



## CBGA Tackling discrimination against India's Muslims

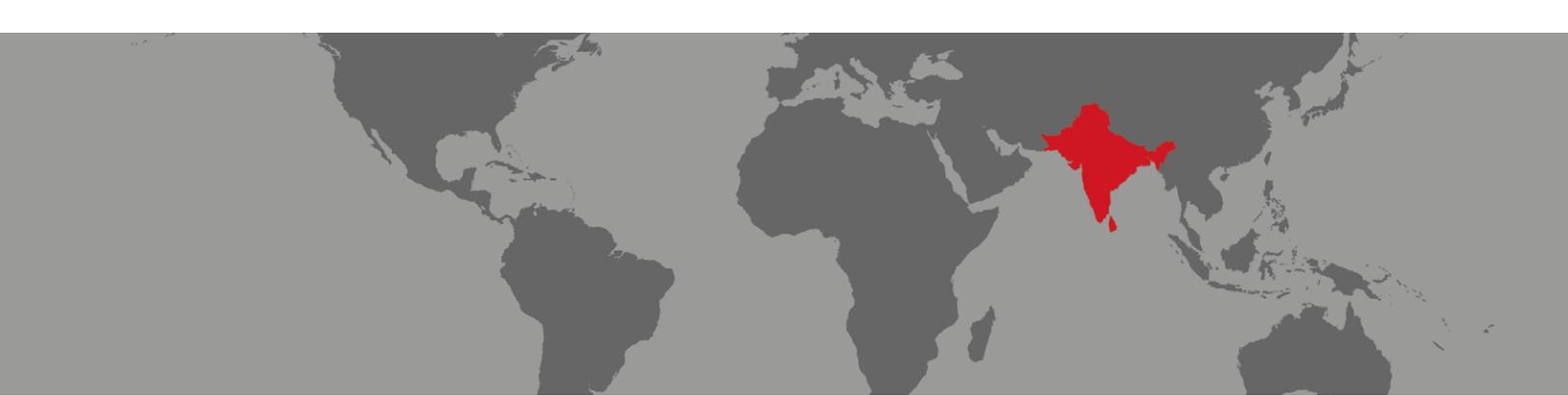
The *Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability* (CBGA) influenced policy to benefit Muslims in India's development trajectory.

**SETTING THE SCENE** —Muslims constitute fifteen per cent of India's total population, making this segment the largest minority community in the country. Until recently, however, there were no substantive policies on the development of Muslims. This changed with the *2006 Report of the Rajinder Sachar Committee*, which found that the status of Muslims in India is even worse than that of other disadvantaged communities, including Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These findings caught the attention of the Government of India.

As a result, the government launched various programmes aimed at accelerating the development of Muslims in the country as well as improving the socio-economic status of these minorities. Prominent measures included the *Prime Minister's New 15 Point Programme* which required several Ministries to earmark 15 per cent of services for Muslims in their key development programmes, and the *Multi Sectoral Development Programme* (MSDP) which focused on improving infrastructure for socio-economic development in 90 minority concentration districts in the country. However, by 2010, as the country's 11<sup>th</sup> *Five Year Plan* (2007-2012) was approaching its final year, many observers had expressed skepticism about the actual benefit of these programmes for Muslims.

**WHAT CBGA DID** —The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) is an independent organization that was established in 2005 and works to improve the responsiveness of public policies in India. It has a mandate to analyze public policies and government budgets from the lens of disadvantaged sections of the population. In 2010, funding support from the Think Tank Initiative allowed CBGA to take on new research and advocacy work on the impact of public policies and government budgets for Muslims. The organization set out to influence government policies on the quality of government interventions in the social sector as well as the responsiveness of budgets to disadvantaged sectors of the population, particularly Muslims.

CBGA began its work with the hypothesis that the continued exclusion of Muslims is due to flaws in government interventions aimed at minority development. It identified potential gaps in policies designed for the development of Muslims, limited budget allocations for the programmes that emerge from these policies and the ineffective implementation of related government interventions. In order to test these theories, CBGA collaborated with another New Delhi based organization, the Centre for Equity Studies (CES), to collect and analyze evidence on current programmes for



Muslims. They carried out in-depth research on budgetary resources, the government's key development programmes, programme implementation and access to public services for Muslims in select districts. The research, which combined in-depth analysis of secondary evidence on budgets as well as primary evidence on implementation issues, confirmed that there were indeed major gaps with regards to the above-mentioned issues for Muslims. The study's policy recommendations stated that the unit planning for implementation of MSDP projects should be the block rather than the district and that these projects should be designed to take into account the needs of the Muslim community.

Both CBGA and CES worked to disseminate the findings of the research widely. They informed key national policy-making institutions including the National Advisory Council, the Planning Commission of India, and the government's *Steering Committee for Empowerment of Minorities in the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan*. They also shared the findings in the *Times of India*, one of the country's leading national newspapers, in March 2012. This caught the attention of some Members of Parliament (MPs) and, citing the evidence generated by CBGA, a question was raised in Parliament in May 2012 on the poor utilization of funds in the MSDP. Following this, CBGA staff took part in two informal meetings of Muslim MPs, which were convened by a senior MP with a keen interest in the issue. This coalesced into a large delegation of Muslim MPs (25 MPs from *Lok*

*Sabha*, i.e. the Lower House, and 22 MPs from *Rajya Sabha*, i.e. the Upper House of Parliament) meeting with the Prime Minister of India in May 2012 to present a *Memorandum on Comprehensive Minority Programmes* on the required policy measures pertaining to the development of Muslims. This Memorandum captured most of the policy recommendations that had been shared by CBGA in its research.

**THE OUTCOME** —CBGA's efforts led to concrete policy changes on development programmes for Muslims. These included a visible increase in government's budgetary provisions for the MSDP in the 12<sup>th</sup> *Five Year Plan (2012-2017)* and a significant change in the guidelines of MSDP. Previously MSDP was intended for minority concentration "districts" with at least 25 per cent minorities in the total population and was implemented in 90 districts covering about 30 per cent of the minority population. In the new guidelines MSDP is now implemented in minority concentration "blocks" - which are smaller units than districts - with at least 25 percent minorities in the total population. This has led to the implementation of MSDP in over 150 districts across the country, and as a result it now covers approximately 60 percent of the minority population. Given that Muslims are India's largest minority group, constituting 73 per cent of the country's minority population, it is anticipated that these policy changes will have positive benefits for the country's Muslim population.

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