

# **Educational opportunities:** Cooperation across the Line of Control in Kashmir

December 2010

conciliation  
resources

# Contents

<b>1. Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Prelude	5
The Line of Control and the regions	5
Context and framework	5
<b>3. Educational infrastructure and environment: a perspective from LoC West</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. Educational infrastructure and management: a perspective from LoC East</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>5. A note on policy formulation process and policy direction in LoC West</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>6. A note on policy formulation process and policy direction in LoC East</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>7. Assessing the potential for cross-LoC cooperation</b>	<b>25</b>

This report '**Educational opportunities: Cooperation across the Line of Control in Kashmir**' was written by Ambassador (Rtd) Arif Kamal, Member Syndicate University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muzaffarabad and Dr Siddiq Wahid, Vice Chancellor, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir. Conciliation Resources (CR), a UK based non-governmental organisation, provided support for this study but the views contained within it are those of the authors and not of CR.

# 1. Summary

The 60-year conflict over Kashmir has reached an impasse. This has precipitated the idea of ‘making borders irrelevant’ without officially abandoning India and Pakistan’s positions, and also allowed a greater role for the people of Kashmir. This augurs well for conflict transformation approaches seeking to harness local potential across the divide in Kashmir and view the region as a connector, rather than a barrier in the peace process.

Communication in the academic domain can be a major tool for confidence building in this context. Levels of education, particularly literacy levels, and assets achieved or promised in the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir are distinct compared with other regions in South Asia. They could serve as ‘opportunity structures’ and as an engine for development to create sympathetic constituencies across the Line of Control (LoC) and thus forge enduring ties that can bridge gaps for long-term conflict resolution. Interaction on education could serve as a catalyst for stabilisation in Kashmir, and for moving forward normalisation between India and Pakistan.

This study is a comprehensive survey of educational achievements on both sides of the LoC divide in Kashmir, identifying commonalities and the potential for supplementing growth. It gives a broad outline of what is already available in terms of infrastructure and resources, and what could be shared to aid confidence building and help develop an agenda for educational cooperation across the divide.

The authors argue that exploring and nurturing cross-LoC institutional links in the education field would help give substance to people-to-people contacts and credence to the irrelevance of borders. It would also inject faith in ‘peace dividends’ against a backdrop of recurring violence. Political realities and decades of tension, they note however, are likely to make the pace of achievement and change incremental.

To help stimulate ideas and opportunities for building educational links across the LoC, this study presents some initial recommendations based on the important observation that room already exists for improving relations within the current relationship between both sides of the LoC. To allow for the necessary steps, the authors urge these be implemented before the more complex aspects are tackled, setting them out as short and medium-term ‘doables’ and longer-term targets. Such an approach would allow for incremental steps and building confidence, which is what cross-LoC educational cooperation seeks to promote.

## 2. Introduction

### Prelude

Jammu and Kashmir<sup>1</sup> has proved to be one of the most intractable conflicts in the world. The unresolved status has not only affected the organic unity of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir but also served as a critical barrier in normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan.

The quest to unknot this dilemma over the decades has been defied by the entrenched policy perspectives in New Delhi and Islamabad that aimed at solutions of each competitor's own choice. The region thus experienced recurring wars and the phenomenon of militancy that brought no conclusions. The consequent impasse has in turn introduced a twofold trend: it has gradually pushed the political elite on both sides to show more flexibility in their traditional positions on Kashmir, without officially abandoning them. The attempt to pursue 'out of the box' thinking is indeed an index of this growing reality. Similarly, the notions of 'making borders irrelevant' – soften borders instead of redefining or removing them – holds the promise of a creative and pragmatic approach to the conflict.<sup>2</sup> Concurrently, recent years have witnessed a resurgence of trans-Line of Control identity<sup>3</sup> and a greater play of the native factor in the triangle involving India and Pakistan.

- 
1. Henceforth referred to as Kashmir
  2. Chari P. R. & Rizvi, Hasan Askari. 'Making Borders Irrelevant in Kashmir', Special Report, United States Institute of Peace (September 2008)
  3. Kamal, Arif. 'Contemporary Kashmir Scenario: Viewing from the Prism of Human Dynamics', (October 2008)

### The Line of Control (LoC) and the regions

The LoC in Jammu and Kashmir is successor to the 1949 UN-mandated ceasefire line between India and Pakistan, reflecting adjustments as pronounced in the 1972 Simla Agreement. This zigzags across all the pre-1947 politico-administrative units of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir: Jammu, the Kashmir Valley, Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh. The terms LoC West and LoC East are used in this study to identify the two sides of the divide. The LoC West includes Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan (Pakistani side), while LoC East refers to Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh (Indian side). The use of these terms is not intended to contest the respective positions of India or Pakistan or substitute any other expression used by stakeholders.

### Context and framework

Citizens across the divide are distinct for their literacy profile that presents an interesting comparison with the related national averages of India and Pakistan. (LoC West: AJK<sup>4</sup> 65 per cent, Gilgit-Baltistan<sup>5</sup> 53 per cent compared with Pakistan's<sup>6</sup> 55 per cent. Similarly, LoC

- 
4. Planning and Development Department, AJK: 'AJK at a Glance', supported by Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan. In contrast with official data on literacy of 65 per cent, an independent report from a World Bank expert suggests that the literacy in AJK had attained 78 per cent rate. The citation refers to Ejaz Nabi - Senior World Bank Economist. See: [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C02%5C06%5Cstory\\_6-2-2006\\_pg7\\_55](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2006%5C02%5C06%5Cstory_6-2-2006_pg7_55)
  5. Prof Dr Hafeez Muhammad Iqbal, Dean Faculty of Education University of Punjab, 18 October 2009 <http://www.down.com/wps/wcm/connect/down-content-library/down/in-paper-magazine/education/education-in-gilgit-and-baltistan-809>
  6. Report presented to Senate of Pakistan available on <http://www.chowk.com/ilogs/76024/47373>

East:<sup>7</sup> 55 per cent compared with India's 66 per cent.) This brings education to the fore as a viable instrument to gradually disentangle the prevailing gridlock. Mapping the opportunities for educational development across the LoC in Kashmir, sponsored by Conciliation Resources, a British non-governmental organisation, is the first meaningful endeavour in this direction.

Communication in the academic domain ought to be seen as a confidence building measure.<sup>8</sup> In the case of Kashmir it should imply confidence building across the LoC divide as well as between people of the State and with New Delhi and Islamabad. It should then provide a stimulant for greater momentum in the normalisation process between India and Pakistan. It is critically important to keep in view that the State's sociopolitical landscape has already witnessed a circular curve of conflict swinging from 'passive resistance' to violence, and now from there to an expectant posture seeking resolution through peace dividends. The latter trend ought to be groomed and sustained for the common good of the larger region.

The levels of educational attainment and assets unfolded or promised in the process ought to serve as 'opportunity structures'<sup>9</sup> and a development engine to create sympathetic constituencies across the LoC and thus forge enduring ties to bridge gaps for long-term conflict resolution. The interaction in

the educational domain should rekindle common stakes in consonance with the local people's sense of identity and mutual engagement; serve as catalyst for stabilisation in the regions across the LoC; and for advancing the normalisation process between India and Pakistan. It is in this framework that the survey brings home a review of the prevailing educational environment and an assessment of the possibilities of cross-LoC institutional links and exchanges in the educational domain.

The study is essentially based on consultative engagements with a variety of stakeholders and 'focus groups': academia and educational administrators, public intellectuals influencing opinion-making processes, policy-relevant bureaucracy and political elite. It also takes into account the readily available quantitative data relevant to analysing the existing and anticipated patterns. The sections of the study dealing with perspectives on educational infrastructure and its management; and policy formulation process and direction on either side are contributed separately and run in tandem. The subsequent assessment of the potential carried in the last section is a joint product highlighting actionable ideas.

---

7. Directorate of School Education Jammu, available on <http://schedujammu.nic.in/>

8. Schucher, Gunter. 'Where Minds Meet: The Professionalisation of Cross-Strait Academic Exchange', German Institute of Global and Area Studies, No. 106, (August 2009)

9. For a discussion of 'opportunity structures' in the 'social mobilisation theory', the citation refers to Shana Dietz Surendra, 'Explaining Social Mobilisation: A Comparative Case Study'. [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/comparative\\_studies\\_of\\_south\\_asia-africa\\_and\\_the\\_middle\\_east/v029/29.2surendra.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/comparative_studies_of_south_asia-africa_and_the_middle_east/v029/29.2surendra.html)

### 3. Educational infrastructure and environment: a perspective from LoC West

This section aims at providing an overview of the educational environment in LoC West in the backdrop of literacy level, quality of education and perceptible relationship between educational infrastructure and opportunities that relate to higher education as well as employment. The review while touching upon school-level education will provide a fuller discussion of the college and university education (undergraduate and graduate level) in the public and private sectors.

