

Bangladesh Educational Assessment  
Pre-primary and Primary Madrasah Education in Bangladesh

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# **BANGLADESH EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT**

## **Pre-primary and Primary Madrasah Education in Bangladesh**

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Alia:	Government-established or recognized Madrasah.
Alim:	Higher secondary level of Madrasah education; also an Islamic learned person.
Aqaid:	Code of Islamic religious beliefs.
Dakhil:	Secondary level of Madrasah education.
Dawra Hadith:	A Qawmi Madrasah higher degree equivalent to Kamil and M.A. degrees, but not recognized by the government.
Ebtidai:	Primary level of Madrasah education.
Fazil:	Graduate level of Madrasah education.
Fiqh:	Jurisprudence or law of Islamic conduct.
Furqania:	Pre-primary Quranic school (in the old system) of Madrasah education.
Hadith:	Collection of sayings of the Prophet Mohammad.
Hafez:	One who memorizes the whole Quran.
Hafizia:	Holy Quran memorizing school.
Imam:	One who leads the prayer in congregation; also religious leader.
Jamaat:	Congregational prayer; also gathering of people.
Kamil:	Masters level of Madrasah education.
Madrasah:	Islamic religious educational institution.
Maktab:	Preliminary level of Quranic school.
Mawlana:	Islamic religious expert or Madrasah teacher.
Modarres:	One who teaches religious subjects in the Madrasah.
Moulovi:	Islamic religious expert ( <i>Persian word</i> ).
Mufassir:	One who teaches Tafsir (the explanation of the Quran).
Muhaddeth:	One who teaches Hadith.
Muazzin:	An Islamic official in a mosque who calls Muslims to prayer, traditionally sung forth from atop a minaret.
Nourani:	A system of teaching the Quran and Arabic especially in Qawmi Madrasahs.
Qari:	Expert on Quranic recitation.
Qawmi:	Non-government private Madrasah.
Quran:	The holy book of Islam.
Sadaka:	A form of religious monetary charity.
Shariah:	Islamic code of conduct based upon the Quran and Sunnah.
Sunnah:	The sayings and acts of the Prophet Mohammed which are often emulated by Muslims.
Tafsir:	Explanation of the Quran.
Upazila:	Particular part/division/area of a district in Bangladesh.
Zakat:	One of the five pillars of Islam. A form of mandatory religious income tax.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AL:	Awami League
BANBEIS:	Bangladesh Bureau for Educational Information and Statistics
BNP:	Bangladesh National Party
CAII:	Creative Associates International, Inc
EFA:	Education for All
GOB:	Government of Bangladesh
MPO:	Monthly Payment Order
SMC:	School Management Committee
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission in Bangladesh contracted with Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII) to conduct a research project on pre-primary and primary Madrasah education in Bangladesh. The research objectives were to strengthen overall USAID understanding of the Madrasah system of education, particularly at the pre-primary and primary levels, and to identify potential entry points for basic education assistance to children and teachers of Madrasahs. Within this context, the research team led by Dr. Amr Abdalla of George Mason University in the United States, Dr. A.N.M. Raisuddin of Dhaka University in Bangladesh, and Mr. Suleiman Hussein of the International Islamic University in Malaysia, undertook the Madrasah education study in April and May 2004.

The researchers designed a research plan that allowed for receiving input from various groups whose work or living related to Madrasahs. The research included over 30 Madrasahs in four divisions in Bangladesh (Dhaka, Chittagong, Jessore, and Sylhet). The researchers interviewed and surveyed experts on Madrasahs, government officials, funders, local Madrasah principals, teachers, pre-primary Madrasah education staff, civil organizations and NGOs, religious leaders, parents, and students.

The research provided information about the Madrasah system, especially the primary (called Ebtidai)<sup>1</sup> and pre-primary levels, their curricula, their connection to the general educational system, and the perceptions of Madrasahs among various segments of the society.

The Madrasah system, like any other institution in Bangladesh, is interactively influenced by its social, political, and cultural dynamics. The Madrasah system was influenced by the introduction of Islam on the Indian sub-continent and by British colonization. Those developments significantly shaped aspects of Bengali identity, with its Islamic, Hindu, Bengali, and Westernized elements. The Madrasah system continued to be attached to the Islamic aspects of the Bangladeshi identity; so much so that it became synonymous with anti-Westernization, and later with pro-Pakistani tendencies. Further, the neglect of the Madrasah system during the time of colonization created an aura of backwardness about it compared to the modern educational system. This had a strong influence on the negative views of the educated middle class and elites of Bangladesh. They adopted the view, and for the most part continue to believe, that the Madrasah system is a backward one, and that it must be replaced by the modern educational system.

However, the research clearly showed that the changes to the Madrasah system over the past few years have been tremendous. The number of Madrasahs has greatly increased, and the number of students, including girls, continues to grow.<sup>2</sup> More Madrasahs are becoming Alia Madrasahs,<sup>3</sup> incorporating the general education curriculum along with a religious curriculum. The Madrasah system and the general education system are becoming more closely connected, allowing

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<sup>1</sup> There are about 16,000 Ebtidai Madrasahs in Bangladesh in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Girls make up close to one-half of the two million students attending Ebtidai Madrasahs in Bangladesh.

<sup>3</sup> Madrasahs that offer both religious and general education curricula and are recognized by the government.

students to transfer from Madrasah to general education schools and universities with fewer difficulties.<sup>4</sup>

The other type of Madrasah, the Qawmi Madrasah,<sup>5</sup> is a non-governmental educational institution; it is a private system of Madrasah education. Qawmi Madrasahs offer religious education and the study of languages such as Arabic, Bengali, Urdu, and Farsi, in addition to some study of arithmetic and social science. These types of institutions continue to grow under community patronage (there are currently estimated to be about 8,000). They have little or no connection with the government and follow the guidelines of independent Islamic educational institutions in Bangladesh and in other Muslim countries.

There are two types of pre-primary Madrasah education: the Furqania/Hafizia and the Maktab/Nournai. The Furqania/Hafizia Madrasah is an Islamic institution of pre-primary education where students memorize the Holy Quran, and learn the basic knowledge of Islam. Students start their studies, and usually reside, at these institutions. They tend to complete their studies within three to five years, after which they may proceed to Ebtidai or primary general education.

Maktab/Nourani Madrasahs are also Islamic institutions of pre-primary to primary education where students learn the basic knowledge of Islam and the Holy Quran. This type of institution is usually attached to a mosque; it teaches the students basic knowledge of religion free of cost, for the most part. Usually this type of pre-primary institution is not residential; it is a before- and after-school program. Students come to the Maktab/Nourani two times every day; once from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., and again for two more hours in the afternoon.

Contrary to the negative views about the Madrasah system among the educated elites and middle class of Bangladesh, Madrasah students and staff have highly positive self-views. They all seem to appreciate Madrasah education, as it combines spiritual and religious knowledge with modern subjects and technology. Yet, everyone is aware that the system is far from perfect. Issues of teacher qualification and preparation, conditions of some Qawmi Madrasahs, and the lack of proper facilities are only few of the concerns that everyone shares. Almost all those who participated in this research—Madrasah staff, students, parents, and others—suggested that the following are the needs of Ebtidai and Qawmi Madrasahs:

- Modernization of the curriculum,
- Technology education,
- Teacher training and preparation,
- Educational and recreational facilities, and
- Vocational training.

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<sup>4</sup> Alia Madrasah students may take examinations at the end of tenth grade (Dakhil examination) and twelfth grade (Alim examination) that are recognized by the government to be equivalent to secondary school and higher secondary school examinations. Upon passing the Alim examination, they are eligible to study in universities.

<sup>5</sup> Privately-run Madrasahs that focus almost entirely on religious education.

The research also showed that views of Madrasahs varied based on factors such as region. Most notably, Madrasahs were more positively viewed in rural areas, although Jessore<sup>6</sup> respondents indicated a lower appreciation of the quality of Madrasah education. These regional and urban/rural differences, in addition to a few gender-based differences, must be taken into consideration.

Just like all other institutions, the Madrasah system has its share of radicals, extremists, and conservatives. It also has its growing share of creative educators and modernizers. On a hopeful note, this research exposed some positive pioneering examples of Madrasahs that are trying to forge a balance between their Islamic identity and modernization. These examples may be the guideposts for more Madrasahs and educators to follow, and lead to more creative ways to improve Madrasah education.

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<sup>6</sup> A relatively under-developed division in Bangladesh compared to the other divisions that were included in the research.

## I. BACKGROUND

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission in Bangladesh contracted with Creative Associates International (CAII) to conduct a research project on pre-primary and primary Madrasah education in Bangladesh. The stated research objectives were:

- To strengthen overall USAID understanding of the Madrasah system of education, particularly at the pre-primary and primary levels;
- To identify the areas of convergence and divergence of the Madrasah education system with the mainstream education system;
- To provide analysis of incentives and resources needed to make Madrasah education more relevant to Bangladesh's economic and social development priorities; and
- To identify potential entry points for basic education assistance to children and teachers of Madrasahs, given USAID's expected resources, comparative advantages, and legal restrictions relative to work with faith-based organizations.

The USAID Mission has specified the following research categories and questions, as identified in the scope of work:

- **History:** Over time, how has the Madrasah system in Bangladesh developed into what it is today? What is the future direction?
- **Types:** How many and what types of Madrasahs exist? Why are some Madrasahs heavily supported by the government of Bangladesh, while others are not? How is each type managed? Do School Management Committees (SMC), similar to those in secular schools, play a role in management?
- **Legal and Financial Status:** How do Madrasahs compare with secular schools regarding finance, income, and expenditures? Are Madrasah students eligible for food-for-education, textbook, and scholarship stipend programs? What are the sources of revenues?
- **Mandates and Purpose:** What are the secular and religious regulations that guide the various types of Madrasahs? What is their purpose, by type? What are the philosophies that guide instruction and how are the philosophies reflected in the curriculum and in public discourse? What efforts have been made to modernize the curriculum?
- **Formal Education Linkages:** How are Madrasahs contributing within the general education system? What kind and level of education are students receiving? What are the comparative levels of achievement? Does the system allow students to move easily from Madrasah to formal education programs? How are Madrasahs supporting the Bangladesh Education for All (EFA) commitments? How do Madrasahs influence parent and preschool education? What is the Madrasah perception of public education and interest in linkages?

- **Public Perception:** How do various sectors of society—including the government, NGOs, civil society, religious leaders, parents, and students—view the Madrasah system, its role, and its usefulness to Bangladeshi society and development?

Accordingly, CAII, in coordination with USAID, identified and hired three researchers to conduct the study: Dr. Amr Abdalla of George Mason University and the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences in Northern Virginia, USA; Dr. A.N.M. Raisuddin of Dhaka University's Department of Islamic Studies; and Mr. Suleiman Hussein of Malaysia's International Islamic University. The three researchers started their work in Dhaka on April 21, 2004 and concluded on May 18, 2004.

This report includes the methodology, processes, and findings of the research team. In response to the fourth research objective stated above, the researchers have provided, in a separate document, recommendations to USAID on potential entry points for basic education assistance to children and teachers of Madrasahs. The report will start with a section on Methodology and Process, describing the research design, how it is related to the study's objectives and research questions, and the factors that contributed to the success of the study's operations. Following the Methodology and Process section, the report will include a Findings section. As noted, the Findings section will follow the USAID research categories and questions above as a research framework. Each sub-section under Findings will include the results gathered through various research instruments. Finally, the report's Summary and Conclusions will focus on the highlights of the research findings. Attached to the report are appendices that include information on Madrasah research activities and reviews of six Madrasah publications. Several documents gathered by the research team, including Madrasah curricula and some textbooks, will be provided to the Mission in a single original copy.

Prior to responding to the research questions, it is necessary to include a description of Madrasah types and prevalence. Providing this information in the beginning of the report will make it easier for a reader to follow the discussions of research questions.

There are two types of Madrasahs for primary education: Alia Madrasahs and Qawmi Madrasahs. In addition, there are two types of pre-primary education institutions: Maktab/Nourani Madrasahs and Furqania/Hafizia Madrasahs. The following discussion will include descriptions of these four types of educational institutions.

### **A. Alia Madrasahs**

Similar to trends among Islamic educational institutions in other Muslim countries, Alia Madrasahs offer both religious education and modern general education.<sup>7</sup> The establishment of these Madrasahs, the appointment of teachers, and the curriculum all follow government regulations as mandated by the Madrasah Education Board. The board approves curriculum for all Madrasah levels from Ebtidai to Kamil (A description of these types of Madrasah education

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<sup>7</sup> The use of the term "modern" in connection to education throughout this paper refers to the type of education that has been introduced in the Indian subcontinent during the British era. Specifically, modern education includes subjects that are focused on educating students in science, arts, and languages. The term "general education" refers to the curriculum used by the Bangladeshi government in public and private general education schools.

appears below). According to the most recent estimates (2004) there are 25,201 Alia Madrasahs in Bangladesh.

Similar to the trend among Islamic education institutions in other Muslim countries,<sup>8</sup> Alia Madrasahs offer both religious education and modern general education similar to that in general education. The Madrasah Education Board approves curricula for all Madrasah levels from Ebtidai to Kamil (a description of the types of Alia Madrasah education follows below).

The present system of Alia Madrasah education parallels the general education system. The stages of the system, with equivalent general education stages, appear in Table 1.

**Table 1: Alia Madrasah System<sup>9</sup>**

Madrasah Stages	Equivalent General Education Stages	Duration	Number of Madrasahs in 2004
Ebtidai	Primary	5 years	15,995
Dakhil	Secondary	5 years	6,574
Alim	Higher secondary	2 years	1,392
Fazil	Graduate	2 years	1,061
Kamil	Post-graduate	2 years	180
<b>Total</b>			<b>25,201</b>

### 1. *Ebtidai*

Ebtidai is a five-year primary-level education in the Madrasah system that parallels primary general education. The government recognizes Alia Madrasahs if they meet specific conditions. For Ebtidai Madrasahs, the requirements for recognition and support are:

- The Madrasah must be located on a lot no smaller than one acre;
- A building with at least five rooms;
- A management committee;
- At least 250 students;
- Sufficient school furniture;
- 1,000 books related to Ebtidai education;
- Fifth grade students must appear at the in-school 5<sup>th</sup> grade examination; and
- The Madrasah must have at least four staff members:
  - One teacher with at least an Alim degree,
  - One teacher with at least a Higher Secondary School Certificate (H.S.C.),
  - One teacher who is a Qari' (Quran reciter), and
  - One headmaster with at least a Fazil degree.

<sup>8</sup> Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination, *Strengthening Education in the Muslim World: Summary of Desk Study* (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 2003), 10.

<sup>9</sup> Chart provided by Dr. Abdus Sattar, Assistant Inspector of the Madrasah Education Board.

Students at this stage study according to a curriculum developed by the Madrasah Education Board, which includes subjects similar to those taught in general education primary schools, in addition to a curriculum of religious and Arabic studies. The following are lists of the curriculum subjects for general education primary schools and Ebtidai Madrasahs:

**Table 2: Primary and Ebtidai Curriculum Subjects<sup>10</sup>**

General Education Primary School Subjects	Ebtidai Madrasah Subjects
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Bengali</li> <li>2) Math</li> <li>3) Social Science</li> <li>4) General Science</li> <li>5) English</li> <li>6) Fine Art</li> <li>7) Religion</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Bengali</li> <li>2) General Math</li> <li>3) Social Science</li> <li>4) General Science</li> <li>5) English</li> <li>6) Arabic</li> <li>7) Quran</li> <li>8) Hadith<sup>11</sup></li> <li>9) Aqaid and Fiqh<sup>12</sup></li> </ol>

According to 2003 official estimates, there are almost two million students enrolled in Ebtidai education in Bangladesh. Girls make up forty-five percent of the total Ebtidai student enrollment. Table 3 includes the total number of Ebtidai students and the number of girls for each Ebtidai grade in each of the six divisions (similar to provinces) of the country.

<sup>10</sup> The chart was provided by the Dr. Abdus Sattar, the Assistant Inspector of the Madrasah Education Board.

<sup>11</sup> A religious subject related to the study of the life of the Prophet Mohammed, his sayings, and his example.

<sup>12</sup> Religious subjects related to Islamic foundational beliefs (Aqaid) and legal interpretations (Fiqh).

**Table 3: Number of Ebtidai Students in Bangladesh Divisions (As of 11/12/2003)<sup>13</sup>**

Division	Class 1	Girls	Class 2	Girls	Class 3	Girls	Class 4	Girls	Class 5	Girls	Total	Total Girls
Barisal	83,233	38,531	66,715	28,616	56,477	25,414	51,473	22,608	45,812	20,088	303,710	135,257
Chittagong	65,016	27,687	54,823	22,150	54,889	21,487	54,955	21,378	54,392	22,073	284,075	114,775
Dhaka	134,947	63,110	95,530	44,454	83,518	38,267	74,756	33,291	73,272	33,710	462,023	212,832
Khulna	58,629	27,874	40,018	18,272	37,107	17,209	35,736	15,942	36,990	16,218	208,480	95,515
Rajshahi	186,603	88,716	137,205	65,120	119,244	58,040	108,824	50,969	103,304	45,515	655,180	308,360
Sylhet	13,956	6,103	9,980	4,005	9,359	3,598	9,048	3,286	9,612	3,672	51,955	20,664
<b>Total</b>	<b>542,384</b>	<b>252,021</b>	<b>404,271</b>	<b>182,617</b>	<b>360,594</b>	<b>164,015</b>	<b>334,792</b>	<b>147,474</b>	<b>323,382</b>	<b>141,276</b>	<b>1,965,423</b>	<b>887,403</b>

<sup>13</sup> The chart was provided by officials of BANBEIS upon the request of the researchers in May 2004.

