Tight-ropes and Bootstraps: Enabling Violence-Affected Young Adults Deal With Trauma

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1. TOP THREE LEARNINGS FROM THE PROJECT

The current report covers the activities of the entire project from 1st February 2010 to 30th November 2012. The top learnings from the project are:

1. Education is one of the most important issues for Muslim youth (men and women), and the communities they belong to in the Old City of Hyderabad. Families undertake significant economic and emotional investment in order to get their children educated. The biggest block to continuing education is the lack of financial security. The desire for education was evident in the way both youth and the larger community were engaged in the project's activities related to scholarships and access to education, and the workshops on education and employment.

2. Lack of employment is the other crucial issue plaguing the youth. Our experience over the course of the project has shown that there is a great deal of enthusiasm – often bordering on desperation – expressed by youth, their parents and even local political representatives. They were prepared to take part in any activity that had the possibility for creating job opportunities. Employability and educational attainment are not correlated, with most Old City residents, whether qualified or not, being unable to secure jobs in the 'new' city.

3. Development programmes –An important aspect of the study is concerned with the debunking of certain myths which portray the Muslim community as apathetic to developmental activities and as insular and inward-looking. The study revealed that there is great enthusiasm and willingness in the community to participate in initiatives which address the improvement of socio-economic conditions. This was reflected in the active participation of the youth of the community, with support from the community elders, in all aspects of the project process. This is indicative of a consciousness of and desire for upward mobility through the maximum use of existing government policies, and was reflected in the needs assessment when lack of information was recognized by the youth as a critical factor inhibiting access to social development. The overall experience of the project highlights the keen interest of minority youth in bringing positive change to their communities.

Unique Methodology of Project

The project was designed with an understanding that young adults are not just "victims" but have the capacity to reflect and comment on their situation. The design had a central objective of involving the youth from the researched communities in the process of research.

This project attempts a unique methodology where the research problem, issues and solutions are all decided in consultation and consensus of the participating youth members along with the core research team. Such a methodological approach is adopted in the spirit of a cooperative mode of enquiry where the attempt is to break the hierarchy of the researcher and the researched and at the same time be action oriented where the activity of

research rather than only aiming at producing new knowledge is instead grounded in praxis with the aim of generating changes and positively affecting the lives of the researched community.

An unforeseen question - Why only Muslims?

One of the questions that we came across frequently during our field study was why we chose to study only Muslims. This in our view indicated their concern and unwillingness at being singled out as the only community facing socio-economic and civic discrimination in the Old City in Hyderabad. We could discern two factors behind this resistance. One, that by choosing only Muslim youth as the subjects of the research we could be inadvertently contributing to a further polarization of an already fragmented society. The second was that there could be a genuine suspicion of 'our hidden agendas' behind the seemingly innocuous task of data collection. Such a feeling though unexpected, is not surprising and in fact conforms to the remark by Justice Sachar where speaking on research with regards to the Muslim community, he points out how there were suggestions that there was "some hidden agenda in focusing research efforts on the status of Muslims in India. In fact, even collection of data on Muslims is seen by many as politically motivated". [footnote: In the foreword to the 'Handbook of Muslims in India. 2010]

We found any exercise involving the Muslim population becomes a challenge in a backdrop where a certain degree a feeling of hostility and mistrust persists towards the researchers who visit the Muslim locales to gather data and record their perceptions. This particular aspect was expressed by both the researchers and the researched, though from different perspectives. For the community it was an issue of distrust and misconception and even hostility towards the researchers that mostly arose from their previous experiences of surveys. This distrust is reflected in questions as to what their benefits from such an exercise would be.

One of the team members, who was interning while pursuing his studies in the University of Hyderabad reported how he was questioned several times with respect to the purpose of the study and his involvement in it. "In the old city, people will often asked, why we are working only on Muslims, or when we tell them that we are from Yugantar, people would often ask 'what is Yugantar? It doesn't sound like an Urdu name'. It sounds more like Sanskrit, and also the fact that it is in a Hindu area, meant that it was owned by the Hindus,given their knowledge of the city and the division of its space along religious lines." This bears evidence to the deep divide in the minds of people while pointing out the underlying insecurity reflected in their questions.

Choosing the Locations

The research team spent the first six months into the project mostly visiting various localities of the Old City, and meeting with residents, leaders and youth in the localities. The team spent considerable time in consulting other known organizations that had been working in the Old City. The team also consulted key informants who had worked on Muslim issues and had fair knowledge of the local conditions. After this process, the team chose five localities to undertake the research:

- Sultan Shahi, a particularly disturbed area in terms of communal conflict was chosen for it represented the economic decline of the Muslim community in Hyderabad.Once home to merchant families, it is now bracketed as one of the poorest areas of the city.

- Kala Patthar, a residential area about 40 years old and relatively more peaceful, was subjected to severe police backlash post the Mecca Masjid blast.

- Kishenbagh, an older settlement with a mixed population was chosen for the contrast evident in access and provision of institutional spaces in the Sikh vis a vis the Muslim section.

- Shaheen Nagar, is amongst the newer settlements that have sprouted up in the aftermath of communal violence from the 1980s.It houses affluent families along with the deprived.

- Syed Nagar, the only one chosen from the new city is adjacent to the most posh area of the city and has no history of violence and is relatively better off economically.

3.2 Learnings from Qualitative Psycho-Social Case-Studies

The Survey findings yielded a number of health and psychological wellness-related responses, which did not point to further psychological issues. However, informal discussions during the course of administering the questionnaires to the respondents revealed a number of behavioural issues that seemed similar to various dimensions of depression and trauma. In order to develop greater clarity on these issues we held discussions with Dr. Poornima Nagaraj, a well-known psychiatrist in Hyderabad, to determine the means to explore this subject further. The method finalized was semi-structured interviews with the youth and members of their families using a few predetermined indicators. Initially the interviews were to be conducted by the youth researchers, but given the sensitivities involved, senior members of Yugantar did them.

One must admit that these interviews have been done with a small cohort but what we have encountered is a widespread sense of personal and *collective* fear, anxiety, and feelings of humiliation as *a people*. The humiliations and repression felt by this small number should not be viewed as isolated instances for "Repeated punishment, while it crushes the hatred of a few, stirs the hatred of all …… just as trees that have been trimmed throw out countless branches." The ripple effect of these experiences extends through the larger community, and we found expressions of this at unguarded moments during many interactions.

Added to all this is the sure knowledge of their hopeless living conditions and meagre means of livelihoods, accentuated by the lack of support and apathy they perceive on the part of the administration and institutions of government. These issues, as we understand them, cannot be clinically diagnosed by psychiatrists, but perhaps society needs to develop a method of sensitive listening and engaging with the traumatized people of such a community.

We encountered tremendous reluctance from youth, community members, as well as civil society organizations working in the Old City, to talk about anything connected with communal riots, police harassment and discrimination. The research team reported extreme reluctance on the part of the respondents and key informants to discuss personal experiences related to violence. They refused to discuss psychological issues that could provide clues to the experience of trauma. We needed to first build trust with the community in order to create a conducive atmosphere to talk about issues, which are obviously painful and seen as part of a past they wish to forget.

In the later part of the research a number of interviews allowed us to understand the mediation between social reality and the inner life of a person; in other words, the conscious and sub-conscious processes. All the interviewees either had been victims themselves or are from families who went through crisis situations like deaths or loss of limbs, and property during clashes and police firings; or bystanders to incidents when others were being attacked; and those who were traumatised as children. The following are some of the themes emerging:

- Sense of meaningless existence and social estrangement.

- Sense of loss of childhood and carefreeness combined with the burden of shouldering responsibility.

- Feeling of not being valued.

- Anger, sadness, despair and the lack of a future

- Being fatalistic, finding comfort in God

- Insomnia

- Self-harm and substance abuse

The following accounts provide an illustration of how these issues manifested themselves.

Sense of meaningless existence and social estrangement

Siddique talks about his father's killing and how his life changed after that. "During my youthful age I shouldered responsibilities." He was emphatic, "only because father was a Muslim, they killed him. That was the only reason…my father used to sport a beard! Why else they have killed him tell me? Only because he was a Muslim! Had father been alive we would have definitely not lived this kind of life. Our life would have been good. We have lived this kind of crap life and that's how we are going to die!"