#### The regions in the West

The LoC West denotes regions in the State of Jammu and Kashmir that fall under ultimate Pakistani responsibility, subsequent to the 1949 UN-mandated armistice and the 1972 adjustments between India and Pakistan pronounced as the Line of Control. LoC West in politico-administrative terms refers to (a) Azad Jammu and Kashmir that carries a constitution and autonomous institutions based in Muzaffarabad, and (b) Gilgit-Baltistan, described as 'Northern Areas' until 2009, where Islamabad's writ is more pronounced. The two regions in the West have been placed on the rails of separate political development over the past six decades and therefore do not form one administrative unit.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the regions continue to carry 'affiliate' status rather than 'constituent' status with the larger Pakistani whole.

The geoeconomic make-up of the regions in the West carries a significant impact on the educational environment as evolved through the past decades. The current population of AJK is estimated

to be around 3.7 million over 13,297 km, with a population density of 284 people per sq km.<sup>11</sup> This is among the highest density recorded in mountain regions worldwide. On the other hand, Gilgit-Baltistan is sparsely populated: about one million over 72,496 sq km.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, nearly 88 per cent of the population in the two regions is rural-based, dependent on small landholdings and facing deficient means of production locally in the wake of population growth. This makes them susceptible to migratory trends in search of job opportunities.<sup>13</sup> A sizeable population has traditionally been employed by the military since the World Wars (Poonch division of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan), a connectivity with the job market in Britain (Mirpur division), and to the Middle East at large, besides urban centres in Pakistan. The primary education or equivalent skills have thus emerged as key to mobility and operation in the job marketplace.

The regions have achieved significantly high levels of literacy and an impressive expansion in the pre-university educational infrastructure. However, the expansion in quantitative terms has come about without an equal attention to quality or focus relevant to the job market. The regions have made a late start in higher education that runs in tandem at the expanded degree college network and newly founded universities.

---

10. For the purpose of this study, developments in the two regions are covered in tandem

---

11. 'AJK at a Glance', Planning and Development Department, Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir (2007)

12. Zaman, Naveed Athar. 'Education in Gilgit-Baltistan', a working paper, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad

13. Hassan, Khalid. 'Literacy rate in Azad Jammu and Kashmir soars to 78 per cent leaves the rest of Pakistan behind', <http://www.kashmiri.info> 17 December 2009, 07:30

## Literacy profile

The literacy rate of AJK is estimated at 65 per cent, which is significantly higher than the national average of Pakistan of 55 per cent. The literacy in gender terms is 77 per cent for male and 53 per cent for female.<sup>14</sup> Varying figures on literacy have emanated from some independent sources<sup>15</sup> though invariably reconfirming the region's standing above the Pakistani national average. The subregional review indicates that Poonch division has the highest literacy compared with other divisions while its key pockets such as the Pearl Valley (Rawalakot) have achieved spectacular growth in women's literacy.<sup>16</sup>

The gross enrolment rate at primary level (between the ages of 5-9 years) is 95 per cent for boys and 88 per cent for girls.<sup>17</sup> However, this ought to be interpreted with caution in view of a significant drop out rate at subsequent levels as only 33 per cent of boys and 19 per cent of girls attend high school.

The adult literacy rate in Gilgit-Baltistan at present is estimated at 53 per cent overall (male 64 per cent, female 41 per cent),<sup>18</sup> up from 38 per cent recorded in the late 1990s and proximate to Pakistan's national average. The gross enrolment rate at primary level is 75 per cent. More than two-thirds (67 per cent) of girls in that age group now attend primary school as compared to only 29 per cent in 1994. The gender parity index (ratio of girls to boys) for primary at 0.73 is in line with

Pakistani national average, though still low by international standards.

The literacy rate and the current enrolment at the primary level in the two regions suggest a very robust engagement of the natives with the educational process. The attainment rests upon, first of all, traditional factors: greater mobility and exposure that run in tandem with competitiveness. Second, social development in the regions has come about in the absence of feudal structures, which are otherwise seen as impediments in the process. Third, the governmental role has been a catalyst in the process. In the AJK, 27 per cent of the total recurring governmental budget alongside 10 per cent of the total development budget is allocated to education.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, expenditure on education in Gilgit-Baltistan accounts for 11-13 per cent of the administration's budget.<sup>20</sup> In a nutshell, the regions are endeavouring to move towards universal compulsory primary education.

## Infrastructure: a broad-brush view

### AJK

The existing educational infrastructure in AJK encompasses a gross number of 7779 institutions from primary to higher secondary or intermediate college in the public and private sectors. This data does not account for the privately run Madaris and special purpose schools (eg cadet college, vocational training). The higher educational facilities relate to a sum total of 68 degree colleges or equivalents and four universities, two each in the public and private sectors.

The quantitative upturn of educational institutions over the past decades has been spectacular. There are nearly 8000

---

14. Bureau of Statistics, Islamabad. Also, Basher Ahmad Ch, Chief Stat, Planning and Development Department, Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

15. A report on Kashmir issued by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) places literacy at 61 per cent while a World Bank expert suggests a 78 per cent achievement level, perceptibly taking into account the Madrassa education data.

16. Akram Sohail, Secretary to Government on Higher Education, Azad Jammu Kashmir

17. Op cit 11

18. The Directorate of Education, Gilgit-Baltistan

---

19. Op cit 16

20. Op cit 12

institutions (over 6000 public sector and over 2000 private sector) at present as compared with 291 in 1947, 2085 in 1977 and 4567 in 1988.<sup>21</sup>

The upturn in the public sector educational institutions is graphically explained in the available data.<sup>22</sup> The public institutions from primary to higher secondary or intermediate college levels have a cumulative strength of 6018 (3262 male and 2756 female) compared with 290 (285 male and five female) in 1947. There are now 55 government-run degree colleges (29 male and 26 female) from a zero start six decades back. The process is enforced by two public sector universities.

Besides the public sector, there has been an impressive increase in private sector educational institutions in the past seven to 10 years.<sup>23</sup> To recap the accumulated growth, there are 1761 private institutions from primary to inter-college and higher secondary level, alongside 48 vocational training institutions and 473 Madaris equivalent to middle or high school levels. Moreover, the private sector upturn in the higher education is reflected in 13 degree colleges and two universities, one of them catering for the first ever medical college in the region.

### **Gilgit-Baltistan**

The region has about 2200 educational institutions of various categories in terms of ownership and levels. The government operates about 76 per cent of the institutions (with 68 per cent of total enrolment) while the private sector has a 24 per cent share (with

32 per cent enrolment).<sup>24</sup> The expansion of school education in the region has been significant when compared with the status in 1947 and low population density in these vast lands. In 1947, the entire north-west of the state had only 80 primary schools, three middle schools and hardly a regular high school facility. Understandably, there was no teaching facility for degree programmes.<sup>25</sup> The upturn comes with dedicated efforts from the administration and recent contribution by the private sector, especially NGOs dedicated to development.

Institutions from primary to higher secondary/intermediate college levels in the region are currently: 1687 including 781 for male, 325 for female and 577 co-educational. There are 16 degree colleges, and a public sector university catering for the region.<sup>26</sup>

### **Patterns in schooling**

The participation scale at school levels (primary to tenth class) is indeed revealing *viz.* the evolving patterns in the region's educational environment. In AJK, at the present time, 351,190 and 210,370 students attend public and private schools respectively. This also entails overall gender strength: 263,377 female and 298,983 male.<sup>27</sup> In Gilgit-Baltistan, the student enrolment up to secondary level is estimated at 157,741 (91,885 male and 65,856 female).<sup>28</sup> The data on student streams indicates a negligible gender gap in AJK and a narrowing graph in the Gilgit-Baltistan arena.

The literacy attainment in AJK is also shaped in part, by the Mosque Schools (1352 approximately),<sup>29</sup> alongside

---

21. Nisar Hmaadani, Raja Mohammad Khursheed and Naheem Ahmad Abbassi. 'An Overview of Education in AJK', a joint working paper by panellists

22. Education Department, Azad Jammu and Kashmir

23. National Educational Census 2005 read with amendments obtained from Basher Ahmad Ch, Chief Stat, Planning and Development Department, Azad Govt. of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

---

24. Op cit 18

25. Op cit 12

26. Ehsanullah, Registrar Karakoram International University, Gilgit

27. Op cit 11

28. Op cit 12

29. Op cit 21



registered Madaris of good standing (473).<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, 282 out of 473 Madaris provide for concurrent male and female education. (However, there are no authoritative figures on the annual turnout of students from the Madaris system.) Concurrently, the narrowing gender gap in Gilgit-Baltistan is the outcome of a growing educational activity generated by NGOs, especially the Agha Khan Foundation, over the past decade or so.<sup>31</sup>

The expansion from primary school to high secondary level has not *ipso facto* injected diversity of subjects or skills commensurate with the job market. The curriculum continues to be overwhelmed by social sciences and arts rather than natural sciences and commerce. Diversification will be contingent upon availability of teachers' cadre and related training facilities that are not in place.<sup>32</sup>

The openings for vocational and technical education within the existing school system are extremely narrow.<sup>33</sup> At present, there is just one government-run polytechnic and a number of private vocational institutes of uncertain standing.

