



**Empowering National Security Studies Education: Enhancing Skills and  
Sensitivity of School Educators and Administrators in India's Border  
Management Residential Areas**

**Dr. Ajay Singh**

Academic Counsellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University

Email: [ajaysingh.rs.defence@mdurohtak.ac.in](mailto:ajaysingh.rs.defence@mdurohtak.ac.in)

**Abstract**

This research paper proposes a comprehensive framework for integrating national security awareness and practical skills into the educational ecosystem of India's sensitive border regions. It focuses on empowering school educators and administrators, recognising their pivotal role in fostering resilience and preparedness among students, particularly girls in residential schools. Leveraging existing national frameworks such as the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) and the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act (PSARA), the paper outlines a multi-faceted approach that incorporates vocational education, disaster management, and gender-sensitive safety protocols. This paper aims to provide actionable policy recommendations for a more secure and informed citizenry in India's border management residential areas by addressing identified gaps in current security studies education and acknowledging the unique challenges posed by geopolitical tensions and non-traditional threats.

**Keywords:** National Security Education, Border Management, School Safety, Vocational Education, Disaster Management, Gender-Sensitive Security, India

**1. Introduction**

**1.1. Context: India's Geopolitical Landscape and Border Management Imperatives**

India's geographical expanse includes extensive land borders, stretching approximately 15107 kilometres and a vast coastline of about 11099 kilometres. Diverse terrains, historical conflicts, and ongoing political tensions with neighbouring countries characterise this intricate border landscape. Effective management of these borders is not merely a matter of territorial integrity but is deeply intertwined with India's national defence and economic stability. It necessitates continuous surveillance, regular patrolling, and proactive measures to counter illegal entries, safeguarding national sovereignty.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) essentially adopts a security-centric approach to border management. This strategy emphasises physical fortification, such as extensive fencing, and the deployment of advanced surveillance systems, including the Hybrid Surveillance System (HSS), primarily to curb illegal migration, insurgency, and drug trafficking. However, this robust security posture frequently creates tension with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) "Act East" Policy. The "Act East" Policy champions regional integration through enhanced connectivity, trade, and cultural diplomacy, aiming to position India's Northeast as a vital link to ASEAN. This divergence in policy priorities can inadvertently lead to the alienation of border communities, whose traditional cross-border lives and livelihoods are often disrupted



by stringent security measures. Therefore, a truly effective border management strategy must transcend a purely militaristic or physical approach. Integrating human-centric development and engagement is imperative to ensure that security measures do not inadvertently create new vulnerabilities or exacerbate existing ones. Education, by fostering strategic awareness and resilience within these communities, can serve as a crucial bridge to reconcile these seemingly conflicting objectives, ensuring that security measures enhance overall national security without undermining the well-being and cooperation of border populations.

### **1.2. The Critical Role of Education in National Security**

In the 21st century, the concept of national security has profoundly transformed. It is no longer confined solely to military defence and battlefield concerns but has expanded to encompass many non-military and non-traditional threats. These include emerging challenges such as cyber warfare, internal insurgencies, disinformation campaigns, environmental degradation, public health emergencies, illegal migration, and mass unemployment. This broadened understanding of national security necessitates a corresponding evolution in educational paradigms.

Educating the youth about this expanded notion of national security is not intended to instil fear but to cultivate a profound sense of responsibility, critical thinking, and preparedness. These attributes are essential for navigating an era of complex and multi-faceted threats. A traditional curriculum, narrowly focused on civics or history, can no longer equip future citizens with the comprehensive understanding and skills required to address these modern challenges. National security education must become interdisciplinary, dynamic, and responsive, preparing individuals to identify and mitigate various threats, from digital vulnerabilities to cross-border issues. This proactive educational approach fosters a more resilient and adaptable society capable of contributing actively to national security. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) implicitly acknowledges this foundational role of education through initiatives like the Sainik School program. This initiative, which includes new schools operating under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, aims explicitly to instil discipline, leadership, and patriotism while preparing students for potential careers in the armed forces, thereby directly contributing to national defence capabilities.