## **2. *Dakhil***

This stage of Alia Madrasah education is divided into two parts: Dakhil classes six to eight, and then Dakhil classes nine and ten. At the end of this stage, a public examination is held under the auspices of the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board. The Board awards certificates to the successful candidates. The government recognizes the Dakhil certificate as equivalent to the general education Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C.). At present 6,574 Madrasahs are offering this level of education.<sup>14</sup> There are four Dakhil Madrasah curriculum groupings:

- **General Group:** The focus is on subjects such as languages (Bengali, English, and Arabic), mathematics, religious studies, and social studies.
- **Science Group:** The focus is also on languages, mathematics, and religious studies, with the addition of computer science, physics, chemistry, and biology.
- **Muzabbid Group:** The focus is principally on religious studies such as Quran, Hadith, and Fiqh.
- **Hifzul Quran Group:** The focus is on Quran memorization and Quranic sciences, in addition to other religious studies and Arabic.

## **3. *Alim (Equivalent to Higher Secondary School)***

The course duration at this stage of Alia Madrasah schooling is two years. At the end of this level of study, a public examination (Alim examination) is held under the auspices of the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board. The Alim certificate is equivalent to the Higher Secondary School Certificate (H.S.C.). Those with an Alim certificate may apply to any university within two years of obtaining the certificate. Similar to the Dakhil system, the Alim system has three groups: General Group, Science Group, and Muzabbid–e–Mahir Group.

## **4. *Fazil***

This is a two-year post-secondary level or stage of Alia Madrasah education. Students at this level study languages, religion, logic, history, and philosophy. Religious studies, languages, and a few related social sciences are the principle emphases at the Fazil level. Graduates of this level must attend a national Fazil examination, supervised by the Madrasah Education Board. The government has yet to recognize the Fazil degree as equivalent to a university's Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A.).

## **5. *Kamil***

This is the highest level or stage of Madrasah education. It consists of two years of religious and language study in four groups: Hadith, Tafsir, Arabic, and Fiqh. Graduates with a Kamil degree must pass the national Kamil examination, supervised by the Madrasah Education Board. Like the Fazil degree, the government has yet to recognize it as equivalent to a university's Masters of Arts degree (M.A.).

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<sup>14</sup> Figures provided by Dr. Abdus Sattar, Assistant Inspector of the Madrasah Education Board.

## **B. Qawmi Madrasahs**

Qawmi Madrasahs are non-governmental educational institutions. They represent a private system of Madrasah education. The equivalent of primary education in Qawmi Madrasahs has a duration of six years. It is important to note here that it was rather difficult to understand from Qawmi Madrasah officials the sequence of their primary educational system. This was due to the fact that they mainly use a subject-based system rather than a grade-based system. That is, students are taught subjects without a clear class-graduated system. It is not feasible to try to “impose” class-graduated terminology on their primary educational system. For example, a Nourani model of education (explained in further detail below) used in Qawmi Madrasahs entails teaching students about a variety of religious and linguistic subjects. The focus of Qawmi Madrasah officials is on delivering all the subjects included in the Nourani curriculum, but without a clear time-sequence that follows what is expected in a grade-based system.

The final stage of the Qawmi Madrasah education is called Daurah Hadith, in which Hadith certificates are awarded to the students after successful completion of the “Daurah” class. The Hadith certificate is somewhat equivalent to a Kamil degree in Alia Madrasahs. More specialized higher courses of a two- to three-year duration are also conducted in some of the Qawmi Madrasahs.

These types of institutions continue to grow under community patronage. They have little or no connection with the government, as was the case during the British period, when they were called “Khariji,” or outside the purview of the government. The government of Bangladesh is now considering recognition of this system in terms of its contribution towards producing Islamic scholars, community religious leaders, Hafezes, and Qaris. There are about 4,000 Madrasahs of this type in Bangladesh. Some of them are functioning as the highest seats of Islamic learning, attracting foreign students to pursue Islamic studies and research. Recently these Madrasahs have been organized under the umbrella of a private body known as the Befaqul Mudarressin of Bangladesh Qawmi Madrasah Education Board, situated in Dhaka. The umbrella includes seven private Madrasah education boards.

## **C. Pre-primary Madrasah Education: Maktab/Nourani and Furqania/Hafizia Madrasahs**

Furqania/Hafizia Madrasahs are Islamic institutions of pre-primary education where students memorize the Holy Quran and learn the basic knowledge of Islam. Furqania Madrasahs offer basic education (maximum four years) on Islam including Arabic language, Quran recitation, elementary Bengali language, and simple arithmetic. Hafizia Madrasahs are exclusively meant for Hifz, or memorizing the entire Quran. Children of the earliest possible age groups (usually three- to five-years-old) join these institutions. Most of these institutions, especially Hafizia Madrasahs, are residential and attached to mosques.

Students may begin their studies at Furqania/Hafizia Madrasahs between the ages of four- and twelve-years-old, and usually complete them within three to five years. After completing their study in these institutions, some of them go to Alia Madrasah or Qawmi Madrasah for further study. Furqania/Hafizia Madrasahs usually require students to stay year-round, and pupils are expected to follow a tight schedule. They start reading the Quran everyday at 4:00 a.m. and

continue until 9:00 a.m. After that they bathe, eat lunch, and rest until 12:00 p.m. They resume at 12:00 p.m. with more reading and memorization of the Quran until 4:00 p.m. There is then an interval until 7:00 p.m. for prayer and leisure. They begin again at 7:00 p.m. with more reading and memorization and stop at 9:00 p.m. They then take dinner at 9:00 p.m. and go to bed at 10:00 p.m.

Maktab/Nourani Madrasahs are also Islamic institutions of pre-primary to primary education where students obtain a basic knowledge of Islam and the Holy Quran. Simple Bengali and arithmetic are taught as well. There are about 58,124 institutions of this type in the country.<sup>15</sup> This type of institution is usually attached to mosques, and for the most part, is free of charge. Usually these pre-primary institutions are not residential. Students come to the Maktab/Nourani twice every day: from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m., and again for two more hours in the afternoon.

Local people, mosques, and Madrasah committees most often fund the two types of pre-primary Madrasahs, and the committees usually supervise the institutions. A few of these Madrasahs have their own shopping complexes to generate funding. A few Madrasahs also raise their funds by collecting Islamic donations known as Zakat and Sadaka. Occasionally, the Madrasahs receive small amounts of money from the government. Some students in the residential Furqania/Hafizia Madrasahs pay 500-600 Taka per month. Few of these institutions follow the Qawmi Madrasah rules and regulations, as their education is regarded as part of the ongoing education in the Qawmi Madrasah.<sup>16</sup> Most of the teachers in these Madrasahs are themselves Hafezes and hold Daurah Hadith degrees from Qawmi Madrasahs or Kamil degrees from Alia Madrasahs.

Major subjects taught in the Maktab/Nourani Madrasah are Holy Quran recitation, Tafsir, Hifz, Hadith, and Islamic Aqid. They also teach basic introductions to Bengali, English, arithmetic and social science. Most of the books they use are Befaql Muddarressin and Nourani publications.

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<sup>15</sup> Figures provided by Dr. Abdus Sattar, Assistant Inspector of the Madrasah Education Board.

<sup>16</sup> See the discussion above about subject-based education in Qawmi Madrasahs versus grade-based education.

## II. METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

The three researchers carefully reviewed the research objectives and categories of questions in order to design and tailor the most effective research plan to be executed within four weeks. The researchers took several factors into consideration:

- The sensitivity of conducting research on the subject of Madrasah education given the current political and international circumstances;
- The need to keep the research focused on pre-primary and primary Madrasah education, without losing sight of the overall educational system issues (with its secondary and university levels) that may affect those earlier levels of education;
- The need to engage local expertise in the research design process, preferably from those who have taken part in the Madrasah system as educators and/or students;
- The need to gather information about Madrasah education in Bangladesh in a representative manner;
- The need to involve various segments of society that may influence or be influenced by Madrasah education; and
- The need to triangulate research approaches in order to ensure reliability and validity of information.

Consequently, the researchers prepared a research plan that allowed for receiving input from various groups whose work or living related to Madrasahs. Further, the researchers determined that a representative sample of Bangladesh's Madrasah education system must include distinct samples of urban and rural areas in various parts of Bangladesh. The following is a description of the groups that were included in the research, the geographical sample design, the student and parent sample design, and factors that facilitated the process used to conduct the research.

### A. Targeted Research Groups

In order to gather a comprehensive picture of pre-primary and primary Madrasah education, it was necessary to seek information from various sources. The researchers were interested in gathering various types of information official data and statistics, expert views, and views stemming from professional and personal experiences. Therefore, the targeted research groups included the following:

- *Experts on Madrasahs*: Specifically, the researchers identified Dr. Md. Abdus Sattar, a Ph.D. graduate of Dhaka University's Department of Islamic Studies. Dr. Sattar completed his dissertation in 2002 on Madrasah education in Bangladesh. He provided invaluable information on the history of Madrasahs and their contemporary educational system. In addition, as the Assistant Inspector of the Madrasah Education Board of the Ministry of Education, he arranged contacts for the researchers in various Madrasahs across the country.
- *Government Officials*: As the research unfolded, the researchers were able to better identify officials in various ministries and government agencies whose work related directly to the Madrasah education system. These included officials in the Ministry of Education, Bangladesh Bureau for Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), Ministry of

Religious Affairs, and the Islamic Foundation. Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with five government officials, and informal ones were conducted with approximately 10 officials. The focus of the interviews was on the regulations and rules governing Madrasah education, the differences between general education and Madrasah education, and their views on the needs of pre-primary and primary education.

- *Funders of Madrasah Education:* The Madrasah educational system depends to a great extent on donations from various organizations and individuals. During the field research, the researchers interviewed various representatives of organizations and individuals who have been contributing financially to Madrasah education. Six funders participated in interviews or focus groups that examined sources of funding, views of how Madrasahs contribute to the educational, social, and economic development of the country, and suggestions for how Madrasahs might be improved.
- *Local Madrasah Principals and Teachers:* Throughout the field research, the three researchers met with principals and teachers both in Madrasahs and in primary schools. The researchers conducted interviews and focus groups with 110 Madrasah and school principals and teachers (32 principals and 78 teachers). The focus of the interviews was on Madrasahs' educational operations, curricula, and linkages to general education, and on concerns and suggestions.
- *Pre-primary Madrasah Education Staff:* Madrasahs have two types of pre-primary education: one focusing on Quran memorization and the other focusing on preparing students for primary education. The research team interviewed 23 pre-primary Madrasah education staff from the two types of institutions. The interviews focused on gathering information about their services, students, sources of funding, curriculum, issues, and needs.
- *Civil Organizations and NGOs:* Several civil organizations, businesses, and NGOs are in direct or indirect contact with the Madrasah educational system. The researchers interviewed and included in focus groups approximately 30 representatives of such organizations. The researchers also ensured that interviews and focus groups were conducted with individuals representing various other religious groups in Bangladesh, and with politicians representing various political parties, especially the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) and Awami League (AL). The interviews and focus groups emphasized Madrasahs' contributions to the educational, social, and economic development of Bangladesh.
- *Religious Leaders:* Madrasahs are naturally related to the religious institutions of Bangladesh. Often the Imams in towns and villages are themselves the Madrasah teachers and administrators. In addition, several religious leaders were the founders of Madrasahs, or currently act as their trustees or financial contributors. It is difficult to accurately state the number of religious leaders interviewed, as several of them were interviewed as Madrasah officials or participated in focus groups as funders.
- *Parents:* The research design stipulated that upon visiting any Madrasah or primary school, the research assistants would conduct semi-structured interviews/surveys with parents who resided in the neighborhood. The interviews/surveys focused on parents' perceptions about

Madrasah education and how it contributed to their children's development. The table below summarizes the number of parents interviewed/surveyed. The table's information, based on actual data gathered from interviewees, shows that most parents were interviewed in Dhaka. It also shows that women accounted for about one-third of all parent interviewees.

**Table 4: Number of Parents Surveyed**

District	Male	Female
Dhaka	44 41.9%	17 48.6%
Chittagong	13 12.4%	7 20.0%
Jessore	14 13.3%	8 22.9%
Sylhet	34 32.4%	3 8.6%
Total	105 100.0%	35 100.0%

- Students:* As it was obvious to the researchers that gathering information from first to fifth grade students had its own limitations in terms of the students' ability to articulate issues and thoughts related to their education experiences, two types of research tools were developed: the first was a researcher-assisted interview/survey of students in grades one to five, and the second was a self-administered survey for students in grades eleven (Alim) and above. The latter survey focused on the older students' experiences when they were in pre-primary or primary Madrasahs, and was usually followed by a focus group to solicit qualitative data. The surveys and focus groups concentrated on students' educational, developmental, and social experiences while in Madrasahs, and their concerns and suggestions. The table below (Table 5) summarizes the number of students who participated in the interviews and surveys. The table shows that close to 400 Ebtidai and primary students were interviewed, with relatively equal numbers in Dhaka, Chittagong, and Sylhet. The numbers dropped in Jessore because there appeared to be reluctance among students and staff in two Qawmi Madrasahs to participate in the research. Female students accounted for about one-third of respondents. The chart includes the number and percentage of students from the "Alim" level and above who participated in the survey and focus groups. The number of female respondents was much lower among this group due to the fact that a smaller number of female students continue their education beyond the "Dakhil" level, which is equal to the tenth grade.

**Table 5: Number of Grade One to Five Madrasah and Primary School Students Surveyed**

	Grade One to Five		Alim Level	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Dhaka</b>	85 30.5%	32 28.3%	69 31.2%	15 35.7%
<b>Chittagong</b>	66 23.7%	30 26.5%	41 18.6%	11 26.2%
<b>Jessore</b>	53 19.0%	19 16.8%	26 11.8%	11 26.2%
<b>Sylhet</b>	75 26.9%	32 28.3%	85 38.5%	5 11.9%
<b>Total</b>	279 100.0%	113 100.0%	221 100.0%	42 100.0%

## B. Geographical Sample Design

The geographical sample design was intended to be as representative as possible of Bangladeshi society. Specifically, the researchers targeted both rural and urban areas in four locations around the country: Dhaka (central), Chittagong (southeast), Jessore (southwest), and Sylhet (northeast). The selection of the four locations covered a wide geographical area, with diversity in terms of the economy (for example, Chittagong is the main port area), political and population density (Dhaka), and socio-economic diversity (with Sylhet being relatively more developed compared to Jessore).

The research team established a targeted minimum cluster sample of 30 schools to be included in the research, as the number 30 has usually been used statistically to indicate sufficient representation of large populations. Within this targeted school sample, the researchers conducted their initial pilot research in three urban Madrasahs in Dhaka. With minimal changes to research instruments as a result of the pilot research feedback, the team then targeted six more Madrasahs in semi-urban and rural areas of Dhaka. Once this was accomplished, the researchers determined that conducting the research in three other areas—Chittagong, Jessore, and Sylhet—would satisfy the need to diversify the sample and make it as representative as possible. Within each division, the researchers targeted seven to nine Madrasahs, for a total of 34 Madrasahs (including the Dhaka Madrasahs). At least one Madrasah in each division was an exclusively female Madrasah. Most selected Madrasahs included both boys and girls, especially at the elementary level. At least two of the Madrasahs visited were Qawmi Madrasahs.<sup>17</sup> Table 6 below shows that both rural and urban Madrasahs from the National Divisions were included in the research. There was a balance of 17 urban and 17 rural Madrasahs included in the research. The Appendix includes the details about those Madrasahs within the four locations.

<sup>17</sup> As explained earlier, *Qawmi* Madrasahs are distinct from what are known as *Alia* Madrasahs. The former is a type of independent religious institution, while the latter follows the government guidelines on curriculum and other policies.