The expansion in educational facilities at the grass-roots level and the quantitative growth in educational institutions can also be taken as a sign of vibrant development in many ways. First it shows that ingredients for universal education are very much present. This growth has come about without long-awaited legislation for universal or compulsory education. Second, the school-level

expansion offers a potential for evolving the higher education assets if the process is not narrowed-down by resource constraints and an uncertain domestic job market. Third, the expansion in quantitative terms is overstretched in cases and carried at the cost of quality and the right focus.<sup>34</sup>

The regions have not developed indigenous productivity commensurate with the growth of educational infrastructure. In the case of AJK, the unemployment rate is between 35 and 50 per cent of the economically active population. (The lowest figure for unemployment is 25.5 per cent in Mirpur with the highest at 52.3 per cent in Sudhonoti).<sup>35</sup> The region is also heavily dependent on remittances from abroad, about 13.2 per cent of income, which means the poverty levels fluctuate without a steady income for those families.

Migratory trends in search of jobs in the neighbourhood or at overseas destinations remain a recurring phenomenon. A very large skilled and semi-skilled workforce has found ways to urban centres in Pakistan, the Gulf and Britain. About seven per cent of the Pakistan Army traditionally comes from one division of AJK and from Gilgit-Baltistan.<sup>36</sup> The capacity of the region to absorb graduates from higher educational institutions also remains limited in the absence of a vibrant productive and commercial activity.

### Higher education

Higher education is a relatively new phenomenon in LoC West. It is carried in a two-track institutional arrangement: the colleges running typical degree programmes and now the emerging universities holding the promise of a qualitative upturn in the environment.

---

30. National Educational Census 2005

31. Op cit 12. Also, interview with Mohammad Ismail, Public Relations Officer, Asian Development Bank Office, Islamabad

32. Yousaf, Mohammad, former advisor to AJK Government on education

33. Khurshid R. M. 'Evaluation of Capacity Building and Promotion of Quality Education of Teachers at Elementary Level in Azad Kashmir', AIOU, Islamabad, Pakistan (2006)

---

34. Op cit 16

35. Op cit 13

36. Ibid

The indigenous development to date is however deficient in professional education and therefore a good number of students find their way to institutions in the neighbouring provinces of Pakistan.

The facilities in AJK relate to educational streams at 56 degree colleges or equivalents, and four universities, two each in the public and private sectors,<sup>37</sup> chartered in the region. This entails participation of about 36,165 students in degree programmes run at colleges and over 5000 students on university campuses.<sup>38</sup> Concurrently, the process in Gilgit-Baltistan is characterised by 16 degree colleges and a newly established university. The student strength is in the range of 2600 including approximately 1700 at the university campus.<sup>39</sup> Besides the established institutions, a good number are benefiting from distance education. The available data does not cover a significantly high outflow of students from regions in LoC West to educational institutions across Pakistan and abroad.

### **The scale and complexion**

The contemporary graph of higher education in various types of institutions with reference to gender make-up ought to be revisited to appreciate aspects of advancement in the domain. Gender participation at degree colleges in AJK public and private sector colleges is now almost equal (16,000 plus each). The university campus as viewed in a broad-brush picture, suggests women are lagging behind (40-60 per cent). However, the two genders run close to each other if the exclusive 'men-specific' facilities (eg geology, agriculture) are condoned.<sup>40</sup> In contrast the gender gap

in the northern areas, though narrowing, is more pronounced.<sup>41</sup>

The degree college network essentially caters for two-year BA and BSc degree programmes. The facilities though quantitatively enlarged, continue to have an emphasis on the humanities and arts compared with the sciences and commerce. The first among four universities in AJK was established in 1981 while the sole university in northern areas is still in its infancy. The university level caters for degree programmes in BSc (Hons), MA and MSc and beyond. The development plans for universities to date suggest selective and incremental focus on sciences rather than humanities and introduction of subjects that may have greater relevance to the job market. The opportunities for solid professional education however remain deficient and, therefore, explain the existing dependency relationship with the larger system in Pakistan.

### **Public sector universities**

There are two public sector universities in AJK region of LoC West: University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muzaffarabad (1981), and Mirpur University of Science and Technology-MUST (2009). The former remains the mainstay of university education in the territory and mother to the latter, which has greater focus in the technological domain.

The AJK University offers an impressive combination of basic sciences and humanities at its main campus in Muzaffarabad while specialised facilities located at district headquarters relate to Faculty of Agriculture (Rawalakot) and Faculty of Administrative Sciences (Kotli). The main campus at Muzaffarabad offers science related studies in Departments of Botany, Chemistry, Computer

---

37. Directorate of Planning and Research, Muzaffarabad

38. Ibid

39. Op cit 26

40. Op cit 37

---

41. Based on analysis of data from the Office of Registrar, Karakoram International University, Gilgit-Baltistan

Sciences and Information Technology, Mathematics, Physics, Statistics, Zoology, and the Institute of Geology. Its Humanities Group entails studies at the Institute of Economics, Departments of English, Law, Arts and Design. It also houses a Kashmir Information Resource Centre. The university is now in the process of developing a Masters of Education (MEd) degree among other programmes for human resource development.<sup>42</sup>

The Faculty of Agriculture (Rawalakot) offers degrees in agriculture, eastern medicine and surgery and animal sciences: veterinary medicine.

The Faculty of Administrative Sciences (Kotli) offers specialisation in Public Administration, Business Administration and Commerce.<sup>43</sup>

Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST), chartered in 2009, has a special focus on engineering. It offers degree programmes in Electric Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Civil Engineering and Computer System Engineering, besides basic sciences. It also has inherited Mirpur-based facilities in Islamic Studies, English Language, Fine Arts and Home Economics. The student intake at MUST is around 1677 including over 1100 students dedicated to engineering and technology.<sup>44</sup>

The education at public universities is generally at MA and MSc level or above. However, studies in six disciplines: geology, computer science (CS) and information technology (IT), art and design, law, administrative sciences and home economics is offered at the BA and BSc level. The intake for MPhil programmes is on the rise. Twenty-four PhD candidates (including three women)

are admitted in the domains of chemistry, botany, agriculture and engineering at the two public sector universities.<sup>45</sup>

At the university in Muzaffarabad, studies in geology have attained the highest enrolment (495 out of 1833). However this is a completely male-specific stream, though very much geared to the job market. There has been an upturn in the enrolment of both males and females in subjects such as CS & IT (190), botany (178), economics (130) and law (184). Concurrently, the MUST carries a high focus in disciplines related to engineering and technology, where the male participation compared with the female (932-168) is overwhelming.<sup>46</sup>

The Muzaffarabad campus of AJK University has more women than men (539-484). Here the women overwhelm disciplines such as chemistry, botany, zoology, economics, English literature, and art and design. At MUST, women dominate disciplines such as Islamic studies (379-75) and home economics (86-0), with a narrow participation in engineering.

### Private universities

Universities chartered in the private sector are Al-Khair University (1995), based in Mirpur, and Mohi-ud-din University, which has opened the first medical college (2009) in the territory.

The Al-Khair has its primary focus in the disciplines such as business, information technology and education, besides conventional subjects in the humanities. It operates from the main campus in Mirpur, together with 29 affiliated colleges (only 10 of them in AJK).<sup>47</sup> Student enrolment at the main campus is around 200. The Al-Khair, though retaining its charter and base in AJK, seems to have turned its

---

42. Prospectus, University of Azad Jammu Kashmir (2009)

43. Ibid

44. Prospectus, Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST), Mirpur AJK (2009)

---

45. Op cit 37

46. Op cit 37

47. Prospectus Al-Khair University: Main Campus (2009)

main operation to neighbouring Punjab. This should be viewed as a commercial venture with marginal benefit for the region.

Mohi-ud-Din University Medical College promises a qualitative change in the domain of professional education in AJK. The charter and related arrangements entitle the medical college to run a five-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme, with capacity of 100 students in each class.<sup>48</sup> The institution, although privately run, has also been given regular access at the government-run Mirpur district hospital for a period of 15 years.

The student intake in the Medical College relates to 40 from the AJK and northern areas, in addition to merit-based enrolment from Pakistan: 20 nominees of the AJK government and 40 overseas students. The first MBBS class at the medical college started in April 2009. The institution plans to open degree programmes in Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm-D) and Dentistry in the coming years.<sup>49</sup>

## Distance education

A window on distance education is provided by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), which has permission from the local administration to maintain a regional office in Mirpur. It is estimated that enrolment at AIOU exceeds 75,000 per semester.<sup>50</sup>

## Karakoram International University (KIU)

The Karakoram International University in Gilgit (KIU), established in 2002, is a public sector venture run by the federal

government. It promises a qualitative change in the environment of the northern region.