Junaid's mother talks about the change in the relatives' attitude after the police picked up her son and detained him illegally. "The behaviour of all my relatives has changed a lot since the incident. Except two of the sisters, all the other relatives, my brothers, their wives, my husband's sisters, my other sisters and their husbands have showed a cold shoulder towards us. Because of the case or I don't know from where they got this false information that a CID person is in our house all the time. So they are scared. They also have young boys and if they come to our house, their boys also might also get arrested. This kind of fear, they are not coming. I also got

to know who is who. You can only judge people when you are in difficulty. Those who really care and love, don't leave you in the worse times. Those who are selfish, turn away."

Akbar expresses a desire for support from the relatives. "I am leading a respectable life but still there is the need for support. I was expecting support and help from the relatives. But they did not help so I was heartbroken."

Sense of loss of childhood and carefreeness combined with the burden of responsibility

When his brother was shot Akbar dropped out of school (7th class) and started working. He says, "I was very upset when Azam was shot … ever since I have been working very hard here in India, in Charminar and that has paid off by the grace of god." Akbar says that in his younger days he was carefree. "In childhood it was not exactly anger but I used to be… kind of mischievous. I have become meek though and never quarrel with anybody. Sometimes I get a little impatient but I hide it successfully". He is a counsellor to the family, a father to his brothers, and burdened with responsibilities though he doesn't say so.

Bearing the burden of the family had affected the young men's lives in other ways as well. A major impact has been in putting off marriage. One of the reasons is the extra attention and effort required to take care of both the emotional and material needs of a family struck by tragedy. Performing marriages of sisters and educating younger male siblings are also cited.

Feeling of not being valued

Lack of any kind of support, while experiencing disrespect and negligence from institutions people needed to connect with, is another important indicator for the despair and collective trauma in people. Their norm has been that it is always their responsibility to go back again and again to visit the government officials or political party representatives for seeking any help. Their experiences in times of crisis has ranged from the harrowing to facing apathy and often negligence, resulting in their losing their sense of self-worth.

It is significant that one of the interviewees says "You are the first people who are kind enough to sit with me and patiently ask in depth about the tragedy we went though. AkramBhai called up and asked me 'do you have time?' Whenever he calls, the first thing he would ask was whether I have time. You know, I would always wonder, the other day also I got somebody's phone call. NayeemBhai's. Asking me, 'Brother, when are you free?' I used to feel so happy and even wonder as to what's so important in me that people are asking if I have time. I would feel so good, so happy".

Anger, sadness, despair and the lack of a future

In our initial survey we found that male youth took little initiative to try for jobs or for financial help from banking institutions for their trades or small businesses etc. We put it down to their complete lack of confidence on the one hand and the total despair of attempting and not succeeding on the other. Siddique, whose father had been murdered during communal strife, was encouraged to believe that financial help was available for

families like his. He talked about desperately trying to raise a loan to buy and run a taxi. He went to government bodies, minority's commission, and even some Muslim foundations. He did not get any help from anywhere and was left feeling completely defeated and hopeless. He had to finally borrow from a private lender at an exorbitant rate of interest.

The three mothers in their interview talk about lack of any space for their kids even to spend time together once they leave their tiny homes in the slum. Their sons were picked up by the police from the kabaristan where they spent their evenings and charged with hatching a conspiracy while sitting there. Now the mothers are scared to let the youth out of their sight and that in turn is creating a problem of no space being allowed for these young men. One of the three boys picked up by the police admits of his fear that is constant with him, "I don't like the way policemen look at me, stare at me whenever I go out of the house or am with friends."

One of the young men interviewed talks about the losses that are tangible and intangible. "How the Mecca Masjid blast has affected the Muslim youth, how they had to give up studies and sit idle for so many years! It had affected the engineering students, electronic students. If they had completed their studies and taken up jobs, they would have earned a lot of money. Those students today are driving autos. The engineering students of Macca Masjid bomb blast who were in II & III year of their studies then, if they would have completed their studies, they would be earning 50 to 60 thousand by now in India and if they went to Saudi they would be earning in lakhs. But now those very boys are driving autos for a living. If they are to get some decent jobs they should get a clearance certificate first and nobody will give them that. Once you are termed as a terrorist you will be a terrorist forever. You cannot always hang a clearance certificate around your neck to prove that you are not a terrorist. Even if you get that certificate it will be there at home safely locked up in the locker. But wherever you go in Hyderabad you will be suspected as belonging to the either to the "Lashkar" or to the "Indian Mujahedeen"

Nothing can indicate the mothers' despair and anger more than this: "Earlier in our childhood, people will sleep on the footpath or on benches in the parks. But now the police will come and thrash one who is sleeping on the footpath or park. The rules have changed now, the country is making progress, and there is no place for the common man. He is absolutely harassed. Actually the government should poison all the poor people and finish off with them. Only those residing in posh buildings and travelling in sleek cars should be allowed to live. All the poor folk, auto drivers, rickshaw pullers should be killed".

Being fatalistic, finding comfort in God

"When Azam was taken for his second operation doctors were very doubtful of him surviving. I went to the masjid on the left side of the hospital and as I stood for namaz and looked down. I could see only one thing i.e. Azam and me playing together and this image stayed with me throughout the prayer.When the doctor came out of the operation theatre with the good news I already knew that Azam is going to be alive, nothing is going to

happen to him. Whatever I want I ask of him who is sitting high up there and I do that with all my heart and soul."

Junaid's mother said "He would sometimes say that it was better to die than giving trouble to everybody else in the family. I used feel so much pain whenever he will talk like this. I would never express myself in front of him. I used to console him by saying that God always tests his true followers in this life. If you have read the Quran, you will see that God always tests his loved ones the most. You should not lose heart. You should be brave and face everything bravely. You should never think of suicide. It is against Islam."

When there are no other sources of support it is the faith in God it seems, that helps people in distress. The discourse of Muslims being overly religious needs to be understood in this context as well.

Insomnia

Stress leads to health problems, particularly insomnia, hypertension and so on. The women with children in police custody say, "We are spending restless days, sleepless nights. The other night, Noor Jahan woke up at 2:00 am and could not sleep till morning. The moment we remember our boys we feel as though our head is going to break open. Noor Jahan woke up and felt so restless that she came and sat outside the house. The tenants asked, 'Aunty, why are you sitting like this, it's so late in the night'. I said "Just like that, not getting sleep".

Junaid's mother's said, "The days would pass somehow but the nights used to be very difficult. I would never get sleep. I prayed always and pleaded God for the well being of my son. I would always tell him "God is there to punish the people who have done this, never think of revenge and all that"

She continues to talk about how her memory is affected, "taking so much of tension for such a long time has affected my memory. I have developed this habit forgetting everything. I keep things somewhere but soon forget it next moment. I have also become so weak that if I perform even a small activity I start sweating. Otherwise I was a very strong and hard person. I am always scared that anytime, anyone may come and arrest my boy. That fear is always there. That's why I can't sleep. But ultimately I leave everything to God and pray for our safety and well being."

Akbar talks about how he tries to relieve his tension by chewing gutkha. "This gutka helps me. Since two years out of tension. If things don't go as I planned, if I don't get anything on time I become tense. Tension comes out as anger, which I cannot afford to vent on anybody. So I chew it in the form of gutka. That's how my psychology works. I spend time very rarely at home. Earlier I used to spend time with others. I used to be very childish. I sleep very little! I wake up at 11 am. Five or six hours I sleep. In that also, sometimes when there is tension I don't get proper sleep."

Self-harm and substance abuse

All of them are addicted to either chewing gutkha, smoking or drinking. The extreme case is that of Nabi who over the last few years repeatedly cut his wrists and had be taken to the hospital by his mother. She is vexed and said despairingly, "It would be better if he killed himself once for all. When he is not drunk he remains absolutely quiet in a corner without uttering a word."

Survey findings from Young Women Respondents:

In keeping with the focus the research has on young women and their gender concerns it would not be out of place to offer the following comments based on their responses to the questionnaire:

Most of the female youth interviewed were forced to drop out of secondary school without completing their school finals. The main reason was lack of money. This was the case even with the migrant families who had been able to afford buying a plot of land or house. Clearly girl education was not a priority with most families. Curiously, the few who had succeeded in going to college were all computer literate. Though their families were not significantly better off, perhaps the very fact that they had been encouraged to learn computer use signified a more 'modern' approach towards girl education. However, none of the married young women were studying, implying that their society could not conceive of daughters-in-law as students, which was very much the accepted notion in almost all Indian communities a few generations ago.

