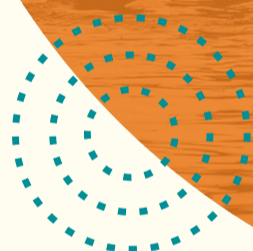


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The Status of Youth-Led PVE Efforts in Bangladesh

COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY BRIEF



AMPLIFYING THE LEADERSHIP OF LOCAL YOUTH (ALLY)
IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTH ASIA

“There [will] always be conflict in different situations. It is us, the youth, who can and must channel it into positive development for peaceful unity over violence.”

*– Shariar Tamim Sourov, Founder,
SURGE Bangladesh*



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Intended Audience and Overview

This policy brief is intended for policymakers at the national level in the Government of Bangladesh. It may also be of interest to local elected officials, police, and other security personnel engaged in preventing violent extremism (PVE) activities.

This brief explores the underlying reasons for violent extremism (VE) in Bangladesh, and recommends practices and policies to better prevent the phenomenon. The study, which resulted in this brief's policy recommendations, aimed to amplify the voices of young peacebuilders in Bangladesh by advancing their views in the policy recommendations. Their experiences provide valuable data, which will help policymakers, NGOs, INGOs, and other stakeholders better understand the Bangladeshi VE context and hopefully implement the suggested policy changes accordingly.

There is wide agreement that people in Bangladesh generally live peacefully together across religious divides. Alongside the generally positive atmosphere of interreligious coexistence, Bangladesh has also experienced conflict and tension between different religious communities. While the threat of a full-scale civil war is not considered prominent, the murders of secular activists in 2013 and 2016, and the Covid-19 pandemic have exacerbated the precarious relations between communities in Bangladesh.

This policy brief attempts to introduce lessons learned and best practices in order to achieve sustainable peace. For instance, the policy brief will review how restrictive policies towards civil societies (CSOs), current education curricula, lack of support to cultural activists and artists, and funding could be improved or transformed to help Bangladesh with its ongoing commitment to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.



Additionally, as the youth efforts in the peacebuilding field often lack support, and the polarization of religious groups is common, this policy brief will illustrate the benefits of youth participation and raising awareness through campaigns and media literacy for a pluralistic, diverse, and peaceful society.

This brief provides a concise review of findings and policy recommendations related to strengthening the youth peacebuilding sector in Bangladesh as a mechanism for enhancing and broadening PVE activities throughout the country. First, it introduces the concepts related to violent extremism in the context of Bangladesh. Second, it explains the Participatory Action Research approach used in the base study, particularly its crucial role in illustrating the present context through the perspectives of peacebuilders. Third, it explores the key level findings. The reader will learn the push and pull factors to VE and, on the other hand, the previous and current initiatives to prevent violent extremism in Bangladesh. Together, these factors provide a comprehensive picture of the peacebuilding work in Bangladesh, and what can be done to improve and support this work. Finally, this brief concludes with recommendations that were informed by the discoveries presented here.

Key Terms: Violent Extremism, Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism, and Peacebuilding