**Table 6: Geographical Distribution of Madrasahs Included in Research**

	Urban	Rural
Dhaka	4	7
Chittagong	5	2
Jessore	4	5
Sylhet	4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>

### C. Student, School Staff, and Parent Sample Design

The selection of Madrasahs for this research followed a cluster sample design, as explained above. Within each Madrasah, the researchers followed a structured research model where they conducted surveys, interviews, and focus groups with four types of populations: Ebtidai students, Alim level students, school staff, and parents. A team of one researcher and two research assistants/translators visited each Madrasah. Given time constraints, as the research was conducted during class time, the researchers decided to limit their sampling of students to 10 Ebtidai students, 10 Alim level students, three to four school staff, and five parents. Table 7 below includes the actual numbers of Madrasahs, students, parents, and school staff who took part in this research. The numbers in the table show some variations in terms of the number of students interviewed in each Madrasah. Although the goal of each research team was to adhere to the sample design of 10 students from Ebtidai and 10 students from Alim levels, the realities in each Madrasah sometimes dictated different sample sizes. In some Madrasahs (as in Sylhet), the administrators offered more students to participate in surveys, interviews, and focus groups. In these cases, the researchers welcomed the larger numbers for two reasons: first, to increase the sample size, thereby enhancing the statistical comparisons among groups; and secondly, to be sensitive to the school staffs' "generosity" as they offered more students. But in other cases, it was not possible to conduct the research with the minimum number of students according to the sample design. This was usually either due to students' engagement in examinations or their reluctance to take part in the research (which only happened in two Qawmi Madrasahs in Jessore).

**Table 7: Actual Cluster Sample Locations and Research Participants**

	Dhaka		Chittagong		Jessore		Sylhet	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Madrasahs	4	7	5	2	4	5	4	3
Ebtidai and Primary Students	43	74	65	31	33	39	61	46
Alim Students	39	45	20	32	17	20	31	59
Parents	32	29	14	6	14	8	13	24
School Staff	12	25	15	7	9	15	12	9

Researchers made diligent efforts to ensure female participation in the study. However, the number of female students, teachers, and parents was lower than what the researchers had anticipated (see Tables 4 and 5 above). This was due to several reasons. Most of the Alim students were males, as female students tend to drop out of Madrasahs in large numbers after completing the Dakhil level of education. For example, in 2001, the number of female students in the Dakhil level was 579,246 out of a total of 1,055,791 students (54.9 percent). In the same year, the number of female students in the Alim level was 130,057 out of a total of 302,882

students (42.9 percent).<sup>18</sup> For school staff, the number of female teachers was minimal (3.5 percent of the entire school teacher population).<sup>19</sup> Finally, mothers were more reluctant to be interviewed.<sup>20</sup>

#### **D. Factors that Facilitated the Research Process**

Despite several hartals (politically motivated strikes), the researchers managed to conduct field research during the no-hartal days and to conduct data coding and analysis during hartal days. The implementation of this research benefited greatly from several factors:

- *The USAID research mandate's focus on educational development:* The USAID scope of work emphasized the educational nature of the project. That is, it was intended to assess the relationship of Madrasah education to the national educational system in order to allow USAID to use its resources to contribute to the effectiveness of that sector in the social and economic development of Bangladesh. Accordingly, all research instruments and designs reflected this objective, which was well received by research participants.
- *Research staff's contacts:* One of the lead researchers, Dr. Raisuddin, a career professor at Dhaka University's Islamic Studies Department, had strong contacts at all levels of the educational system, including with Madrasah staff. This facilitated, to a great extent, entry into Madrasahs and establishing contacts with several officials. In addition, three of the research assistants that he identified for the project were themselves graduates of the Madrasah system, and also from Dhaka University. They too contributed significantly to the development of all aspects of this research, and via their contacts, they facilitated further contacts and access to Madrasahs.
- *The ability of the two international consultants to fluently speak Arabic, and their Islamic education credentials:* Speaking Arabic (the language of the Holy Quran) in Madrasah circles, combined with an Islamic education background, provided for much credibility. School staff often requested that the international consultants give motivational speeches to students in Arabic.

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<sup>18</sup> Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), "Statistical Profile on Education in Bangladesh," *BANBEIS Publications* 11 (2002): 42.

<sup>19</sup> BANBEIS, 42.

<sup>20</sup> Mothers in some conservative areas were reluctant to talk to male researchers. We deliberately made an all-male team to ensure that the conservative attitudes in some Madrasahs about women do not get in the way of our access to Madrasahs. Including women researchers would have probably hindered more aspects of our research, as more Madrasahs may have been reluctant to respond to us or give us entry. But the downfall was that we were unable to communicate effectively with more mothers.

### III. FINDINGS

As explained earlier, this section will follow the structure of the research categories and questions included in USAID's scope of work. Each sub-section will include information gathered through various research methods. At times, the report will refer to the Appendix and attachments for detailed information.

#### A. History

This subsection will include information on three topics: 1) how the Madrasah system in Bangladesh has developed over time into what it is today; 2) the social, cultural and political influences on Madrasahs; and, 3) the future direction of Madrasahs.

##### 1. *Madrasah System Development in Bangladesh*<sup>21</sup>

Madrasahs first started in Bangladesh with the arrival of Muslim Sufis and Saints who came to preach Islam.<sup>22</sup> At first, Madrasah originated in the form of Khanqa (a place for spiritual worship) and then Maktab (a place for teaching basic Quran recitation and Islamic rituals). It then took the form of the Madrasah (a place for Islamic theological education), where complete Islamic subjects were taught. Consequently, Ikhtiaruddin Mohammad Bin Bakhatiar Khilji, the first Muslim ruler in Bengal, arrived in 1206. During his rule he established large numbers of Maktabas and renovated a good number of already-built Maktabas. Around the middle of the 13th century, a saint and great scholar, Sheikh Sharf Uddin Abu Tawama, came to preach Islam and establish the first traditional Madrasah in Bengal, which later took the shape of a university in an area known as Mograpara, in Sonargaon near Dhaka. The students of this institute scattered all around the sub-continent and established many Madrasahs.

In the Indian sub-continent, the Muslim rulers of the 13th to 19th centuries were also interested in Madrasahs in order to prepare efficient manpower, with good knowledge of Arabic and Persian, to run the official work of the state. In those days, the Muslim rulers usually built Mosques for performing prayer. Adjacent to them, they built Maktabas or Madrasahs for teaching religion and science. They believed that it was a religious duty as well as a social and charitable service for the community to do so. Among those Muslim rulers who patroned Madrasahs were Shamsuddin Firoz Shah (1301-1322), Jalaluddin Shah (1418-33), Shamsuddin Usuf Shah (1474-81) and a most popular ruler of Bengal, Alauddin Hossain Shah (1493-1519).<sup>23</sup>

Madrasah education was the only institutional education system during the reign of the Muslims (1201-1857) in Bangladesh. At that time, educational institutions were dependent upon taxes collected from the land. The British rulers eliminated the system after they occupied the Indian sub-continent in 1793. They established a large number of modern schools, in which English was

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<sup>21</sup> Please note that most information used in this sub-section was obtained from: A.F. Salahuddin Ahmad and Bazlu Mubin Choudhury, *Bangladesh National Cultural Heritage: An Introductory Reader* (Dhaka: Independent University, 2003) and Mohammed Abdus Sattar, *Madrasah Education in Bangladesh and its Influence in the Social Life* (Dhaka: Dhaka University Ph.D. Dissertation, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> This historical overview refers mainly to the Bengal area of the Indian subcontinent, without specific distinction between what is now Bangladesh and what is the West Bengal area of India.

<sup>23</sup> A.N.M. Raisuddin, "Advent of Islam in Bangladesh," *Islamic Foundation Journal* (1987): 167.

often the medium of instruction for teaching such subjects as science and mathematics. As a result, the number of Madrasahs was gradually reduced. Some private and some mosque-based Madrasahs survived.

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, there were approximately 1,351 Madrasahs in the country.<sup>24</sup> When President Ziaur Rahman gave the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board autonomous status on July 4th, 1979, Madrasahs were restored to their past glory. After the government approved the Madrasah Education Board, Ebtidai Madrasahs started separately in 1984. From 1984-1989, 14,414 Madrasahs were recognized by the Madrasah Education Board. The lack of sufficient government funds, however, hindered the efforts to establish more Ebtidai Madrasahs. By 2004, the Madrasah Education Board had given recognition to 19,000 Madrasahs, although several of them are not operational.<sup>25</sup>

## **2. *The Social, Cultural, and Political Influences on Madrasahs***

The Madrasah system, like any other institution in Bangladesh, is interactively influenced by its social, political, and cultural dynamics. The historical overview above shows how the Madrasah system was influenced by the advent of Islam on the Indian sub-continent and by the British colonization. Those developments shaped many aspects of Bengali identity, with its Islamic, Hindu, Bengali, and Westernized elements.

To a great extent, the Madrasah system continued to be attached to the Islamic aspects of the Bangladeshi identity, so much so that it became synonymous with anti-Westernization, and later with pro-Pakistani tendencies. So, when the struggle was against Western colonization, just like the case in all other Muslim countries at that time, the Islamic identity provided safeguard against what was perceived as a threat to Bangladeshi identity. With the establishment of Pakistan, with its West and East sides, the Islamic identity was again being asserted as it was the main connector of peoples on the opposite sides of the Indian sub-continent. Madrasahs in Bangladesh reflected much of what West Pakistan culture was about, especially the Urdu language, as symbols of the Islamic identity.

On the other hand, as a result of Western colonization, the neglect of the Madrasah system during that time created an aura of backwardness when it was compared to modern educational systems. This had a strong influence on the negative views of the educated middle class and elites of Bangladesh. They adopted the view, and continue to a great extent to believe, that the Madrasah system is a backward one, and that it must be replaced by modern general education.<sup>26</sup>

Later during the independence movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, several of the leaders of the Madrasah system, and Muslim orthodoxy, seemed to embrace the concept of the

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<sup>24</sup> A.K.M. Ayoub Ali, *History of Islamic Education in Bangladesh* (Dhaka: Islamic Foundation, 1983), 17-18.

<sup>25</sup> Courtesy of the Madrasah Education Board.

<sup>26</sup> Those sentiments were expressed repeatedly by members of the educated elite during the interviews.

unity of all-Pakistan against the independence movement.<sup>27</sup> Separation from Pakistan was viewed in such circles as a blow to Islam, to the benefit of communists and Hindu India.<sup>28</sup>

After independence in 1971, and as a result of the perceived position of Muslim orthodoxy against independence, the issue of Madrasah education became a subject of political debate between those who wanted to assert Bangladeshi identity and those who wanted to assert a Muslim one.<sup>29</sup> The subject of Madrasah education continues to receive the attention of the major political parties in Bangladesh.

Consequently, it was not surprising during this research to see that Qawmi Madrasahs were attached to Muslim identity, with less regard to Bangladeshi identity, and taught Urdu and Farsi (Persian) as part of their curriculum, because those languages were perceived to assert the Indian-subcontinent Muslim identity. Madrasahs that seemed to embrace Bangladeshi identity, and definitely most Alia Madrasahs, focused on teaching Bengali, and as a rule would not teach Urdu or Farsi.

In summary, the role of Madrasahs in Bangladesh reflects larger political, social and cultural influences, and will probably be shaped in the future by such dynamics. The debate about Islamization, modernization, and Westernization will continue to shape views about the Madrasah system and its role in society.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. *Future Direction of Madrasahs*

The question of Madrasah education in Bangladesh is the subject of an often polarizing debate among various segments of the society. As the two sub-sections above showed, Madrasah education has been influenced by several societal factors: Islam as a religion, colonization, the relationship with Pakistan, and the approach of political parties. In addition, levels of Westernization versus levels of religiosity and traditionalism affect perspectives on Madrasah education. During the interviews with school staff, parents, and members of the society, it became clear that expectations regarding Madrasah education varied widely. Among the elitist Western-educated segments of the society, there existed a widespread characterization of Madrasah education as backward and sometimes radical. Often they suggested that there was no need for Madrasah education, as general education was sufficiently capable of providing educational services to society. Conversely, among those involved with Madrasah education—whether as teachers, students, parents, or officials—there was a strong agreement that the Madrasah system is in need of massive changes and reforms in order to meet the demands of the

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<sup>27</sup> M. Rashiduzzaman, “The Liberals and the Religious Right in Bangladesh,” *Asian Survey* 34 (1992): 978.

<sup>28</sup> The movie *The Clay Bird* depicted such views and attitudes that circulated around Madrasahs and among orthodox Islamists. *The Clay Bird*, directed by T. Masud and C. Masud (New Jersey: Milestone Film and Video, 2002).

<sup>29</sup> Emajuddin A. and D. R. J. A. Nazneen, “Islam in Bangladesh: Revivalism or Power Politics?” *Asian Survey* 30 (1990): 795-8.

<sup>30</sup> The term “modernization” in this paper refers to developing institutions and structures that reflect contemporary modes of economic, educational, and political structures. Modernizing education refers to the inclusion of modern educational subjects such as science, math, and arts, and also to the use of modern pedagogical approaches. “Westernization” refers to the implementation of culturally Western life styles in the social and personal realms of life.

21st century. Seldom, however, did any of those involved with the Madrasah system suggest that it was to be abolished. They acknowledged that it provided significant services to society including modern education in Alia Madrasahs, religious education, care for orphans, and Quran memorization classes. Several interviewees used terms such as “bright,” “promising,” and “wonderful” to describe the future of Madrasahs in Bangladesh. Below are some of the comments gathered from school staff and parents when asked: “In your opinion, what is the future of Madrasah education?”

**Question: In Your Opinion, What is the Future of Madrasah Education?**

- I see a bright future as more students are coming to Madrasahs. Also the government and the school board emphasize Madrasah education.
- All Madrasahs will be under government control, which is good because there would be more scholarships and food-for-education programs. If government provides Ebtidai Madrasahs with vocational training, this would be good.
- Bright future.
- Future of Madrasah education is bright but the government should develop it.
- Future of Madrasah education is bright; expect that it will need more than this.
- Very good future is expected.
- Future will be bright and good.
- If things continue as they are, future is not good.
- The future is not good unless the government takes some steps to develop Madrasah education.
- I am not optimistic unless it is modernized and rearranged fully to follow the syllabus of general education.
- There is no significant development in Madrasah education. Madrasah education needs revolutionary change.
- In the future, Madrasahs will be better, because once government sees that Madrasahs are working well, they will recognize them and they will be improved.

## **B. Types of Madrasahs**

Several questions are addressed here: How many and what types of Madrasahs exist?<sup>31</sup> Why are some Madrasahs heavily supported by the government of Bangladesh while others are not? How is each type managed? Do School Management Committees (SMC), similar to those in secular schools, play a role in management? For each of these questions, the researchers reviewed official documents and interviewed experts on Madrasah education, officials in the Ministry of Education, and the Madrasah Education Board.

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<sup>31</sup> The answer to this particular question was introduced in the beginning of the report in the Background section in order to make it easier for a reader to follow the discussions in the previous parts of Sections 1 and 2.

### 1. Government Support of Madrasahs

As mentioned earlier, it is true that the government of Bangladesh supports certain types of Madrasahs, namely Alia Madrasahs. These Madrasahs, once they fulfill the requirements described earlier, become eligible for government contributions to teachers' pay. The government contribution, known as The Monthly Payment Order (MPO), is usually 500 Taka for no more than four teachers in Ebtidai Madrasahs, and represents 90 percent of teachers' salaries in Dakhil Madrasahs and higher. Students in such Madrasahs are also eligible for the scholarship stipend upon successful completion of a competitive examination in the fifth and eighth grades. Such Madrasahs also receive free books from the Madrasah Education Board. The government does not support Qawmi Madrasahs, but according to some Qawmi Madrasah directors they may receive support from the Ministry of Social Welfare for supporting orphans. According to some pre-primary education officials, some of them receive minor contributions from the government. The two tables below summarize the government's contributions to Madrasahs (all levels of Alia Madrasahs).

**Table 8: Distribution of Government Revenue Budget for Education, by Type of Education (Taka in Millions)<sup>32</sup>**

Type of Education	1990-1991 Budget			1994-1995 Budget		
	Taka	Dollars	%	Taka	Dollars	%
Primary Education	5289.3	\$91,194,827.59	44.7	8430.1	\$145,346,551.72	42.0
Secondary Education	2492.1	\$42,967,241.38	21.1	4149.5	\$71,543,103.45	20.7
College (General) Education	1184.8	\$20,427,586.21	10.0	2254.3	\$38,867,241.38	11.2
Madrasah Education	953.3	\$16,436,206.90	8.1	2146.3	\$37,005,172.41	10.7
Technical Education	266.9	\$4,601,724.14	2.3	395.5	\$6,818,965.52	2.0
University Education	1030	\$17,758,620.69	8.7	1533	\$26,431,034.48	7.6
Teachers Training	92.3	\$1,591,379.31	0.8	156.9	\$2,705,172.41	0.8
Cadet College Education	120.9	\$2,084,482.76	1.0	142.5	\$2,456,896.55	0.7
Others Administrative & Subsidiary Departments	390.5	\$6,732,758.62	3.3	869.2	\$14,986,206.90	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>11820.1</b>	<b>\$203,794,827.59</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>20077.3</b>	<b>\$346,160,344.83</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>32</sup> BANBEIS, 25.

