

An in-depth case study

How to involve religious scholars in sensitive topics

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Pakistan Country Context

Largely Muslim-populated nation

6th most populous country in the world - Ranks 146 in the Human Development Index

207 million in total population which is an average annual growth of 2.4 percent from 1998.

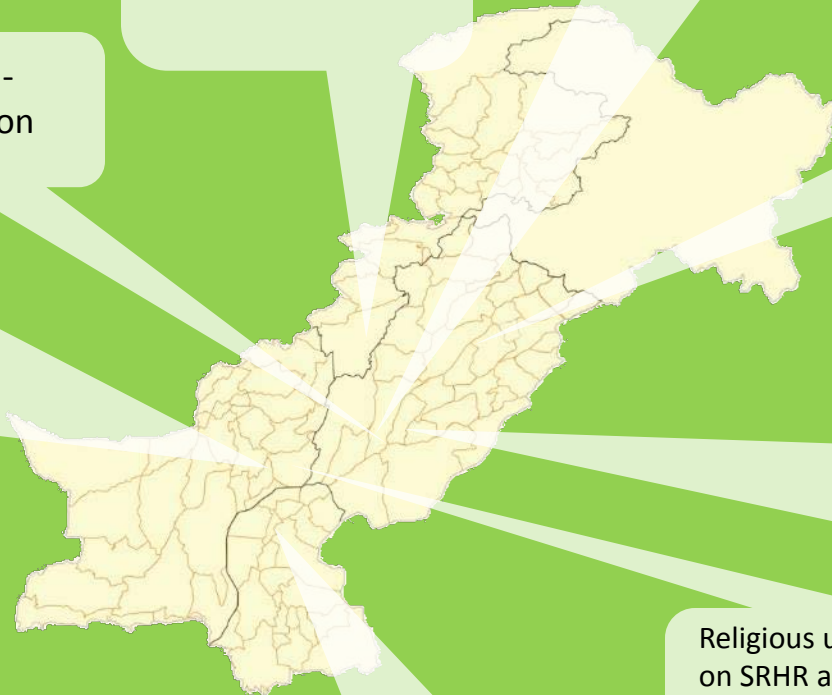
Out of total population almost 60% are in youth category.

64.27 % of Pakistan' youth lacks proper information, services and guidance on SRH issues

Youth specially girls are most vulnerable to exploitations, bullying, violence, sexual abuse, forced early marriages, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions and HIV/STI infections

Religious un acceptability and discourse on SRHR are key component of SRH rights for youth in Pakistan