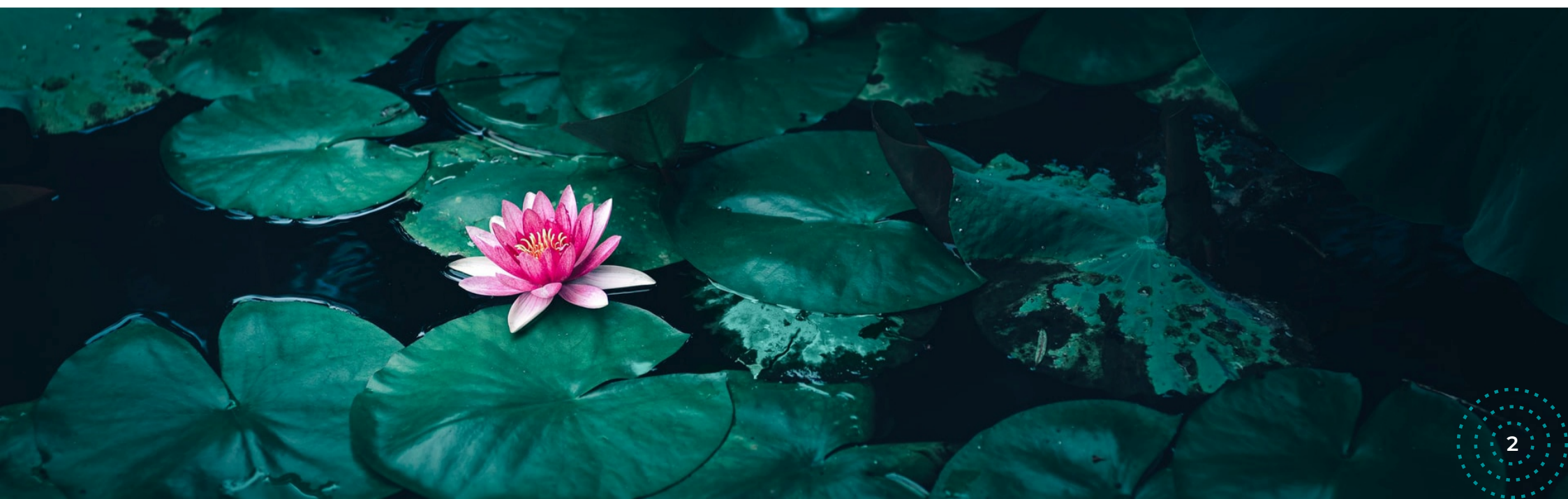
To contextualize VE in South Asia, it is necessary to have a basic understanding of how these concepts are understood and defined on the global stage. By and large, VE and related concepts are Western in origin and perspective, originating in the United States (US) and Europe (Ilyas 2021).

While the core premises of these ideas have existed for decades, the 9/11 attacks on the United States saw the US and many other Western countries invest heavily in stopping global terror threats. This period saw the concept of VE further defined and world-wide efforts to counter VE operationalized. For example, the US's Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) defines VE as the "encouraging, condoning, justifying, or supporting the commission of a violent act to achieve political, ideological, religious, social, or economic goals" (2021). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) offers a definition of "promoting views which foment and incite violence in furtherance of particular beliefs, and foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence" (2016). Frazer and Nünlist note that VE as a term emerged in the US initially in response to criticism of the generalist term "terrorism" to distinguish between violence as a means of spreading fear and violence as a tool for achieving political goals (2015).

In the wake of 9/11/2001, there were rapid response actions globally that relied centrally on police, military, and other covert security agencies. Despite extraordinary levels of spending and global cooperation, a decade later, serious critiques of this approach emerged. The discourse of countering violent extremism (CVE) arose as a more holistic response that recognized that structural causes of VE must also be tackled, including intolerance, government failure, and political, economic, and social marginalization (Frazer and Nünlist 2015). There are few precise definitions that distinguish between CVE and PVE. CVE, despite having similar aims, remains a project of states, bureaucracies, and government actors.

PVE, however, is typically understood as a bottom-up approach, that includes more local and civil society actors working on the ground to interrupt the process of radicalizing narratives and discourses which promote VE (UNDP 2016). PVE is an "all of society" approach (Ki-moon 2016) that engages local actors, such as religious leaders on the ground, to interrupt and challenge narratives shared at the local level to radicalize and recruit people—particularly young people—into extremist groups. Ilyas sees PVE as part of a broader movement to "decolonize" what he calls the "terrorism industry"; he argues that the field needs more localized/contextualized definitions, framings, methods, and knowledge, rather than ideas which have been imported from the West (2021).

While peacebuilding itself is a broadly defining concept, the UN emphasizes the role of local and "indigenous capacities for peace management and conflict resolution" (2010). Youth-led peacebuilding exemplifies this focus on local capacity and action. Youth Peacebuilders (YPBs) seek to mediate conflicts, misunderstandings, and misinformation at the community level, facilitating activities which build dialogue and deeper understanding between groups with perceived differences and long-standing conflicts/tensions.



The Research Approach

The findings and recommendations contained in this brief were produced through the ALLY project, which seeks to amplify youth voices and actions dedicated to PVE in India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The project aims to increase the knowledge of the push and pull factors, enhance the multidimensional capacity and strategies of youth leaders, as well as strengthen multi-stakeholder partnerships to prevent VE in South Asia.