The Karakoram University is running degree programmes in information technology and computer sciences, communications, education, English language and business, alongside primary subjects in sciences.<sup>51</sup>

A distinctive feature of KIU is the newly emerging 'Faculty of Human and Mountain Area Development Studies'. This would focus almost entirely on multidisciplinary and integrated courses geared to sustainable development in the area. The university is attempting to create during the next few years, a pivot around fields such as geology, mineralogy and mineral development, glaciology (including glaciers as climate change indicators and their significance for human communities), ethnobotany, hydropower generation, solar energy development, wildlife management, livestock management, vocational development and regional studies. The university is also developing an Institute of Hotel Management and Tourism geared to the job market in that domain.<sup>52</sup>

## The outflow for professional education

The outflow of students for professional education in areas such as medicine, engineering, agriculture and business remains an important feature of the higher education system. A major part of the outflow comes through seats offered at various institutions that are regulated by nomination boards in Muzaffarabad and Gilgit.

An estimated 422 students from AJK benefit at the Pakistani professional colleges or universities. This relates to 129 medicine-related seats and 260 engineering-related seats, besides

---

48. Prospectus Mohi-ud-Din Islamic Medical College Mirpur (2009)

49. Prospectus Pharm-D: Mohi-ud-Din Islamic Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (2009)

50. Op cit 21

---

51. Op cit 12

52. Op cit 12

other domains such as agriculture and business.

The dependence of Gilgit-Baltistan on professional education in Pakistani institutions is more pronounced. The sector-wise allocation of seats relates to medical (45), engineering (40), pharmacy (2), agriculture (15), veterinary (19) and polytechnic (72).<sup>53</sup>

### **Findings**

The LoC West is indeed in search of an educational edifice with the right focus and quality, and a greater connectivity with job markets within the regions. The policy-relevant circles in Muzaffarabad and Gilgit therefore need to revisit their 'vision' and upgrade planning as well as coordination mechanism while taking into account the region-specific needs and heritage. (The mere adoption of a 'vision' from Islamabad designed for macro level would only reinforce brain drain rather than precipitate intra-regional development.)

Higher education in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan continues to run on a dual track. The older track relates to degree colleges that offer BA and BSc programmes for two years and produce generalists rather than specialists. They are deficient in academic standing and competitiveness. Now the public universities are focusing on Honours, MA and MSc programmes leading up to subject specialisation in targeted areas and are by and large, relevant to the job market. There is a growing awareness that the older track should gradually be transformed to the new. However progress to materialise the option is indeed slow.

The tendency to overwhelm the campus with disciplines in humanities rather than sciences and business, ought to be shunned as this runs counter to the desired levels of quality and job

opportunities. An example of the right focus and of the promise for a better tomorrow, is carried in ventures such as the Institute of Geology in Muzaffarabad and the Faculty of Human and Mountain Area Development Studies in Gilgit.

The literary level and quantitative expansion are among the primary assets, which should help advance the higher educational streams. However, the need for qualitative improvement at the school levels will have to be factored while seeking a significant progress at the apex levels. Full blossoming of higher education is indeed faced with resource constraints that cannot be met from within the local resources. Intercession of external donors to meet the gap in the domain will be crucial.

---

53. Op cit 12

## 4. Educational infrastructure and management: a perspective from LoC East

Jammu and Kashmir State (hereinafter referred to as LoC East) has made significant strides in the field of education in the last 60 years. This is quite impressive from the point of view of physical infrastructure, data for which is readily available in various reports, and with regard to the actual ground realities, of achievements in knowledge advancement.<sup>54</sup> The three constituent parts of LoC East – Ladakh, Kashmir and Jammu – can all rightfully boast of a considerably more literate population than in the mid-20th century, as can the whole of South Asia in the postcolonial period. So in that sense, one must understand the statistics and their interpretation within the context of the postcolonial scenario and it would not be far wrong to say that from the point of view of parameters such as literacy, access and possibility, LoC East is no different from the rest of South Asia. But if we were to acknowledge, as we must, a difference between being ‘literate’ and being ‘educated’, the picture will have to be adjusted in no small measure.

To put it another way, it must be stated at the outset that as we review the ‘physical’ infrastructure of the educational system one task, at least apropos of LoC East, must be to constantly and consistently keep in mind the gap that exists between its quantitative and qualitative dimensions or, to use a phrase that arguably has

gained universal currency, between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure. This is important because it will speak directly to the recommendations that will follow.

Thus from all accounts the literacy rates in LoC East have shown huge gains since 1947; however the ‘Literacy Rate of a population is arrived at by culling out the percentage of the people whose age is seven years and above and who can both read and write a simple message with understanding in at least one language’.<sup>55</sup> Such a definition is not helpful, for example, in understanding other parameters of what might be considered an ‘educated society’. Similarly, given the increase in literacy rates and the proliferation of institutions of learning there should be, logically speaking, a concomitant increase in employment figures for the youth in LoC East – if not equalling the increase in literacy rates at least nudging forward half as dramatically – but it can safely be said that any such proportionate increase is missing.

### Primary and higher secondary education<sup>56</sup>

The last National Census in India was conducted in 2001. However, the **Socio-Economic Profile – 2008** (hereafter **SEP - 2008**) is a very useful interim report that not only updates some of the findings of the 2001 Census but also supplies

---

54. We have consulted various statistical reports that allow us to come to this conclusion. The primary sources, however, are two official reports entitled Literacy Report for J&K State – 2008 (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning and Development Department, J&K Government, Srinagar - hereafter LR-2008) and Socio-Economic Profile of Jammu & Kashmir – 2008 (Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning and Development Department, J&K Government, Srinagar).

---

55. LR – 2008, p 62

56. To avoid cluttering the pages of the main report with charts and lists, we have collected break up information on the various primary, secondary and higher secondary schools in LoC East along with details of all the colleges, professional institutes and universities by way of several tables. In some cases we have included a brief summation with some elemental information about the individual institutions. These tables can be made available upon request.

comprehensive economic information on the geography, history and polity of LoC East. The following information of a general nature can be gleaned from this and other reports.

The estimated total population of LoC East in 2008 was calculated at nearly 12 million, with those under 18 years of age constituting nearly two million, or approximately 16 per cent of the population. This gives us an idea of the immediate future needs for planning education in LoC East. The picture that emerges for education from primary to higher secondary levels is encouraging. In 2001, the literacy rate in LoC East was just over 55 per cent. However in the past eight years there have been aggressive programmes such as the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA); literacy rates have seen a remarkable jump to over 65 per cent. Some other major indicators are as follows:<sup>57</sup>

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the first eight years of schooling is over 74 per cent, which is considerably lower than the national ratio of 93.53 per cent.

The pupil to teacher ratio at the primary level is 1:34 and at the upper primary level is 1:16 indicating a good marker in the latter, while tolerable to needing improvement in the former.

One very encouraging figure is the number of schools per 100,000. It is 13 schools, against a national average of 14 for the same population.

An even more encouraging figure is the drop out rate among students up to the upper primary level. Nationally, it is 62 per cent, whereas in LoC East it is 54 per cent. Regardless of the gap between quality and quantity, one thing these figures show is a desire for the education of its youth among LoC East's population

and that this is growing. It can and must be taken advantage of.

One of the features of concern in the official statewide reports is that the figures, other than on literacy, for the two districts in Ladakh (namely Kargil and Leh) are minimal and, in some cases, not represented at all. In a sense this reflects a severely quantitative representational approach, since the population of Ladakh is barely two per cent of LoC East. However, interviews with members of the local governing bodies reflect that the statistics for the two districts are not far off those for LoC East as a whole, with Kargil lagging behind in some measure, reflecting the figures in the **Literacy Report – 2008**<sup>58</sup> (hereafter **LR – 2008**).

In absolute terms, the figures for education up to the higher secondary level are encouraging. There are 19,238 government-run elementary schools. Private schools are also impressive in their numbers; 3691 schools in the state are registered with the Department of Education. As for higher secondary schools, there are 1652 government-run higher secondary schools and 1093 private schools in this category.<sup>59</sup>

## Vocational education<sup>60</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned schools, the government in LoC East, under the impetus of the Union Government of India, has aggressive vocational programmes. Here too, the numbers are impressive and there is

---

58. **LR – 2008**, p 7

59. **SEP**, p 104. The government reports break up the schools into 'primary' and 'upper primary' for Classes I to V and VI to VIII respectively; and Classes IX and X and Classes XI and XII are referred to as 'secondary' and 'higher secondary' respectively. However, for ease of reference, in this note we refer to Classes I to VIII as 'primary school' and Classes IX to XII as 'higher secondary school'.