Many young women also complained of harassment from men when they travelled by bus, and this was cited as another reason for dropping out. The problems that this created was compounded by the conservative 'protective' attitude of their brothers who were more domineering then even their fathers or elders. Such macho tendencies have surfaced among male youth of all communities, more so in the Muslim community due to heightened communal pressures.

The formation of urban gangs comprising mainly of male youth is another feature of many societies worldwide, and few civil society organizations, much less governments, have even discussed corrective measures for youth/social groups who seem to have lost a sense of social value.

While vocational training in crafts did little to help young women, most respondents were eager to be taught spoken English and other soft skills which would help them secure jobs in businesses. Many had relatives working in the Gulf or in the USA. Some expressed a desire to migrate to the Gulf as beauty technicians, especially those who were skilled in 'mehendi'; and some were willing to go to the USA for a better life. Despite coming from conservative families, many young women wished to go into the world and make a life for themselves if only opportunity offered.

Most of the women preferred to be self-employed and almost all wished to work in their own localities in the Old City. They did not seek job satisfaction, but satisfaction in their family life, and to support other earning

members of their families. This was in accordance with the views expressed by young men as well, as noted above, and in accordance with the conservative nature of society as such. In one locality the parents did not wish that their daughters should be interviewed!

Most of the women had friends only from their own community. Only just in one location were there young women who had been able to befriend women of other communities. Again only in one location there were young Muslim women who could speak Telugu as well as Urdu. Some young women who went to Madrasas did not listen to music or watch television. Only some who were married, or the very few who went to college had the use of mobile phones. A clear picture emerges of most of these young women belonging to poor, very conservative communities, which felt discriminated against, isolated and alienated from mainstream society.

2.   BASIC INFORMATION

1.1   The Research Problem

The current study 'Tightropes and Bootstraps: Enabling violence affected young adults deal with trauma' was conceived on the basis of learnings that emerged from an earlier action research project undertaken by Yugantar which analyzed the various processes through which the minority women negotiate citizenship in their post-conflict affected lives. The project did not directly deal with trauma but trauma-like symptoms whichwere identified throughout the narratives of these women. The previous study demonstrated the importance of the role of social capital network in any attempt towards social recovery of the violence affected communities, while also highlighting the experience of violence as extending beyond the actual incidence of violence where impoverishment, loss of dignity, displacement and disarrayed family structures are the multifaceted mechanisms through which violence is prolonged and perpetuated turning the affected persons into traumatized subjectivities.

This research on the impact of prolonged violence on young Muslim adults living in conflict-prone and disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Hyderabad, drawing from the previous study looks at issues of their access to various institutions, networks, programs and social, cultural and political spaces, with the objective of mapping the socio-economic and psycho-social dimensions of trauma. The project also aimed to conduct a needs assessment towards improving social reintegration processes. However, the study mostly focused on enabling the youth of the minority community to actively participate in the process of social recovery with the stated objective of strengthening capacity of a number of young adults in building sustainable linkages with state and civil-society institutions. This meant a rather open research design with a view to a more participative and consultative approach by involving the members of the community itself in the research process right from building contacts and field surveys to the selection of a group of the participants from the representative local communities for livelihood and capacity building measures.

The rationale for the research problem:

This project draws on the following learnings from our study on the long-term impact of communal violence on Muslim women in Gujarat, Mumbai and Hyderabad. The study, titled *'Minority Women Negotiating Citizenship'* found that in post-conflict or post-violence situations:

- Social recovery is mostly achieved in some measure through the support of social capital networks

- Impoverishment, loss of dignity, displacement and family structures in disarray are all experienced as violences, and are often articulated as being as traumatic as the actual incident of violent conflict

- Most rehabilitation efforts are focused on material rehabilitation, providing legal aid and vocational or life-skills training for victims of violence. There have been minimal efforts towards social reintegration.

One of the overarching learnings we came away with during the previous study is that Muslim communities affected by communal violence continue to be affected, on an everyday basis, by both political and structural violences. Displacement, impoverishment, the lack of voice, lack of representation, and the experience of these direct violence cause insecurities in every sphere of life – economic, social, physical and political. These insecurities, coupled with the new spotlight on terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, seem to have restricted young Muslim adults' mobility and access to socio-economic, political and cultural spheres of life.

It is an established fact that in the aftermath of ethnic/ communal conflict 'partitions' of various kinds occur, the most tangible of which are the physical/ geographic partitioning of families, localities, cities, and nations. In all the research locations of the previous study, near-complete ghettoization has occurred, with pre-conflict mixed neighbourhoods forcibly becoming single community areas often delineated by 'borders'. Changed spatial and socio-economic geographies, the fracturing of families and traditional support structures, and the ongoing presence of violence increases a sense of insecurity, inhibits mobility, disables access to public spaces/ institutions and ruptures civic trust. These displacements also shatter dignity, notions of belonging and security and in the long run may leave an impact that affects the person psychologically causing what is understood as trauma.

Even though the previous study was not directly probing questions on trauma, most of the narratives collected for the project speak at length on what we can identify as symptoms of trauma[1]. Many of the women we interviewed suffer from high-blood pressure, insomnia, and unidentified aches and pains. Pain and suffering, shame and helplessness are very palpable in all the interviews. They also speak about their children suffering from issues like insomnia, spurts of uncontrolled anger, passivity/detachment and loss of interest in most activities, hopelessness and in some cases suicidal behaviour. Interestingly, we found that most of the young

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[1]In the medical context trauma refers to any physical injury caused by heat, energy, electricity, chemicals or other agents. However, we refer mainly to what can be termed psycho-social trauma, i.e. an event that overwhelms an individual's coping resources. Traumatic situations are those in which the person is rendered powerless and great danger is involved. Trauma generally includes events involving death and injury, or the possibility of death or injury. These experiences are unusual and out of the ordinary, and do not constitute part of the normal course of life. The word trauma is generally used to include both natural catastrophes (such as hurricanes, floods or fires), and man-made violence (such as war, concentration camp experiences and other forms of victimisation).

women we interacted with were more vocal, forthcoming and sometimes aggressive compared to the young men, who we found were mostly withdrawn and anxious.

The insecurities of post conflict life, coupled with the new spotlight on terrorism/Islamic fundamentalism, have adversely impacted young Muslim adults' mobility and access to socio-economic, political and cultural spheres of life. The global and national rhetoric on 'terror', the portrayal of all young Muslim men as potential terrorists, and recent 'acts of terror' in various Indian cities have resulted in indiscriminate police harassment, illegal detentions and torture of many young Muslim men, especially in Hyderabad.

It is well understood and documented that communities in post-conflict situations often continue to face political and structural violences on an everyday basis. There is the deep psychological impact that is characterized by trauma; the loss of livelihoods to individuals and to whole communities; displacement and the consequent loss of networks and finally in many cases a disjuncture from the past and the loss of cultural heritage. Over the last decade experts working in this field have gradually recognized the inadequacy of any single domain to address these issues and are attempting to develop a unified framework now being referred to as the psycho-social framework. The Psycho-Social Working Group has defined the psycho-social well-being of an individual "with respect to three core domains: human capacity, social ecology and culture & values. These domains map in turn the human, social and cultural capital available to people responding to the challenges of prevailing events and conditions."2 In her 2008 paper, Shobna Sonpar argues that in contexts such as in South Asia, where "traumas of mass violence in the past are readily evoked to create hostile emotional climates in the present… the application of a psycho-social framework to issues of development, social transformation and conflict is promising."(pg 49).

Working on this premise we found that the psycho-social framework is a relevant starting point towards a comprehensive understanding and analysis of the multidimensional impact of violence discussed above. Such a framework also enabled us to move beyond narrow medico-legal definitions of trauma, and recognize the traumatic impact of indirect/ structural violence on both individuals and communities. We started the study with a basic understanding of trauma as resulting from the experience of direct or indirect violence, manifesting in varied levels of disability in social, economic and political functioning. Somasundaram's definition of collective trauma as representing "the negative impact at the collective level, that is in the social processes, networks, relationships, institutions, functions, dynamics, practices, capital and resources; to the wounding and injury to the social fabric" (as quoted in Sonpar, 2008) is apt for the context of this project.