The goals of this study include:

- Highlight the experiences and perspective of YPBs in South Asia.
- Document the factors behind youth engagement with regional violent extremist discourses.
- Examine youth-led innovative approaches to PVE in South Asia.
- Analyze impacts of youth-led initiatives and constructive narratives on individuals, communities, and institutions across South Asia.
- Contribute to an increasingly evidence-based approach to policies and programs related to PVE by deepening the existing knowledge-base of youth-led peacebuilding.

This research was conducted using an alternative methodological approach known as participatory action research (PAR). PAR focuses on collaborative, bottom-up knowledge production with community members and other stakeholders who possess the daily, lived experience of the issues at hand. The PAR approach necessitated that experienced YPBs comprise the core of the research team. Eight YPBs were chosen to form the core research team, with two researchers from each country, including two YPBs from Bangladesh. The researchers completed eight weeks of research training in participatory research methods. During this time, each team collected publications, newspapers articles, video clips, and other media documenting VE and PVE activities in Bangladesh. The team of researchers also reviewed several policies, reports, articles, and research papers to develop a holistic understanding of the Youth Peace and Security Sector (YPS) sector. The YPS discourse originated with the UN's Security Council Resolution 2250 (UN 2015). UNSCR2250 calls on governments to recognize the role of youth in peacebuilding and PVE activities and to actively support and enhance the opportunities for youth to engage in these activities.

The ALLY project research team collected data for YPBs in Bangladesh to better understand the current state of the YPS sector and to produce recommendations for strengthening the sector so that YPBs can contribute more extensively and effectively to PVE activities and to community level peacebuilding as well. The youth researchers in Bangladesh surveyed and interviewed 20 YPBs, five women and 15 men (women are notably under-represented in the sector) to develop an in-depth understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and limitations faced by YPBs across Bangladesh. The research specifically targeted early career peacebuilders, those under thirty years of age with work articulated as peacebuilding and PVE.

Additionally, another seven non-youth stakeholders were interviewed, all of whom are actively engaged with the youth peacebuilding sector in Bangladesh. Such stakeholders include religious leaders, government officials, parents, journalists, civil society leaders, police officers, and senior peacebuilders, among others.

Summary of Key Country-Level Findings

Youth Peacebuilders' Perception of Preventing Violent Extremism and Violent Extremism Contexts in Bangladesh

Growing up, YPBs in Bangladesh have witnessed and experienced both politically- and religiously-charged conflict and violence. While political violence between members of opposition parties (especially around elections) is well known, intraparty conflicts and violence incited by student political groups have become regular occurrences in Bangladesh (Alamgir and Ullah 2019). Though strict counter-terrorism government measures abated religious extremist attacks in the early 2000s (Crisis Group 2018), religiously motivated violence rose again with the 2012 Ramu violence¹ (BDNews24 2012). Local Muslim mobs attacked minority Buddhist communities in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, destroying twelve temples and monasteries and fifty homes in reaction to a social media misinformation campaign.

Since 2012, attacks incited by false news and social media have occurred almost every year against religious minority groups. Property vandalism during minority religious festivals has also become a regular occurrence.² From 2013 to 2016, Islamist extremists killed more than a dozen bloggers, publishers, teachers, and cultural and LGBTQ activists.³ Most victims were secular activists who disagreed with social norms set by the majority religious consensus and social institutions (Petersmann 2018). Despite the growing number of hate motivated violent crimes, this has not resulted in discussing VE as a broader national issue affecting the public at large.

The July 2016 attack on the Holey Artisan Café in Dhaka was a wake-up call for Bangladesh. Violent extremists opened fire on the café, killing twenty-two people, seventeen of which were foreign nationals. Since then, YPBs have worked extensively in collaboration with law-enforcement agencies, independent non-profit initiatives, and civil society organizations (CSOs). However, as more and more youth join the peacebuilding sector, VE has become more of local concern than a national issue, which can be seen from the lack of policy reforms and joint approaches (YPB Interview, 26-10-2020).