60. A list of the vocational institutions in LoC East can be made available upon request.

---

57. Figures are from **SEP**, p 104, Srinagar, 2008

every indication of a need for more such institutions to alleviate unemployment in LoC East. In this category of education, LoC East has 13 government-run polytechnic institutes and some 47 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). However, there is little information on the qualitative output of these institutes; the government has recently embarked on a scheme, in conjunction with one of the state universities, to upgrade this skill development and training aspect of the state's educational planning. LoC East in conjunction with the Central Government of India, has also announced the creation of 18 more ITIs to respond to the need.

Although the brief for this report has been to focus on higher education, it may be worthwhile to consider including vocational skill development and training institutes within the ambit of its study. More on this is provided later.

## Higher education

Our discussion of higher education in LoC East should be prefaced with a brief overview of higher education in the country as a whole. Indeed, as may be gleaned from current media reports, the educational system within India has undergone considerable introspection in the past year starting with education up to Class XII (India has a system that is known as the 10 + 2 formula which considers the last two years of schooling to be a preparatory for the stream of study a student may wish to adopt) and spilling into higher education. Quite apart from that, it seems that given the nature of higher education, it is quite logical for us to think about it globally. This is not only because of the links between educational and research institutions globally – through sheer need such as environmental and climate change imperatives – but also because students travelling across borders have been a fast-growing global phenomenon.

In this context, the fact that this logic should extend to and be actualised for improving and expanding the cross-LoC relationship is commonsense. We shall address this in some detail in the section on policy formulation and direction in LoC East. For the moment, let us provide a brief overview of the higher education infrastructure.

## Colleges<sup>61</sup>

The quantitative information apropos of institutions beyond higher secondary education for LoC East is reflective of the numbers for secondary education. In all, it has 74 colleges that offer degrees equivalent to the Bachelor's degree. Of these, 10 are in the category of 'Oriental Colleges', which means that the language proficiency in these is Urdu and Arabic. In all the other colleges the medium of instruction is English, although there is now a growing demand to make these colleges bilingual, meaning also offering instruction in Hindi. This demand however is probably some time away from being actualised, as it would put a strain on those who can actually instruct in the vernacular, and also limit employment opportunities for their graduates. In Jammu province there is also a sizeable number of privately funded three-year degree colleges.

---

61. For the purposes of this note, we have used the following definitions to distinguish the various kinds of higher education, which in fact corresponds to the official understanding prevalent in LoC East. 'College' refers to three years towards a Bachelor's Degree. Professional Institute refers to either one, three or four year institutions which provide technical education ranging from engineering, to medical education to specialised diplomas in teaching such as the 'B Ed' and the term 'University' refers to institutions that offer degrees beyond the Bachelor's Degree such as a Masters, MPhil or PhD, although without prejudice to their own 'colleges', either as 'affiliates' or as part of their own system.



The colleges are affiliated to either the University of Kashmir or the University of Jammu. This means, primarily, that it is these two universities that give legitimacy to the degrees conferred on their graduates; however the colleges operate with a high degree of autonomy. As a consequence the system at times is cumbersome, and it also makes for difficulty in monitoring standards of education. The colleges offer courses that culminate in bachelor degrees in various fields including the arts, sciences, humanities, technology and medicine.

Here it might be mentioned that certain colleges such as Islamia College, Amar Singh College and Sri Pratap College were established before the 1947 divide and generally represent the 'top' colleges within the LoC East. Indeed, there would be many individuals in LoC West who graduated from these colleges before 27 October 1947 who could provide the initial impetus, in various ways, to facilitate easier contact between these colleges, as their statutes and rules would in all probability facilitate easier dialogue between the two sides of the divide.

Almost all, if not indeed all, the other colleges were established after the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir's division in October 1947. They are collectively known as 'government degree colleges' and offer courses in the sciences, the humanities, technology and the social sciences. However, there has been minimal reform in the past 60 years and it would not be inaccurate to say that in the past 20 years, due almost entirely to the insurgency and the exodus of teachers – not a small number of them being Kashmiri Pandits who in many ways constituted the backbone of the educational system – the colleges have deteriorated and need to be revamped both in physical infrastructure and methods in teaching and research.

In a somewhat separate category are institutions known as 'B Ed Colleges'. These are in fact one-year colleges, which accept students after they complete three years of a bachelor's degree. They are premised on the fact that to teach in the various government primary and higher secondary schools, the Indian government as well as the government in LoC East requires a specialised degree in teaching. There are approximately 140 of these in LoC East that produce a large number of teaching diplomas for citizens of LoC East as well as other areas, large numbers of whom do not hesitate to travel to the Kashmir Valley despite adverse security conditions to study and obtain degrees.

It needs to be said that there have been no studies on the quality of education in the various colleges. The quality varies from institution to institution. One of the tasks that will need to be undertaken is an objective assessment of the quality of education including identifying those colleges in which it is good.

## **Professional colleges**

The institutions in this category include medical colleges, dental colleges, music and art colleges, engineering colleges, institutes of technology, institutions specialising in the teaching of traditional (Unani and Ayurvedic) medicine and so on. There are about 12 such institutions throughout LoC East.

Some of the medical institutions, like the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) are well funded and do provide pockets of very good services in health care. However, there is little doubt that the progress in LoC East has some way to go before it catches up to state-of-the-art best practices in hard infrastructure, diagnosis and patient care. There are also several private institutions, especially in medicine and engineering that exist and which, as a rule, are as good as the government sponsored

ones in LoC East. As for the educational institution designed to cater to music and the arts, its scope is currently quite limited and there is considerable room for the development of institutions that promote these fields of study and research.

## University education

It is in the arena of university education that LoC East has a large network. With a population of approximately 12 million people, it has seven fully fledged universities and two 'deemed universities'.

Two of the established universities, the University of Jammu and the University of Kashmir, are the first state universities. They were established as one institution in the late 1950s and then split into two independent universities in the late 1960s. Two more universities in the agricultural sciences<sup>62</sup> are also fully state sponsored. In addition to these, three more universities have been established in the past six years: namely, Mata Vaishno Devi University, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University of Science and Technology and Islamic University of Science and Technology. These universities hold an ambiguous status that might be termed public-private partnership. They were promulgated by religious endowment boards of the state; however all universities in India can only be established by an Act of the State Legislature or the Central Government Parliament, so these three universities have been proclaimed by an Act of the J&K State Legislature. They are different from the 'fully' state sponsored universities in that the latter are not obligated to fund them, this being the

purview of the religious endowment boards that promulgated them.

There are two institutions in LoC East that are termed 'deemed universities': the National Institute of Technology (NIT) and the Medical College at the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS). These institutions were started as professional institutes that were modest in size, but over the years have acquired a large enough infrastructure so as to qualify them to become full institutes. The University Grants Commission of India (UGC) has recognised this and has conferred a status that implies full university status after they fulfil certain requirements and a minimum period of gestation. In addition, the Central Government of India has in the last year announced its intention to promulgate, enact, fund and operate two central universities – one each in Kashmir and Jammu – with an initial funding of Rs. 1400 crores<sup>63</sup> each.

---

62. These are the two Sher-i-Kashmir Universities for Agricultural Science and Technology (SKUAST) based in Kashmir and Jammu. They too began as one unit and then were split into two after a few years.

---

63. One crore equals 10 million Indian Rupees. (One US dollar = 46 Rupees. One UK pound = 70 Rupees).

## 5. A note on policy formulation process and policy direction in LoC West

The policy formulation and implementation processes in the regions of LoC West: AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan are fragmented and, therefore, do not manifest the drive that is essential for a qualitative advance and productive relationship between educational attainment and the job market. First, the two regions have followed the path of 'separate political development' in the past six decades. Second and more pertinent, is the intra-regional scenario that is characterised by a near absence of cohesive approaches in planning and implementation in the domain of educational development. There is no 'jointness' in the vision or efficient mechanism for coordination among three sectors: schools, colleges and universities that were organisationally separated for management purposes. The sector, barring the newly emerged universities, is indeed a major source of employment rather than development. Moreover, the local administrations remain uncertain about their own roles in view of a gradual and not-too-ostentatious integration process with the larger Pakistani whole.

The government structure in Muzaffarabad provides separate ministerial and top bureaucratic portfolios for school and college education. The universities, whether public sector or private sector, are chartered by the administration in Muzaffarabad through an act of the Legislative Assembly with a built-in role for the State President as Chancellor and autonomous institutions such as Senate and Syndicate. However, the higher education domain, both at college level and at the universities, is overwhelmed by administrative advice, curriculum development and funding from or through Islamabad-based institutions: Ministry of Education and Higher Education Commission.