**Table 8 (Continued)**

Type of Education	2000-2001 Budget			2001-2002 Budget		
	Taka	Dollars	%	Taka	Dollars	%
Primary Education	13591.4	\$234,334,482.76	37.8	13480.5	\$232,422,413.79	36.6
Secondary Education	8514.6	\$146,803,448.28	23.7	9007.2	\$155,296,551.72	24.5
College (General) Education	5022.5	\$86,594,827.59	14.0	5175.1	\$89,225,862.07	14.0
Madrasah Education	4108.3	\$70,832,758.62	11.4	4395.5	\$75,784,482.76	11.9
Technical Education	441.1	\$7,605,172.41	1.2	439.3	\$7,574,137.93	1.2
University Education	2919.1	\$50,329,310.34	8.1	2913.5	\$50,232,758.62	7.9
Teachers Training	234.1	\$4,036,206.90	0.6	211.4	\$3,644,827.59	0.6
Cadet College Education	168	\$2,896,551.72	0.5	NA	\$0.00	NA
Others Administrative & Subsidiary Departments	965.5	\$16,646,551.72	2.7	1222.8	\$21,082,758.62	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>35796.6</b>	<b>\$617,182,758.62</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>36845.3</b>	<b>\$635,263,793.10</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 9: Number of Non-government Madrasahs and Number of Madrasahs Receiving MPOs, 1991-92 to 2000-2001<sup>33</sup>**

Fiscal Year	No. of Madrasahs	Annual Increase number	% of Annual Increase	No. of Madrasah Receiving MPOs	Annual Increase number	% of Annual Increase
1991-92	4,959	-	-	4,784	-	-
1992-93	5,191	232	4.63	4,807	23	0.48
1993-94	5,564	373	7.19	5,244	437	9.09
1994-95	5,762	198	3.56	5,605	361	6.88
1995-96	5,974	212	3.68	5,785	180	3.21
1996-97	6,652	678	11.35	5,841	56	0.97
1997-98	6,848	196	2.95	5,972	131	2.24
1998-99	6,953	105	1.53	6,087	115	1.93
1999-00	7,119	166	2.39	6,417	330	5.42
2000-01	7,273	154	2.16	6,717	300	4.68
2001-02	7,648	375	5.16	6,995	278	4.14

The tables above show that the government expenditure on Madrasah education is increasing slowly in response to the increase in number of Madrasahs. Table 8 shows that government expenditure on primary schools is about five times more than that on Ebtidai Madrasahs. Such a ratio corresponds to the 1:4 or 1:5 ratio of the number of students in Ebtidai Madrasahs to those in primary schools. Table 9 shows that over 90 percent of all non-governmental Madrasahs have been receiving MPO since 1991. These figures suggest that the government has been consistent in providing MPOs for the vast majority of Alia Madrasahs over the past 13 years. However, the researchers often heard complaints from Madrasah officials about the difference in the government's treatment of Madrasahs compared to that of general education schools.

<sup>33</sup> BANBEIS, 81.

## **2. Management of Madrasahs**

Alia and Qawmi Madrasahs are both managed by committees. The main duties of the committees are to approve annual budgets, appoint teachers, and to create a convenient atmosphere for study. Often a Madrasah founder heads the committee in the beginning, until the Madrasah has become more stable and institutionalized. The committees are usually comprised of renowned community members and religious figures. In Alia Madrasahs, the committees include government representatives. These officials usually ensure that government regulations are followed, particularly when hiring new teachers.

### **C. Legal and Financial Status**

This section will address the following questions: Regarding finance, income, and expenditures, how do Madrasahs compare with secular schools? Are Madrasah students eligible for food-for-education, textbook, and scholarship stipend programs? What are the sources of revenue? The following is a comparison of income and expenditure between Madrasahs and general education schools.

#### **1. Sources of Revenue**

In general education schools, the government supplies all kinds of revenue, but in Madrasahs, the sources of revenue differ from one type to the other. Qawmi Madrasahs receive almost all their revenue from donations and contributions from individuals, and from local and international Islamic organizations. Some Qawmi Madrasahs have their own foundations and economic projects that support them financially. For instance, some of these Madrasahs, especially in rural areas, generate income during religious occasions, such as by selling Qurbani meat during one of the annual Islamic feasts. Usually Qawmi Madrasahs charge fees to students whose socio-economic assessment indicates that they are financially capable.

Alia Madrasahs have a wider range of income sources. In addition to receiving funding from donations, they also receive government support for teachers' salaries. They also charge student fees except to needy students. Like Qawmi Madrasahs, some have their own economic projects and foundations. Because there is a lack of official information on sources of revenue for independent Ebtidai Madrasahs (Madrasahs that offer education only up to the fifth grade), included below is a table summarizing the reported annual income of Dakhil Madrasahs (including attached Ebtidai Madrasahs). The table below shows that the largest source of income for Madrasahs (about 87 percent) comes from governmental salaries and MPOs.

**Table 10: Estimated Annual Income (In Taka and Dollars) for Alia Dakhil Madrasahs in 2003<sup>34</sup>**

Student Fees	Salary/MPO	Income from Properties	Contributions of Local People
104,176,454.40 (\$1,796,145.77)	3,928,332,256.45 (\$67,729,866.49)	144,885,272.94 (\$2,498,021.94)	58,906,891.73 (\$1,015,636.06)
Recurrent	Development	Others	Total
216,800,986.53 (\$3,737,948.04)	23,975,556.35 (\$413,371.66)	36,991,721.53 (\$637,788.30)	4,514,069,139.93 (\$77,828,778.27)

## 2. Eligibility for Food-for-Education

According to the Ministry of Education's Assistant Director for Special Education, the Food-for-Education Program has been cancelled. A new program is now in place. Under the new program, 40 percent of students from each school are selected by Management Committees to receive 100 Taka each for food on a need and merit basis. Alia Madrasahs benefit from this program.

## 3. Textbooks

Students of Alia and independent Ebtidai Madrasahs receive free books from the Madrasah Textbook Board (MTB). In addition, students eligible for the fifth grade and eighth grade scholarships receive 200 Taka and 300 Taka respectively in lieu of textbook costs.

## 4. Scholarship and Stipend Program of Ebtidai Madrasahs

Alia Madrasah students are eligible for scholarship stipends upon successful completion of competitive scholarship examinations in fifth and eighth grades. The top three fifth grade Ebtidai students from each Upazila receive 60 Taka each. The top three eighth grade Dakhil students from each Upazila receive 100 Taka each. However, the number of scholarships allocated to general education students is much higher; about 30 to 40 scholarships are offered in each Upazilla (three in each ward).

## D. Mandates and Purpose

The questions in this section are: What are the secular and religious regulations that guide the various types of Madrasahs? What is the purpose, by type? What are the philosophies that guide instruction and how are the philosophies reflected in the curriculum and in public discourse? What efforts have been made to modernize the curriculum?

<sup>34</sup> The chart was supplied by BANBEIS upon the request of the researchers. May 2004.

## **1. *Secular and Religious Regulations Guiding Madrasahs***

Based on the distinction that was made earlier between Alia and Qawmi Madrasahs, it becomes clear that Alia Madrasahs abide by government regulations related to all aspects of education: curriculum, standards of education, commitment to government regulations such as implementing an in-school examination for fifth grade students, and teacher hiring processes. Qawmi Madrasahs do not follow such guidelines and regulations, as they are independent from the government system; however, they do follow guidelines from private Islamic educational associations, such as Bafak Mudaressin of Bangladesh, and the Deubandi Madrasahs that originated in India.

In terms of religious regulations, most Qawmi and Alia Madrasahs are linked to some form of association or religious educational institution. Most often, ties to such associations and religious institutions reflect more on their philosophy, curriculum, and teaching approaches than on administrative aspects of their work. In addition, linkages to such associations and institutions make Qawmi Madrasah students eligible to receive their certificates, and often facilitate the chance to pursue educational opportunities in Islamic institutions in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries.

## **2. *Philosophies of Madrasahs***

In order to respond to questions regarding the philosophies of Madrasahs, the researchers selected and reviewed a sample of six Madrasah brochures, curricula, and some of their textbooks in order to gain insights into their philosophies and curriculum. Two of the six selected Madrasahs are Qawmi, four are from Chittagong, and two are from Dhaka. The Appendices include descriptions of each Madrasah's objectives, curriculum, and major activities. Please note that the language used in the Madrasah publications was preserved as much as possible in order to be reflective of their own discourse.

The descriptions of Madrasah brochures, their statements about their philosophies, *raison d'être*, and consequent educational approaches and curriculum (included in the Appendices), seem to represent a spectrum of beliefs and directions. It is obvious that all Madrasahs have a few goals in common, while they vary on others. Their approaches to education also varied to a great extent, consistent with their articulated beliefs and philosophies. The following main themes emerged from the review of this sample of Madrasahs:

- *Asserting the Islamic Identity:* All Madrasahs emphasized that their goal was to follow a well-grounded Islamic educational system. They all seemed to acknowledge that Islamic education has suffered from setbacks, and that their efforts were intended to restore that education to solid ground.
- *Fear of Hostile Cultures and Nations:* At least three of the Madrasahs emphasized in their statements that they were concerned about hostile attitudes and actions by other religious and national groups. Their mission focused on the need to deter such hostilities by restoring Islamic principles and values. A reciprocal hostile attitude was obvious in some statements.

- *Mixed Attitudes about Modern Education:* Although all Madrasah statements included at some level or the other indications regarding the need to include modern subjects, it was obvious that Qawmi Madrasahs had a strong focus on “modernizing” the way they teach religious and Arabic studies, while Alia Madrasahs viewed modernization as the inclusion of modern subjects and teaching methods. It is notable that the two Madrasahs that seemed to incorporate modern subjects the most (Tanjimul Ummah and Al Ihsan International Academy) did not include in their statements a message of hostility for or against other cultures and nations.

### 3. Efforts to Modernize the Curriculum

The efforts to modernize the Madrasah curriculum have included efforts by both the government and Madrasah educators:

*a. Governmental Modernization Efforts:* The Madrasah Education Board has developed curricula for Ebtidai, Dakhil, and Alim Madrasah educational levels that have incorporated modern subjects. It is estimated that 60 percent of Alia Madrasahs’ curricula now consist of modern subjects. Of course, those efforts could benefit from increased numbers of teachers, better pay for those teachers, and better teacher training. The number of Alia Madrasahs has increased tremendously over the past 30 years. The table below shows the steady growth of Alia Madrasahs from 1970 to 2000.

**Table 11: Growth of Madrasahs (Dakhil to Kamil), by Management<sup>35</sup>**

Year	Number of Madrasahs			% Total Increase
	Public	Private	Total	
1970	3	1,515	1,518	-
1975	3	1,827	1,830	20.6
1980	3	2,681	2,684	46.7
1985	3	3,736	3,739	39.3
1990	3	5,790	5,793	54.9
1995	3	5,974	5,977	3.2
2000	3	7,276	7,279	21.8

In addition, the number of Alia Madrasah students, including girls, has increased in the past 30 years. The chart below shows this increase. The number of Madrasah students increased from below 300,000 in 1970 to more than 3,000,000 in the year 2000. The number of girls also increased steadily. In the year 2000, girls accounted for about 40 percent of all Madrasah students.

<sup>35</sup> BANBEIS, 41.

**Table 12: Growth of Madrasah Students by Gender<sup>36</sup>**

Year	Number of Students			% Total Increase	Girls % of Total
	Boys	Girls	Total		
1970	271,138	12,242	283,380	-	4.3
1975	277,910	13,281	291,191	2.8	4.6
1980	361,468	18,545	380,013	30.5	4.9
1985	588,968	49,958	638,926	68.1	7.8
1990	920,063	76,953	996,996	56.0	7.7
1995	1,283,350	553,663	1,837,013	84.2	30.1
2000	1,885,999	1,226,206	3,112,205	69.4	39.4

*b. Madrasah Educators' Modernization Efforts:* The section above, and its corresponding Appendix, referred to examples of Madrasah brochures and publications and showed that several educators came to realize that Madrasah education could no longer continue to serve the society without modernization. Obviously, educators have been actively trying to modernize Madrasahs as more of them join the Alia system, thus providing modern general education to their students (please see figures showing large increase in Alia Madrasahs in the past few years).

The interviews with school staff also showed that most of the Madrasah staff thought that Ebtidai Madrasah curriculum should be modernized to meet the needs of today. The existing curriculum, according to Madrasah staff, is not up to the standards of general education. They suggested that it was necessary to include computer science and other technical subjects as well. A training institute for teachers and libraries for students were among the suggestions for modernizing Madrasah education. Only a few staff members felt that it was unnecessary to modernize because the government had already taken steps in this regard. They suggested that the problem was with the recruitment of teachers, deficiency of funding for Ebtidai Madrasahs, and poor teacher salaries.

*c. Promising Examples of Modernization:* Although it is clear that Madrasah education struggles with issues of modernization, poverty, and other problems from which the entire country suffers, it was hopeful to see examples of Madrasahs that may perhaps serve as models for others. The following is a description of some Madrasahs that seemed to implement successful steps towards modernization:

- **Tanzimul Umma Madrasah in Uttura, Dhaka:** This Madrasah, a private Alia Madrasah following the British Cadet College model of education, emphasizes modern education, including computer science and English language on levels comparable to any modern school. At the same time, the Islamic focus is clear and obvious in all aspects of the Madrasah's activities.

<sup>36</sup> BANBEIS, 43.

- Kahdija Umul Mumenin Girls Alia Madrasah in Alumshabara, Rangonia, Chittagong: This was the only Madrasah with a female principal and all-female staff. Wearing conservative veils, the principal and teachers, most of them with Masters level degrees, conduct the Madrasah's affairs with much efficiency. During their interviews, they emphasized the need for recreational and sports facilities for their 800 female students.
- Mogarkhal Qawmi Madrasah in Gazipur, Dhaka: Madrasah staff and students engage in agricultural activities and produce all of their food. Students and Madrasah staff often expressed the need to incorporate vocational training in the curriculum. The example presented in this Madrasah provides a participatory, cooperative approach to education that seems to be lacking in most Madrasahs.
- A few Madrasahs hire non-Muslim teachers to teach modern subjects such as English and math. Some of those teachers have been employed for 15 years. The fact remains that several Madrasahs would not hire women or non-Muslim teachers because of rather conservative religious views and interpretations. The presence of positive examples of inclusion of non-Muslims and women as teachers, provides a model for others to follow.

## **E. Formal Education Linkages**

The questions answered in this section are: How are Madrasahs contributing within the general education system? What kind and level of education are students receiving? How do levels of achievement compare? Does the system allow students to move easily from Madrasah to formal education programs? How are Madrasahs supporting the Bangladesh EFA commitments? How do Madrasahs influence parent and preschool education? What is the Madrasah perception of public education and interest in linkages?

### ***1. Madrasah Contribution to the General Education System***

It is important here to maintain the distinction between Alia and Qawmi Madrasahs. The latter continue to serve society's needs for religious practices and rituals. In this regard, Qawmi Madrasahs are perhaps continuing to contribute to a traditional educational system that serves specific needs in the society. There have been few efforts to date to modernize their educational system, however, and they are not contributing effectively to the overall education system.

The Alia Madrasah system is obviously contributing positively to the general education system now that it combines religious and modern subjects. It does, though, suffer from the problems of poverty, corruption, and political instability. However, it is increasingly moving in the direction of modernization. In the interviews, surveys, and focus groups, both teachers and students alike echoed the need for modernization in Madrasahs. The promising examples described above confirm that Madrasahs are on the right path to contribute even more effectively to the general education system. According to most Madrasah interviewees, both Madrasah staff and students, there was a strong belief that Madrasahs produce citizens who are knowledgeable in both modern and religious education. This combination was viewed as positive and unique to Madrasah graduates.

Similar to the distinction between Alia and Qawmi Madrasahs is the distinction between the two types of pre-primary education: the Maktab/Nourani system and the Furqania/Hafizia system. The latter no doubt provides a valuable contribution to an Islamic society where there is a strong emphasis on the desirability for people to memorize the Quran. There is also a great need for Quran memorizers to perform a number of religious services on various occasions. The concern is that Quran memorization becomes the only type of knowledge that some children end up receiving for several years.

The Furqania/Hafizia system may benefit greatly from the example provided by Tanjimul Ummah Madrasah of incorporating Quran memorization into the Ebtidai and Dakhil curriculum. In doing so, students accomplish the goal of memorizing the Quran while continuing to receive their other forms of education.

As for Maktab/Nourani Madrasahs, they do not seem to interfere with children's pursuit of education in Madrasah or general education. They seem, in fact, to provide some type of linguistic and religious foundation that prepares the children for their Ebtidai or primary education.

## 2. Type and Level of Education Received by Students

The Madrasah School Board designed a curriculum for Ebtidai education. The curriculum includes a combination of religious studies and modern subjects. Below is a list of the subjects included in the Ebtidai Madrasah curriculum.