The twenty Bangladeshi YPBs interviewed in this study come from a diversity of backgrounds. Twelve YPBs identified as male, five as female, and three as non-binary. Among those interviewed 13 were Muslims, two Hindus, two Christians, and one Buddhist. Ten of the YPBs worked in urban areas, seven worked in rural regions, and three lived in suburban communities. Fifteen YPBs felt that the government was welcoming and encouraging of peacebuilders' efforts to maintain harmony in society. At least six of them thought their platform was not sufficient to bridge their ideas and policymakers' decision-making. All respondents observed the misuse of social media and misrepresentation of religious ideologies, leading youth to choose a violent path. Respondents agreed that proper guidance by religious scholars could be helpful in keeping youth non-violent and peaceful. Religious leaders of different faiths often participate in youth-led peacebuilding initiatives, which has been considered as good practice. Fifteen respondents reported that there is an opportunity to better engage female peacebuilders, as there are more men in the sector. The other five participants perceived more balanced gender participation in urban areas than in rural areas.

Push, Pull, and Other Factors Contributing to Violent Extremism

Socio-Economic and Political Discrimination

Unemployment and an accompanying financial struggle have been crucial factors leading to recruitment and radicalization of youth into VE groups in Bangladesh. Social marginalization, injustice and inequality have led to a denial of civil and human rights, which have further influenced radicalization. There are inequalities reported in education between national and international curricula, public and private universities, as well as orthodox religious and secular institutions. A culture of impunity, corruption, and political persecution coupled with state monitoring and censorship (such as the 2018 Digital Security Act) has also led to the denial and refusal of rights (Amnesty International 2021).

1 - YPB Interview, 6-11-20
2 - YPB Interview, 7-11-2020
3 - YPB Interview, 7-11-2020

Lack of Religious and Media Literacy

In the absence of religious literacy, sacred texts are misinterpreted, and narratives are distorted and manipulated. Though the government has strict measures to counter religious extremism, the coercive approach has encouraged a biased and stereotypical impression of anyone visibly practicing Islam to be more vulnerable to radicalization.⁴ This attitude often gets reflected in the public domain, making people feel inferior and marginalized. The misuse of religious sentiment for the gain of power, property, or to create tensions between groups has been a common political practice in the last two decades. Misinformation, false news, and rumors spread easily on social media leading to hate speech, intolerance, and in some cases even violence. Fabricated narratives often provoke youth to follow extreme paths. Different online-based news sites run clickbait news articles that usually flaunt misleading headlines (Dhaka Tribune 2018).

Deteriorating Social Determinants of Personal Development

Social and family issues can contribute towards an identity crisis in young individuals. Examples include deteriorating bonds between families, increased rates of divorce⁵, lack of parenting, over-parenting, absence of mental health resources, drug addiction, lack of peace education, gender discrimination, and gender-based violence. Extremist recruiters have been known to leverage socio-economic grievances to appeal to youth through online platforms. Extremists frame VE as a pathway to achieve justice and peace in societies, providing youth with a sense of purpose and identity.

Youth Peacebuilding Sector Analysis

Youth peacebuilding is a relatively new sector in Bangladesh. In the early 2000s, only state actors were taking initiatives to counter VE. Between 2012 and 2013, there was an increase of interfaith intolerance. False news spread quickly via social media and attacks were made on secular individuals because of online posts and them expressing their opinions. In 2013, the MOVE Foundation became the first non-profit organization to address radicalization and extremism through capacity building workshops and civic education classes among mainstream (school, college, and university) and marginalized (religious and ethnic minority) youths. In addition, MOVE arranged the first Peace Film Festival in the country, while continuing regular dialogues between youth and religious leaders, and facilitating trainings on media and information literacy.

After the 2016 Dhaka attack, several youth organizations started working on different PVE initiatives. Many peacebuilding initiatives are developed and funded by larger CSOs, law enforcement authorities, or supported by the government. Individual PVE or peacebuilding activities are often developed and executed by young volunteers (mostly college and university students) with limited resources. In the last few years, international donor organizations have been assigning funds to local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international NGOs (INGOs), and sometimes, individual peacebuilders. Most initiatives are urban-based, focusing on students from colleges, universities, or madrasas. PVE remains predominantly male-dominated space. Female peacebuilders are more likely to work on addressing gender-based violence. There is work to be done to make the peacebuilding sector, and peacebuilding activity designs, more gender sensitive and inclusive.