While many studies have been conducted on the socio-economic status of Muslims in India, and on communal conflict and politics, we believe that there is a strong need to study the possible psycho-social impact of the various direct and structural violences affecting Muslim lives in India today. The research team felt strongly that

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2Psycho-social Working Group, "Psycho-social Interventions in Complex Emergencies: A Framework for Practice", October 2003

one of indicators that could help us study the psycho-social impact of social, economic and political violence is the concept of alienation. Several studies, including media reportage of late, have been highlighting the issue of alienation in Kashmir (especially the Muslim community), North-east India and most Tribal regions of the country. Mainstream discourse has a tendency to address this alienation as a geographical issue. Our objective is to interrogate alienation in the citizenship/nation framework, focusing on the role of various institutions in redressing the impact of violence on affected communities both in its psycho-social dimension as well as socio-economic factors.

Research Method: Shift of focus from Psycho-social trauma to Socio-economic framework

In the initial phase of this study we encountered tremendous reluctance from youth, community members, as well as civil society organizations working in the old city, to talk about anything connected with communal riots, police harassment and discrimination. The research team reported extreme reluctance by the respondents and key informants to talk on anything related to violence while refusing to discuss psychological issues that could provide clues to the experience of trauma. Our impression was that we need to first build a strong relation of trust with the community in order to talk about issues which are obviously painful and seen as regressive. We therefore re-ordered the project activities to foreground research on socio-economic issues in the first phase of the project while retaining a few questions pertinent to the experience of trauma, insecurity and perceived discrimination.

This project was conceived as a participative and consultative study where the researched community took active part in the identification of needs and issues of young Muslim adults. The response from the field was overwhelmingly focused on issues of livelihoods, education, welfare etc, and where some discussion on discrimination took place it was in these contexts. The young researchers stressed upon these as primary issues that needed to be addressed while emphasizing lack of information with regards to career options and existing provisions and policies drafted for the minority communities. They felt that an improvement in the living conditions of the young adults through better facilities for education, training in livelihood skills and employment opportunities in the private as well as public sector would automatically address the issue of psycho-social trauma in the backdrop of violence affected communities. Henceforth, alienation, as a concept that could describe the community's perceived insecurity and exclusion from the country's process of progress and development, was recognized as a key component for addressing the psycho-social issues within the community while shifting the focus to a more socio-economic paradigm in informing the process of social re-integration and recovery through education, employment and employability of the marginalized Muslim young adults.

However, the psycho-social aspect in terms of trauma was not completely abandoned as few indicative questions in the survey were included that addressed the issue of trauma. During the administration of the survey a few individuals were identified who had been through traumatic experiences and were willing to talk in

length about it. We identified six such cases and a thorough case study was done to address the psycho–social dimension of this project.

Why focus on Youth?

Globally, issues of exclusion and participation amongst youth have been intently researched especially in the contexts of: post-conflict scenarios, issues of access to livelihood (in Europe and Africa), First Nations and youth (in Australia and North America), and urbanization, crime and narcotic trafficking (in Latin America). In India, research on social exclusion has mostly focused on historically disadvantaged regions (Kashmir, the North-east), and groups (caste, religion, sexual minorities, and the disabled).

Youth from these regions, communities, or groups, and the complex web of issues arising out of these multiple marginalization have hardly been studied. Alongside continuous structural violence, these youth face numerous challenges of varying levels of distrust, non-acceptance, and non-recognition of rights, skewed state policies and collective misperceptions. Youth from historically disadvantaged regions and groups are alienated from processes of growth, development, democracy and socio-cultural spaces and relationships. The continuing exclusion of these youth will create a further disabled and skewed national landscape. It is imperative that this issue be addressed in a comprehensive manner by policy makers, researchers, civil society and communities.

The Sachar Committee report, 2006, reveals the disparity and huge under-representation of the Muslims in almost all areas of economic activity. The Muslim youth clearly lags behind in terms of education while most of those employed work in unorganized sectors or are self employed. In addressing this huge disparity of representation in almost all walks of life, we believe that the youth, as the most active though highly volatile section of society in marginalized communities, has a central role to play. As the prime movers of change, the youth of our researched communities are central to this project by involving them in participation and initiation of the process of social recovery.

This study is predicated on the understanding that social recovery can be addressed through the rebuilding of social and institutional networks and linkages, dialogue between community and state actors, and recognizing and overcoming trauma related psycho-social concerns. There must be an effort towards the articulation of the individual and collective narrative where the voices of young adults are not just representations of 'victims' but of individuals who have the capacity to reflect and comment on their life situations.

1.2   Research Objectives

The primary objective of this project is to address the increasing trauma of violence-affected Muslim youth in Hyderabad and to enable processes of social reintegration.

The objectives of this project are:

1. To build knowledge on the socio-economic and psycho-social dimensions of trauma

2. To conduct a needs assessment towards informing social reintegration processes

3. Strengthening capacity of young adults in building sustainable linkages with state and civil-society institutions

4. Record the research process for documenting the methodological innovations and communicating findings to wider audiences

This study has been designed to answer the following research questions:

What are the elements of human, social and cultural capital building that are required to better facilitate the social reintegration of Muslim youth in Hyderabad?

and

How will they be built?

The approach of the research is predicated on the following hypotheses:

- Increased knowledge on the politico-economic and psycho-social elements of trauma will enable a gap analysis of the existing programs that are targeted at the Muslim Community

- Action research and participatory methodology will generate a data-set that will have features normally inaccessible to external researchers

- Muslim Youths' participation as active researchers will lead to a greater acceptance that they should play a more active role as facilitators of dialogue for identification and solution of community problems.

1.3   Methodology

B.   Framework

This project had been conducted in three phases, each phase drawing on different methodological frameworks. The core research team, who participated in the design, implementation and analysis of the research, consisted of trained social science researchers both in qualitative as well as quantitative methods. The core team was assisted by a Project Advisory Committee through the project period.

In the first phase we mapped the socio-economic dimensions of trauma. We also attempted to map the psycho-social dimensions of trauma, by using qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Starting with a quantitative survey to map socio-economic parameters, we then conducted semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with young adults and key informants. All the research tools used during this phase were developed in the inception/design workshop by the research team. Secondary sources and key informants interviews helped the design of the research tools. Unstructured interviews have been used to collect data on the psycho-social issues of young Muslim adults.

A needs assessment of young Muslim adults in the old city was conducted in the second phase. The needs assessment studied issues of a) livelihoods/ employability/ access to capital, b) education and training, c) recreation and d) health. This phase used participatory research methods; we identified 10 young Muslim adults in the first phase to work with us as researchers during this phase. They received training in basic research methods, participated in designing the research tools for this phase, collected data, and participated in the analysis of the data.

The data and findings collected during the first phase survey set the parameters for the needs assessment. The community based researchers elicited responses to the first phase findings and generated the communities' assessment of their own needs. The research process in this phase was both consultative and consensual, drawing on the 'Protagonist Theory' developed by Paulo Freire.

This methodology was useful in providing an organic way of empowering and bringing disarticulated, disenfranchised young adults into the public domain. Through most of the second and third phase of the project, Yugantar team remained as facilitators and encouraged the young adults to take ownership of the research questions, process and results.

The third phase used action research methodologies to strengthen the capacity of youth in building linkages with state and civil-society institutions. Dialogue sessions/workshops, facilitated by resource persons with relevant expertise, for an interface between young adults and various stakeholders (government, corporate, CSO's and NGO's, financial and educational institutions), were organized.

C.   Process Documentation

It is well known that projects don't follow straight lines.Unforeseen obstacles and barriers come in the way – in our case we faced issues relating to selection of partners, differences on research perspective and selection of locations, issues of logistics and continuity amongst others. As researchers we viewed these as opportunities for gaining fresh insights. We had undertaken process documentation as an important activity in this project to keep track of and discuss issues pertaining to the methodology.

