

PILOT PROJECT

NUMBER 1

GFMW Partners with the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy (ICRD) KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA, PAKISTAN

In February 2011, GFMW, in partnership with ICRD, facilitated a four-day training workshop for 35 female madrasa teachers and administrators in collaboration with a local girls' madrasa and the University of Peshawar in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The workshop focused on teaching methods, educational psychology, student development, higher order thinking skills, the elimination of prejudices, and technical education.

The madrasa leaders who participated in the workshop represented:

- 27 madrasas
- 4 of the 5 schools of thought which run madrasas in Pakistan
- 4 different districts throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- 1-20 years of teaching experience each

This training program, the first of its kind devoted solely to engaging female madrasa leaders in a university-level training, generated positive feedback from the participants and requests for further training programs.

The workshop was experiential, with interactive activities designed to provide the participants with a better understanding of their field from a theoretical perspective as well as to engage them in concrete examples for how to best engage the girls they teach. For instance, one of the trainers had the participants develop lesson plans based on the concepts they had previously learned in the workshop and then present them to the class. Through interactive exercises such as these, the participants were able to learn new skills and gain confidence in their ability to implement new ideas, dramatically increasing the likelihood that they will utilize that knowledge in class.

As a result of the workshop, participants learned **new methods and skills to make their teaching more effective, were exposed to a new dimension of modern**

research in religious studies, and had the opportunity to spend significant time with teachers of other schools of thought. As one participant from a madrasa in Abbotabad said, “It was an excellent workshop from all aspects of capacity building, knowledge enhancement and attitudinal development.”

ADDENDUM

GFMW through extensive research and vetting decided to work and support the work on ground in Pakistan, which ICRD was engaged in for 7 years. They had projects which have been thoroughly vetted and shown ground impact. ICRD lacked funding to support female madrasas and to bring other projects to scale.

For the past seven years, ICRD has been conducting a unique initiative to secure a better future for the children of Pakistan and to enhance global security in a meaningful way. Together with partnering Pakistani religious and civic organizations, ICRD is helping teachers of Pakistan’s madrasas (Islamic religious schools) to provide a better education and improved moral guidance for their students by conducting teacher-training workshops that:

- Encourage expansion of the madrasa curriculums to include the scientific and social disciplines, with a special emphasis on religious tolerance and human rights (particularly women’s rights),
- Encourage the adoption of pedagogical techniques that can promote critical thinking skills among the students,
- Convey conflict resolution and dialogue facilitation skills, and
- Equip newly-trained teachers with the skills to train other previously uninvolved madrasa leaders in these same areas.

By providing madrasa leaders the opportunity to discuss and reflect on Islamic principles with leaders of other sects, often for the first time in their lives, this program is fostering peaceful coexistence among these diverse groups. It is also encouraging greater adherence to the principles of tolerance and human rights in Islam, with an emphasis on how these values were successfully upheld in past Islamic civilizations.

Comments from a female madrasa teacher after attending GFMW supported workshop in Pakistan.

“After my experience here, I personally will go back and talk to my two sons and tell them not to fight anymore, because I realize that this is not Islamic jihad [Afghanistan] . . . I have realized that it is only through personal struggle and hard work that we can rebuild our countries, and I will make this a regular part of my teaching . . . You can talk to all the male madrasas you want, but if you don’t engage us female teachers, it will be very hard to stop the fighting. As mothers and sisters, it is we who can influence the men more than anyone else.”

~ Female teacher of girls’ madrasa who attended Human Rights Curriculum Training, Balochistan, Pakistan

One woman, who is the principal at her madrasa, shared the following:

“I am very happy and satisfied with this workshop and I feel that now I will deal my students, colleagues and other staff with better attitude and skills. I will also be able to manage my madrasa effectively.”

“Attending the ten-day training gave me a new way of looking at the world. I feel I no longer react harshly toward my students . . . there would be peace in Pakistan if there was a way to have all madrasa administrators attend the workshop.”

~ Madrasa Administrator

“I felt all the anger and rage I have carried for so many years about the Americans washed away from my being . . . the ten days spent on learning and in reflection helped me put the pieces together to reach out in peace instead of constantly burning with anger.”

~ Madrasa Administrator

“This is significant for several reasons. First, she has recognized the importance of attitudinal shifts—something that is often hard for people to accept the need for and to embrace. Secondly, as a principal she has the power to make institutional changes at her school to affect all students and teachers in a way that ordinary teachers cannot always do.”

~ GFMW & ICRD

“One of the most exciting stories we’ve heard so far is that this women’s workshop inspired a Deobandi men’s madrasa to ask for a training on peace building and dialogue skills for its senior students. This training, conducted in late February, was the first such training conducted for madrasa students (our trainings to date have engaged teachers), many of whom will likely go on to

open their own madrasas or become imams and preachers. Thus, they will have been exposed to peace building skills at an early age and can start off their career with these principles. It is hoped that these principles will help shape not only the actions of these men as religious leaders, but how they treat the women of their community. We are very proud of the women who participated in the madrasa training—they are not only inspiring women, but are inspiring the men as well to take a more active role in promoting peace building.'

~ GFMW & ICRD