Primary Motivations

YPBs are primarily motivated by personal experiences of unrest, violence, loss, and trauma. Family disputes, neighborhood unrest, intolerance, conflict, false news-incited violence, and hate speech towards religious and ethnic minority communities were reported by those interviewed. Pervasive corruption, injustice, and inconsistency from state actors also inspired YPBs to work in their communities towards reformative action. Youth have seen and experienced domestic and gender-based violence as intrinsic to Bangladesh's patriarchal culture. This has inspired a sense of urgency and protest amongst peacebuilders. Muslims, in general, are feeling pressured between narratives of the global rise of Islamist extremism and Islamophobia.

For Bangladeshi YPBs growing up in the Muslim majority, this phenomenon has led them to get involved in de-radicalization and PVE processes in their communities. Peacebuilder icons who receive local, regional, or international recognition, fellowship, and awards for their initiatives have inspired other young individuals to start working in peace and development.

Primary Impacts and Examples

Almost all organizations or youth peacebuilding initiatives use capacity-building training, advocacy workshops, dialogues, social media, or online campaigns. Recently, online campaigns, especially via social media, have gained popularity as more beneficiaries can be reached, including broader age groups and participants with more diverse backgrounds. Through capacity-building training and advocacy workshops, youth-led organizations like Y Coalition, Power to Bloom, Inclusive Bangladesh, Enlightening Youth, Women Peace Café, and SURGE Bangladesh, have worked with students on peace and civic education, media literacy, cyberbullying, and crime. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Barisal Youth Society, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), SAVE Youth - Students against Violence, and other youth-focused organizations frequently facilitate dialogue between young activists, policymakers, as well as political and religious leaders. Community leaders on interfaith and intercommunal harmony often serve to bring together state actors, civil society leaders, and youth as a connecting bridge with these different entities.

Youth-led peacebuilding organizations, in collaboration with experienced CSOs, law enforcement agencies, or established media houses, have arranged advocacy campaigns on pluralism, good governance, freedom of speech, and right to information. With more and more youth initiating and engaging with peacebuilding activities, digital activism has increased through social media campaigns. This has only been magnified by the limited face-to-face interaction and mobility during the COVID-19 pandemic. Memes, skits, hashtags, and webinars on tolerance, respect, conflict mediation, pluralism, and interfaith harmony have been widely used as youth peacebuilding initiatives.

In the last few years, many YPBs from Y Coalition, Power to Bloom, SURGE Bangladesh and Youth Power in Social Action (YPSA) have started PVE activities in Dhaka focusing on peace and harmony. CCD Bangladesh and RUPANTAR has formed **Youth Circle** and **Peace Club** in Rajshahi and Khulna region and implementing several types of activities to sensitize young people and students specially madrasha students about CVE & PVE, tolerance, social harmony and interfaith issues. Inclusive Bangladesh's initiatives have explored approaches like sports for increasing cohesion. Some organizations like Oroddhho foundation, TransEnd, and Project Debi work to prevent gender-based violence by redefining gender roles, ensuring equal rights irrespective of gender, and applying a gender lens to all the social contexts.

Notable peacebuilding organizations and initiatives in Bangladesh include:

The Power to Bloom program engages adolescent girls across Bangladesh on challenging topics to help them feel more informed, confident, and resilient to systemic gender-based violence. Most girls move from childhood to marriage without knowing their own voices and ideas hold power. These programs create a platform for young women to speak up against the violence and oppression they face. “Stories for Peace” is a core initiative in which children are taught peacebuilding skills through storytelling. “Project PeaceNet” is another social media campaign on media information and literacy that focuses on gender-based cyber violence against women. Power to Bloom has impacted about two thousand children and youth through their online and offline projects.

