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SUCCESS STORY

Investing in People

USAID is working to bring vulnerable Muslim youths into the national mainstream.



Photo: Anita Khemka

Adolescent girls at the Ayesha Madrasa in Rodamestary Nagar, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

The Madrasa intervention began as a pilot project with eleven Madrasas in Andhra Pradesh in 2005. The goal of the pilot was to demonstrate an effective and scalable model for introducing formal curriculum into these religious schools. The program works with Muslim community leaders, Madrasa administrators and the state government to introduce formal curricula, enroll and retain out-of-school children, improve the quality of education, and help Madrasas meet government standards.

India's Muslim community has much higher illiteracy and school drop-out rates than the national averages. Many Muslim children in India only attend Islamic religious schools, Madrasas, which traditionally provide only religious education and do not teach formal subjects like math, science, social studies, and languages, leave many children at a disadvantage when they finish school and want to enter the job market.

With USAID's support, the CAP Foundation has been working with Muslim community leaders and Madrasa administrators in the state of Andhra Pradesh to introduce formal curricula in the Madrasas, enroll and retain out-of-school children, improve the quality of education, enhance the range of educational services, and prepare Madrasas to meet government standards.

The program is implemented in partnership with the state chapter of the Indian government's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) or Education for All (EFA) initiative. The program has already reached over 500 Madrasas and provided formal education to 48,000 children and vocational training to 1,850 youth. The SSA provides resources such as honorarium and training for teachers and textbooks, mid-day meals, and exam fee waivers for students. Additionally, USAID is helping Madrasas to get government recognition as formal schools.

The CAP Foundation and Madrasa committee members have focused on building teacher capacity by introducing lesson planning, student assessment tools, scientific concepts of child psychology, and sequential learning for improving thinking skills in children. Training courses have been held in child centered teaching techniques and in the use of visual aids in teaching. Efforts have also been made to improve the spoken English skills of teachers.

Life skills development has also become an integral part of the Madrasa curriculum. For this purpose, ten Employability Training Centers (ETCs) were set up in the State to provide employability skills to Muslim youth. So far, a total of 2,713 youth have been trained at the ETCs in information technology, customer relations, and sales. Of these, 1,997 trainees have already been placed in highly regarded Indian companies with good entry level salaries.