



Findings of Tolerance, Respect & Peace (TRP) Workshops with Youths

2016

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Bangladesh : Youths Perspective



MOVE Foundation

Acknowledgement

MOVE Foundation would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of our partners in the quest to build a peaceful and secure Bangladesh. Foremost, we are grateful to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Dhaka for their technical and financial support.

We are thankful to Mr. AQM Safiullah Arif, Secretary, Central Sharia Board for Islamic Banks of Bangladesh, Mr. Md. Minhaz Uddin Rahat, Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Jagannath University and other guest speakers, and resource person Mr. Fazle Elahi for their enthusiastic engagement with the youth participants.

We also take this opportunity to appreciate the support of Mr. Iftikhar A Rashid and Mr. G.M.Shoeb Ahmed in writing the report and our fellow MOVERS Mr. ABM Rashedul Hassan, Mr. Masudur Rahman Mithu, Ms. Tanjila Tabassum and Mr. Faez Belal for their support in organizing the events. Last but not least, we thank the youth participants for making the workshop a success.

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Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in Bangladesh : Youths Perspective

Findings of Tolerance, Respect & Peace (TRP) Workshops with Youths

MOVE Foundation
SEPTEMBER 2016

FORWARD

Bangladesh has hit global headlines in recent months following a series of terrorist attacks on bloggers, journalists, foreigners, religious minorities, spiritual leaders and academics. This has unfortunately generated a temporary sense of insecurity and negative perceptions of youth in the country.

In this backdrop, MOVE Foundation has taken the initiative to reach out to youth from diverse backgrounds - students of public universities, private universities, national colleges, qawmi madrassas, religious and ethnic minorities, faith leaders and young professionals - in order to listen to their perspectives on preventing radicalization, upholding freedom of speech, building tolerance and respecting differences of opinion in society.

MOVE Foundation conducted a series of day-long workshops on Tolerance, Respect & Peace (TRP) between August and September 2016 to reinforce the spirit of pluralism and provide counter-narratives rejecting religious militancy. 124 youth aged between 18 to 35 years actively participated in six workshops held in Dhaka on Aug 27, Aug 31, Sep 3, Sep 19, Sep 21 and Sep 24, 2016.

The workshop culminated in MOVE Foundation pioneering a youth network of '*Community Peace MOVERs*' comprising of university and madrasa students to develop creative initiatives in preventing violent extremism and building social cohesion in urban communities. The Community Peace MOVERs were equipped with practical tools and techniques for effective conflict resolution, including knowledge of counter narratives to prevent the radicalization of youth. MOVE Foundation acknowledges the generous support of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Dhaka in providing the technical and financial support for these workshops.



Saiful Haque Tusar
Founder & President
MOVE Foundation

Aims and Objectives of the Workshops

MOVE aimed to fulfil the following broad objectives through these workshops:

- Guide youths to identify conflict drivers and mitigation strategies by applying conflict analysis and resolution tools;
- Promote the spirit of freedom of speech, democracy and pluralism amongst youth;
- Disseminate religious perspectives against terrorism as counter narratives preventing the radicalization of youth;
- Mainstream conflict resolution strategies as an effective mechanism for CVE ;
- Build a network of Community Peace MOVERs to serve as permanent platform for peacebuilding by youth at the local level.

[...whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely...]
-Sura Al-Maidah (5:32) Al Quran



Approach and Methodology

The workshops were conducted through standard participatory approaches. In addition, a number of other methods, including brain storming, interactive discussions, group exercises, scenario analysis, lectures, and question answer were employed to ensure active participation and maximum involvement of youth.

MOVE pioneered the development of targeted, scaled counter-narrative campaigns in Bangladesh. During the Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) session, MOVE Foundation showed a video on the recently developed app 'Hello CT' of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police and promoted its usage for community collaboration in fighting terrorism. Posters and videos of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) as well as relevant verses of the Holy Quran and narratives of Al-Hadith denouncing terrorism and violence were disseminated to the youth participants.

“The action taken by the state to deploy military commandos and wipe out the terrorist was the real and actual Jihad, not the killing of innocent people in Holey Artisan.”

- Maulana
Monzur-ul-Haq

Thematic Area	Method/Approach	Participant
Conflict Analysis	Lecture/Video/Exercise	124
Countering Violent Extremism	Lecture/Group Work/DMP Video	
Freedom of Speech, and Tolerance	Lecture/Group Work	
Conflict Management, Resolution and Transformation	Lecture/Exercise/RAB Video/Posters	
Promoting Counter Narratives for Preventing Radicalization	Lecture/Q&A	

Outcome

The learning outcomes were achieved by a combination of day-long theoretical and practical exercises spread for each workshop. Participants explored thematic areas in individual and group interactive sessions.

The workshop reinforced the spirit of freedom of speech, democracy and pluralism amongst youth participants in order to motivate their peers in practicing tolerance and respecting differences of opinion. It equipped the participants with a hands-on understanding of conflict resolution tools and counter-narratives against religious extremism amongst urban youth communities.

The participants gained a strong understanding and appreciation of the role of youth in peacebuilding and countering violent extremism, thereby internalizing the **SDG Goal 16 (peaceful and inclusive societies)** and **UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (youth, peace and security)**.

[But whoever kills a believer intentionally - his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment.]