**Table 13: List of Curriculum Subjects for Ebtidai Madrasahs<sup>37</sup>**

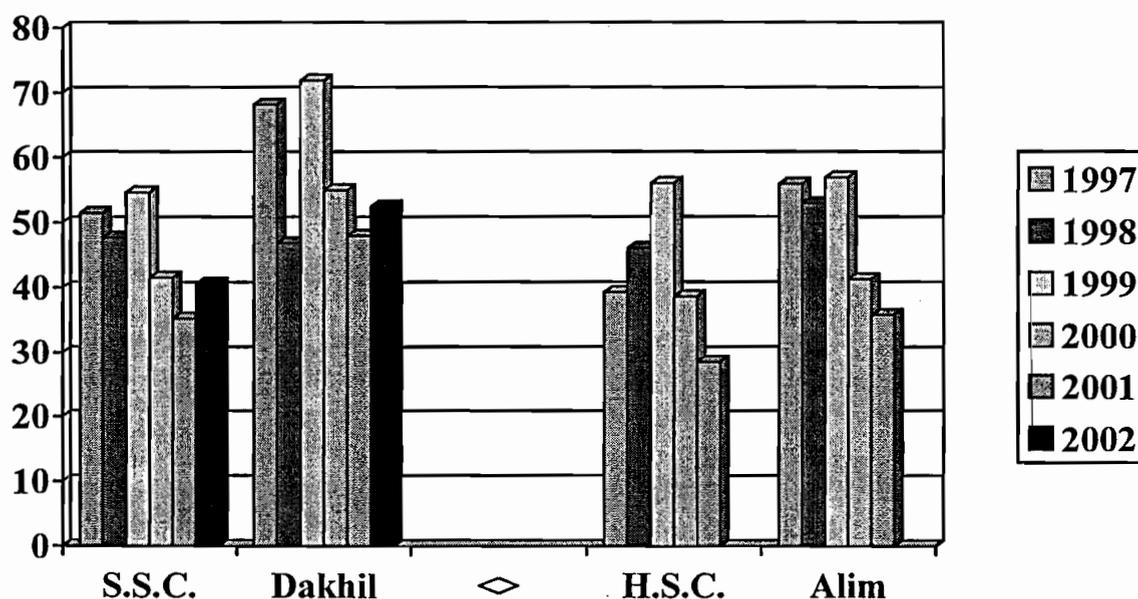
Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5
Quran	Quran	Quran	Quran	Quran
Arabic	Aquaid and Fiqh	Aquaid and Fiqh	Aquaid and Fiqh	Arabic 1st paper
Aquaid and Fiqh	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic 2nd paper
Bengali	Bengali	Bengali	Bengali	Aquaid and Fiqh
Math	Math	English	English	Bengali
		Math	Math	English
		History	History (Muslims' influence in Bengal)	Math
		Stories of prophets	Geography	History
		Geography	Science	Geography
		Science	Urdu (optional)	Science
		Urdu (optional)	Persian (optional)	Urdu (optional)
		Persian (optional)		Persian (optional)

<sup>37</sup> Madrasah Education Board of Bangladesh. Curriculum and Educational Textbook Department. *Plan and Curriculum for Ebtidai through Eighth Dakhil Grade*. 1990-1991.

### 3. Comparative Achievement Levels of Madrasah and General Education Students

The general education system and the Madrasah system have two points where comparisons between students in the two systems are possible: in the Dakhil/S.S.C. examination and in the Alim/H.S.C. examination. Using this measure, it seems that Madrasah students do fairly well compared to general education students. The chart below shows the percentage of students who passed the exams in both systems over the past few years.

**Table 14: General Education and Madrasah Examination Passing Rates 1997-2002<sup>38</sup>**



The fact that Madrasah students have relatively higher rates of passing what are considered by the government to be equivalent examinations to those taken by students of the general education system seemed to contradict observations made by various interviewees. Specifically, among most members of the educated public there is a belief that Madrasah students are not as “smart” as those graduating from general education schools. One United States Embassy staff member stated that Madrasah graduates fail interviews for educational visas at higher rates compared to graduates of general education schools because the former cannot respond to basic general education questions asked of them. In addition, the effect of corruption on examination processes has been acknowledged in the media and official circles.<sup>39</sup> This may explain the discrepancy between the relatively high passing rates among Madrasah students and the poor performance in tests such as the one given in the Embassy. It was the opinion of one of the researchers, however, that the government has been actively addressing the issue of examination corruption in the past

<sup>38</sup> BANBEIS, 56-65.

<sup>39</sup> According to the State Minister for Education, ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon, commenting on examination cheating, “Madrasahs are the ground for learning the moral lessons, but some learners of these institutions do copy in the public examinations just for obtaining a certificate by which they cannot do anything in their life.” *The Financial Express*, May 5, 2004, 3.

two to three years. That effort explains, in his opinion, the sharp drop in examination passing rates in 2000 and 2001 in both educational systems.

It is perhaps premature at this stage to try to seek an objective assessment of Madrasah students' comparative achievement. This is because Madrasah education is currently undergoing a transition in which more modern subjects are introduced, and the entire system—staff, teachers and students—are adjusting in the process. A longitudinal study of the achievement of Madrasah students graduating from Alia Madrasahs that seem to incorporate modern approaches to education, compared to students from other Madrasahs and from general education schools, may provide useful findings about this issue in the near future.

#### ***4. Student Transition from Madrasahs to Formal Education Programs***

The system allows for students to move from the Madrasah system to the formal education programs at various levels:

- At the Ebtidai and Dakhil levels, a student may move from a Madrasah to a general education school after passing an in-school competency examination.
- After passing the Dakhil examination, a student may move from a Madrasah to a general education school.
- After passing the Alim examination, a student may apply to a university within two years of receiving the Alim degree.

#### ***5. Madrasah Support of EFA Commitments***

The EFA Conference in Jomtien (1990) and a follow-up in Dakar (2000) brought wide-ranging inputs into the basic education system, which were initiated by three E-9 countries of South Asia, namely, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. The key areas identified for action were: 1) promoting community-based literacy and nonformal education in the context of poverty alleviation; 2) promoting curriculum change and reform; and 3) improving learning achievement of children. The UNESCO offices in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan decided to serve as focal points in these three sectors, respectively, and to work jointly to achieve positive and sustainable results in these critical areas.

Based on the Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca (1994) inclusive education is increasingly becoming one of the strategies to achieve the goal of EFA in countries all over the world. Inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to the learning needs of all children using child-friendly, flexible, and effective teaching-learning methods. Though there is a special focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion, inclusion benefits all children. Better training and support of teachers is a critical part of the development towards inclusive education. Much of the learning that is taking place now is based on rote learning, meticulous adherence to textbooks, and copying. This does not challenge the capable and bright children, nor does it support the less advantaged learners. Inclusive education also promotes greater cooperation between teachers, learners, parents, and communities. For example, there is strong evidence that better use of child-to-child cooperation contributes to the development of a more inclusive education in ways that will improve conditions for all learners.

It is the researchers' assessment that the Ebtidai Madrasah education in Bangladesh does to an extent accomplish one of the EFA objectives—promoting curriculum change and reform—while not responding adequately to the two other objectives. Ebtidai Madrasahs as part of the Alia Madrasah system have taken major steps to incorporate general education subjects in addition to religious education. The figures shown earlier in Tables 11 and 12 indicate a steady increase in the number of Alia Madrasahs in Bangladesh since the 1971 independence, and also a steady increase in the number of girls attending Madrasahs. Alia Madrasahs have included the Madrasah Education Board curriculum, which in itself is a reform over the traditional type of education prevalent in Qawmi Madrasahs. The challenge for Madrasah education in Bangladesh will be to entice more Qawmi Madrasahs to include general education curricula in their system.

Towards the second objective of promoting community-based literacy and nonformal education, in the context of poverty alleviation it is not clear yet that Ebtidai or Qawmi Madrasah systems successfully contribute. It is plausible to consider the fact that many Ebtidai Madrasahs provide free formal education to many orphans, thereby helping them gain education that may contribute to alleviating their poverty. However, the community-based and nonformal types of education, offered to both orphans and other community members in Qawmi Madrasahs and in some Ebtidai Madrasahs, have a strong emphasis on Quranic memorization. It is difficult to conclude that such education contributes to poverty alleviation, unless it is used in conjunction with formal education or as a gateway to formal education. Unfortunately, the researchers often observed that the community-based and nonformal education that focused mainly on Quranic memorization was treated as an independent branch within Madrasahs, with hardly any connection to the formal education offered by other branches in the same Madrasahs.

As for the third objective of improving the learning achievement of children, it is obvious that students in Qawmi Madrasahs study little more than religious-based subjects, and therefore it is difficult to ascertain their learning achievements, especially that they do not participate in any national examination to assess their achievements. With regards to Ebtidai Madrasah students, there has not been in place an objective mechanism to assess their learning achievement. Ebtidai Madrasahs are required to conduct an in-school examination of students at the end of fifth grade. No information is available on the quality of such examinations or the achievement levels of students. The earliest national examination takes place at the end of tenth grade (Dakhil examination). The student achievement levels in this exam, as shown in Table 13, are comparable to those of general education students who take the S.S.C. examination. With a decrease in the number of students who passed both examinations in the past few years, with much concern about examination cheating and corruption, and considering that the Ebtidai Madrasah system is still going through a major transition to incorporate general education, it is perhaps premature to try to determine the extent to which Ebtidai Madrasah education has accomplished this third objective.

## **6. *Madrasahs' Influence on Parent and Preschool Education***

Madrasahs influence parent education in that they offer religious courses to the community on such topics as Quranic memorization and basic Islamic study; but the researchers did not detect specific Madrasah-based programs targeting parents.

In terms of preschool education, Madrasahs offer what was described earlier as Maktab/Nourani education and Furqania/Hafizia education. They both are integral parts of the Qawmi and Alia Madrasah education. Neither system receives meaningful support from the government. They continue to be community-generated and supported programs. The Furqania/Hafizia system could be too limiting to many children, especially when combined with a Qawmi Madrasah. This is because it may confine a child to years of Quranic memorization residential classes, with little chance of pursuing further education. It is this aspect of pre-primary education that could benefit greatly from modernizing examples such as the ones offered now by Madrasahs that combine Quran memorization with other formal education streams.

## **7. *Madrasah Perception of Public Education and Interest in Linkages***

According to information gathered from interviews and focus groups with Madrasah staff and students, there is a strong sense that Madrasah education is superior to general education. In the view of those interviewed, the combination of modern and religious education makes a better student and citizen in comparison to general education's sole focus on modern education and its minimal emphasis on religious education.

Another noteworthy point made by Madrasah interviewees regarding general education was that they felt they were at a disadvantage, because the government offered more facilities, scholarships, and benefits to general education schools.

In terms of linkages, most Madrasah interviewees suggested that the linkages have already been established via the equivalent Alim/H.S.C. and Dakhil/S.S.C. examinations. They continue to demand, however, that the Fazil and Kamil examinations become equivalent to higher degrees of general education. Several parents and students also requested that Madrasahs become fully part of the government system.

## **F. Public Perception**

The question that this section seeks to address is, how do various sectors of society, including the government, NGOs, civil society, religious leaders, parents, and students, view the Madrasah system and its role and utility to Bangladeshi society and development?

The surveys, focus groups, and interviews all pointed to several factors that seemed to influence the public perception of Madrasah education. Socio-economic class, regional level of development, urban/rural variations, and to some degree gender, all seemed to influence views about Madrasah education. This section will include a review of the results of surveys, focus groups, and interviews with various segments of society. It will conclude with observations

about the salient cultural features that researchers observed in several Madrasahs that they visited during this research study.

### *1. Views of Alim-level Students on Ebtidai Madrasahs*

The majority of students at the Alim level and above stated that they liked Ebtidai education very much because it was coordinated with general education. Most of the students were content that the government had taken the initiative to modernize the Madrasahs. Most of the students also suggested that Ebtidai education had a positive impact on students because it taught about the world as well as spiritual life. A small number of students suggested that the quality of learners was average and that Ebtidai education did not play a vital role towards higher education.

It appears that the students from rural areas had more positive views of Ebtidai Madrasah education than those students from urban areas. For example, many in a group of students from rural Dhaka Madrasahs suggested that the quality of Ebtidai education was very good because the syllabus was coordinated with general education even from childhood, and students could learn Islamic knowledge through the Quran and hadith. The curriculum also taught morality and honesty. Very few responses within this Dhaka rural group indicated that the quality of Ebtidai education was poor.

By contrast, a group of students from urban Dhaka Madrasahs suggested that the quality of the Ebtidai education was not so good; they felt that the education system should be modernized and brought under the control of the government. A few students reiterated the opinion of their rural counterparts, suggesting that the Madrasahs were of high quality because students had the opportunity to learn both worldly and spiritual subjects.

When asked about how well Madrasah education prepared students for higher education, to become a good citizen, and to be prepared for the workforce, the majority of students suggested that Ebtidai education played a vital role in improving the workforce and producing good citizens.

Regarding the needs of their Madrasahs, students from Alia Madrasahs stated that they needed more sophisticated science instruments, more facilities for recreation, qualified teachers, and computer education. Others also suggested that there is a necessity to put greater emphasis on the teaching of English, and, as stated above, that Ebtidai education should be brought under government control.

A group of Qawmi Madrasah students suggested that the holy Quran should be properly taught and that qualified teachers were needed. Another group of Qawmi Madrasah students suggested that government recognition was needed, and that Madrasahs should be nationalized.

Alim-level students were asked in the quantitative survey about their assessment of the quality of Ebtidai education and its impact on preparing students for higher education, being good citizens, and the workforce. The responses to these questions show consistent statistically significant patterns of divergence: female students and students from rural areas had a much more positive view of the quality and impact of Ebtidai education. Students from Jessore were less likely to

view those issues favorably compared to students from the three other divisions. The tables below include a sample of these scores. Using chi-square, all differences were statistically significant ( $p \leq .05$ ).

**Table 15: What Do You Think of the Quality of Education that Ebtidai Students Receive? Responses of Alim-level and Above Students: Male and Female**

	Male	Female	Total
Don't know	1 .5%		1 .4%
Very poor	22 10.0%	2 4.8%	24 9.2%
Poor	9 4.1%	1 2.4%	10 3.8%
Middle	42 19.1%	7 16.7%	49 18.7%
Good	69 31.4%	5 11.9%	74 28.2%
Excellent	77 35.0%	27 64.3%	104 39.7%
Total	220 100.0%	42 100.0%	262 100.0%

The results in the table above show that nearly 65 percent of all female students thought that the quality of Ebtidai education was excellent, compared to 35 percent of male students.

**Table 16: What Do You Think of the Quality of Education that Ebtidai Students Receive? Responses of Alim-level and Above Students: Across Divisions**

	Dhaka	Chittagong	Jessore	Sylhet	Total
Don't know			1 2.7%		1 .4%
Very poor	9 10.7%	3 5.8%	1 2.7%	11 12.4%	24 9.2%
Poor	5 6.0%	1 1.9%	3 8.1%	1 1.1%	10 3.8%
Middle	16 19.0%	2 3.8%	15 40.5%	16 18.0%	49 18.7%
Good	22 26.2%	15 28.8%	12 32.4%	25 28.1%	74 28.2%
Excellent	32 38.1%	31 59.6%	5 13.5%	36 40.4%	104 39.7%
Total	84 100.0%	52 100.0%	37 100.0%	89 100.0%	262 100.0%

The results in Table 16 show that, consistent with other results from the surveys, respondents from Jessore exhibited different attitudes about Madrasah education than students from other divisions. The results of Table 15 show that 40 to 60 percent of respondents from Dhaka, Sylhet, and Chittagong thought that Ebtidai education was excellent, while only 13.5 percent of Jessore respondents thought the same. The largest segment of the Jessore respondents (40 percent) suggested that the quality of Ebtidai education was average, between poor and good.

**Table 17: What Do You Think of the Quality of Education that Ebtidai Students Receive? Responses of Alim-level and Above Students: Urban and Rural**

	Urban	Rural	Total
Don't know		1 .6%	1 .4%
Very poor	12 12.5%	12 7.2%	24 9.2%
Poor	6 6.3%	4 2.4%	10 3.8%
Middle	25 26.0%	24 14.5%	49 18.7%
Good	25 26.0%	49 29.5%	74 28.2%
Excellent	28 29.2%	76 45.8%	104 39.7%
Total	96 100.0%	166 100.0%	262 100.0%

The differences between rural and urban students' responses also show consistent patterns. In the table above, more students from rural areas (45.8 percent) suggested that Ebtidai education was excellent, compared to 29.2 percent of urban students.

## 2. Views of Ebtidai, Primary, and Qawmi Students on Their Education

Given their relatively young age, Ebtidai and primary students were surveyed using a researcher-assisted instrument. The young students did not provide much qualitative information, but provided some valuable quantitative data. Nearly all Ebtidai students (97 percent) stated that they liked their Madrasahs very much. The results in Table 18 show the responses for Ebtidai, Primary, and Qawmi students when asked about their favorite classroom subjects. The shaded rows indicate statistically significant differences between the three groups using chi-square, with  $p \leq .05$ . The results in the table show some qualitative differences in students' views of subjects. Most notably, none of Qawmi Madrasah students selected any modern subjects, such as math, science, social science, or art/music, as a favorite subject. This is perhaps because they receive little if any education in those subject areas. They were also the least likely among the three groups to choose Bengali or English as favorite subjects. Those differences reflect the realities of Qawmi Madrasahs, where much emphasis is assigned to Arabic and religious studies, but little or no emphasis is assigned to modern subjects.