The outputs of the process documentation were meant primarily for young researchers and for development practitioners undertaking similar projects. The documentation included the experiences of the youth working with others in the community, officials in institutions that deal with them, NGO staff, and the researchers themselves. This information was generated through interviews, group discussions, observation of meetings, photography and video, and through diaries maintained by the researchers. As videography was intrusive, it was used selectively.

There were regular meetings organized between the core team and the researchers so that the reflections could be immediately documented. The outputs were in the form of both visual and written material such as case studies, videos, photo-albums.

2. RESEARCH OUTPUTS

2.1   List of Outputs

The following is a list of outputs generated by the project:

* Policy Briefs – Two policy briefs, 1) On education which has recommendations on access to education and scholarships for minority communities, and 2) On establishing a information helpline for youth from marginalised communities (Annexure 1)

* Capacity-building in research and analysis skills; in communication; in knowledge and awareness building; in networking and mobilization; and in leadership skills of 10 young Muslim men and women

* Formation of MY Collective, a voluntary group formed by the 10 young adults who worked with the project as community-based youth researchers

* Innovative Research Methods developed such as (cooperative inquiry); and involving political parties and elected representatives

* Final report

* Data generated by the quantitative and qualitative survey. Given the paucity of disaggregated data on Muslim communities in Andhra and particularly in Hyderabad city, the data generated by this project is useful and significant. (Annexure 2)

* A Presentation made at Social Exclusion Conference. This was as part of a session organized by Yugantar. It was unique in terms of being the only panel on youth as excluded category. (Annexure 3)

* An article published in the e-journal - Counter Currents that generated a popular debate. Articles published for Etimaad and Siasat, local Urdu journals. (Annexure 4)

2.2   The Relevance of Outputs

The approach of the research is predicated on the hypothesis that increased knowledge on the socio-economic and psychosocial elements of trauma will enable a gap analysis of the existing programs that are targeted at the Muslim Community. This approach has been proved right by the outputs in the form of Policy Briefs.

The other hypotheses are

a) Action research and participatory methodology will generate a data-set that will have features normally inaccessible to external researchers;

and

b) Muslim Youths' participation as active researchers will lead to a greater acceptance and will facilitate their active role in dialogue for identification and solution of community problems.

We have been proved right on both these counts. This can be seen not only from the way the research focus itself got shifted but from the cooperation the project received from the community as well as the local political

representatives which was expected to be a hurdle for the team before the project began. The enthusiasm received by the team from the community also helped in disseminating the study findings with the youth and the community further providing impetus for the identification of core issues that figured in the Policy Briefs and the recommendations of National Advisory Council to the Planning Commission regarding the establishment of a Helpline (which has been included in the 12th plan document).

3.   PROJECT OUTCOMES

Doing this research has been a rewarding experience because it was implemented as an action research project with the enthusiastic participation of community-based youth researchers, who have continued their engagement with the issues raised here, beyond the project time-frames. The twin premises of the study were that youth in the Muslim community were alienated from mainstream society and opportunities for a number of reasons, and that one possible way to address this is through the rebuilding of social and institutional networks and linkages. It has been a journey of over two years during which the core researchers have engaged with a group of Muslim youth men and women from different parts of the city – and through a process of mentoring explored various issues that they have felt to be important in their lives.

The learnings are presented in three sections; the first two relate to the research study and speak to the stated objectives of the project, and the third relates to the learnings from the *researchprocess* are drawn from the process documentation.

3.1   Findings from the Research

Before presenting the specific findings of the research we would like to underline some of the general learnings of the project:

- The community is primarily interested in socio-economic development. There is a disinclination to engage with issues of alienation, trauma, and impact of violence even though these exist in a significant manner.

- The future of the youth is of paramount importance to the community and issues such as access to quality education, scholarships, employment & livelihoods and financial support feature prominently in our findings.

- Young Muslim women's access to education and employment is hindered by a lack of physical security in the context of the increasing polarization and ghettoization in Hyderabad.

- Information about opportunities for education, employment, access to development programs, scholarships etc. do not reach a majority of Muslim youth.

- Muslim youth, men and women, are open to engaging with Civil Society Organizations, and apprehensions about community indifference and hostility are largely unfounded.

- The level of "linking social capital" is low and there are hardly any pathways available to access institutions. Equally most institutions do not have a strategy or the capacity to reach out to the Muslim community, and therefore *de facto* responses range from indifference to hostility. This is especially true of financial institutions.

- Perception amongst people residing in Muslim areas in Hyderabad - whether Old city or new city, that they belong to the old city.

Baseline Survey

The first objective of this study was to develop a baseline socio-economic and psycho-social understanding of the young Muslim adults living in Hyderabad's old city. The socio-economic baseline was done by administering a questionnaire to 231 young men and 64 women. The psycho-social baseline was developed through interviews with traumatized young people and their family members totalling about 40 persons. While the detailed reports are in an Annexure to the final report, the following is a brief summary of the findings.

Socio-Economic Survey Findings

The focus groups and survey were conducted in the five research locations in Hyderabad. Snowball sampling was used as a method – the initial respondents were known to our contacts in the location and the further respondents were chosen from amongst their social networks. There is a bias towards the more disadvantaged parts of the community and therefore the survey cannot claim to be truly representative of the totality of young Muslims in Hyderabad. In the absence of a rigorous sampling frame the findings should be read with the *caveat* that, if anything, it is a representation of the underprivileged parts of the community.

The questionnaire was administered in 5 localities of the Old city and there were 231 men and 64 women respondents. The following are the **highlights of the findings from the survey:**

1) Most of these families are classified as living below the poverty line (BPL or white ration cards). The data on average monthly household income shows that there is no significant difference between male and female respondents, which is around Rs.10,000/-.

2) The residency profile of the people who were interviewed shows that two areas – Kishan Bagh and Shaheen Nagar - are quite new, while the other areas are old and established areas. Among the men, Shaheen Nagar has the most number of people who shifted to this locality due to disturbances, but there are also many who have migrated recently to the city. Amongst the women, a majority of the respondents were residing for more than 10 years in the current locality of residence. Among the women, 10 respondents reported that they had shifted residences due to insecurity caused by disturbances.

3) A significant number of people have family members or relatives working in the Gulf. Amongst the women respondents, 10 reported family members working in the Gulf (8) and the West (2).

4) The data shows that in older areas like Sultan Shahi, more people stay in rented houses and in new areas, more people stay in own houses. The trend is similar in both the men's and women's responses.[3]

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[3]Sultan Shahi Sultan Shahi is an old residential colony to the east of, and very close to, Charminar (the 'centre', business and tourist hub, of the Old City). Sultan Shahi itself is a very large area, constituting a huge chunk of the Moghulpura Ward. Home to merchant families during the Nizams' rule, Sultan Shahi is now one of the poorest localities in the Old City. While many of the richer Muslim families moved out of the area in the late 1940s early1950s, a largest out-migration of Muslim families took place over 1980s and 1990s when the area became the focal point of recurrent communal conflict. This area continues to be one of the tension points in the old city, with high security presence during 'sensitive' times like the Ganesh festival, Ramzan, and the 6th of December. Today, Sultan Shahi is a mixed locality of very poor Muslim families, a considerable Mehtar community, as well as lower-middle class Telugu-speaking Hindu families. The area in Sultan Shahi we chose to work in is around the Kali Kaman polling station, and has a mixed population of around 3000 people. The main occupations for men in this area are auto-driving and petty business, while most of the women are domestic help. A large number of youth here are uneducated and unemployed,

5) Education:

- A majority of the men interviewed are intermediate educated while among the women, high school educated girls are the highest with the numbers dropping sharply for higher education.

- A major reason for dropping out of education is their inability to pay for their higher education. Many want to continue but cannot afford. Among the women, lack of family support was also cited along with lack of affordability for higher education. Distances to travel to educational institutions (especially for higher education) were also cited as an inhibiting factor by the female respondents.

- A large number worked while studying among the male respondents while this trend is not visible among women.

- The myth that Muslim youth get Madrasa education stands exposed with this survey. Only a very small minority went to madrasas. (Arabic education is available in masjids and private schools nowadays, so madarsa education is low. There is also a feeling that Madrasa education is inadequate. Mostly migrants who attend Madrasas especially on the outskirts of the city.)

