannot prevent individuals from becoming violent extremists, however, it can definitely prevent the perpetuation of an environment conducive to violent extremists. In order to guarantee this, she suggested that schools need to be safe spaces where students can openly debate and discuss sensitive, religious and political issues to prevent them from findings answers elsewhere.

By and large, there is a lack of awareness about the threat extremism poses to the society. A majority in Pakistan rejects violence but not necessarily disagrees with the extremist agenda as such, which is couched in religious language. Following are some of the major challenges being faced by Pakistan's existing CVE strategies:



In Pakistan where radicalism is said to be across the board, few de-radicalization centers are akin to confined islands of normalcy where militants are provided with a sound situation to encourage their return to normal life. An inefficient administrative system, no proper framework for education, absence of NFE centers, wide spread financial inconsistencies and political marginalization provides an ideal breeding

ground for the growth of radicalization. There needs to be improvement in the aforementioned factors, as targeted de-radicalization interventions alone cannot overcome the problem of extremism in Pakistan.

Given the scale and extent of the issue, the constrained increases accomplished against radicalization are delicate and reversible because of restricted subsidizing. Giving a satisfactory asset base is the second significant test going up against the CVE endeavors. The donor-driven initiatives have short life span. Sustaining these programmes on long-term basis and then expanding them as a national-level activity looks a tall order<sup>18</sup>. CVE is an on-going, consistently developing and long-haul process. The specialists dealing with the de-radicalization program guarantee low recidivism rates. Such claims seem, by all accounts to be misdirecting, untimely and overstated. The actual achievement or disappointment of a re-radicalization program must be decided after 10-15 years, whereas Pakistan's de-radicalization program is just six years in the process and in such a short timeframe, it is difficult to determine which strategies have had a long-lasting impact on individuals. To turn the on-going CVE initiatives in Pakistan into national-level comprehensive programme, the oversight and supervision of the programme should be in the hands of civilian authorities as the army's control or de-radicalization programme politicizes it.

Furthermore, education policies can guarantee that places of learning to not become a breeding ground for violent extremism (VE). They can also guarantee that educational contents and teaching/learning approaches develop learner's resilience to VE. The role of education, in this way, is to not capture fierce radicals or recognize people who may end up potentially as violent fanatics, instead, it is to make the conditions that construct barriers, within learners, against VE and strengthen their responsibility regarding non-violence and peace.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/3-art-s-15.pdf>

Education alone can have just a constrained effect on the counteractive action of VE on the off chance that it strengthens exclusionary world perspectives and endures viciousness in any shape. For viable effect, education policies and practices must, directly and indirectly, address the particular drivers of VE. A blend of short, medium and long haul instructive measures is required. At a pedagogical level, this means prioritizing not only cognitive skills, but also learner’s socio-emotional and behavioral skills in view of fostering respect for diversity and responsible engagement. It is evident that education is an extremely noteworthy part in a nation’s development and stability, and equitable access to quality education is all by itself a significant objective for governments. It is also clear that certain legislatures must go past concentrating just on access to education – they should also focus on quality and significance of their education frameworks with a specific end goal to generate real impact. As described previously there is mounting proof that baffled educated youth who have no access to occupations or who don’t have the necessary abilities to land reasonable positions are much more slanted to support violent extremism.

On 18-19 September 2013, the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation (CGCC) and Hedayah co-hosted in New York City an expert roundtable on the “Role of Education in Countering Violent Extremism.”<sup>19</sup> Enhancing logic, problem solving, and critical thinking skills of young people was seen as a vital component in preventing violence and extremism. Empowering students to think critically teaches them to challenge ideas, construct cogent thoughts, and engage in meaningful discussion. Some participants believed that programs that support critical thinking skills should be integrated into educational curricula in primary school—that introducing these skills in secondary school or at the university level was too late. One partaker noted that basic developmental testing of a particular subset of young violent extremists revealed that most of the children lacked basic logic and problem-solving skills.

Violent extremism is a multifaceted problem that requires complex solutions, of which education could be one tool in the CVE toolbox. While some educational notions are general and transferable, it is crucial that policies are targeted, context-specific, and based on detailed research rather than assumptions. For instance, some participants of the roundtable conference cautioned against conflating religious education with radical ideologies and violent extremism. In fact, participants noted that while religious schools are often blamed for generating religious radicalization, poorly resourced or managed public-school systems are more likely to create an enabling environment for violent extremism. One participant emphasized that some of the most successful school interventions are those that take risks, for example, by presenting several arguments and leaving it up to students to discuss and debate, or engaging them in anti-violence campaigns outside of school grounds.

Education plays a vital role in shaping the lives of people. Nelson Mandela said that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world”.<sup>20</sup> Education’s role is proactive and preventive rather than reactive to extremist ideologies. Hence, the potential of education to counter religious extremism reinforces the salient value and role of education overall. Our world is constantly changing and it requires a society that is knowledgeable in understanding the problems deriving from culture differences and resilience for each other’s convictions and observations. In Pakistan, where 22.6 million children are out of school, the statistics paint a gloomy picture.<sup>21</sup> This is due to lack of facilities and overall shortage of schools and formal education. It is important that children should be provided with education or even skills training through NFE centers, so they do not miss out on education, which is every human’s basic right. The country is in dire need of non-formal education centers due to its shortage of formal schools. Education plays an important role in development, especially in a developing country. To develop the skills and knowledge of the large percentage of the

<sup>19</sup> <http://globalcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Action-Agenda-ENG.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/12/05/nelson-mandelas-famous-quote-on-education/?utm\\_term=.8b334e075bd8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2013/12/05/nelson-mandelas-famous-quote-on-education/?utm_term=.8b334e075bd8)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1319300>

people outside the reach of formal education, and to offer education programs which can easily adapt and respond to the specific and immediate needs of a developing community, NFE centers should be considered, as the variety of approaches in non-formal education ensures students to acquire cognitive, emotional and specific competences and skills, which helps to identify and as well as develops confidence in their unique learning process. Thus, in order to counter violent extremist ideology in the long term, in a preventive and cost-effective manner, education, both formal and non-formal must be considered in the discourse on terrorism.



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