SURGE Bangladesh is a peacebuilding organization in Chattogram and Cox's Bazar that works to counter and prevent violent extremism by engaging children, adolescents, orphans, and youth on topics like community development and emergency response. The SURGE Community School offers education and cultural activities for orphans. The Community School regularly conducts a “Route to Fortune” workshop to equip youth with employable skills such as technological expertise, organizational culture, leadership, and mediation. On social media engagement, SURGE mostly publishes posts against hate speech as well as quotes from the Quran and Hadith on peace, charity, and mutual respect. SURGE also trains volunteers in social work and activism through the “Harmonizing Soul” program. So far, they have reached around eight thousand individuals through their programming.

Shekor Lifeskills is a non-profit platform that has worked with nearly three thousand youth on through regular trainings on citizenship, self-worth, self-growth, positive attitude, personal well-being, and detoxification. Shekor Lifeskills focuses on a “Behavioral Change Communication” approach to increase tolerance among youth through trainings in compassion, empathy, and sympathy.

Peacemaker Studio and Ohnish Films are two unique initiatives that harness media's power to reach a wide audience through music, movies, and documentaries. Peacemaker Studio and Ohnish Films use a “soft power approach” to explore interfaith and intercommunal harmony. Other topics include the heritage and cultural diversity of different regions, professions, ethnic communities, the importance of strong family bonds, environmental peace, mental health, and suicide prevention. Peacemaker Studio also centers CVE and PVE by illustrating the dangers of hate speech, intolerance, and misuse of religious narrative through their projects. Moreover, they regularly conduct online shows with experts and YPBs where peace and Quranic interpretation and instruction are discussed. These discussions also include critical analysis on how media, particularly films and dramas, encourage violence against women.

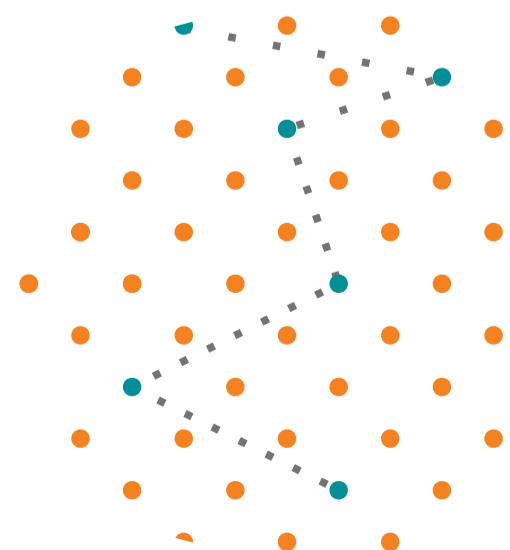
These youth-led peacebuilding PVE initiatives have had an impact at the individual, community, and institutional levels. Media literacy, tolerance, critical thinking, belonging, and purpose have all been observed to increase following participation. Peacebuilding participants report feeling more courageous taking risks, placing demands, and consulting with leadership. As great as these impacts are at an individual level, however, there is work to be done to scale it up to the community level. At the institutional level, schools, colleges, and universities respond positively to media literacy and societal harmony initiatives. Religious institutions have become increasingly interested in working on interfaith harmony through supporting the youth initiatives.