### **1.3. Objectives and Scope of the Research Paper**

This research paper aims to thoroughly analyse the landscape of national security education within India's school system, with a particular focus on educational institutions located in border management residential areas. A primary objective is to identify critical gaps and deficiencies in current educational approaches and to propose actionable strategies for significantly enhancing the skills and sensitivity of school educators and administrators in these vulnerable regions.

The scope of this paper is multi-faceted, specifically incorporating the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), guidelines stipulated by the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act (PSARA), the integration of private security through vocational education, comprehensive disaster management protocols, and specific considerations for the unique safety and security needs of girls in residential schools. Ultimately, this paper seeks to

contribute to policy discourse by providing evidence-based recommendations that foster a more informed, resilient, and secure citizenry capable of contributing to national security imperatives in India's sensitive border regions.

## **2. Current State of National Security Education in India's School System**

### **2.1. Existing Curricula and Initiatives**

At the higher education level, India has established specialised academic institutions and programs dedicated to national security studies. For instance, the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) hosts a School of Conflict and Security Studies, which offers programs such as Conflict Resolution and Peace Research, International Strategic and Security Studies, and Science, Technology and...source Similarly, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) provides a range of National Security Studies courses, including "Research Methodology for National Security Studies of India," "Domestic/Internal Security Studies of India," "India's External Security challenges," "Indian Strategic Thoughts and Military History of India," "Emerging Technology and National Security," "Studying India's Borders," and "Non-traditional Security Studies of India". These offerings indicate a recognition of the academic discipline at advanced stages.

Beyond traditional universities, the Indian Institute of National Security (IINS), inaugurated in 2004, offers certificate courses in various aspects of security, including "Certificate in National Security" and "Certificate in Terrorism Mitigation." Notably, some of these courses have "no minimum educational qualification" requirements, suggesting a pathway for broader accessibility to security training and awareness.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has developed an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) curriculum within the school education system. This curriculum addresses social and ethical issues related to internet use, specifically promoting safe and secure web practices for students and teachers. Complementing this, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has also developed and shared guidelines on cyber safety and security with its affiliated schools across the country. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023, a direct outcome of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, aims for holistic quality education and notably integrates vocational education across all schools, providing a conducive framework for including new subjects and skills. At the senior secondary level, the Class 12 Political Science curriculum (NCERT) consists of a chapter titled "Security in the Contemporary World." This chapter differentiates between traditional and non-traditional threats. It outlines the four broad components of India's security strategy: strengthening military capabilities, strengthening international norms and institutions, meeting security challenges, and developing the economy.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is expanding military-oriented education through its Sainik School initiative. This ambitious plan aims to establish 100 new Sainik Schools under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, with 86 schools already approved as of May 2025. These CBSE-affiliated residential schools emphasise a holistic curriculum that blends



academic rigour with physical training and value-based education, fostering discipline, leadership, and patriotism and preparing students for potential careers in the armed forces.

## **2.2. Identified Gaps and Deficiencies in National Security Studies Education**

Despite some specialised programs and initiatives, significant gaps and deficiencies persist within India's current security studies education system, particularly at the school and foundational college levels. A primary concern is the absence of a structured mechanism within the education system to build strategic awareness among young Indians despite the nation facing a broad spectrum of threats, including cross-border terrorism, cyber warfare, internal insurgencies, and disinformation campaigns.

As a formal and dedicated academic topic, national security is largely absent from the school curriculum across most Indian states, with Maharashtra being cited as a partial exception. While covering governmental structures and basic civic duties, traditional civics classes rarely engage students with contemporary and evolving threats such as cybercrime, ongoing border disputes, climate security, or information warfare. This lack of foundational knowledge leaves youth ill-equipped to understand, critically analyse, and respond to complex threats. Consequently, the populace may be less strategically aware, potentially more susceptible to disinformation campaigns, and less prepared to act effectively during crises. This educational deficit directly contributes to a less resilient national security posture, as a well-informed citizenry is a fundamental component of comprehensive defence.