6) Employment:

- A majority of the men interviewed are employed. Most of them acquired their skills while apprenticing. Among the women, only 14 are employed.

- A majority of the men reported that youth from Old City don't get equal employment opportunities when compared to youth from new city. Among the women too, there was a majority consensus on the same lines. Both expressed their opinion that there were fewer opportunities in the Old City when compared to the new city.

- Most of the men and women interviewed prefer to be self-employed. However among the women, there was also a preference for professional careers in medicine, engineering and the media and entertainment industry. Both men and women reported that there is discrimination in employment against youth from the Old City and that was one of the reasons for preferring to be self employed.

- There is a feeling among both groups that reservations can help.

7) Training: Training or vocational education is not sufficient and it did not provide them with jobs or better job opportunities. But a large number of youth do undergo such training which is not beneficial to them. This trend is visible among both male and female respondents.

8) Current events: A majority of the people interviewed follow news related to their community and general current events.

9) Political Activity: Among both the male and female respondents, a majority are not interested in the political process. However they are very politically aware. They strongly feel that good political leaders are lacking to represent the community.

10) Media: There is a strong opinion among the men that the media misrepresents Muslims while among the female respondents, a majority felt that there was "partial" misrepresentation by the media.

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and several have been directly affected by communal and police violence. Our contact person in this area is the son of one of the MWNC interviewees.

11) Health and Psychological wellness: A majority of the interviewees are unable to access government medical services and instead rely on neighbourhood clinics. A significant number of men reported that either they or their family members were "feeling low" or suffering frequently from minor ailments like headaches, inability to sleep etc. Most respondents' parents suffer from sort of ailment or the other. Among the female respondents, it was mostly the mothers who were reported to be afflicted by similar ailments.

12) On "Being Muslim" in Hyderabad: The Mecca Masjid blasts and the subsequent 'scapegoating' of Muslim youth has left an indelible scar on the psyche of the Muslim community in Hyderabad.

3.3   Learnings from the Research Process

Co-operation from Local Organizations

The research team had anticipated the process of building contacts a challenging task and accordingly a strategy was employed to identify key informants from the research locations and networking with other non-profit organizations active in these areas or working on Muslim related issues. Here Yugantar's earlier experience in working with the Muslim community in the Old City of Hyderabad came in handy while the field coordinators own personal contacts and experience with other organizations also helped. However, despite this we still faced problems in getting the expected cooperation from other NGOs in these areas. We became aware of terrain possessiveness in the sense that the organizations that had been working in these localities from before bore a patronizing and protective attitude to the representatives of the community. However, once the objectives of the research and the importance of the study were explained most of these organizations rose above their reluctance to cooperate but there remained exceptions who continued to show resistance. As the field workers reported, they found that some of these organizations had instructed the respective members of the communities from the research locations to not to talk to us. Consequently, in one locality in particular, the team reported how members who had initially shown interest in the project never came back to talk again. However, with persistent efforts the team was finally able to convince the local leaders in that locality about the importance of the study who then helped the research team in getting contacts and identifying the key informants.

However, the overall experience in this context proved the importance of approaching through the local political representatives of the research locality. In the proposal to this study, we had identified intervention and objection of the local political representatives, particularly the political party representing the community as a potential problem in carrying out the survey. Our experience proved contrary. The field coordinators and researchers reported that contacting the MIM (Majlis-Ittehadul-Muslimeen) and explaining the objectives and importance of the project, helped them in gaining access to the researched community and further cooperation as well.

Muslims and the Development Agenda

As governance is the key to success, concerted efforts are needed to sensitise the bureaucracy at various levels. This needs to be a sustained endeavour. While there is no doubt that a quantum increase in resources is required, the percentage share of Muslims in all other schemes and programmes needs to be ensured and closely monitored. A sharp urban focus needs to be brought in as in AP for instance as 80% of the Muslim community is in urban areas.

Poor governance is at the root of even assigned benefits not reaching the Muslim community and is of relevance in the context of the current study as well. For instance in government programmes where there is 30-40% Muslim eligibility, entitlements do not reach. Participation and representation of Muslims at all levels is very low. For instance in community based committees there is almost no representation, and the participation of Muslim women is non-existent. Some of the ways in which this problem of implementation and governance could be improved is building a sustained dialogue and connection between Government and civil society organizations that is currently tenuous; and ensuring representation in various policymaking and implementation bodies. For this to happen changes are required at various levels and among various players—Government, funding organizations and among the Muslim Community as well to become proactive in such engagements.

There is further a need to activate and make accountable bodies such as the Minority's Commission that do not fulfil the minimum functions they are supposed to do. It is not just a question of availability of funds but also the lack of commitment. For instance the Commission has dedicated funds for research and yet nothing has happened and there is no way to make it accountable.

Deconstructing Muslim Identity

There is a need to go beyond the use of the term "Muslim", to identify the groups within the Muslim community that are marginalized and to assess whether benefits and entitlements are indeed reaching them. There is a need to recognize and focus on Dalit Muslims and the marginalized tribal Muslims. In AP for instance, the reservations for Muslims (for example, scholarships) have sometimes benefited the rich Muslims but not the poor. The discourse on issues related to Muslims is mostly dominated by elite Muslims and this trend has marginalized 'other voices' coming from the Muslim community.

Another crucial issue is the discomfort of civil society organisations in working exclusively with the Muslim community, as this is perceived as working on religious lines. There is an urgent need to create a discourse that working with Muslims is not advancing a religious or communal agenda. One way of creating a framework for such a discourse is starting with the experiential contexts of the lives of Muslims.

Yugantar's pilot project with Muslim youth has thrown light on the concerns of the youth. Despite educational opportunities being available, their inability to enter institutions of their choice is a major problem.

The ways in which we frame and address developmental issues will provide insights on how to overcome the problems of being labelled communal or religious. There is a need for secular organizations who do not focus

on issues of identity but on ensuring sustainable livelihoods through access to financial services. This will enable a more proactive developmental agenda being nurtured to help the Muslim poor.

Integrating Gender:

The finding that the problems and issues faced by Muslim women do not seem to be different to those from other deprived communities are corroborated by our project (ZoyaHasan,2004). The tendency to stereotype Muslim Women must be avoided and their position must be understood within the framework of economic factors, political influences and class background.

In the initial phase of the project we had some difficulty in recruiting educated, young Muslim women from the community. One of the organizations, namely, Mahila Sanatkar, was instrumental in providing access to Muslim girl researchers who helped in completing the survey - with questions modified to address issues specific to women - administered amongst the Muslim girls. The girls were active and highly motivated in pursuing the project activities. They later continued through the second phase of needs assessment developing linkages with the civil and state society institutions, organizing workshops. They participated with equal zeal in all the activities taken by the group till the completion of the project. The stereotype image of a 'veiled' Muslim woman did not seem to correspond with these young girl researchers of the community who, while wearing their 'Hijabs' showed enthusiasm in taking initiatives and played active part in decision making and feedback sessions often being more vocal than the boys.

An important objective for the group was to introduce the youth researchers to other organizations working on issues identified in the Needs Assessment period through an inter-state exposure trip. This included visits to organizations in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Mewat and Delhi over a two-week period. For the girls to participate it meant that they had to travel with a group of young men for a considerable period of time. We expected that it would not be possible given the presumed restrictions on mobility imposed by family and community on single young women. However the girls came up with a solution by persuading some older women from their families to join the group to act as chaperones and so the exposure trip took place successfully. This experience also indicated that the older generation of women was willing to encourage young women from their families to engage in out of the ordinary activities provided they were convinced of the value of the experience.

However, despite this picture of participating young Muslim women adapting and showing a social concern remains limited to those who have a better access to education. The pilot Helpline run by the youth seemed to be particularly helpful to young women from poorer areas or areas to which migration has taken place due to communal violence. Their queries reveal that amongst other things they are particularly handicapped by their lack of access to information education, scholarships and employment opportunities. This indicates an important need for institutional spaces dedicated to the cause of women from the minority sections of the society.

The need for Muslim women and girls to be included in interventions that focus on empowerment cannot be over emphasized. Issues of demand for education, mobility, security in public places, measures against violence, health, etc need to be urgently addressed. Poor Muslim women in the old city of Hyderabad need to have access to services such as those provided by institutions like the Mahila Samakhya.