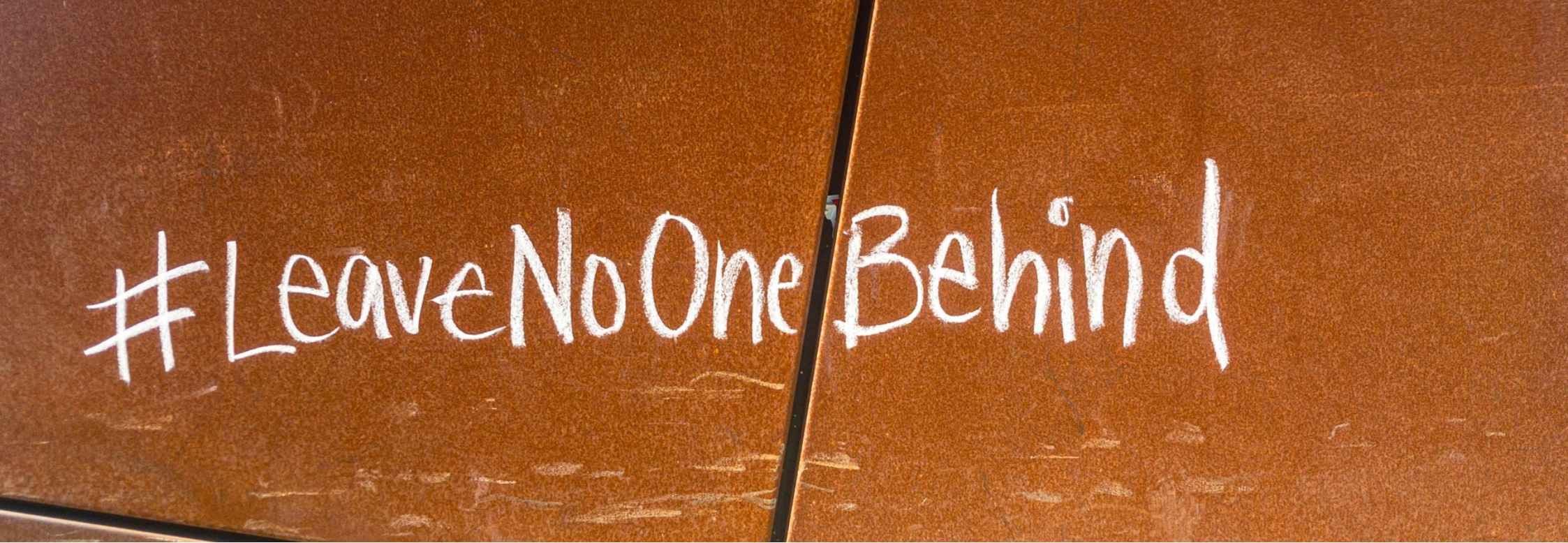
Primary Enablers

One of the key enablers for successful PVE work is young peacebuilders' high motivation and commitment to the work. However, in order to ensure sustainability for such programming there is need for sufficient funding and strategic collaborations. Moral support from peers, family, and faculty members is also crucial for the continuation of any peace program. PVE is a sensitive and challenging issue. YPBs must receive moral, administrative, or financial support from their community, as well as religious and political leaders. Recognition from any government organization, senior official, or media house greatly improves and facilitates on-the-ground program implementation. Thus, networking and collaboration with political parties in power, influential or renowned CSOs, INGOs, media houses and public figures help reach broader stakeholders, especially for peacebuilders who work in rural areas. Fellowships and other learning exchanges and resources also enhance YPBs' organizational capacity.

Primary Barriers

Lack of initial funds has been a significant barrier to PVE programs. With almost non-existent local sponsorship, youth-led organizations must be legally registered as NGOs to qualify for available international funds. This registration process, however, is bureaucratically complex, with incoherent and/or insufficient instructions available to YPBs on how to complete the registration process. Often, NGOs working on human rights, freedom of expression, and/or social and religious harmony, find it the most difficult to assist with the registration process. Thus, most peace projects are run by volunteers, exacerbating the common misconceptions that the peace and development sectors are risky and fruitless. Stronger professional peacebuilders' networks, improved access to resources, as well as greater support from local administrations and agencies are needed to enable youth-led peacebuilding. Other barriers to youth-led peacebuilding for PVE include distrust from local communities and leaders, gender-based prejudice, and threats from radical groups.





#LeaveNoOneBehind

Policy Recommendations

YPBs build peace through innovative initiatives that foster dialogues. They use the narratives to inspire tolerance and respect, good governance, the rule of law, and human rights. Though a few activities have directly addressed the anti-Islamist description, few programs target anti-Hindu, anti-Buddhist, or anti-Christian sentiments. Based on the increasing number of religious extremism incidents and reported radical recruitments, more initiatives are needed. Local and national policies should be reformed to accommodate and facilitate scalable peace initiatives in Bangladesh.