At the college level, security-related topics are typically subsumed under broader disciplines like political science, international relations, or defence studies. Despite India's rich strategic tradition, this prevents national security from being institutionalised as a core academic discipline. The higher education system also faces administrative challenges, including a lack of standardisation in program nomenclature, disputes over faculty eligibility criteria, and an over-reliance on contractual and guest faculty, which can compromise academic rigour and consistency. The growing influence of retired civilian and military bureaucrats in academic recruitment and curriculum framing further raises concerns about the autonomy and intellectual rigour of educational governance in this critical field.

A deeper examination reveals a significant systemic disconnect in India's national security education. On the one hand, there are advanced, specialised programs at the university level, such as those at NIAS and JNU, and dedicated training institutes like IINS, along with targeted MoD initiatives like Sainik Schools. These initiatives demonstrate a recognition of the importance of national security at professional and higher academic levels. On the other hand, there are explicit "deficiencies in school and college-level education", with national security being "largely absent from the school curriculum". This pattern indicates that national security education is primarily siloed within professional and higher academic tracks rather than being integrated as a foundational general education element from an early age. This fragmented approach hinders the development of a holistic, "whole-of-society" strategic awareness, thereby limiting the overall national capacity to address evolving security challenges effectively. India currently lacks a substantial cadre of civilian national security experts proficient in specialised fields such as intelligence analysis, foreign languages, cybersecurity,

data-driven risk modelling, and geopolitical forecasting, a direct consequence of these educational gaps.

### **2.3. Unique Challenges for Schools and Educators in Border Management Residential Areas**

Schools in India's border states, including Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, and Rajasthan, are uniquely vulnerable and directly impacted by escalating geopolitical tensions. This often leads to frequent and temporary closures of educational institutions, disrupting academic schedules and creating uncertainty for students and staff. Military operations, such as "Operation Sindoor," necessitate these precautionary school closures. This can also result in educational institutions being converted into temporary shelters for displaced families, further exacerbating the disruption to academic continuity.

Children in these border areas often hail from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, possessing minimal or no access to digital tools and reliable internet connectivity essential for online learning. This exacerbates the learning gap during periods of school closure. Beyond academic disruption, the psychological impact on children growing up in conflict zones is profound. They frequently suffer from post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and fear, with the sounds of shelling or the constant presence of armed personnel becoming normalised, thereby robbing them of their childhood innocence. A study by child psychologists in border districts revealed that students exposed to repeated school closures and threats of violence exhibited higher levels of depression, attention disorders, and social withdrawal.

Girls in these regions are particularly vulnerable. The instability and disruption often lead to them being pushed into domestic roles or early marriages, which can permanently deprive them of their education. This means that beyond the general disruption to learning that all students face, girls are at a higher risk of having their educational journey completely cut short due to societal pressures and traditional expectations that resurface during times of instability. The insufficient educational infrastructure in these underserved border regions further exacerbates these learning gaps during closures. While local governments and district education officers attempt to introduce contingency plans, such as mobile schools and radio lessons, the scale of the problem often dwarfs the available solutions, highlighting an amplified vulnerability in these sensitive areas.

## **3. Leveraging National Frameworks for Enhanced Security Education**

### **3.1. The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF)**

The National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), launched by the Government of India in December 2013 and rationalised in June 2023, represents a significant stride towards standardising and integrating vocational education with mainstream academics. It is an outcome and competency-based framework that organises qualifications across eight levels, from Level 1 to Level 8, with each level representing a distinct degree of skills, complexity, knowledge, responsibility, and autonomy.