Signatory to all UN declarations



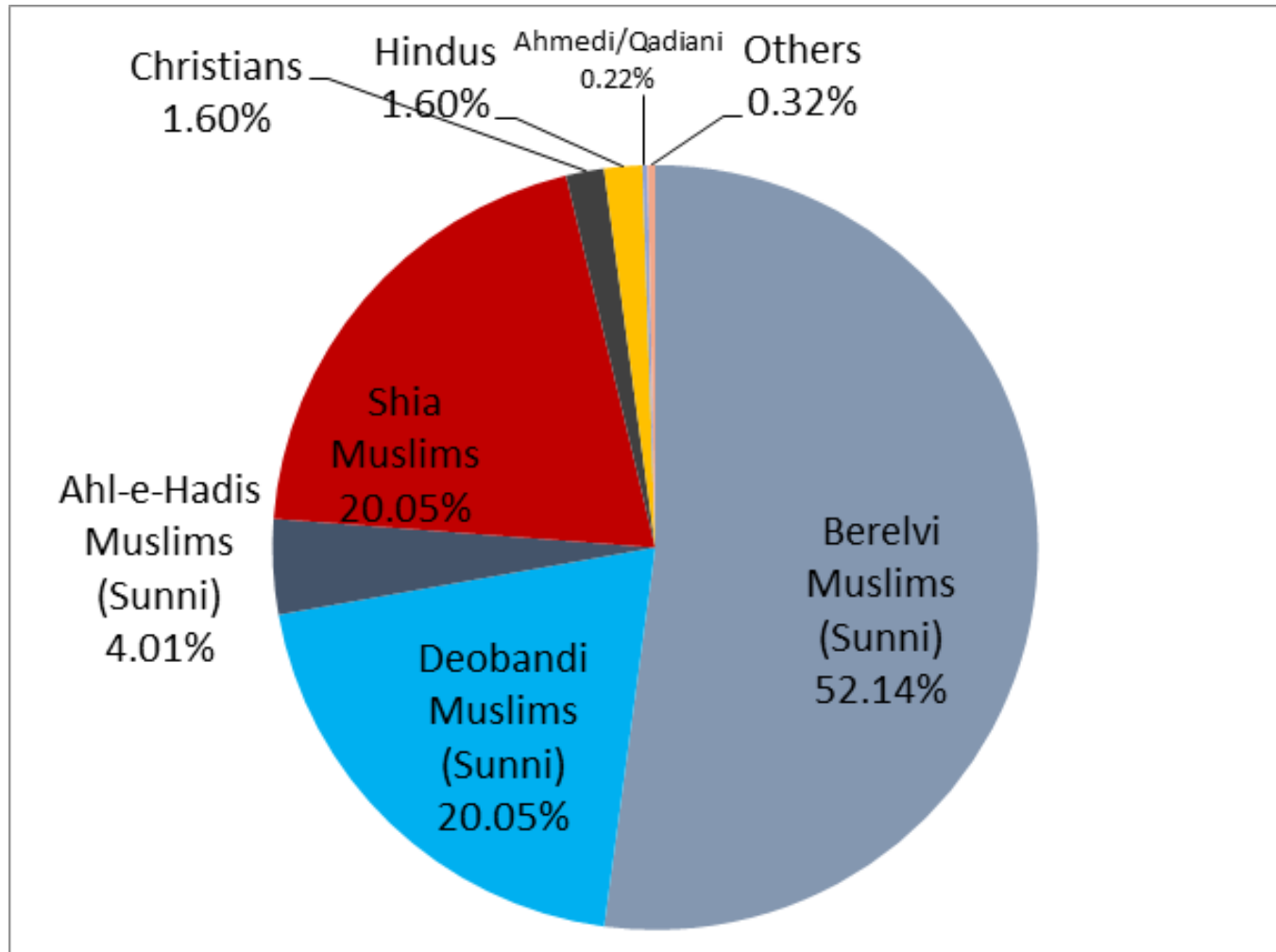
My Rights My Voice- Brief Overview

- ✓ 4 year edutainment project; across four provinces of Pakistan. Multi-country program in partnership with SIDA.
- ✓ Empower, equip and engage adolescents (10-18) and their caretakers to know, claim and practice youth rights to SRH
- ✓ lobby for a more conducive environment for promoting youth life skills education, awareness and implementation at all policy levels with government, Religious Scholars, academia and civil society.

SRHR – a sensitive topic in Pakistan

- ✓ Within the MRMV programme in Pakistan, we engaged directly with religious leaders to work with us on designing and implementing activities
- ✓ A realistic approach in a context where SRH is a highly sensitive topic. In order to mitigate risks and strengthen results

Religious milieu of Pakistan



Motivation for the Case Study

In total, **12 *Ulemas*** were a direct part of our project, working on LSBE material development and awareness raising. With our case study, we analyze:

- ✓ The effects of involving religious scholars in development practice and how it has enabled our programme's success.
- ✓ The factors for success, best practices and to evaluate challenges and lessons around effectively working with religious leaders around sensitive topics
- ✓ The process of engaging Religious scholars, starting from strategy development, to the first contact to the ultimate success of the project



Methodology to accumulate evidence for the Case study!

- The methodology involved in-depth interviews; review of existing project reports and Information Education and Communication materials; and literature review on similar projects.
- In-depth interviews with religious leaders (from different sects) were conducted. For this we chose one supreme *Aalim from each sect* and one religious leader at grassroots level, i.e., *Khateeb/Imam* from each of the three sects in our project areas. We also interviewed one government official.



Steps required for the meaningful participation of Religious scholars

In total, 12 Ulema's worked with us to develop review papers which were further translated into Friday sermons all containing SRHR information. The involvement of ulema made it possible for MRMV to not only broadcast SRHR soup on National TV but also to mainstream SRHR curriculum at Federal level.

7 Steps involved:

1. PLANNING AND STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

2. MAPPING AND IDENTIFICATION OF STAKEHOLDERS

- Rational for taking the ulema
- Power of Ulema

3. CONTACTING THE ULEMA

- Dispelling misconceptions and doubts of Ulema
- Differences between the sects:
- Successful Implementation of the project



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4. SELECTION OF TOPICS AND VOCUBULARY

- Local Context, Local Needs

5. IDENTIFYING MOTIVATION OF ULEMA

- Concerns and Barriers from Ulema

6. EDITING AND FINALIZATION OF REVIEW PAPERS

7. PRINTING, UTILIZATION AND DISSEMINATION OF BOOKLETS



CHALLENGES TO THE IMPLEMENTATION

- ✓ Rights based approach vs Need based approach
- ✓ Selection of Religious scholars
- ✓ Drop-outs of religious scholars
- ✓ Monetary incentive might have played a role
- ✓ Win some lose some!



THANK YOU

