Youth for Humanity

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Summary Report

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Context

Amidst concerning indicators of religious violence and social tensions in Pakistan, the need for promoting peaceful coexistence and respect becomes paramount. Deteriorating religious freedom in Pakistan highlighted by recurring instances of violence against religious minorities, underscores the urgency for intervention. In response, Search for Common Ground (Search) initiated the "Youth for Humanity: Engaging Youth to Promote Religious Freedom in Pakistan" project, through funding from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), and implemented by partners Shaoor Foundation for Education and Awareness (SFEA) and Pakistan Research Institute for Sustainable Media (PRISM). Guided by Search's established methods of dialogue, artistic expression, and media engagement, the youth-led project focuses on fostering unity and shared understanding among diverse religious communities. Particularly targeted at major metropolitan areas such as Karachi and Lahore, the project seeks to address the pressing need for peace and respect within this context of religious tensions.

PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES

→ Multi-stakeholder dialogues which were attended by religious leaders and youth leaders from diverse religious backgrounds.

→ The common ground approach training aimed to provide the project beneficiaries with improved knowledge and skills to strengthen mutual collaboration and promote peaceful coexistence.

→ Forming mixed-faith teams for social action projects to foster collaboration and interaction achieve common goal of a tolerant society.

→ Media component aimed to use social media and mainstream media to develop effective messaging on interfaith harmony and to promote freedom of religion and belief, by increasing the capacity of the participating youth in digital messaging.

WHY THIS IS MEANT TO CREATE CHANGE

The project is designed to create change as its programmatic approaches are derived from common ground principles. These strategies collectively aim to transform attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge among project participants, consumers of media programs and target communities. By fostering a deeper understanding of different religions and beliefs, promoting common values, and encouraging collaboration towards shared goals, the project seeks to break down barriers, build relationships, and ultimately promote peaceful coexistence. This holistic approach recognizes that lasting change requires a comprehensive shift in attitudes and behaviors, making it well-equipped approach to create meaningful and sustainable impact.

About the study

The key objectives of the final evaluation were to document the project's performance, to assess shifts in the attitudes and behaviors of project beneficiaries as a result of the project and to document change.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation employed a mixed method approach using both qualitative and quantitative data collection tools. The evaluation included 400 surveys with youth (comprising direct and indirect youth participants) and 21 surveys with religious leaders, 15 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) including 6 with implementing partners (SFEA and PRISM), 1 with NACTA, Search staff, and Monitoring team each, and 6 with religious leaders, 15 In-depth Interviews (IDIs) with youth leaders, and 5 case studies.
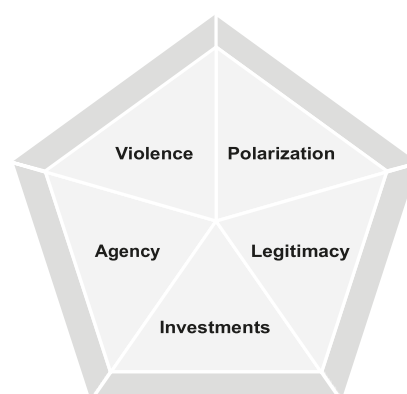
REPRESENTATION

The data collection exercise involved 430[1] respondents from different groups: religious leaders from Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Sikh, and others, youth leaders, indirect youth participants, project staff, and a government officer. Respondents included 38.6% women, 57.2% men, 2.1% trans women and 2.1% trans men.

Key Results

OUR APPROACH TO MEASURING CHANGE

In order to measure change, this study is aligned with the Peace Impact Framework, which explores five elements for healthy societies, as displayed in the corresponding figure.