The key features of NSQF highlight its potential for a structured approach to security education. It provides for integrating and crediting vocational education, training, and skill learning across various dimensions of academics, skilling, and experiential learning, including relevant



experience and professional proficiency levels, subject to assessment. This framework prescribes desired competency levels regarding knowledge, skills, aptitude, responsibility, and learning outcomes, assigning a predefined NSQF/NCrF level to each qualification. It facilitates the assignment of credit levels across vocational education and skilling, including in school and higher education, based on cumulative learning hours. It aims to establish academic equivalence between vocational and general education, enabling mobility within and between these educational streams. The NSQF also promotes multi-disciplinarity, offers multiple entry-multiple exit (ME-ME) options, and defines clear progression pathways within and between school education, higher education, technical education, vocational education, training, skilling, and the job markets. This flexibility allows students and learners to choose their learning trajectories and career paths, including options for mid-way course correction. Furthermore, it recognises learning through close partnerships with industry and employers via internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training across all sectors. It provides for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) through a credible assessment process, thereby enabling and promoting lifelong learning and skill development.

Under the Government of India's Skill India Mission (SIM), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) delivers skill, re-skill, and up-skill training through an extensive network of skill development centres and institutes under various schemes, such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS), National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), and Craftsman Training Scheme (CTS) through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). This robust framework can provide a standardised, flexible pathway for incorporating security-related skills into the curriculum, allowing for formal recognition of competencies and facilitating mobility between general and vocational education. This can bridge the gap between theoretical academic learning and practical preparedness, creating a workforce better equipped to address contemporary security challenges.

### **3.2. Integrating Private Security through Vocational Education and PSARA Guidelines**

The Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act (PSARA) of 2005 is a pivotal piece of legislation enacted to regulate and monitor the operations of private security agencies (PSAs) in India, ensuring they function within a legal and ethical framework and contribute to maintaining law and order. A mandatory license is required for any security agency to operate, and the application process involves police verification and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an accredited training institution.

PSARA stipulates comprehensive training requirements for security guards. This includes at least 100 hours of classroom instruction and 60 hours of field training spread over at least 20 working days. For veterans and former police personnel, a shorter course of 40 hours of classroom instruction and 16 hours of field training over at least seven working days is mandated. The training curriculum encompasses many subjects, including physical fitness, physical security, firefighting, crowd control, analysis of identification documents, identification of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), first aid, crisis response, and disaster management. Optional training in handling non-prohibited weapons and fire alarms, as well as

understanding police and military ranks and leadership (for supervisors), is also covered. Strict physical fitness standards cover height, weight, vision, hearing, and freedom from communicable diseases.

The NSQF curriculum for an Unarmed Security Guard, for instance, is designed to align with these requirements, covering essential aspects such as an introduction to security services, understanding risks and threats, cooperation with police and other organisations, introductory legal provisions under PSARA, knowledge of security equipment, access control procedures, and search and seizure protocols. While the Security Sector Skill Development Council (SSSDC) was initially formed under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) to facilitate upskilling in the Private Security Sector, its power and authority were withdrawn in 2018, with the Management and Entrepreneurship & Professional Skills Council (MEPSC) now handling assessment and certification for this sector.

Although the PSARA Act does not explicitly detail its direct applicability to schools, schools are implicitly included if they employ private security agencies. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for training institutes under PSARA broadly covers "any industrial or business undertaking or a company or any other person or property," which would encompass educational institutions. The structured training and certification under PSARA, aligned with NSQF, can be adapted to train school staff, not necessarily as professional security guards but to enhance their security awareness and response capabilities. This approach would professionalise non-traditional security roles within schools, ensuring a baseline of competency and compliance with national standards, thereby significantly enhancing overall school safety and preparedness.

#### **4. Comprehensive Disaster Management and National Security Integration**

##### **4.1. India's Disaster Management Framework and School Safety**

India has established a robust and comprehensive framework for disaster management, primarily guided by the Disaster Management Act of 2005. This Act was instrumental in transforming the nation's approach from reactive to proactive, emphasising prevention, preparedness, and planning. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), chaired by the Prime Minister, serves as the apex body responsible for overseeing the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and formulating and enforcing national disaster management policies. Complementing this, the National Policy on Disaster Management 2009 aims to create a safe and disaster-resilient India through a holistic and technology-driven approach, stressing community involvement, capacity building at all levels, and integrating disaster management into development planning. The National Disaster Management Plan 2018 outlines a multi-hazard framework involving various stakeholders, including government agencies, the private sector, and local communities. At the district level, the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), led by the District Collector or Deputy Commissioner, is responsible for planning and executing local disaster management strategies.