**Table 18: Favorite Subject at Madrasah/School**

Subject	Ebtidai N=245	Primary N=46	Qawmi N=101
Arabic	69.0%	NA	79.2%
Bengali	27.8%	50.0%	9.9%
English	22.0%	30.4%	16.8%
Fiqh	11.8%	NA	14.9%
Religion	.8%	8.7%	19.8%
Math	21.6%	37.0%	0.0%
Science	6.9%	8.7%	0.0%
Social Science	4.9%	2.2%	0.0%
Art/Music	2.4%	6.5%	0.0%

When asked about what they liked the most in their Madrasah/school (Table 19), large percentages of students in all three types of educational institutions listed teachers. Fewer respondents from these institutions listed sports and leisure time as what they enjoyed the most. It is notable that none of the Qawmi students listed sports as something that they liked most at their Madrasah, an unsurprising result given the absence of sports in Qawmi Madrasahs. One interviewee, a leader in the field of Islamic education in Bangladesh, raised a concern about this issue; he was very uneasy with the general lack of physical activity among Madrasah students, and attributed slow development among some students to this deficiency.

**Table 19: What Do You Like the Most at Madrasah/School?**

Like Most	Ebtidai N=245	Primary N=46	Qawmi N=101
Teacher	66.1%	50.0%	62.4
Study	22.9%	23.9%	20.8
Classmate	13.1%	15.2%	17.8
Principal	10.2%	8.7%	6.9
Sports	9.8%	13.0%	0.0
Leisure time	1.2%	2.2%	0.0

When asked about what they disliked the most at Madrasah/school (Table 20), “punishment” received the most responses among students from all types of educational institutions, led by over 50 percent of Ebtidai students. Other interesting comparisons related to students’ ratings of teachers. Almost 20 percent of primary school students indicated that their teachers were what they disliked most, compared to fewer than three percent of other students. This finding was consistent with the data in Table 19, which shows that over 60 percent of students from Ebtidai and Qawmi Madrasahs mentioned teachers as what they liked most, as opposed to the 50 percent of primary school students that expressed similar sentiments. Another statistically significant finding was that Qawmi Madrasah students disliked “too much homework” at higher percentages (13 percent) than other students (4 percent).

**Table 20: What Do You Dislike the Most at Madrasah/School?**

Dislike Most	Ebtidai N=245	Primary N=46	Qawmi N=101
Punishment	51.0%	43.5%	40.6
Too Much Homework	4.5%	4.3%	12.9
Long time in class	3.3%	2.2%	4.0
Teacher	1.8%	19.6%	2.0
Classmates	1.2%	4.3%	3.0
Syllabus	1.6%	2.2%	0.0

### 3. Parents Views of Ebtidai Madrasahs

The majority of parents responded that religious factors motivated them to enroll their children in the Madrasah education system. Some parents, and also teachers and members of civil society, suggested some additional reasons for sending children to Madrasahs. One reason was that among religious families there was a preference to educate at least one male child in religion. This was considered necessary to bring blessings to the family, and prepare an “in-house” person to perform religious rituals, especially at times of family deaths. Another reason often cited was

that Madrasahs are notorious for their discipline. Therefore, trouble-making children were sent to Madrasahs to improve their behavior. Finally, and perhaps linked to the notion held by certain circles of society that Madrasahs offer inferior education, some families tended to send children deemed less intelligent to Madrasahs.

The majority of parents responded that the quality of Madrasah education was very good; it played a vital role in higher education, produced conscientious citizens, and improved working ability, because teachers taught their students attentively. A few parents, in contrast, thought that the quality of teachers was very poor, and that there was lack of efficient management. They also noted that the salaries of teachers were very low.

A majority of parents from Jessore responded that the quality of learners was not so good, but that Madrasah education molded a conscientious citizen and increased working ability. Fewer parents from Jessore responded that the quality of learners was very good, and many noted that the curriculum should be more developed by including various new subjects.

Parents were divided on their preference for Madrasah education or general education. Some suggested that Madrasah education was better as it emphasized moral issues. Others suggested that general education was better because it was more appropriate for modern times.

The majority of parents responded that all Madrasah education must be nationalized, qualified teachers must be appointed, syllabi should be modernized, and Fazil and Kamil degrees should be equivalent to B.A. and M.A. degrees, respectively. The majority of parents also demanded that Madrasah education should be given equal status to general education and that government facilities should be given to Madrasah teachers. Vocational and computer training were also as seen to be needed.

In the quantitative survey, parents were asked about the reasons that parents send their children to Madrasahs. Most respondents suggested that religious values were strong motivations. A greater share of those who actually sent their children to Madrasahs (93.6 percent) gave that reason, as compared to 80.6 percent of those who sent their children to general education schools. In addition, 10.3 percent of those who sent their children to Madrasahs indicated that poverty was one of the reasons parents sent their children to Madrasahs, while fewer than 2.0 percent of those who sent children to general education schools listed poverty as a reason. Those differences were statistically significant ( $p \leq .05$ ), as indicated by shaded boxes in the chart below.

Another striking statistically significant difference existed between respondents from Jessore and all other respondents. Only Jessore respondents, in large numbers (68.2 percent), listed poverty as a reason for sending children to Madrasahs. This may be a reflection of the relatively impoverished reality in Jessore compared to the other three locations.

**Table 21: Reasons Parents Send Their Children to Madrasahs**

Reasons	<i>Do your children attend Madrasah?</i>		Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Dhaka	Chittagong	Jessore	Sylhet
	No	Yes								
<b>Religious Value</b>	80.6%	93.6%	87.6%	88.6%	83.6%	92.5%	83.6%	90.0%	90.9%	91.9%
<b>Poverty</b>	14.5%	7.7%	9.5%	14.3%	9.6%	11.9%	0.0%	0.0%	68.2%	0.0%
<b>Family tradition</b>	1.6%	10.3%	7.6%	2.9%	9.6%	3.0%	9.8%	0.0%	0.0%	8.1%
<b>Children's behavior</b>	1.6%	3.8%	2.9%	2.9%	4.1%	1.5%	3.3%	0.0%	4.5%	2.7%

The responses to the set of questions about concerns regarding Madrasah education revealed some variations based on gender and region. Mothers and fathers were most concerned about the quality of teachers and syllabus. Fathers were more concerned about the negative views of some segments of the society, while mothers were concerned about the limited job opportunities for Madrasah graduates. The latter concern was also more prevalent among urban parents than rural parents. Jessore, again, provided a contrast compared to other regions. More than 75 percent of Jessore parents were far more concerned about teacher standards, job opportunities, and the quality of the syllabus than parents from other regions. The table below summarizes these results.

**Table 22: Concerns about Madrasah Education**

Concerns	<i>Do your children attend Madrasah?</i>		Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Dhaka	Chittagong	Jessore	Sylhet
	No	Yes								
<b>Teachers not up to standard</b>	44.3	59.2	48.6%	62.9	54.8%	49.3	49.2%	55.0%	77.3%	40.5
<b>Negative views of certain segments of society</b>	36.1	32.9	41.0%	20.0	37.0%	34.3	39.3%	20.0%	27.3%	43.2
<b>Limited job opportunity in the future</b>	39.3	35.5	30.5%	54.3	43.8%	28.4	39.3%	5.0%	77.3%	24.3
<b>Poor syllabus quality</b>	42.6	46.1	41.9%	51.4	46.6%	41.8	39.3%	35.0%	86.4%	32.4

The consistent response patterns among Jessore parents and students as well indicate clearly that there are substantive differences in the perceptions of Madrasah education in Jessore compared to other places.

#### ***4. Views of Civil Society, NGOs, and Government on Madrasah Education***

The views of individuals in these categories were gathered via interviews and focus groups. It was obvious that the responses of those who were in contact with Madrasahs, or have been to Madrasahs, varied greatly from those who “only hear about Madrasahs.” There was also a clear socio-economic class divide on the views of Madrasahs. Those in more affluent, Westernized segments of society had less favorable views of Madrasah education. Often their views were shaped by an understanding that Madrasahs only offered religious teachings and thus did not produce productive members of society. Often our interviews with these groups turned into educational sessions where we, the researchers, clarified many of the misperceptions or narrow understandings of Madrasahs prevalent among those groups.

Those whose work or education were related to Madrasahs seemed to share the same sentiments as those we have heard from Madrasah staff and students: they appreciated Madrasah education, yet they were aware that it required much support and change. They all agreed that the Madrasah syllabus must be modernized and that Madrasahs can no longer afford to solely focus on religious education. They were all in support of more government involvement and training for teachers.

One issue that emerged from our interviews with government officials was the realization that Ebtidai Madrasah education did not fall under the clear purview of one governmental agency. The Ministry for Primary and Mass Education is not in charge of Ebtidai education; nor is the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The Madrasah Education Board only designs the syllabus and provides books, but does not provide administrative support or supervision. The Assistant Director for Special Education in the Ministry of Education is in charge of financial matters such as stipends. It is clear that an educational system the size of Ebtidai Madrasahs, which educates more than two million children, deserves a more coherent type of supervision and coordination.

#### ***5. Views on Pre-primary Madrasah Education***

In order to gather information on pre-primary Madrasah education, the research team interviewed teachers in 23 Maktab and Hafizia Madrasahs in different parts of Dhaka city. Among the 23 Madrasahs, 12 were Hafizia, and 11 were Maktab. Among the 12 Hafizia Madrasahs, six were Mosque-based, three were Madrasah-based and the remaining three were separate institutions. Among the 11 Maktabs, eight were mosque-based and the other three were Madrasah-based. A total of 868 students attend the 12 Hafizia Madrasahs, an average of 73 students in each. Among the 868 students, 838 were males and only 30 were females. The largest Hafizia Madrasah included 200 students, while the smallest included only 30.

A somewhat similar picture emerged in Maktabs. The total number of students in the 11 Maktabs was 835. One major difference compared to Hafizia Madrasahs was the larger enrollment of girls: among the 835 students, there were 605 males and 230 females. On average, 76 students

studied in each Maktab. The maximum number of students in one Maktab was 130, and the minimum number of students was only 20.

Most of the teachers interviewed suggested that these Madrasahs needed to come under the purview of the government. They believed that the government should emphasize this type of education because it was essential for Muslims, and that math, English, and Bengali should be included in every Hafizia Madrasah syllabus as well. It was also felt that the government should inspect the Hafizia Madrasahs, and that the inspections should include checking students' diet and nutrition, health, and accommodations, especially for those Hafizia Madrasahs that are residential. In addition, it was suggested that the government should pay greater attention to the orphans in these Madrasahs. Finally, teachers also recommended that the government approve their certificates.

## **6. Salient Cultural Features of Madrasahs**

During the visits to Madrasahs, the researchers observed several recurring salient practices. These features include:

*a. A Spirit of Social Entrepreneurship:* Almost all Madrasahs were established by single individuals who had a vision of social service and commitment to religious duty, combined with some financial capabilities. They established Madrasahs to educate the younger members of their community in their religion and to provide support to orphans. This entrepreneurship continues to influence individuals and communities today. In some cases, such as in a Madrasah observed in Chittagong, individuals seem to re-invent traditional models of Madrasahs that focus solely on religious education and Quran memorization. Others, such as one observed in Dhaka, seem to attach themselves to the growing body of Alia Madrasahs to embrace modern techniques and models of education, and via high fees, cater to the affluent segments of society. Yet, a third type of entrepreneurship relies on building contacts with the wider Muslim world, and on receiving financial and educational support from Muslim foundations and educational institutions in countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

*b. A Proud Self-Image Based on Religious Duty:* Most Madrasah staff and students expressed pride in belonging to the Madrasah system. They always articulated the notion that their education was superior to that of general education because Madrasahs educate students and prepare them for this life and the hereafter. They viewed general education as limited because it focused predominately on this life, while their education did the same while maintaining the spiritual and religious connection. Consequently, they often stated that Madrasah graduates were decent citizens of high morals and ethics. They also suggested that Madrasahs avoid many of the problems now prevalent in general education schools, such as violence and drug use.

*c. A Conservative Attitude Towards Gender Relations:* The general impression in all Madrasahs was that genders were clearly separated, especially as children got older. There are co-ed Madrasahs all over Bangladesh, but the view among school staff has been mainly to work towards separating them once means are available. A few Madrasahs, even those embracing modern curricula, refuse to hire women teachers. Despite such attitudes, girls account for nearly half of students in Ebtidai Madrasahs, and more female teachers are taking lead roles in running

the affairs of their Madrasahs. Complete veiling of the face seemed to be more common than the wearing of headscarves among women teachers and older female students; yet, such conservative images did not prevent women teachers, administrators, and students from expressing great interest in modernizing their education and in including sports and cultural activities such as music.

*d. A Mixed Attitude about Teacher-Student Relations:* Students cited punishment as the one thing they disliked the most in Madrasahs. In focus groups they gave examples of how such punishment was humiliating in front of their classmates, and how teachers would not make an effort to understand students' views. Unfortunately, and based on the experience of the researchers who attended schools in the Muslim world, Islamic religion and Arabic language teachers across the Muslim world have a reputation for being harsh on students. Bangladeshi Madrasah students echoed these same sentiments about some teachers. At the same time, most students considered teachers to be the aspect that they enjoyed the most in their Madrasahs. In focus groups and interviews, students noted that their appreciation for teachers was usually due to the positive influence of individual teachers upon them, and was not a reflection upon all or most teachers in their schools.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The movie "The Clay Bird" depicted a similar notion about teacher/student relationship in Madrasahs. Masud, 2002.

#### IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Madrasah educational system in Bangladesh, including the Ebtidai level, is a key institution in this country. In order to understand the significance of the Madrasah system, one must realize that it is deeply interwoven into the fabric of the society: its history of Islam, colonization, liberation, culture, political adaptations, and struggle for modernization. The Madrasah system is about Bangladesh's Islamic identity and how it has strived to catch up with modernity. To the extent that some may attach themselves to versions of modernity that resemble Westernization, they will dismiss Madrasahs as "in the way." To the extent that some attach themselves to the Islamic identity of this country, they will hold fast to the Madrasah system, almost as a source of protection. Bangladesh has taken steps to reconcile the two polarized approaches to Madrasahs, as both government and educators have sought to modernize the Madrasah system over the past 30 years.

The changes in the Madrasah system over the past few years have been significant. The number of Madrasahs has increased greatly, and the number of students, including girls, continues to grow. More Madrasahs are becoming Alia Madrasahs, incorporating the general education curriculum alongside a religious curriculum. The links between the Madrasah system and the general education system are becoming closer, allowing students to transfer from Madrasahs to general education schools and universities with fewer difficulties.

Despite these improvements, societal views, especially among the Western-educated circles of society, continue to foster inaccurate perceptions of Madrasahs. Negative stereotypes of Madrasah education are prevalent among these groups. Most people in these circles are not aware that Alia Madrasahs offer modern education. These misconceptions about Madrasah education exist even among government officials.

Such negative views and stereotypes are in sharp contrast to the highly positive self-view of Madrasahs among staff, students, and parents. They all seem to appreciate Madrasah education, because it combines spiritual/religious knowledge with modern subjects and technology. Nonetheless, everyone is aware that the system is far from being even remotely close to perfect. Issues of teacher qualifications and preparation, the condition of some Qawmi Madrasahs, and the lack of proper facilities are only few of the commonly shared concerns. Almost all those who participated in this research—Madrasah staff, students, parents, and others—suggested that the following are the needs of Ebtidai and Qawmi Madrasahs:

- Modernizing the curriculum,
- Technology education,
- Teacher training and preparation,
- Educational and recreational facilities, and
- Vocational training.

The research also showed that views of Madrasahs varied based on factors such as region. Most notably, Madrasahs were more positively viewed in rural areas, although Jessore<sup>41</sup> respondents indicated a lower appreciation of the quality of Madrasah education. These regional and urban/rural differences, in addition to a few gender-based differences, must be taken into consideration.

The largest concern this research had was about Qawmi Madrasahs. Because students coming out of Qawmi Madrasahs have only limited knowledge and expertise (mainly in religious subjects), they are receiving fewer job opportunities than Alia Madrasah and primary school students. If they incorporate the national curriculum as Alia Madrasahs, new avenues will be opened for their graduates.

Similar to the concern above is the one related to the Furqania/Hafizia educational facilities. The strong focus in such facilities on residential Quran memorization seems to deprive many children of the opportunities afforded them by Alia Madrasahs and primary schools. This perhaps is the most alarming aspect of the Madrasah system, as it confines children to years of Quran memorization, after which they lag behind their peers in all aspects of their development. It would be useful to explore ways to replicate the model of before- or after-Madrasah Quran memorization classes introduced by some Alia Madrasahs, instead of the current full-time Furqania/Hafizia model. Several Alia Madrasahs now provide early morning and afternoon Quran memorization classes. Those classes do not interfere with students' normal Madrasah education. It would be beneficial to children if more Furqania/Hafizia facilities could be re-designed as before- and after-Madrasah classes.