-Sura An-Nisa (4:93); Al Quran

Team Coordination & Participant Presence

The workshop team consisted of one lead trainer, two co-trainers and two guest speakers. MOVE Foundations' Executive Committee advised on the overall agenda and thematic focus for the workshops. All sessions were conducted successfully with 100 percent attendance.



Participant Involvement & Feedback

The youth participants demonstrated their dedication and enthusiasm in peacebuilding during the interactive sessions. They participated actively in discussions on challenging issues. Prior to this workshop, majority of them had no experience of attending such interactive exercises with participants from diverse backgrounds discussing the thematic areas.

They acknowledged the workshop contents were relevant to practical contexts of their day-to-day lives and reiterated their commitment to peacebuilding by expressing their interest to attend follow-up programs.



From Facebook

Results of Mood Meter

The workshop evaluation revealed all youth participants were in complete agreement that the training objectives were relevant and appropriate. Regarding achievement of training objectives, 70% (per cent) were totally satisfied, 20% (per cent) highly satisfied and remaining 10% (per cent) satisfied but provided recommendations for further improvement. In addition to this, almost all participants provided positive feedback on the learning-oriented classroom environment for gaining knowledge and skills to improve their effectiveness in conflict resolution and peace building in their communities.



Challenges Identified by Participants

- The youth participants felt they were not adequately integrated with CVE measures undertaken by the government and civil society;
- A section of the media may be inadvertently generating sympathy for terrorists undermining CVE efforts by simplified reporting on "good boys turning into extremists";
- The spirit of community collaboration has to be mainstreamed in law enforcement agencies from the central to the local levels.
- Attempt to associate the term 'Jihad' to any kind of terrorism and violence creates resentment among religious people.
- Irresponsible use of the freedom of speech provision in social media, and intolerant, in most cases, dreadful reaction to that are increasing proportionately.



Recommendations Put Forward by Participants

- Affordable and adequate mental health support, including psychological counseling, being made available for youth in conflict situations and/or vulnerable to radicalization;
- Incorporating values of tolerance, pluralism, respect, dignity, non-violence and ethics in the civil education curricula;
- Promoting religious education by authentic scholars rejecting violence and extremism in order to prevent youth being misguided by misinterpretations of scripture;
- Propagating counter narratives rejecting religious extremism through traditional and social media;
- Increasing opportunities for intellectual and cultural activities by youth, including debating, writing and theatre, groups to channel their energy in a positive direction;
- Raising awareness about the nature of social media to prevent rumors triggering violence;
- Developing a strategy on how media can report on terrorism in a pragmatic manner without unintentionally creating sympathy for terrorists;



Abdullah Mahmud added 2 new photos — with Sajjad Mahi and 2 others.

17 hrs · 🌐

মুভ ফাউন্ডেশন কর্তৃক আয়োজিত "সহনশীলতা, শ্রদ্ধাবোধ ও শান্তি" বিষয়ক কর্মশালায় অংশ গ্রহন করেছিলাম আজ। কর্মশালাটি ভালোই লেগেছে। এরকম বিষয় ভিত্তিক কর্মশালা বিভিন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠানের ছাত্রদের নিয়ে কওমী অঙ্গনেও হওয়া উচিত বলে মনে করি।

From Facebook

Way Forward

Given recent terrorist trends in Bangladesh, including the July 1 hostage siege in Dhaka, government-civil society-youth collaboration in countering violent extremism is more important than ever. The Bangladesh government has so far shown a strong political will and determination to counter terrorist groups, including dismantling their organizational capacity and operational space.

The immediate priority for the government, educational institutions and civil society is now to counter the radicalization process underpinning violent extremism and terrorism by developing counter-narratives to prevent the ideological and tech-based recruitment of youth by specific local and transnational terrorist groups. It is also important to go beyond top-down policing solutions to bottom-up community empowerment measures. Another goal would be to avoid stereotypes of individuals from private universities or madrassas as this alienates majority of students in these institutions opposed to violent extremism.

The MOVE Foundation workshop series with youths gave an opportunity to interact with youth from diverse age and backgrounds in imparting knowledge on conflict analysis tools and preventing violent extremism. We will be collaborating with our local and international partners to develop follow-up programs for implementation through the Community Peace MOVERs, a unique platform of peacebuilders at the local level committed to develop secure, peaceful and terror-free Bangladesh.



MOVE Background

Founded in 2013, MOVE Foundation is the first and only youth-led civil society platform dedicated exclusively to the goal of countering violent extremism by promoting conflict resolution, peacebuilding and pluralism in society. We seek to mobilize youths from diverse backgrounds, including students from public and private universities as well as qawmi madrassas (private seminaries) to come together as change makers in promoting a culture of tolerance as well as respect for freedom of speech.

MOVE is playing a pioneering role in reaching out to qawmi madrassas outside the state regulatory oversight and developing internal support for the modernization of faith-based education system. We are committed to improving global security by increasing youth engagement and empowering local communities as peacebuilders.

Contact:

Web: www.move-foundation.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/move.found/>



MOVE Foundation

**H# 124/1, Ahmedbag, P.S: Sabujbag
Dhaka-1214, Bangladesh**

E-mail : info@move-foundation.com

** [fb.com/move.found](https://www.facebook.com/move.found)
www.move-foundation.com**