The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) plays a nodal role in this framework. It is responsible for human resource development, capacity building, training, research, documentation, and policy advocacy in disaster management. NIDM offers specialised

programs, such as the "Training of Trainers Programme on School Safety Plan and Auditing," designed to empower government administrators, academicians, principals, headmasters, and senior teachers in making schools safe and disaster-resilient.

The School Disaster Management Plan (SDMP) is a key component at the grassroots level. This plan is structured around five key steps: sensitisation and preparation, formation of teams and groups with delineated roles and responsibilities, addressing special needs of children, dissemination and mock drills, and regular checklist-based review. The School Disaster Management Committee (SDMC), typically led by the Principal, includes diverse stakeholders such as parents, students, and local authorities, fostering a community-wide approach to safety. SDMPs primarily focus on identifying and mitigating natural hazards like earthquakes, landslides, fires, floods, and cyclones, assessing structural and non-structural vulnerabilities, and conducting mock drills to enhance preparedness.

In response to escalating geopolitical tensions, particularly between India and Pakistan, the NDMA has also issued guidelines for schools to follow in the case of an external threat. These guidelines, released amidst heightened hostility, are part of a broader effort to prepare citizens for national security threats, including civil defence exercises for air raid warnings. Schools along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir have significantly stepped up their emergency preparedness protocols, specifically in the Poonch, Kupwara, and Uri sectors. These measures include thorough bunker inspections and stockings, regular student evacuation drills, staff-led emergency training sessions, and close coordination with local disaster management teams. The existing robust disaster management framework, with its multi-tiered structure and emphasis on preparedness, offers a strong template. However, the challenge lies in explicitly integrating national security threats into these plans, moving beyond natural disasters to encompass artificial and geopolitical risks, especially in border areas.

#### **4.2. Adapting Disaster Management for Border Security Threats**

While the existing School Disaster Management Plan (SDMP) primarily addresses natural hazards and general emergencies, the unique threat landscape of India's border areas necessitates a tailored adaptation to incorporate national security threats explicitly. These threats include cross-border terrorism, infiltration, shelling, cyber warfare, disinformation campaigns, and illegal migration.

To address these specific challenges, training for educators and administrators in border regions must be expanded to include:

- **Threat Identification Specific to Border Regions:** This involves equipping educators with the knowledge and sensitivity to identify suspicious activities, understand local geopolitical dynamics, and recognise the indicators of various border-specific threats. Programs offered by institutions like the OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC) and Rashtriya Raksha University's Centre for Border Management and Intelligence Studies (CBMIS) provide relevant expertise in intelligence-led border management strategies and risk assessment that can be adapted for school contexts.
- **Rapid Response Protocols for Security Incidents:** Training should cover specific scenarios such as active shooters, bomb threats, and cross-border firing, ensuring



educators and administrators know how to initiate lockdowns, secure premises, and guide students to safety effectively.

- **Coordination with Security Forces and Intelligence Agencies:** Establishing clear protocols for liaison and cooperation with the Army, Border Security Force (BSF), local police, and intelligence agencies is crucial. Educators must understand their role in reporting incidents and collaborating with these entities during a crisis.
- **Psychological First Aid and Trauma Support:** Given the psychological impact of living in conflict-affected zones, educators require training in providing immediate psychological support and trauma-informed care to students and staff who may experience fear, anxiety, or distress during and after security incidents.
- **Cybersecurity Awareness:** With the increasing reliance on digital tools, educators must be trained in cybersecurity awareness to protect school digital infrastructure from cyber threats and prevent disinformation campaigns that can destabilise communities.
- **Understanding Legal Frameworks:** Training should also cover relevant legal frameworks, including aspects of the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act (PSARA), to ensure that school staff understand their roles, responsibilities, and limitations when private security personnel are deployed or when interacting with law enforcement.