Finally, Just as in all other institutions, the Madrasah system has its share of radicals, extremists, and conservatives. It also has its growing share of creative educators and modernizers. On a hopeful note, this research exposed some positive pioneering examples of Madrasahs that are trying to forge the balance between their Islamic identity and modernization. These examples may be the guideposts for more Madrasahs and educators to follow, and to lead to new and creative explorations for the improvement of Madrasah education.

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<sup>41</sup> A relatively under-developed division in Bangladesh compared to the other divisions that were included in the research.

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**Annex I**  
**Madrasah Research Activities**

**Madrasah Research Activities  
Group 1 (Dr. Amr Abdalla)  
Azad, Rahman**

Name of the Madrasah	Urban/Rural
<b><u>Dhaka City:</u></b>	
1. Shah Alli Bagdadi Madrasah	Urban
2. Tanjimul Ummah Madrasah	Urban
<b><u>Gazipur City:</u></b>	
1. Borohor Abdul Mazid Madrasah	Rural
2. Digda Alia Madrasah	Rural
3. Kapasia Darul Ulum Quami Madrasah	Rural
<b><u>Chittagong City (South East Benge):</u></b>	
1. Hazrat Khadiza (R) Balika (Girls) Madrasah	Rural
2. Jamiea Darul Ma'rif al Islamia Madrasah	Urban
3. Daurl Ulum Kamil Madrasah	Urban
4. Nasirabad Kindergarten Madrasah	Urban
5. Halishohor Abulia Primary school	Urban
6. Omor Faruq (R) Adorsho Madrasah	Urban
7. Alamsahpara Kamil Madrasah	Rural

**Madrasah Research Activities  
Group 2 (Dr. A. N. M. Raisuddin)  
Mahadi, Maksud**

Name of the Madrasah	Urban/Rural
<b><u>Dhaka City:</u></b>	
1. Quderia Taiebia Alia Madrasah	Urban
<b><u>Gazipur City:</u></b>	
1. Mogarkhal Madrasah	Rural
2. Degerchala Madrasah	Rural
3. Tongi Kashemia Mahila Madrasah	Rural
<b><u>Sylhet City (North East Bengle):</u></b>	
1. Sylhet Govt. Alia Madrasah	Urban
2. Kajirbazar Jamia Madania Madrasah	Urban
3. Sahjalal Darusunnah Quami Madrasah	Urban
4. Bishonath Kamil Madrasah	Rural
5. Lalabazar Alim Madrasah	Rural
6. Jalabad Alim Madrasah	Rural
7. Kamalbazar Alim Madrasah	Rural
8. Barikandi Fadil Madrasah	Rural
9. Barutkhan Mahila (Girls) Quami Madrasah	Urban
10. Dargha Qawmi Madrasah	Urban

**Madrasah Research Activities  
Group 3 (Suleiman Hussein)  
Arif, Anis**

Name of the Madrasah	Urban/Rural
<b><u>Dhaka City:</u></b>	
1. Tamirul Millat Madrasah	Urban
<b><u>Sonargoan City:</u></b>	
1. Taherpur Madrasah	Rural
<b><u>Jessore City (In South Bengele):</u></b>	
1. Jhikargacha Darul Ulum Kamil Madrasah	Rural
2. Gazir Dargah Fadil Madrasah	Rural
3. Chatiantala K. I. senior Madrasah	Rural
4. Puratan Kashba Fadil Madrasah	Urban
5. Jessore Mohila (Girls) Madrasah	Urban
6. Al Jamiatul Islamic Daratana Madrasah	Urban
7. Jessore Jamia Ejajia Darul Ulum Railstation Madrasah	Urban

**Annex II**  
**Review of Six Madrasahs' Publications**

## Review of Six Madrasahs' Publications

### A. Madrasah Ta'amirul Millat (Alia Madrasah, Dhaka)

#### 1. *Madrasah Goals*

This Madrasah was established for the sake of high noble goals which are as follows:

- Spreading the message of Islam in Bangladesh as a whole through learning and Islamic education.
- Spreading pure Islamic science within the rising generations and ingraining the genuine Islamic creed in the hearts of people.
- Teaching Arabic language, the language of the Holy Quran, and the prophetic tradition and spreading it among the Muslims of Bangladesh.
- Streamlining religious and modern sciences under Islamic principles.
- Educating students who join the Madrasah from different angles, graduating scholars who specialize in Islamic sciences and Arabic language, and jurists in Islam equipped with knowledge that will qualify them to preach the faith and to solve the problems of Muslims in light of the Quran and Sunnah and in light of the practice of the previous companions.
- Planting the spirit of Islam, as well as deepening practical religion in the life of individuals and the society, through sincere worship of Allah and the practice of his prophet.
- Graduating orators and propagators of Islam, as well as preparing those who exert themselves for the sake of God, and bringing up leaders who strive to raise the religion in the nation and in the society.
- Preparing writers, editors, and Muslim thinkers in order for them to solve the urgent problems and correct the strayed society, as well as correct the wrong creeds.
- Guiding poor orphans and Muslim children, and educating them on the Islamic way.

#### 2. *Ebtidai Madrasah Level*

The study at this level is 5 years starting from standard one. This level was established in 1993. The subjects taught are as follows: reading and memorizing Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, religion, syntax, Arabic language, English, Bangla, mathematics, geography and science.

#### 3. *Other Madrasah Activities*

The other activities of this Madrasah include:

- Evening school for elderly people,
- Computer science,
- Science laboratory,
- Teachers training, and
- Orphanage.

## **B. Jamiat al-Islamia Alamshahbara (Alia Madrasah, Chittagong)**

### **1. Madrasah Goals**

- Spreading everlasting religious education and correct Islamic creed within the society.
- Minimizing the shortcomings of Muslims, uniting them, deepening the brotherhood within them, and protecting against the conspiracy of the enemies whose target is to disunite Muslims.
- Salvaging the people from the brink of secular education and implementing the advanced educational method which combines both the original and the modern.
- Graduating elite scholars, propagators, and teachers who possess the ability to lead the people.
- Purifying the society from the innovations in Islam and planting the spirit of Islam in Muslims, as well as rescuing them from the Western, Hindu, and Buddhist civilization.
- Eradicating illiteracy and unemployment from society by learning science, technology, and vocation besides religious sciences.
- Preparing an enlightened generation that will be concerned about the current affairs of Muslims worldwide and will be able to face modern challenges, especially those targeting Islam by using knowledge as their weapon.
- Making scholars come out from the narrowness of theoretical knowledge to the vastness of practical knowledge, and from the scope of stagnant thought to the field of action and production.
- Rescuing Muslim people from the claws of missionary institutions.

### **2. Contents of the Syllabus**

Ebtidai-level consists of five years. Its syllabus includes:

- Quran and Tajwid,<sup>42</sup>
- Religions and Jurisprudence,
- Arabic language and literature,
- Grammar and syntax,
- Bengali,
- English language, and
- Arithmetic

This Madrasah continues up to Masters level. It includes Dakhil level, where subjects like agriculture, computer science, geography, and mathematics are taught. Education continues to Alim, Fazil, and Kamil levels.

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<sup>42</sup> A model of Quran recitation.

### **3. Other Madrasah Activities**

- Khadija Madrasah for Girls: This consists of two levels: Ebtidai and Dakhil level. Studying in each level is for five years.
- Amin Zaid bin Thabit Madrasah for Memorizing Quran: Its aim is to graduate students who memorize Quran. Currently it houses 50 students.
- Orphans Home: This home provides all academic facilities to orphans. It has a complete dormitory that houses about 250 orphans. All their food, clothes, and other necessary needs are provided. The number of orphans increases day by day.
- Vocational programs: According to the Madrasah's brochure, Bangladesh is a Muslim country with dense inhabitants; it faces poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and lack of technology in all fields. With this in view, this program prepares skillful students for various jobs so that they will not be a burden on the society. It has several projects or enterprises for vocational training, including:
  - Center for typewriting,
  - Centre for training sewing and embroidery,
  - Farm for milk and cheese production, and
  - Fish farm project.

### **4. Source of Funding**

The Madrasah has no regular financial source on which it depends. Its projects and budget come from Muslim philanthropists or from the contribution of Islamic charitable organizations locally and internationally. The government gives some token funding to teachers and clerks, but it does not contribute to the development of other Madrasah projects.

## **C. The Tanjimul Ummah Pre-cadet Madrasah (Alia Madrasah, Dhaka)**

### **1. Madrasah Goals**

- To modernize the present Madrasah education system with a view to contributing to the excellence of learning science and technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- To ensure success for the learners under the supervision of a group of teachers educated both in Islamic and general education.
- To make the learners efficient in science and technology based on Quran and Sunnah.
- To build the learners as careful, neat, and clean conscious and disinterested social worker.
- To build them as responsible, patriotic, and sincere incumbent.
- To build up dynamic and Islamic leadership and ideal personalities in the national and international arena.
- To make an all-out effort to build up a group of ideal Muslim inspired with the ideal of Rasulullah.

## **2. Syllabus and curriculum (General Section)**

The medium of instruction for students in the General Section is English. In addition, special courses are conducted for those students who want to learn Bengali. Extra care is given to those who are weak in Arabic. The curriculum includes:

- Subjects prescribed by Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board.
- Supplementary subjects:
  - Hifzul Quran (memorization of the Quran),
  - Hifzul Hadith (memorization of the Hadith),
  - General knowledge,
  - Islamic knowledge,
  - Biography of great personalities,
  - Computer study,
  - Spoken English,
  - Spoken Arabic,
  - Khuluq el Hassan (Decent Morals), and
  - Islamic Calligraphy.

## **3. Source of Funding**

The Madrasah is funded through students' fees.

## **4. Other Madrasah Activities**

- Physical education,
- Teacher training, and
- Recreation: weekly programs including Football, Badminton, cricket, cultural functions, and other games.

## **D. Jamiah Darul Ma'arif Al- Islamiah (The Islamic University of Darul Ma'arif) (Qawmi Madrasah, Chittagong)**

### **1. Madrasah Goals**

Every reader of the history and geography of South-East Asia, will realize that Bangladesh is the most populous Muslim country after Indonesia, as Muslims are the majority of about 120 million citizens. It is surrounded by secular Hindi India in every direction but the south.

This country is filled with Madrasahs scattered everywhere. There are also large numbers of Islamic centers, but they are of little benefit. Islam came to Bangladesh through Arab traders and propagators. It was under British occupation, then under the Pakistani governance until its independence in 1971. During all these periods there were three main curricula:

- *Secular curriculum invented by the British, and imposed on official schools:* Religion was included in those schools only nominally. A student would not graduate until his brain was electrocuted with destructive thoughts antagonistic to Islam. Among those schools' main goals was the elimination of Islam and the destruction of the Muslim society intellectually and morally.
- *Government's Madrasah Education Board curriculum:* This curriculum combines religious and modern subjects without guidance or insight. It is highly focused on modern subjects, which influences students more than religious subjects, hence the loss of sincerity and the spirit of commitment to God.
- *Qawmi Madrasah curriculum:* Such curriculum adheres to old methods that do not respond to the requirements of the modern age, and such Madrasahs are isolated from life. They were established indeed to preserve Islamic life style, to deter the Western civil and cultural wave, and to restore confidence in the eternal message of Islam. But such Madrasahs follow the curriculum established by Mullah Nizam el-Din Ansari el-Fringhi Mahali (1161 Islamic year).

It is because of those serious conditions that the founder of the Madrasah reviewed the prevalent curricula in Madrasahs and introduced a new curriculum used in this Madrasah. The curriculum is based on proper Islamic principles derived from original Islamic sources and the practice of the good ancestors of Islam, without change or alterations.

## **2. Syllabus and Activities**

The focus of studies is on Quran memorization and Islamic and Arabic studies. However, the brochure indicates that the Madrasah has started a project to establish an institute for technology education. The Madrasah also hosts an orphanage and a girls' school.

## **3. Source of Funding**

The funding for the Madrasah comes from philanthropists, alms (Zakat), and charitable organization.

## **E. Al Ihsan International Academy (Alia Madrasah, Chittagong)**

### **1. Goals of the Madrasah**

- Combining of Islamic and modern education.
- Introducing an ideal educational system that keeps up with modernity.
- Presenting practical initiatives to change the educational system in the country.
- Demonstrating a unique example of Islamic education.
- Concentrating on Islam as a faith, creed, practice, and complete system of life.
- Shaping a Muslim person and a strong believer who cares for his Islam, and is capable of facing modern challenges.

- Preparing students as good and qualified citizens.
- Educating them with genuine Islamic creed and on the way of previous companions.

## **2. *Levels of Education***

The Madrasah includes pre-primary level studies and Ebtidai level studies from grades 1-5.

## **3. *Subjects Taught***

- Quran, Arabic, Bengali, English, arithmetic, drawing, spoken Arabic, spoken English, cultural studies, and physical sport.
- The Madrasah emphasizes modern subjects including computer sciences (they have an adequate computer lab). They also emphasize English education.
- The Madrasah facilities are of high quality compared to other Madrasahs.
- According to the Madrasah principal, all teachers are men, and there is no interest in hiring female teachers.

## **F. Omar Faruk (R) Madrasah (Qawmi Madrasah, Chittagong)**

### **1. *Aims and Purposes***

The standard syllabus of this Madrasah was developed from the combination of old and modern subjects to enable Muslim children to learn modernized Islamic education, and to rescue the declined human society and nations by raising self-esteem and religious values in their heart, as well to as bring sunshine to them.

### **2. *Course Structure***

- Teaching Hifz Quran using easy and modern method following Tajwid system.
- One year Hifz preparation course. At the same time primary Bengali and English are taught.
- Four years of Arabic language and Islamic studies courses for Hafez and meritorious students.

### **3. *Syllabus for Hifz Section***

- Arranging all subjects for the children so that they memorize the whole Quran with Tajwid.
- At the same time, giving them practical training about good behavior, Tahjib (morality), Tamaddun (civility), Azan (call for prayer), Ikamah (starting the prayer).
- Teaching primary Arabic, Bengali, English, and handwriting.
- Only the residential students can be admitted in this section.

It is notable that meritorious students can finish their Hifz course within two-and-a-half years. Medium-quality students take three-and-a-half years to finish, and students with poor skills take four years to finish. Nobody beyond these three categories is suitable or fit for Hifz courses.

#### **4. *Features of the Madrasah***

- Creative education environment,
- Complete education system,
- Specialized teachers in relevant subjects,
- Residential /Non-residential,
- Reasonable fees,
- Bengali/Arabic medium,
- Special importance for English,
- Academic calendar base,
- Limited seats,
- Weekly class test,
- Proper arrangements for physical games and exercise,
- Teachers' vigilance, and
- Tight security.