The 'vision of education' and broader policy direction emanating from Islamabad does not *ipso facto* apply on the territory under the administration of Muzaffarabad. However, in most cases it is adopted in the territory by administrative or legislative acts. In doing so, the institutions in Muzaffarabad have not displayed sufficient skills to blend the 'vision in Islamabad' with the region-specific heritage and needs.

Similarly, the educational administration in Gilgit-Baltistan is run separately in various compartments while all fragmented levels within the region have evolved greater connectivity with Islamabad through the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs. Among them, university education is contingent upon an almost exclusive control from Islamabad.

The attainment in literacy levels is deep-rooted in the region's history and political economy and therefore stands high among tangible achievements of the past six decades. However, higher education is a rather new phenomenon compared with schooling and, therefore, is still in the evolutionary stage. The window of opportunities to date, relate to two public sector universities and a private medical college in AJK, and one public sector university in Gilgit. Institutions dedicated to professional education and more openings for teacher training are still in the planning stage.

The higher literacy, without corresponding productive activity in the regions, has strengthened migratory trends for opportunities in the wider job market and for quality and higher education. Until recently, transfer of residence to Lahore or Islamabad and in cases Karachi was seen as cost-effective, promising access to the

requisite higher education and jobs. The trend has perceptibly slowed down with the broadening higher education opportunities within the area, though brain drain remains among the foremost problems faced in LoC West.

The government remains the single most important employer in the two regions. However, productive activity in the private sector has not enlarged with the growth in literacy and subsequently in higher education. The relationship between education, quality and focus, and the job market therefore remains uncertain.

Policy-relevant circles at the regional levels are faced with a number of dilemmas and search for remedial courses. The imbalance between quality and expansion is the foremost problem. Second, the quality as well expansion is faced with serious resource constraints. Third, development of a teaching community of high standing, using orientation and training tools is another dilemma. The planners would therefore like to sustain and improve the existing facilities rather than expand. However, this approach does not always receive support from political circles. They would also like to reprioritise and reshuffle emphasis on disciplines that have connectivity with the job market and to relate the education policy with indigenous planning and development.

In recent decades, the indigenous character of the policy formulation process has eroded at higher education levels. The erosion is, in part, an outcome of the globalisation phenomenon that is universally at play. It also results from the overriding influences from the federal structures and the Higher Education Commission (HEC). However, the erosion is only resented in as much as it relates to the native sense of identity and their cultural ethos. Of late, incremental steps are underway to make up for this deficiency.

The governmental budgets in the regions are essentially related to school and college education. The AJK authorities spend Rs. 6,782.852 m<sup>64</sup> (27.5 per cent of its revenue budget) on education.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Gilgit-Baltistan incurs Rs. 623.922 m<sup>66</sup> (13.7 per cent of revenue budget) in the domain.<sup>67</sup> Ironically however, 97 per cent of the AJK education budget is taken by recurring expenditure, mainly salaries, leaving behind limited operational capacity for development. Similar constraints exist in the northwest.

The public sector universities in AJK have an overall budget of Rs. 618.371 m; out of this 80 m has been diverted from AJK University to the newly established MUST.<sup>68</sup> Their current developmental outlay is in the range of Rs.197 m. The Karakoram University in Gilgit spends Rs. 260 m as recurring budget and Rs. 151 m on development projects.<sup>69</sup> It is important to keep in view that for universities in AJK 70 per cent of resources come from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) in Islamabad. The university in Gilgit relies upon funding from HEC equal to half its budget.

The educational management in the territory also mirrors the overall problems of governance and cost-effective management. The regions need to enforce an organic relationship between the 'vision' and policy management, and to re-energise planning and policy coordination with an eye on quality of education and job markets. Moreover, innovative approaches are needed to overcome resource constraints.

---

64. Here 'm' denotes a million (ten lakh: 1,000,000) Pakistani Rupees. One US dollar = 85 Rupees. One pound = 132 Rupees.

65. Akram Sohail, Secretary Education AJK

66. Approximately 7 million US Dollars

67. 'Education in Gilgit-Baltistan', a working paper by Naveed Athar Zaman, Research Associate, Faculty of Contemporary Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad

68. Professor Dr Muhammad Qayyum Khan, Registrar AJK University

69. Wajod Hussain, Director of Finance, Karakoram International University

## 6. A note on policy formulation process and policy direction in LoC East

The large educational infrastructure of LoC East is managed through the combined structure of political, bureaucratic and professional inputs. Politically, two elected individuals who are designated Ministers for School, Technical and Higher Education with cabinet rank, address education. They, in turn, are assisted in implementation of policies by parallel bureaucratic support structures. In the arena of higher education, the parent body for all of India, for purposes of standards, regulation and funding is the University Grants Commission of India (UGC). The latter monitors the minimal standards for all the universities and colleges that are either affiliated to specified universities or wholly operated 'constituent' parts of the university. This, then, is the theoretical framework for state education.

The structure is true of the government schools, as also colleges and universities supported by the government. In addition, as has already been stated, there are a large number of private schools. These, in both Kashmir and Jammu divisions, have grouped to form private professional associations (there are three in Jammu, one in Kashmir and, now, a joint all state body) that meet periodically to discuss such matters as curricula, syllabi and other issues; but it is not clear how effective these are as a lobby for elementary and secondary education. Private colleges however, do not as yet have such an association given the relatively small numbers.

In practice the education portfolio is considered, as in many governments, a 'lesser' one. There is little focus on the desperate need for vertical synergies between the various levels of education, including at the intra-state or at the

central government levels between schools, colleges and universities. Nor is there much coordination horizontally within LoC East between schools, colleges and universities. Indeed, in LoC East this is wanting even in usual activities such as inter-school sports, debates and other cooperative competition. These did exist earlier, but in the past 20 years such cooperation has been the victim of the violence that has plagued the state; it has had the effect of a loss of memory about such activities and educational institutions have been habituated to become insular, thinking merely in terms of the classroom rather than all-round education and, indeed, confining themselves to their given regions of Ladakh, Kashmir and Jammu.

As for the universities in LoC East, it would not be inaccurate to say that while each has its own strengths, there is no perception of one or the other being individually distinctive in a given field. Each pursues its development more or less independently of the others, resulting in duplications, overlapping curricula and redundancies in areas of research. This lack of coordination between them results in the paradox of an extensive network of higher educational institutions for a population of its size but an inability to optimise the benefits of such a luxurious infrastructure.<sup>70</sup>

So it would seem that the intra -Kashmir cooperation across the LoC should be preceded by some interaction between the universities within LoC East (and within LoC West), or even an independent research project that gives us a qualitative

---

70. It should be mentioned here that the Governor of J&K State has recently convened a meeting of Vice Chancellors of the universities to address this vacuum and coordinate higher education

overview of the present and a broad roadmap for the future.

In anticipation of some of the specific recommendations for the improvement of education in the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir as a whole in a later section, it might be worthwhile to very briefly take into consideration some general assumptions or trends in higher education in India in particular and the South Asian region in general.

A recent development in education in the postcolonial regions of the world has been to concentrate on 'science and technology'; this has been the inclination in South Asia as well, and LoC East is not immune to the same temptation. Research by educationists and philosophers<sup>71</sup> however, has pointed out how '... in most state-run schools (sic), science and technology prosper while essential values of critical thinking and mental freedom, so crucial to the health of a democracy, are sorely neglected.'<sup>72</sup>

The author, Martha Nussbaum, goes on to recommend among other things, the need for '[Indian] national dialogue [that] might include and focus on the question of how to revive the humanities, so that, from primary education to the university research level, they make the social contribution that they are capable of making.'<sup>73</sup> Similarly, she suggests the dire need to concentrate on ways in which earning power, prestige and dignity for the teaching profession should be a point of consideration within the Indian educational system.<sup>74</sup> And again, how the 'arts can and should be given particular emphasis in education infrastructure of

the state in higher education. The many great artists of whom India is justly proud could be brought together to generate ideas about how this can best be done.'<sup>75</sup>

All of these suggestions would seem to apply to the initiative under consideration for the State of Jammu and Kashmir in its entirety. Indeed, I would tend to argue that Nussbaum's analysis and recommendations are true for South Asia in general and that it would stand us in good stead to keep that in mind when considering the potentialities and recommendations for cross-LoC interaction on educational cooperation.

In this context, in a seminar<sup>76</sup> a couple of years ago, the following were considered the five key questions on higher education in India:

1. Should institutions of higher education, including universities, diversify their curricula to cater to the specialised requirements of employers or should they concentrate on core competencies only?
2. How could the system be simplified because the times had far outgrown the regulatory capacity of the government institutions?
3. What should be the time frame within which basic education ends and vocational education begins?
4. Should examinations be held at the national level?
5. How should the evergrowing gap between the demand and the supply of qualified teachers be bridged?

It is fair to say that the country is in the midst of responding to these questions in higher education at this time.