Furthermore, mock drills, a vital component of preparedness, should be expanded to simulate security scenarios relevant to border areas, moving beyond natural disaster simulations. This would include drills for cross-border incursions, active threats, and coordinated evacuations under hostile conditions. This comprehensive adaptation ensures that the existing disaster management infrastructure is fully utilised and enhanced to build a robust security posture capable of addressing the multi-faceted threats in India's border regions.

## **5. Special Considerations for Residential Schools for Girls in Border Areas**

### **5.1. Enhanced Safety and Security Protocols**

Residential schools, particularly those catering to girls, face distinct and heightened challenges in ensuring a secure environment. The separation of students from their families places a greater responsibility on these institutions to act as guardians, providing their students' physical, emotional, and psychological safety. To address these unique vulnerabilities, enhanced safety and security protocols are paramount.

Physical safety measures are foundational. Campuses must be secure, enclosed by boundary walls, equipped with strategically placed CCTV cameras, and feature controlled access points to prevent unauthorised entry. The presence of 24/7 trained security personnel and vigilant supervision is critical for maintaining a secure environment around the clock. Access control systems, such as ID cards and key fobs, should be utilised to track and manage entry and exit to various campus buildings. Regular safety equipment inspections, including fire extinguishers and alarms, are essential to ensure their functionality. Safe and monitored transportation facilities for field trips and emergencies are also crucial.

Emergency preparedness is another key aspect. Schools should conduct regular drills for fire safety, earthquake response, and evacuation procedures and maintain emergency kits stocked

with essential supplies. Establishing transparent chains of communication to notify parents during emergencies is vital. Stringent policies and regulations form the backbone of these measures, including enforcing curfews, restricting access to unauthorised individuals, implementing zero-tolerance policies against harassment, ragging, and discrimination, and maintaining detailed visitor logs. A critical protocol for girls' residential areas is the deployment of only female outsourced staff; male staff should only access these areas for maintenance or emergencies in the presence of a female staff member and the absence of girls. Thorough student baggage checks are also recommended to prevent the introduction of prohibited items. This multi-layered approach, extending beyond physical infrastructure to include rigorous personnel protocols and continuous oversight, is essential for creating a safe and supportive environment for girls in residential schools.

### **5.2. Addressing Human Trafficking and Gender-Based Violence**

Girls residing in conflict zones and border areas are particularly vulnerable to being pushed into domestic roles or early marriages, which can permanently deprive them of their education. Beyond these societal pressures, human trafficking poses a significant and often overlooked national security threat, particularly along porous borders such as the open border between Nepal and India. This vulnerability is exacerbated by factors such as poverty, low educational attainment, and cultural pressures, with traffickers frequently exploiting social media and false promises of a better life to lure victims.

Government efforts to combat human trafficking, as highlighted by the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report for India, indicate increased prosecutions and convictions, including in bonded labour cases and advisories to state governments to enhance cooperation and victim identification. However, significant gaps persist. These include a persistently low conviction rate for trafficking crimes, inadequate protection services for victims (with some confined in shelters without magistrate's orders), a lack of coordination among anti-trafficking efforts, legal gaps in criminalising all forms of trafficking, and a perception of widespread impunity for complicit government officials. The report recommends increasing investigations and prosecutions, strengthening Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), ensuring systematic victim identification, monitoring shelters for victim-centred care and freedom of movement, improving compensation mechanisms, re-establishing inter-ministerial coordination, conducting proactive inspections of labour-intensive industries, enforcing recruitment regulations, and enhancing international cooperation and information sharing with neighbouring countries.