4. OBJECTIVES

The **primary objective** of this project is to build knowledge on the deepening trauma of violence-affected young Muslim adults in Hyderabad and to identify enabling processes of social reintegration.

The specific objectives of this project are:

1. To build knowledge on the socio-economic and psycho-social dimensions of trauma
2. To conduct a needs assessment towards informing social reintegration processes
3. Strengthening capacity of a cohort of young adults in building sustainable linkages with state and civil-society institutions
4. Record the research process for documenting the methodological innovations and communicating findings to wider audiences

The approach of the research is predicated on the following hypotheses:

- Increased knowledge on the politico-economic and psycho-social elements of trauma will enable a gap analysis of the existing programmes that are targeted at the Muslim Community

- Action research and participatory methodology will generate a data-set that will have features normally inaccessible to external researchers

- Muslim Youths' participation as active researchers will lead to a greater acceptance that they should play a more active role as facilitators of dialogue for identification and solution of community problems.

On the culmination of the project, it can be concluded that the objectives were fairly met, with some adaptations that arose from the demands of actual field conditions. These shifts did not, however, deviate from the course of the project from the main objectives it had started with but nevertheless limited the scope of the psycho-social component of the dimension of trauma that we set out to map, leading to a preoccupation with the socio-economic dimensions. This limitation was a result of the reluctance of the community under study to identify their problems and issues from within the paradigm of a psycho-social trauma despite, importantly agreeing or indicating the presence of trauma operating, on the individual level in some cases, while being present as a collective experience on a subconscious level. This unwillingness on the part of the community, the disregard to the evident psycho-social indications of their current marginalized and alienated existence is, we think a topic of research itself which, however, is beyond the scope of the project. At the same time this complied with the method of research for this study which intended to be a consensual process of research involving the community and its representative participants to take part in all the aspects of the research, including decision-making. Their experiences in the field, like our research team, felt the reluctance of the community to view their issues of backwardness in the backdrop of communal violence. In addition we realized understanding this aspect would require a detailed conversation and could not be captured through the questionnaire alone.

This led to a change in the strategy where we decided to map the Psycho-social dimensions of trauma through limited but adequate indicative questions in the survey to mainly identify individual cases with traumatic

experiences in their lives and who were willing to talk about. We decided to do a case study of six such individuals. The case studies reveal the stress under which these young adults from the community suffer and documents the various ways the respondents feel disadvantaged and marginalized, showing signs of the feeling of alienation from the mainstream developmental course of the country, and in Hyderabad, a city that stands as an exemplar of a visually evident economic gap that correlates with the religious divide.

The needs assessment was conducted by the core research team along with the youth research team comprising of the representatives of the researched localities, and included young Muslim women as well which was important for us to meet the objective of gendered analysis of our findings. This period resulted in active participation of the community through feedback with the localities surveyed, group discussions, discussions with eminent and key personalities that were involved in the Muslim developmental issues along with internal discussion between the researchers. The needs assessment process resulted in the recognition of education, employment and employability and security as the main concerns that the community thought should be addressed to facilitate their socio-economic progress.

An unexpected outcome of this process was the set up of a helpline that ran on an experimental basis for three months based on the perception of lack of awareness and information with respect to institutional and policy based support to the community drafted for its development. A primary example that came to our attention was the issue of scholarship that the government offers to the members of the minority communities which it was noted was such a complex process that hardly few people were actually able to benefit from this provision. Apart from that many other schemes with respect to education and health were completely unknown to most Muslims and even those who knew were wary of the whole bureaucratic process. Indeed most of the respondents from our survey lacked documentation including even the ration card in many cases. Information, rather lack of it, with regard to the various beneficiary schemes and institutional support was seen as very important for the efficacy of existing programs for the community. As a result the project initiated this sub-project of launching a call-centre, which not only proved highly successful but has even been included in the draft for the empowerment of the minority community for the 12th plan based on the suggestion forwarded by Yugantar to the National Advisory Council. Here we can safely conclude how our objective of needs assessment to inform social reintegration proved highly successful and yielded results more than our expectation.

One of the main objectives was capacity building with a target of benefitting directly about 50 young adults for the purpose and was conceived as a simultaneous activity throughout the project. These included training in research methods in both quantitative and qualitative methodology, survey techniques and computer training for data entry and analysis besides being also trained on Participatory observation. Other outputs of the research in this aspect of capacity building was the experience of organizing workshops, network building through visits to other organizations working on similar issues within the city as well as profiling of organizations across the state working on Muslim related issues. The exposure visit though originally planned somewhere in the middle of the project could finally be undertaken towards almost the end of the project but which nevertheless proved very

enriching in terms of learning gained by the youth researchers through their exposure to and interaction with various organizations across the country. From the capacity building aspect the final outcome which again was unexpected or unplanned though not entirely unintended is the formation of a collective that the youth researcher group has formed in order to continue their commitment to community work and carry forward the learning through experience with their association with Yugantar in this project. In this respect we more or less achieved our objective of helping at least 20-25 young adults directly through the project while providing placements through workshops to more than 40 young Muslim boys and girls..

5.   PROJECT CONTRIBUTION

This section covers details about our project's contribution to a) building new knowledge, b) individual or organizational capacity building, c) policy influence, d) integration of gender

5.1   To Building New Knowledge

While doing the secondary research, we understood that there was no disaggregated data on Muslims in the country. In a very small way, our project has collected such data that can be built further upon.More importantly, the effort of collecting and collating this data, with the help of youth researchers from the 'researched' community, has resulted in these youth becoming aware of **the importance of having such data available to inform themselves, policy makers and other actors on the status of the community**. This has been expressed time and again, and is referred to in various parts of the report, by the youth researchers. The 'new knowledge' referred to here is not merely empirical data but equally the critical insights and awareness generated through the process of this research.

Several studies, including media reportage of late, have been highlighting the issue of alienation in Kashmir (especially the Muslim community), North-east India and most Tribal regions of the country. Mainstream discourse has a tendency to address this alienation as a geographical issue. The project's objective was to interrogate alienation in the citizenship/nation framework, focusing on the role of various institutions in redressing the impact of violence on affected communities both in its psychosocial dimension as well as socio-economic factors.   Although the project was able to address this in a limited way through qualitative case-studies, the case-studies themselves mirror awidespread sense of personal and *collective* fear, anxiety, and experiences of indignities as *a people*.**These limited case studies shed significant light on the impact of structural violences, and the vicious cycle of un-palpable discrimination and growing alienation.**

5.2   Capacity Building of Youth Researchers

One of the main objectives of the project was to provide Muslim youth from the ghettoized communities of Old City sustainable institutional linkages with state and civil-society institutions,while helping them build awareness and acquire analytical and livelihood skills. This was implemented as a simultaneous activity corresponding to each phase of the study. The response and enthusiasm of youth in the research locations in the

initial phase of the project, encouraged us to train these youth in basic research skills and involve them in the design, administering, collation and analysis of the survey during the first phase of the project.

Ten young male adults between the ages of 18 and 24, all from the lower end of socio-economic profile of backward and ghettoized localities of Hyderabad, were identified and trained in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The core research team felt that their participation in the collection and data entry would not only equip them with requisite research skills that would benefit them in terms of livelihood skills but also sensitize the youth, facilitating a more empathetic approach in understanding and noting down the observations and responses of the survey respondents on issues which also impact their own lives. Employing them could also break the researcher/researched hierarchy, as belonging to the same socio-economic and religious category the respondents would feel more at ease in discussing sensitive issues.

Following the administration of the survey, young Muslim men and women who were slightly more experienced and socially active were identified to form the youth research cohortto take forward the subsequent phases of the project, during which cooperative method of research and enquiry was adopted. This cohort was trained in research methodology and was involved in every step of the Needs Assessment, in building linkages, disseminating project research questions and learnings at the community level, as well as designing and organizing workshops and outreach sessions.

These youth researchers also took part in other sub-projects of Yugantar where they helped in collecting and collating national data on scholarships for minorities, at the request of the designated planning commission member. They also worked towards a comprehensive profiling of organizations working on the Muslim issues in Andhra Pradesh. An integral process across all these activities was that of perspective-building and awareness-building on minority issues, and providing exposure through meetings organized with other actors working on youth, Muslims and developmental concerns both within the city as well as nationally. The cohort also went on an extremely successful inter-state exposure visit, which resulted in cross-learning for both the cohort as well as the organisations they visited.