---

71. With regard to education in India, see Nussbaum, Martha. *The Clash Within* (Harvard University Press, 2007): 264 – 301. Cf. also Beteille, Andre. 'Universities as Centres of Learning', in *Antinomies of Society*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000): 131-152

72. Ibid 265

73. Ibid 298

74. Ibid 299

---

75. Ibid 300

76. See 'How to Reform Higher Education in India', in *Business World*, 22 August 2009

In addition to these specific issues, there are some others of a broader nature. In a recent discussion, Professor Varun Sahni, Vice Chancellor of the University of Jammu, was introspecting about what the challenges are for the university system in India. He indicated, I think rightly, that the challenges have to do with achieving a high degree of balance between several factors that impinge on this sector. These he listed as the balances between mass education and quality education, between private initiative and state support, between developed global competition and strengthening national institutions of higher education and between regulation and autonomy of educational systems.<sup>77</sup> It seems to me that it is precisely these factors we should keep in mind as we explore the extant higher educational infrastructure on both sides of the LoC and aim towards utilising each other's strengths, dividing up responsibilities to minimise redundancy and build capacity for all citizens on either side of the LoC.

In the context of the Kashmir problem, it should be noted that the Indian government's stated position, within the framework of its official position that excludes the 'redrawing of borders', is that it welcomes any form of interaction between the two sides of the LoC divide. To this end, Group II of the Four Working Groups that were constituted by the Prime Minister of India, has recommended in its January 2007 report, that the government encourages:

"Exchange visits between students and faculty members of the Universities on [the] two sides of the LoC; organised visit[s] of school students; short term courses in certain specific subjects; consideration for the grant of admission to PoK (sic) students in LoC East Universities; exchange visits of groups

of journalists, academicians, lawyers etc; cultural trips in the fields of music, dance, etc. After due consideration of security aspects the landline and mobile communication should also be permitted."<sup>78</sup>

This passage from the report merits full quotation as it seems to leave considerable room for play and can be a central argument for this CR-sponsored initiative in its submissions to the governments of the two countries. It should be added that the Ministry of Home Affairs has acted on this official position of the Indian government; in an interview with the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, the latter confirmed 12 students from Pakistan have been given permission for visas to study in LoC East and furthermore, some of them had been permitted to study in Srinagar. Perhaps more importantly, the Ministry is willing to grant more such visas if and when they are applied for, and has pledged support for any applications received for admission into educational institutions on this side of the divide. These are encouraging signs for any assessment of the potential for cross-LoC engagements in higher education and, indeed, education in general. It is precisely such windows of 'opportunity structures' that need to be taken advantage of in order to advance the aims of the present initiative in the area of higher education.

---

77. He has argued similarly in an article in *Mail Today*, New Delhi, 17 September 2009

---

78. 'Summary of Reports of Four Working Groups on Jammu and Kashmir', January 2007

## 7. Assessing the potential for intra-Kashmir cooperation

A hiatus of six decades in the way of trans-Jammu & Kashmir contact because of sibling rivalries between India and Pakistan has created perception gaps and accentuated ideology-based and grievance-propelled behaviour patterns that have impeded conflict transformation in the state. However, it has not completely erased the sense of common history, appreciation of plurality, tolerance of diversity and the memory of social, economic and political interdependence among the citizens of the state's constituent parts. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that the acrimonious lines drawn after intense contestations and wars over the past 62 years has rigidly separated the state during a period in world history that has seen the most dramatic changes since the start of the 16th century. The reality of frozen borders after centuries of *de facto* fluidity between its peoples that allowed trade, pastoral grazing rights and ethnic interaction has had its own impact on the body politic of this region; an impact which cannot be ignored when considering any assessments for cooperation in higher education or, for that matter, any other kind of social activity between the two sides of the Line of Control.

In this context, the past five to seven years have seen arguably the most sustained and intensive engagement between New Delhi and Islamabad since partition of the subcontinent and, consequently, that of the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir. A good portion of this latest series of engagements between the twin-born states has been ambiguous, argumentative and even accusatory. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that from these oppositional positions has

emerged an ongoing dialogue that is responding, albeit incrementally, to cutting a path toward resolution of the dispute.

Indeed, the effect of this very separation lends efficacy to the consideration of institutional engagements between the two sides of the LoC rather than the more generic calls for 'making borders irrelevant' or even opening up the divide for 'people-to-people' contacts. The efforts towards the latter should and will continue, especially where the separation of organic units such as blood relatives, filial links and ethnic associations strive for contacts between each other across divides, no matter where they exist. But for state-to-state relationships to transmute into amity and cooperation, it is precisely *institutional* linkages that must be explored, nurtured and implemented. It is just such linkages that will be instrumental in giving substance to people-to-people contacts and credence to the idea of irrelevant borders without prejudice to either the historical reality of such unity or reification of that unity.

The possibility for mobilising 'opportunity structures' for conflict transformation and peacebuilding is linked to the space and political will to allow greater interaction across the LoC. In this context it is important to bridge the gaps, be they real or perceived, build on genuine commonalities and revive commonalities in the economic and social spheres among the citizens of the state as a whole.

This presupposes an enhancement of cross-LoC movement of the natives, thus far limited, and its wider use to cover cultural and scholastic exchanges as well. Both India and Pakistan need to be



encouraged to enlarge the area of their facilitation and take up a responsive mode in meeting the agenda of trans-Jammu & Kashmir interaction in the educational domain.

This survey of potential for cross-LoC educational cooperation has been revealing in many ways. Educational progress made by two sides of the divide is, first of all, manifest at varying levels: LoC West has achieved a spectacular literacy rate while its structures of higher education are still in the evolutionary stage. LoC East has excelled in the domain of higher education, although is found wanting in state institutions for elementary and secondary education.

Second, these attainments do not necessarily lead to an upturn in the productive activity within the state. In the case of LoC West, the higher literacy rate, without corresponding job markets, only strengthens migratory trends to the neighbourhood. Concurrently, the attainment in higher education in LoC East has enlarged the unemployment process. The educational development therefore ought to be backed up by development of indigenous job markets and the role of donors-enterprisers from abroad ready to contribute to the development process.

Third, the future educational development on both sides, commensurate with international standards, is faced with resource constraints. The process is subject to control by higher education regulatory bodies, which have roles beyond the lead in curriculum development. They determine funding priorities and quantum within the ambit of a larger whole rather than in a region-specific operation.

There are some specific areas in which there is potential for cross-LoC cooperation in higher education. Before examining these it may be pertinent to identify two broader tasks that need

to be addressed before they can be implemented effectively.

The first area is the political sensibilities involved in any engagement between the two sides of the LoC. Any attempt at such relationships, in whichever field of activity, is contingent on amity between India and Pakistan. One way to address this sensibility is to keep New Delhi and Islamabad fully informed about the ideas and projects being discussed so as to cultivate an interactive and dialogic atmosphere at the Muzaffarabad - Islamabad and Srinagar-New Delhi axes also. It may be done, for example, by inviting observation and participation by representatives of the two capitals in these engagements. This is important, precisely, to help the effort garner 'political will' in the two capitals.

Another important dimension for any success on initiatives in higher education cooperation would be a candid and frank assessment of the conditions of the status of higher education that are prevalent *internally* on either side of the LoC at present. The process has already begun with this report, which gives us the broad outlines of what is available on either side of the LoC, but is only a beginning. It will have to be supported with more specific surveys of either side, possibly by professional research firms. One key issue to be addressed in such a professional survey would be the gap between physical infrastructure and the quality in the learning - teaching - research combine in the state as a whole. It would also identify priorities that need to be pursued in the medium and long-term.

The above assessment points towards some short, medium and long-term institutional commitments in education between LoC West and LoC East. These rest upon opportunities for development, rooted in the LoC East setting, which are heritage-based on the one hand and need-based on the other. Toward this,

the authors consulted educationists and various stakeholders and ‘focus groups’ on both sides of the LoC, and followed this up in an interactive conclave.<sup>79</sup> Educationists on both sides of the divide, whether policy-relevant or academics, expressed great interest in more interaction in the educational domain with a desire to use the newly provided openings for movement, specifically among natives. This feeling was tempered by a realisation that such intra-Kashmir exchanges, because of the political rivalry between India and Pakistan over the past six decades, may have to be realised in incremental gains.

What follows are some recommendations for short-term, medium-term and long-term engagement between the two sides of the LoC. The precise time frame and ordering of engagements such as those discussed below is clearly open to discussion and dependent upon a chain of possibilities being pursued and opened up. Nonetheless, the intention here is to stimulate ideas so as to generate further opportunities.

## **Short-term recommendations**

### **Getting to know each other better**

It was felt that given the opportunity structures in place in the overall relationship between the two sides of the LoC, participants in the interviews suggested three possible steps that could be initiated and co-sponsored by universities to get to know each other better. These were (a) visits by groups from among the teaching community and talented students, (b) an extensive process of consultation among academics to develop a list of themes based on common heritage and shared needs that qualify for collaborative research and

professional seminars or workshops and (c) exchange of student groups, students for which purpose are nominated on the basis of their merit and talent.