Educational institutions in border areas have a critical role to play in prevention. The Border Security Force (BSF), in collaboration with NGOs like 'Shakti Vahini', organises awareness programs in border areas, including at girls' high schools, to educate students on topics such as human trafficking, child abuse, child labour, gender discrimination, the misuse of social media, and the importance of education. Similarly, NGOs like "Every Daughter Matters" operate border booths to intercept potential victims, provide emergency accommodation, offer life skills training, and conduct extensive awareness campaigns in schools and communities. The intersection of national security and gender-specific threats is undeniable; human trafficking

and gender-based violence are not merely social issues but directly undermine national security by destabilising communities, creating vulnerabilities, and eroding human capital. National security education must explicitly address these threats, equipping educators to recognise signs of exploitation, implement prevention strategies, and facilitate appropriate responses, particularly for girls, strengthening the broader national security fabric.

### **5.3. Role of National Security Education in Protection and Empowerment**

National security education holds transformative potential for girls in border areas, extending beyond mere protection to genuine empowerment. Education can equip girls with the tools to identify and mitigate risks effectively by integrating relevant knowledge and skills into the curriculum. This includes formal curriculum integration of personal safety education, building on initiatives like NCERT's introduction of "Safe and Unsafe touch" concepts in Grade 4 Environmental Studies textbooks. Such education fosters an understanding of personal boundaries, helps children identify unsafe situations, and empowers them to seek help from trusted adults, laying a foundation for a culture of awareness and prevention.

Beyond personal safety, national security education can cultivate critical thinking skills, enabling girls to discern disinformation and navigate online threats safely. This is particularly crucial in the digital age, where misinformation campaigns exacerbate vulnerabilities in sensitive regions. Furthermore, education can foster resilience and psychological well-being among students and staff by addressing the psychological impact of living in conflict-affected areas.

The Indian Army's "Operation Sadbhavana" in Kargil exemplifies a holistic approach to national security that integrates women's empowerment. Through this initiative, the Army has established Women Empowerment Centres (WECs) and Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), upgrading school infrastructure and providing special scholarships for girls from economically weaker sections to pursue higher education. Army Goodwill Schools (AGS) in these regions specifically focus on gender inclusion, ensuring excellent education for girls. These efforts demonstrate that protecting and advancing women's education is a fundamental human right and a security imperative. The denial of girls' and women's education can be viewed as a form of conflict-related intellectual violence, interconnected with other forms of physical violence, which ultimately undermines peace and security. By prioritising girls' education, national security education can empower them to become self-reliant, critically thinking individuals and active agents of change within their communities, thereby strengthening the broader national security fabric.

## **6. Recommendations and Way Forward**

Based on the analysis of India's geopolitical landscape, existing educational frameworks, and the unique challenges faced by schools in border management residential areas, the following recommendations are proposed to empower school educators and administrators, thereby enhancing the skills and sensitivity of students, particularly girls, in these vulnerable regions:

### **6.1. Curriculum Development and Integration**

- **Formal Inclusion of National Security Studies:** A structured curriculum on national security should be formally integrated into the school education system from primary

to secondary levels. This curriculum must move beyond traditional civics lessons to comprehensively cover contemporary threats such as cyber warfare, border management, climate security, and disinformation campaigns. This integration should align seamlessly with the principles and objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) 2023, ensuring a holistic and future-ready educational experience.

- **NSQF Alignment for Vocational Pathways:** Vocational courses in security management should be developed and implemented within schools, aligning with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). These courses could lead to recognised certifications, providing students with pathways to careers in the private security sector or defence-related fields. Modules within these vocational programs should cover basic security operations, access control, emergency response, and an understanding of legal provisions under the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act (PSARA).
- **Gender-Sensitive Content:** It is crucial to incorporate specific modules focused on personal safety, cyber safety, human trafficking awareness, and gender-based violence prevention, particularly for girls in residential schools. This content should build upon existing initiatives, such as NCERT's personal safety education, to equip girls with practical knowledge and self-protection skills.