This evaluation focuses on the resilience of youth in relation to **Agency, Violence** and **Polarization** out of the PIF themes. Impact in these areas is measured in relation to the OECD-DAC criteria of **Relevance, Intermediate Impact** and **Sustainability.**

Intended Positive Outcome	Related Results
Percentage of Youth leaders who were engaged in the project, reported feeling confident to lead intra-faith dialogues.	• 88.3% of the youth leaders believed they could lead these dialogues, underscoring their leadership abilities as a peacebuilder. • More women (91.8%) than men (86.1%) believed they could confidently lead such dialogues.
Intended Positive Outcome	**Related Results**
Percentage of youth participants who reported increased interaction and new relationships with youth from other religious and secular backgrounds.	• 99.2% of youth participants (compared to 16.5% baseline value) confirmed they had increased interaction and new relationships with youth from other religious communities after participation in the project. • 96.5% of male youth leaders (compared to 18.0% baseline value) and 95.6% of female youth leaders (compared to 15.0% baseline value) confirmed an increase in interaction and new friendships with youth from other faiths.
Intended Positive Outcome	**Related Results**
Percentage of youth who report having an increased understanding of what is effective messaging.	• 62% of youth leaders had a better understanding of effective messaging after participation in the project.
Intended Positive Outcome	**Related Results**
Percentage of youth engaged in media campaign development who report being more active in promoting peaceful coexistence messaging on social media.	• 85.5% of youth leaders (compared to 17.5% baseline value) are active in promoting peaceful coexistence messaging on social media.
Unintended Positive Outcome	**Related Results**

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[1] Those respondents who were part of more than one data collection event such as survey, IDIs, KIIs and case studies are counted once only to ensure avoiding the double counting.

Initiatives led by young people have the power to make a lasting impact on social change and promote peaceful coexistence in the target communities.	• 97.5% of the respondents believed the social action projects initiated by youth leaders have the potential to make a lasting impact on social change.
Unintended Negative Outcome	**Related Results**
One of the group activities (balloon activity) of the CGA training were not supportive of persons with disabilities.	• 48.3% of the survey respondents believed the project activities were not inclusive from a disability aspect. • IDIs with youth leaders and project partners also confirmed it.

INCLUSION & PARTICIPATION

The project prioritized inclusivity by engaging diverse groups encompassing various faiths (Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs), genders, ethnicities, and persons with disabilities. The project attempted to include youth from the Ahmadi faith, but the latter chose not to become part of it as a separate faith identity. The project interventions were inclusive and respected distinct needs as depicted by the selection of disability-friendly training venues. Nonetheless, some of the CGA training's group activities posed challenges for individuals with disabilities who had limited mobility, marking a limitation in an otherwise inclusive endeavor.

Feedback:

"The action plans for the youth projects were extremely inclusive. Multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-religious people and minority groups, as well as transgenders, were all brought together under this project" (KII with one of the project partners)

"I have gained a lot of confidence and I feel like I have gained more strength from this project…now I am not scared to lead such initiatives" (IDI with Trans woman youth leader)

REACH

DIRECT PARTICIPANTS

145

INDIRECT PARTICIPANTS

255

RELIGIOUS LEADERS

21

Conclusions

The project successfully addressed challenges such as a lack of knowledge about diverse religious beliefs and cultural practices. Furthermore, the project has been successful in enhancing the knowledge and skills of youth in promoting inter- and intra-communal respect and relationships. Overall, the project served as a platform for youth hailing from diverse faith backgrounds to engage in meaningful interactions, thereby fostering a nuanced understanding of each other's beliefs and practices and leading to stronger bonds and friendships. Additionally, the initiative boosted participants' self-confidence and respect, fostering improved leadership, digital skills, and the use of social media for promoting inter- and intra-communal respect.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Need identified to actively engage youth from across other areas of Punjab and Sindh in light of increasing faith-based violence.**
→ Engage youth in peacebuilding activities from smaller cities, peri-urban and rural areas where civil

society organizations are less prevalent and faith-based violence is high, in addition to youth from metropolitan areas.

2. **Sensitization regarding PWDs' inclusion is required to ensure that the project is better able to cater to their needs.**
→ All participants and project staff should be made aware at the start of the project regarding the specific accessibility challenges, needs and support required by PWDs.

3. **Shortened implementation window led to increased level of effort of IPs' staff, and activities being implemented under condensed timeframes.**
→ Project implementation should be extended logically for a project of a similar scope to allow activities to progress organically, and help to deepen the impact of individual activity.

4. **Trans men and women required additional support regarding active engagement on social media for peacebuilding in comparison to cisgender men and women.**
→ Organize activities to particularly cater to the needs of transgender individuals, based on a needs assessment of barriers to active participation in social media campaigns.