### **Cross-LoC Vice Chancellors’ Consortium**

The Vice Chancellors from both sides of the LoC should form a consortium and agree to periodic meetings between them. These would inject greater clarity in the vision for cooperation and unfold an actionable agenda on matters within their domain. The first meeting of the Vice Chancellors should be arranged at a third point, with an eye on subsequent meetings taking place within the former State of Jammu and Kashmir. Follow-up meetings through videoconferencing facilities could serve to sustain a dynamic relationship between the Vice Chancellors.

### **An academic website**

This could be a window of opportunity that would allow a bridge for information in the domain of scholarly endeavour. It could be co-managed by members from both sides of the LoC and provide academics with access to profiles of their counterparts and their work. This venture will be cost-effective and time-efficient in view of the existing narrow and incremental openings for interaction across the LoC.

### **Institution of e-learning processes**

Encourage select universities from the two sides of the LoC to implement classes by videoconference in specified subjects. This is relatively easy to arrange and would greatly help to familiarise the two sides with each other and ‘demystify’, as it were, the other. University Vice Chancellors in Muzaffarabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, Srinagar and Jammu could be approached in order to utilise already existing infrastructure if it exists and institutions without them should be encouraged to obtain the technology.

---

79. A conclave of a dozen educationalists from Kashmir was convened by Conciliation Resources in Istanbul on 20-24 September 2010

### **Scholarly exchanges**

The above three steps should serve as a ladder for scholarly exchanges on two counts. First, the universities on the two sides could agree to an exchange of publications and research results that relate to shared professional and academic interest. Second, this could set the stage for eventual faculty exchanges among the institutions on a need basis. The exercise could begin with the universities drawing up a shortlist of disciplines in which faculty exchanges may be desirable.

### **Medium-term recommendations**

#### **Special collaborative projects**

The academia and policy-relevant educationists across the divide have been inundated with studies and research on issues relevant to de-escalating conflicts rooted in identity-crisis and/or governance. This carries potential for special collaborative projects that may take the form of workshops or seminars. For example, the International Resource Centre (AJK University, Muzaffarabad), the Centre for International Peace and Conflict Studies (Islamic University, Awantipora) and the Centre for Regional and Strategic Studies (University of Jammu, Jammu) could all examine the Kashmir dispute in relation to peace and conflict and could develop a collaborative framework to build a regional centre of excellence in a similar way to the focus on conflict resolution and peace studies in Northern Ireland in the years prior to and since the Belfast Agreement.

#### **Vocational training**

The potential for both sides of the LoC gaining from the experiences either side over the past 60 years is immense and can serve as yet another bridge across the divide. In this context, 'wazwan' as a distinct form of cuisine could be popularised and reintroduced in

the Muzaffarabad area from Kashmir. Similarly, special skills in Himalayan tourism could be exchanged between Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan and trade or manufacturing skills between the two sides of Jammu could be both learned and synergised.

#### **Liaison Council of Teachers in higher education**

Teachers in higher education from the two sides of the LoC could be encouraged to form a Joint Liaison Council of Teachers (JLCT) that could set in motion some broad interactions between practitioner pedagogues. This too may be contemplated with an incremental approach in mind and as a complementary step alongside the Vice Chancellors' Consortium. It could also start with a meeting of a small nucleus outside the region that could facilitate the process by drafting a workable broad agenda.

#### **Committee of Stakeholders in Education**

Complementing the JLCT and the Vice Chancellors' Consortium (VCC) could be a Committee of Stakeholders in Education (CSE). This group would consist of stakeholders in education from across the LoC such as pedagogues, parents, students, electronic and print media, and business community members who will discuss various aspects of possible cooperation. The JLCT and the VCC could consider nominations for members among them to be part of the CES.

### **Long-term recommendations**

#### **Human resource development**

On the one hand, LoC West is preparing to upgrade and widen its educational programmes in the domain of human resource development and its teacher training institutions are being upgraded. Concurrently, AJK University is in the

process of initiating a USAID project to introduce a Faculty of Education with a focus on M Ed. The importance of collaboration in this broad domain has been highlighted by academics. The two sides should jointly discuss the specifics of where there might be opportunities for reciprocity and collaborations in important fields such as this.

### **Collaborative research**

Collaborative research on various themes, whether heritage-based or need-based, should be encouraged between individuals sponsored by institutions from either side of the LoC. The heritage-based themes could consist of cultural history, languages such as Kashmiri, Pahari, Tibetan, Dogri and other languages spoken in the region, archaeology, arts, crafts and religions including Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

The need-based subjects seen as relevant for collaborative study and research include environmental issues such as Kashmir-specific flora and fauna in the context of threatened extinction; wildlife conservation; implications of the fragility of high altitude mountain desert regions; water bodies and waste management; disaster management (including flooding, earthquakes and forest fires); climate change issues such as cooperative carbon credit planning; and intra-Kashmir trade.

### **Allocating seats for higher education**

The seat allocation for studies in higher education between the two sides of the divide is, in the main, seen as a measure to gain from their respective strengths and weaknesses in academic standing. In some cases, it is also viewed as a vehicle of mutual enrichment.

In this context, one of the tasks of the above-mentioned joint groups, such as the Vice Chancellors' Consortium and the Committee of Stakeholders in Education would be to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the various universities

and then make recommendations to them as to how prospective students from the two sides might gain from making seats available to them.

For example, the university at Muzaffarabad takes pride in its strength in subjects such as geology, physics and chemistry while it needs to learn more on 'Kashmir studies' and sectors in social sciences. Another example is the existence of Karakoram International University in Gilgit, which is preparing to introduce departments that would be of great benefit to the inhabitants of Ladakh in LoC East, where there is no university. The KIU development plan has a focus on geology, mineralogy and mineral development, glaciology (including study of glaciers amid climate change indicators and relevance to habitat), hydropower generation and wildlife management. The disciplines relate to shared interest in both sides of the state's northern regions. This flags the opportunities for student placements in the future. The solar energy development has moved from experimental success to production in Ladakh. Students from LoC West can benefit from this model.

### **Curriculum development**

Potential for collaboration in curriculum development is limited owing to the overall political environment and sensitivities at policy levels in India and Pakistan. However a beginning can be made in disciplines such as Kashmir studies, which is region-specific. Textbooks specific to cultural history and native languages can also draw on experiences of either side.

### **Joint degree programme**

The possibility of blending some degree programmes on either side of the divide with similar programmes at a comparable university or institution on the other side has been voiced as a test case. For example, the four-year IT and software

engineering programme at MUST in LoC West could be adjusted to make space for the final year or six-month placement at the other institution. Similarly, economics, plant sciences and Kashmir studies could be other test cases. However, evaluation of such projects will be the subject of negotiations between institutions within the ambit of curriculum-regulatory bodies in the larger national contexts on both sides.

# Acknowledgements

Any undertaking that has to do with confidence building measures in a conflicted zone requires dialogue, trust and patience. This is true also of a Report of the present nature and the authors would like to acknowledge the constant support of Conciliation Resources in both inculcating and expanding on all these ingredients. The participants of the Istanbul Conclave from both sides of the LoC divide also went a long way in infusing these important components of peacebuilding and we would like to thank all of that unique assemblage for their inputs. Needless to say, many of their valuable suggestions have not found their way into the Report due to reasons of space and context; but it would be fair to say that they are included in its implications. The study required many hours of interviews and the authors are grateful for the time and support given by all those who lent their time and ideas to the study. In LoC East, we would like to acknowledge, in particular, the help of Syed Suhail at Srinagar, who was instrumental in helping us to sift through a lot of information gathered in the official reports. In LoC West, we equally benefitted from the methodical support extended by Raja M. Khursheed at Muzaffarabad and Naved Athar Zaman at Gilgit.

The views contained in the publication are those of the authors, of course, and do not necessarily reflect the view of either Conciliation Resources or of others who have helped to make the study possible.

**Conciliation Resources (CR)** is an independent non-profit organisation with over 15 years experience of working internationally to prevent violent conflict, promote justice and build lasting peace in war torn societies.

We work with partners – local and international civil society organisations and governments - in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Pacific. We also seek to influence government peacemaking policies and publish the journal *Accord: an international review of peace initiatives*. Our funding is through grants from governments, multilateral agencies, independent trusts and foundations.

CR is registered in the UK as a charity (1055436).

## **Conciliation Resources**

173 Upper Street  
London N1 1RG  
United Kingdom

Telephone	+44 (0)20 7359 7728
Fax	+44 (0)20 7359 4081
Email	<a href="mailto:cr@c-r.org">cr@c-r.org</a>
Website	<a href="http://www.c-r.org">www.c-r.org</a>

conciliation  
resources