## 6.2. Educator and Administrator Capacity Building

- **Specialised Training Programs:** Implement mandatory, periodic training programs designed explicitly for border-area educators and administrators. These programs should focus on enhancing national security awareness, improving threat identification capabilities, and developing robust emergency response protocols. Such training should be developed in collaboration with specialised institutions like the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM), the Indian Institute of National Security (IINS), and Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), leveraging their expertise in security and disaster management.
- **Disaster Management Integration:** Enhance existing School Disaster Management Plans (SDMPs) to include national security threats explicitly. Training should cover specific scenarios pertinent to border regions, such as cross-border shelling, infiltration attempts, and cyberattacks, with mock drills tailored to these unique contexts to ensure practical preparedness.
- **Psychological Support Training:** Equip educators with essential psychological first aid and trauma-informed care skills. This is vital for supporting students and staff who may be exposed to and affected by conflict, displacement, or other traumatic events, helping to mitigate long-term psychological impacts.
- **PSARA Compliance and Private Security Liaison:** Train school administrators on the intricacies of PSARA guidelines for hiring, managing, and overseeing private security agencies. This ensures compliance with legal standards and fosters effective

coordination between school management and security personnel, optimising the contribution of private security to overall school safety.

### 6.3. Infrastructure and Resource Allocation

- **Digital Infrastructure:** Prioritise significant investment in strengthening digital infrastructure and ensuring reliable internet connectivity in India's border areas. This is crucial to support continuous online learning during school closures and to facilitate comprehensive cybersecurity education.
- **Safe School Infrastructure:** Invest in constructing resilient school buildings and establishing dedicated shelters or bunkers in vulnerable border regions. These facilities should be regularly inspected and adequately stocked with essential emergency supplies to ensure the safety of students and staff during crises.
- **Dedicated Female Staff and Counseling:** Ensure adequate female staff, including house mothers and professional counsellors, in girls' residential schools. They are critical in providing emotional and psychological support, addressing gender-specific safety concerns, and fostering a nurturing and secure environment.

### 6.4. Inter-Agency Collaboration and Community Engagement

- **Civil-Military-Education Synergy:** Foster stronger, more integrated collaboration among the Ministry of Education, Home Affairs (particularly its Border Management Division), the Ministry of Defence, and local communities. This can build on successful existing models, such as the Indian Army's "Operation Sadbhavana," to create a cohesive approach to security and development in border areas.
- **Community-Based Awareness:** Expand and intensify awareness campaigns on critical issues such as human trafficking, cyber safety, and general security risks within border communities. These campaigns should actively involve local authorities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and parents to ensure broad reach and effectiveness.
- **Policy Cohesion:** Develop a more cohesive national policy that effectively reconciles the Ministry of Home Affairs' security-first approach to border management with the Ministry of External Affairs' regional integration goals. This unified strategic vision is essential to ensure that educational initiatives in border areas are consistently supported and contribute to security and development objectives.

## 7. Conclusion

Empowering school educators and administrators in India's border management residential areas is not merely an educational imperative but a critical component of a comprehensive national security strategy. The analysis presented herein demonstrates that while India possesses a robust framework for higher education in national security and disaster management, significant gaps exist at the foundational school level, particularly in vulnerable border regions. These gaps, exacerbated by geopolitical tensions and socio-economic challenges, lead to amplified vulnerabilities, especially for girls in residential schools.

By systematically integrating national security studies into the school curriculum, aligning vocational education with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), and



leveraging the regulatory provisions of the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Act (PSARA), a more informed and resilient citizenry can be cultivated. Adapting existing disaster management plans to explicitly address border-specific security threats, coupled with specialised training for educators in threat identification, rapid response, and psychological support, is essential. Furthermore, enhancing physical and digital infrastructure in border schools and implementing stringent, gender-sensitive safety protocols in residential schools for girls are paramount to ensuring a secure learning environment and mitigating risks such as human trafficking.

Ultimately, a holistic approach that fosters strong inter-agency collaboration—between education, home affairs, and defence ministries—and deeply engages local communities is vital. Educators and administrators in border areas are frontline responders and crucial facilitators of resilience. By equipping them with the necessary skills and sensitivity, India can foster a generation of citizens who are academically proficient, strategically aware, capable of contributing actively to national security, and resilient in the face of evolving challenges. This integrated strategy will lead to an informed citizenry, enhanced safety, empowered girls, and a stronger national security posture for India.

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