**Annex III**  
**Survey and Interview Forms**

### Primary Student Interview Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Intercept Location:

1. \_\_ Madrasah vicinity      2. \_\_ Home      3. \_\_ Street      4. \_\_ Workplace  
5. \_\_ Place of worship      6. \_\_ Market      7. \_\_ Other ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

Gender:      1. \_\_ Male      2. \_\_ Female

Religion:      1. \_\_ Muslim      2. \_\_ Hindu      3. \_\_ Christian      4. \_\_ Other ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

1. Who do you live with?

1. \_\_ Parents(s)      2. \_\_ Relatives  
3. \_\_ Orphanage      4. \_\_ Other( \_\_\_\_\_ )

2. Do you have siblings?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_\_

3. Are you a student at Madrasah or general education school?

1. \_\_ Madrasah      2. \_\_ General Education School

4. What is your grade?

1. \_\_      2. \_\_      3. \_\_      4. \_\_      5. \_\_

5. Do you have any siblings in Madrasahs?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_\_

6. Do you have siblings in general education schools?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_\_

7. How do you like your Madrasah/school?

1. \_\_ Very much      2. \_\_ Some      3. \_\_ Not at all      4. \_\_ Don't know

8. What is your favorite subject in Madrasah/school?

1. \_\_ Arabic      2. \_\_ Fiqh      3. \_\_ Religion      4. \_\_ English      5. \_\_ Bangoli      6. \_\_ Science  
7. \_\_ Math      8. \_\_ Social Science      9. \_\_ Art/Music  
10. \_\_ Other( \_\_\_\_\_ )      11. None

9. What do you like the best about your Madrasah/school?

1. \_\_ Classmates      2. \_\_ Teachers      3. \_\_ Principal/Headmaster  
4. \_\_ Tiffen Break      5. \_\_ Sports      6. \_\_ Studying  
7. \_\_ Other( \_\_\_\_\_ )      8. \_\_ Don't know

10. What do you dislike the most in your Madrasah/school?

- |                            |                  |  |
|----------------------------|------------------|--|
| 1. __ Punishment           | 2. __ Long time  | 3. __ Too much homework                |
| 4. __ Prayer               | 5. __ Classmates | 6. __ Teachers                         |
| 7. __ Principal/Headmaster |                  | 8. __ Madrasah committee/local funders |
| 9. __ Other(_____)         |                  | 10. __ Don't know                      |
| 11. __ No Response         |                  |  |

11. After you finish Ebtidai what do you want to be doing?

- |                                     |                                  |                    |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. __ Continue in general education | 2. __ Continue in Madrasah study |                    |
| 3. __ Work/ Job                     | 4. __ Don't Know                 | 5. __ Other(_____) |

12. What are your hobbies?

- |                    |                   |                    |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. __ Sports       | 2. __ Collections | 3. __ Watching TV  |
| 4. __ Vdideo games | 5. __ Gardening   | 6. __ Other(_____) |
| 7. __ Don't know   |                   |                    |

13. Are there any recreational facilities in your Madrasah/school?

- |          |           |                  |
|----------|-----------|------------------|
| 1. __ No | 2. __ Yes | 3. __ Don't know |
|----------|-----------|------------------|

14. If yes to question 13, what are they?

- |                    |                  |                      |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1. __ Gamesroom    | 2. __ Playground | 3. __ Library        |
| 4. __ Other(_____) | 5. __ Don't know | 0. __ Not applicable |

15. Are there any cultural activities in your Madrasah/school?

- |          |           |                  |
|----------|-----------|------------------|
| 1. __ No | 2. __ Yes | 3. __ Don't know |
|----------|-----------|------------------|

16. If yes to question 15, what are they?

- |                         |                        |                         |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. __ Poetry recitation | 2. __ Quran recitation | 3. __ Music competition |
| 4. __ Essay competition | 5. __ Sports           | 6. __ Art competition   |
| 7. __ Other(_____)      | 8. __ Don't know       | 0. __ Not applicable    |

17. Do you have any suggestions for your Madrasah/school?

18. Any other comments?

### Parent Interview Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Intercept Location:

1. \_\_ Madrasah/School vicinity      2. \_\_ Home      3. \_\_ Street      4. \_\_ Workplace  
5. \_\_ Place of worship      6. \_\_ Market      7. \_\_ Other ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

Gender:      1. \_\_ Male      2. \_\_ Female

Religion:      1. \_\_ Muslim      2. \_\_ Hindu      3. \_\_ Christian      4. \_\_ Other ( \_\_\_\_\_ )

1. What is your job?

1. \_\_ Laborer      2. \_\_ Clerical      3. \_\_ Professional  
4. \_\_ Business      5. \_\_ House wife      6. \_\_ Unemployed  
7. \_\_ Other( \_\_\_\_\_ )

2. What is your level of education?

1. \_\_ No education      2. \_\_ Primary school/Ebtidai Madrasah  
3. \_\_ S.S.C./Dakhli Madrasah      4. \_\_ H.S.C./Alim Madrasah  
5. \_\_ Graduate/Fadil Madrasah      6. \_\_ M.A./Kamel Madrasah  
7. \_\_ Other( \_\_\_\_\_ )

3. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you have any children in Madrasahs?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you have children in general education schools?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What are the main reasons parents usually send their children to early and primary Madrasahs?

1. \_\_ Religious values      2. \_\_ Poverty      3. \_\_ Family tradition      4. \_\_ Other( \_\_\_\_\_ )  
5. \_\_ Don't know

7. Do you encourage other parents to send their children to early and primary Madrasahs?  
Please explain.

8. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Poor, and 5=Excellent, (0=do not know), what do you think of the quality of education that Ebtidai Madrasah students receive?	Poor				Excellent	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain:</i>						
9. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Not at all, and 5=Very much, (0=do not know), how does Madrasah education contribute to the following :	Not at all				Very much	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
9.a. The quality of knowledge among students	1	2	3	4	5	0
9.b. The preparation of students for higher education	1	2	3	4	5	0
9.c. The preparation of students as citizens	1	2	3	4	5	0
9.d. The preparation of students for workforce / government service	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain your Choice of scores for 9 a-9 d :</i>						

10. What concerns, if any, do you have about early and primary Madrasah education? (check all that apply)

- 1.  Teachers not up to standard
- 2.  Negative of view of certain segments of the society
- 3.  Limited job opportunities in the future
- 4.  Poor syllabus quality
- 5.  Other(\_\_\_\_\_)
- 6.  Don't know
- 7.  None.

11. How do early and primary Madrasah students compare in terms of educational achievement to students of general education? What are the achievement indicators?

- 1.  General education better than Madrasah education  
Explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.  Madrasah education is better than general education  
Explain: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.  Both are necessary.
- 4.  Don't know

12. What is the future of the Madrasah education in Bangladesh? In your opinion what should be the future of Madrasah education in Bangladesh?

13. Do you have any suggestions for early and primary Madrasah education?

14. Any other comments?

## NGO and Civil Society Interview Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How does your work relate, if any, to Madrasah education?
2. How long, if any, have you been working on issues related to Madrasah?

3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Poor, and 5=Excellent, (0=do not know), what do you think of the quality of education that Ebtidai Madrasah students receive?	Poor				Excellent	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain:</i>						

4. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Not at all, and 5=Very much, (0=do not know), how does Madrasah education contribute to the following:	Not at all				Very much	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.a. The quality of knowledge among student	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.b. The preparation of students for higher education	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.c. The preparation of students as citizens	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.d. The preparation of students for the workforce/ government service	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain your Choice of scores for 4 a-4 d:</i>						

5. From an NGO/civil society's perspective, how do you view the role of Ebtidai Madrasahs in the community?
6. What concerns, if any, do you have about Ebtidai Madrasah education?
7. How do Ebtidai Madrasah students compare in terms of educational achievement to students of general education? What are the achievement indicators?
8. Is it necessary to modernize the Ebtidai Madrasah curriculum? Please explain.
9. What do you think is the future direction of Ebtidai Madrasahs in Bangladesh?

10. What future direction do you like it to take?

11. Do you have any suggestions for Ebtidai Madrasah education?

12. Any other comments?

### Early and Primary Madrasah Staff Interview Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Madrasah: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Male Madrasah  Female Madrasah

Type of Madrasah: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Range of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

1. When was Madrasah established: \_\_\_\_\_ By whom? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Source(s) of Funding: \_\_\_\_\_
3. How long have you been working in Madrasahs?
4. What are your educational qualifications? Where did you acquire them?
5. Please describe your professional responsibilities in the Madrasah and outside Madrasah.
6. What are the objectives of Ebtidai Madrasah education?
7. How are those objectives reflected in the curriculum of Ebtidai Madrasah education?
8. What curriculum do you use for Ebtidai students? How was it developed?
9. What are the major subjects/components of the Ebtidai curriculum?
10. What kind of formal education do Ebtidai Madrasahs student receive (in terms of its equivalence to primary general education of Bangladesh)?
11. Is it necessary to modernize the Ebtidai Madrasah curriculum? Please explain.

12 (F). On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Poor, and 5=Excellent, (0=do not know), what do you think of the quality of education that Ebtidai Madrasah students receive?	Poor			Excellent		Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain:</i>						

13 . On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Not at all, and 5=Very much, (0=do not know), how does Madrasah education contribute to the following:	Not at all				Very much	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.a. The quality of knowledge among student	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.b. The preparation of students for higher education	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.c. The preparation of students as citizens	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.d. The preparation of students for the workforce/ government service	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain your Choice of scores for 13 a-13 d:</i>						

14. What are the processes used to appoint teachers for Ebtidai Madrasah and general education? Please discuss any differences.

15. What are the processes for awarding scholarships to Ebtidai Madrasah and general education? Please discuss any differences.

16. What is the demographic profile of Ebtidai Madrasah students?

17. Are there cultural factors that influence parents' decisions to enroll, or not to enroll, children in Ebtidai Madrasahs?

18. How do Ebtidai Madrasah students compare in terms of educational achievement to students of general education? What are the achievement indicators?

19. Do students move from Ebtidai Madrasahs to general education and vice versa? If yes, please explain at what stages, and the causes.

20. Do you have any concerns about Ebtidai Madrasah education? If yes, please explain.

21. What is the future of the Madrasah education in Bangladesh? In your opinion what should be the future of Madrasah education in Bangladesh?

22. Do you have any suggestions for Ebtidai Madrasah education?

23. Any other comments?

**Government Official Interview Form**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How does your work relate to Madrasah education?

2. How long have you been working on issues related to Madrasah?

3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Poor, and 5=Excellent, (0=do not know), what do you think of the quality of education that Ebtidai primary Madrasah students receive?	Poor			Excellent		Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain:</i>						

4. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Not at all, and 5=Very much, (0=do not know), how does Madrasah education contribute to the following:	Not at all				Very much	Don't know
		1	2	3		
4.a. The quality of knowledge among students	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.b. The preparation of students for higher education	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.c. The preparation of students as citizens	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.d. The preparation of students for the workforce/ government service	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain your Choice of scores for 4 a-4 d:</i>						

5. What are the ideas about Ebtidai Madrasah education among the general public of Bangladesh?

6. What are the processes used to appoint teachers for Ebtidai Madrasah and general education? Please discuss any differences.

7. What are the processes for awarding scholarships to Ebtidai Madrasah and general education? Please discuss any differences.
8. How do Ebtidai Madrasah students compare in terms of educational achievement to students of general education? What are the achievement indicators?
9. Do students move from Ebtidai Madrasahs to general education and vice versa? If yes, please explain at what stages, and the causes.
10. Is it necessary to modernize the Ebtidai Madrasah curriculum? Please explain.
11. What factors encourage and discourage Madrasah Board officials to link Ebtidai Madrasahs with general education? Please explain.
12. How do people working in Ebtidai Madrasah perceive general education and vice versa?
13. What do you think about the future direction of Ebtidai Madrasahs in Bangladesh?
14. What future direction do you like it to take?
15. Do you have any suggestions for Ebtidai Madrasah education?
16. Any other comments?

**Funder Agency Interview Form**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How does your work relate, if any, to Madrasah education?
2. How long, if any, have you been working on issues related to Madrasah?

3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Poor, and 5=Excellent, (0=do not know), what do you think of the quality of education that Ebtidai Madrasah students receive?	Poor				Excellent	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain:</i>						

4. On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Not at all, and 5=Very much, (0=do not know), how does Madrasah education contribute to the following:	Not at all				Very much	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.a. The quality of knowledge among students	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.b. The preparation of students for higher education	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.c. The preparation of students as citizens	1	2	3	4	5	0
4.d. The preparation of students for workforce	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain your Choice of scores for 4 a-4 d:</i>						

5. Why does your agency fund Ebtidai Madrasah education?
6. In the past five years, how much did your agency provide in funding to Madrasah annually?
7. What has been the focus of your agency's funding (i.e., books, construction, food, etc.)
8. Who are other funders of Madrasahs that you know about? What are their focuses of funding?

9. From a funder's perspective, how do you view the role of Ebtidai Madrasahs in the community?
10. What concerns, if any, do you have about Ebtidai Madrasah education?
11. How do Ebtidai Madrasah students compare in terms of educational achievement to students of general education? What are the achievement indicators?
12. Is it necessary to modernize the Ebtidai Madrasah curriculum? Please explain.
13. What do you think is the future direction of Ebtidai Madrasahs in Bangladesh?
14. What future direction do you like it to take?
15. Do you have any suggestions for Ebtidai Madrasah education?
16. Any other comments?

### Alim Class Student Interview and Focus Group Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: 1. \_\_ Male 2. \_\_ Female

1. Who do you live with?

1. \_\_ Parents(s) 2. \_\_ Relatives  
3. \_\_ Orphanage 4. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)

2. Do you have siblings?

1. \_\_ No 2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_

3. What class do you read in?

6. \_\_ 7. \_\_ 8. \_\_ 9. \_\_ 10. \_\_

Alim/H.S.C Fadil/B.A\_\_ Kamil/M.A\_\_

4. Do you have any siblings in Madrasahs?

1. \_\_ No 2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_

5. Do you have siblings in general education schools?

1. \_\_ No 2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_

6. How did you like your Ebtidai Madrasah?

1. \_\_ Very much 2. \_\_ Some 3. \_\_ Not at all 4. \_\_ Don't know

7. What were your favorite subjects in Ebtidai Madrasah?

1. \_\_ Arabic 2. \_\_ Fiqh 3. \_\_ Religion 4. \_\_ English 5. \_\_ Bangoli 6. \_\_ Science  
7. \_\_ Math 8. \_\_ Social Science 9. \_\_ Art/Music  
10. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)

8. What did you like the most in your Ebtidai Madrasah?

1. \_\_ Classmates 2. \_\_ Teachers 3. \_\_ Principal/Headmaster  
4. \_\_ Tiffen Break 5. \_\_ Sports 6. \_\_ Studying  
7. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)

9. What did you dislike the most in your Ebtidai Madrasah?

1. \_\_ Punishment 2. \_\_ Long time 3. \_\_ Too much homework  
4. \_\_ Prayer 5. \_\_ Classmates 6. \_\_ Teachers  
7. \_\_ Principal/Headmaster 8. \_\_ Madrasah committee/local fundors  
9. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)

11. \_\_ No Response

10. Are there any cultural activities in your Ebtidai Madrasah?

1. \_\_ No 2. \_\_ Yes 3. \_\_ Don't know

11. If yes to question 10, what are they?

1. \_\_ Poetry recitation      2. \_\_ Quran recitation      3. \_\_ Music competition  
 4. \_\_ Essay competition      5. \_\_ Sports      6. \_\_ Art competition  
 7. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)      8. \_\_ Don't know      0. \_\_ Not applicable

12 (F). On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Poor, and 5=Excellent, (0=do not know), what do you think of the quality of education that Ebtidai Madrasah students receive?	Poor			Excellent		Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain:</i>						

13 . On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Not at all, and 5=Very much, (0=do not know), how does Madrasah education contribute to the following:	Not at all				Very much	Don't know
	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.a. The quality of knowledge among students	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.b. The preparation of students for higher education	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.c. The preparation of students as citizens	1	2	3	4	5	0
13.d. The preparation of students for the workforce/government service	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain your Choice of scores for 13 a-13 d:</i>						

14. Do you have any suggestions for your Madrasah/school?

15. Any other comments?

### Class Student Interview and Focus Group Form

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:      1. \_\_ Male      2. \_\_ Female

1. Who do you live with?

1. \_\_ Parents(s)      2. \_\_ Relatives  
3. \_\_ Orphanage      4. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)

2. Do you have siblings?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_

3. What class do you read in?

6. \_\_      7. \_\_      8. \_\_      9. \_\_      10. \_\_

Alim/H.S.C    Fadil/B.A\_\_    Kamil/M.A\_\_

4. Do you have any siblings in Madrasahs?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_

5. Do you have siblings in general education schools?

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes, how many? \_\_

**6 (F). How did you like your Ebtidai Madrasah?**

1. \_\_ Very much      2. \_\_ Some      3. \_\_ Not at all      4. \_\_ Don't know

7. What were your favorite subjects in Ebtidai Madrasah?

1. \_\_ Arabic    2. \_\_ Fiqh    3. \_\_ Religion    4. \_\_ English    5. \_\_ Bangoli    6. \_\_ Science  
7. \_\_ Math    8. \_\_ Social Science    9. \_\_ Art/Music  
10. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)

**8 (F). What did you like the most in your Ebtidai Madrasah?**

1. \_\_ Classmates      2. \_\_ Teachers      3. \_\_ Principal/Headmaster  
 4. \_\_ Tiffen Break      5. \_\_ Sports      6. \_\_ Studying  
 7. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)      8. \_\_ Don't know

**9 (F). What did you dislike the most in your Ebtidai Madrasah?**

1. \_\_ Punishment      2. \_\_ Long time      3. \_\_ Too much homework  
 4. \_\_ Prayer      5. \_\_ Classmates      6. \_\_ Teachers  
 7. \_\_ Principal/Headmaster      8. Madrasah committee/local fundors  
 9. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)      10. \_\_ Don't know      11. \_\_ No Response

**10. Are there any cultural activities in your Ebtidai Madrasah?**

1. \_\_ No      2. \_\_ Yes      3. \_\_ Don't know

**11. If yes to question 10, what are they?**

1. \_\_ Poetry recitation      2. \_\_ Quran recitation      3. \_\_ Music competition  
 4. \_\_ Essay competition      5. \_\_ Sports      6. \_\_ Art competition  
 7. \_\_ Other(\_\_\_\_\_)      8. \_\_ Don't know      0. \_\_ Not applicable

**12 (F). On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Poor, and 5=Excellent, (0=do not know), what do you think of the quality of education that Ebtidai Madrasah students receive?**

Poor			Excellent	Don't know	
1	2	3	4	5	0

*Please explain:*

13 (F). On a scale of 1-5, with 1=Not at all, and 5=Very much, (0=do not know), how does Madrasah education contribute to the followings :	Not at all			Very much		Don't know
<b>13.a. (F) The quality of knowledge among students</b>	1	2	3	4	5	0
<b>13.b. (F) The preparation of students for higher education</b>	1	2	3	4	5	0
<b>13.c. (F) The preparation of students as citizens</b>	1	2	3	4	5	0
<b>13.d. (F) The preparation of students for the workforce/government service</b>	1	2	3	4	5	0
<i>Please explain your Choice of scores for 13 a-13 d:</i>						

**14 (F). Do you have any suggestions for your Madrasah/school?**

**15 (F). Any other comments?**