

## Conceptions, legitimacy, and impact of faith-based organisations: an inquiry into Pakistani *madrasas*

### Post-Doctoral Fellow

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### Key research questions & methods

The primary objective of this Post-Doctoral Fellowship is to produce a book monograph on the working of Pakistani *madrasas*— the oldest institution of learning in the Muslim world which has currently become suspect of promoting international terrorism— and their relationship with the development processes in Pakistan. The research develops a typology of Pakistani *madrasas*, investigates the factors that make parents and students choose *madrasa* education over secular schools, analyses the basis of community support for *madrasas*, and documents the factors leading to rise of female *madrasas* in Pakistan. The underlying theoretical concern is to explore how religion, defined as an institutional arrangement and modes of living to which sacred status has been given by a set of beliefs and values, impacts individual behaviour and development processes, and how these beliefs and values and their organisational manifestations in turn are influenced by the socio-economic and political developments within a given society.

The research draws upon the ethnographic study of a Deobandi *madrasa* conducted for the DPhil thesis plus an additional six months fieldwork carried out with students, parents, teachers, and donors of five *madrasas* of different scale, sect and educational level, including two female *madrasas*, during 2006. In addition, the student enrolment data available with the five central *madrasa* regulatory boards in Pakistan is being analysed and interviews conducted with their supervisors.

### Relation to the programme

This Fellowship has been awarded under ESRC NGPA programme on *Religion and Non-Governmental Public Action- Impact and Conceptions of Different Faith-Based Organisations*. The research helps understand the working of faith-based organisations and their role in development processes as compared to secular non-governmental organisations.

### Relevance of this research to user groups

Given the current policy interest in *madrasas*, a stakeholders' workshop in Islamabad with representatives from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, central *madrasa* boards, international development organisations, and NGOs will be organised to shape the policy recommendations emerging from this research. A policy report will be produced to share with international think tanks working on security issues, international development agencies,



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western governments interested in *madrasa* reforms, and western media. A series of discussions will also be held with women-rights NGOs in Pakistan to help bridge the gap between Pakistani feminist trained in western tradition and female scholars trained in *madrasas*.

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