The following recommendations for the government of Bangladesh would, if implemented, facilitate the increased engagement and impact of youth in peacebuilding and the prevention of violent extremism in Bangladesh:



Collaboration for Prevention of Violent Extremism

The use of terms like “radicalization,” “extremism,” “religion,” or “faith” in peacebuilding activities has been difficult given sensitivities around religions. Thus, the government must collaborate with other stakeholders to conduct mass awareness campaigns and re-orient the public on peacebuilding, VE and de-radicalization, freedom of religion and belief, gender, and youth involvement. Special attention should be given to more remote and rural regions. Workshops, trainings, and orientation dialogues with government officials and trusted political and religious leaders would help increase understanding and efficacy of YPB initiatives and efforts. This would facilitate paths by which stakeholders may provide better administrative, financial, and moral support for peacebuilding initiatives.



Integration of Peacebuilding related Content into Academic Curricula

Integration of peace, tolerance, inclusion, diversity, and global citizenship in the existing education curriculum would greatly facilitate peace and development programs in the long run. Applying a behavioral change approach to curricula by incorporating educational content on mutual understanding, empathy, and compassion would enhance PVE and peacebuilding efforts. Piloting collaborative projects with existing YPB initiatives would expedite efforts by state and non-state actors. YPBs could collate peacebuilding training and workshops suited to academic curricula under the guidance of the educators.



Establishment of Government Database Containing Registration and Sector Specific Information

As youth-led organizations find legal registration difficult and confusing, a well-documented and updated, accessible framework with all necessary information on documents, links, and connections by the Bangladeshi NGO Affairs Bureau would help streamline the registration process. The government could hire YPBs to establish and update the database on working regions, organizations, targeted beneficiary groups, initiatives, numbers reached, etc. so that both the government and YPBs can identify communities and regions in need of more support.



Amplifying Involvement of Cultural Activists and Artists

Cultural personnel (including musicians, singers, actors, models, and painters/artists) have an incredible influence on the public. Their actions, statements, and affiliations with social initiatives naturally draw more public attention and interest. Government agencies and celebrated non-profits have championed a few national peace programs, with promotions by public figures reaching millions at a time. Active involvement of such influencers in youth-led peacebuilding would enhance visibility and impact beyond the limited beneficiary community. In addition, it could also encourage greater collaboration between peacebuilders in different working areas, government organizations, and civil society actors.



Creation of Local Funding Mechanism

With the diversion of international funding to battle the COVID-19 pandemic and the Rohingya Refugee crises, additional and sustainable local funding opportunities for PVE should be created. Besides fund-disbursing organizations, the private sector could contribute by assigning a part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) fund to the peace and development sector. The government database could help monitor transparent and neutral selection, disbursement, and usage mechanisms.



Initiation of Investment into Joint Peace, Gender and Development Research

Peacebuilding initiatives should not be one-size fits all. Applying measures from another country will not suffice in Bangladesh. Local ownership is an essential feature of any feasible and sustainable PVE program. Evidence-based research is the most effective way to find local contexts and situations to target. While peace research exploring Bangladesh's local context has been building up slowly over decades, academic and organizational PVE research and practices must still be solidified. Moreover, even within the limited research conducted, gender-based analyses are still missing and the potential interlinkages between PVE and gender based violence could be further explored. This would also be in line with the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ongoing commitment to promoting gender equality and women empowerment (Ministry, 2016). Therefore, investing in collaborative research between YPBs, academia, and the national government would assist PVE programming and efficiency.



Revision, Integration and Development of National Policy on Youth, Peace and Security

Lastly, having an inclusive national policy and national action plan on YPS reflecting the recommendations, opinions, and experience of YPBs would be a formal and dependable guideline for youth-led organizations and sustainable, successful programming. A revision of the existing national policies and plans on youth to integrate concentrated provisions and practical enablers on peacebuilding through PVE, YPS, and Women, Peace and Security are encouraged for the following: 2010 Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project, 2010 National Education Policy, 2011 National Skills Development Policy, 2011 National Women Development Policy, 2011 Youth Award Policy, 2016 Youth Welfare Fund Act, 2017 National Youth Policy, and 2019-2022 National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

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AMPLIFYING THE LEADERSHIP OF LOCAL YOUTH (ALLY) IN PREVENTING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOUTH ASIA



Network for Religious and
Traditional Peacemakers