The aim of the participative consensual method used in this project, was to help build confidence in ability and possibility for young Muslim adults, by a) nurturing awareness, perspective, and capacity b) forming sustainable linkages with both state and civil society institutions, so they could independently continue to work on issues that matter, beyond the completion of the project. To this end, the cohort of youth researchers has come together to form a voluntary collective called MY Collective. As of today, they have secured the support of some key civil-society and governmental bodies in Hyderabad, and are exploring the various possibilities for future work an action.

5.3　Policy Influence
Establishing a Minority Youth Helpline:

Our participatory study with urban Muslim youth (men and women) in Hyderabad established that while they have access to education (usually of a poor quality), they lack guidance, access to public utilities and community institutions, and absence or breaking down of social networks that hinder their growth prospects as a community and bar access to economic opportunities. They are thus unable to participate in the growth story of India and one of the unacceptable consequences has been that there is a growing degree of alienation from both the mainstream society and the state. We have to also contend with the fact that the negative material, emotional and developmental effects of this alienation is being exacerbated by larger contextual issues.

It was evident therefore that there is an urgent need for an intervention that helps these marginalized youth in their 'social recovery' by building their human, cultural and social capital. This can best be done by leveraging technology for the rebuilding of social and institutional networks and linkages, dialogue between community and state actors, and recognizing and overcoming trauma/ psycho-social concerns. The new information technology here could be used more effectively in bridging these gaps that keep the Muslim youth alienated and withdrawn into their own safety cocoons

Our initiative of establishing a help-line for this purpose with the help of other organizations was based on a 'hub and spoke' hybrid technology model with a Muslim Youth Help-line call centre as the hub, supported by community outreach nodes that served as spokes. The MYH was a 4-seater call centre working from 10 AM to 6 PM. It was operated entirely by Muslim youth who were part of the localities in cities where the project will be implemented. It had the initial capability of handling 50 calls a day and was scaled up over time.

The following services were provided by the helpline:
- Career Guidance: education, vocational training,
- Access to Government Schemes/Programmes
- Placement Services
- Facilitation for Certification
- Institutional Linkages (Education, Employment, finance etc.)
- Faith Sensitive Counselling (women's issues, health issues, legal issues, identity, security)

The needs assessment phase with the inputs from the youth researchers and following dissemination and sharing of the survey findings emphasized the need to redress this immense gap existing between the provisions by the state for the minority communities and their awareness and access to these benefits. Towards addressing this need Yugantar launched a four seated call centre with the help of a local corporate, for a period of three months on an experimental basis. The experience of this project also served as basis for engaging with the National Advisory Council's sub-committee on minorities. **Our effort contributed in part to the inclusion of a Chapter entitled "Basket of Schemes to build social capital among minorities and to enhance outreach of the ongoing programmes" in their recommendations for the 12th Five Year Plan (entitled**

"Towards Inclusive Development to Empower Minorities"). The recommendation has been accepted and our idea of the Urban Youth Helpline has been included in the draft 12ᵗʰ plan.

5.4   Integrating Gender

The portrayal of Muslim woman is that of an oppressed and marginalized subject that virtually has no rights of her own and lags behind in almost all socio-economic indicators. This image of subjugated, enslaved entity called a Muslim woman trapped behind the 'hijab', a symbol of everything that deprives her of freedom and individuality. The wave of protests and even legislation banning the 'hijab' in several European countries attest to this obsession against this particular Islamic tradition that symbolizes singularly, as if, the patriarchal, androcentric oppression of Muslim women. However, many girls might chose to wear a veil and indeed do so while pursuing and balancing a modern lifestyle, including work and profession, as a cursory survey of internet blog sites reveals is not taken into account.

 In the context of this project, such an image of Muslim women only further perpetuates a feeling of persecution and the perception and fear of being targeted, felt by the Muslim communities. Such a perception could only lead to regressive actions where a possibility of resistance is automatically harnessed as a defense mechanism towards this perceived attack on everything that this community represents - when specifically dealing with the issue of women. However, this is an ongoing and widely debated issue and the purpose here is to highlight the way Muslim women are perceived as marginalized and discriminated, in more ways than one. Firstly, for being from a minority community that is way behind in socio-economic parameters while traumatized by incidences of communal violence. Secondly, for being women where the girls interests, for example, would be sacrificed for their brothers when resources are limited. This is often the case, like we found in this study, when families are dislocated as an aftereffect of violence when many girls had to discontinue education on relocation. And thirdly for being Muslim Women, the most oppressed 'other' of this 'other' community among all the marginalized communities in the context of the feminist discourse.

However, Muslim women do not seem to be much different in the problems and issues of discrimination as women from other deprived communities of the country (ZoyaHasan,2004). The author in this path-breaking study dispels powerfully the misconception and stereotyping of Muslim Women in India. Their position must therefore be understood within the framework of economic factors, political influences and class background while avoiding to focus on their status within religion.

Our study and experience throughout the project corroborated this understanding. Our secondary sources and mapping and identification of organizations working with Muslim women gave us an impression that contradicts the stereotypes of Muslim women. The fieldwork required personnel who were familiar with the local areas, to finalize the research locations and, given the expectation of the difficulty of finding respondents, in generating contacts. The extensive nature of fieldwork and the difficult process of building contacts meant that the field

coordinators had to be male researchers. This meant that the access to women respondents of the community got limited if not completely excluded. This handicap was overcome in the needs assessment period as young women researchers were identified to assist as youth researchers and take part in the research project thereon.

One of the organizations, namely, the Mahila Sanatkar, was instrumental in providing access to Muslim girl researchers who helped in completing the survey - with questions modified to address issues specific to women; administered amongst the Muslim girls. The girls were active and highly motivated in pursuing the project activities. They later continued through the second phase of needs assessment developing linkages with the civil and state society institutions, organizing workshops. They participated with equal zeal in all the activities taken by the group till the completion of the project. The stereotype image of a 'veiled' Muslim woman did not seem to correspond with these young girl researchers of the community who, while wearing their 'Hijabs' showed enthusiasm in taking initiatives and played active part in decision making and feedback sessions often being more vocal than the boys.

In our previous study on Muslim Women Negotiating Citizenship, we found women to be articulate and being agential in their everyday lives. As such their openness was in contrast to the male youth who were found to be withdrawn and unwilling to talk openly on issues of violence and trauma.

An important objective for the group was to introduce the youth researchers to other organizations working on issues identified in the Needs Assessment period through exposure trips both within the city as well as an inter-state exposure trip. We expected difficulty here given the restrictions of mobility on women and esp. women of the old city. This is also reflected in the findings from the survey on girls where most of them preferred working in the old city, though it is not clear whether it is due to reasons of insecurity or due to difficulties in mobility.

The other unexpected surprise for the team was the way in which the inter-state exposure trip took place with the girls included. Our assumption was that it would prove to be difficult to organize with the girls since, it meant that they had to travel with a group of young men for a considerable period of time. However, with the family members of some of the researchers joining the group, it became possible for the girls to participate in the trip. This also indicates the willingness and encouragement provided by the older generation of women to their young girls.

However, despite this picture of participating young Muslim women adapting change and showing social concern remain limited mostly, as again the survey indicates, to those who have better recourse to education while in poorer areas or areas where people migrated due to communal violence, the girls had to often sacrifice their education. This indicates an important need for institutional spaces dedicated to the cause of women from the minority sections of the society.

The girl researchers played an active part in the institutional visits organized within Hyderabad, often being quite vocal and critical in their dialogue with the officials. But, they expressed deep dissatisfaction with the men members of the team, for their lack of interest in the preparations when a workshop was organized exclusively for girls in the old city. This is indicative of the deeply rooted gender bias.

The young researcher girls also benefitted with the training provided on research tools and methodology and in participating in the assessment of needs period. They reported a higher level of confidence and knowledge to deal with issues of social concerns.

The initiative of the Helpline was particularly helpful for the women who were the majority of the callers and it seemed from an analysis of the call centre database generated from the received queries on the helpline, that owing to mobility factor, this service proved most beneficial to the women.