

# Local approaches to preventing violent extremism in Pakistan



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## Abbreviations

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AG	Aware Girls	NACTA	National Counter Terrorism Authority Pakistan
CSO	Civil society organisation	NAP	National Action Plan
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism	NCEP	National Counter Extremism Policy for Pakistan
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas	SSP	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1901	TNSM	Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammad
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammed	TTP	Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	VE	Violent Extremism
LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi		
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba		

Cover image: Young Pakistani boys actively listening in a local community session on the role of men in evading violence against women, human rights and the role of youth in building a peaceful society.

# About this report

- This report is based on a week-long consultation and dialogue among 54 leading Pakistani experts on violent extremism. The consultation was held online over a five day period in September 2016. It was facilitated by Ruairi Nolan from Peace Direct, supported by Peace Direct's Local Peacebuilding Expert for Pakistan, Dr Zahid Shahab Ahmed, and Bill Baue of Convetit.
- Convetit is an online platform designed to bring professionals together for intense dialogues in moderated online engagements. There were over 400 high quality posts analysing the situation in Pakistan.
- Participants included academics, policy analysts and practitioners in civil society organisations that focus on preventing violent extremism. A full list of participants and their affiliations is included at the end of the report.
- During the consultation, participants were able to debate and present a range of different perspectives on key issues relating to violent extremism in Pakistan. Participants were able to challenge each other on their ideas, including sharing content anonymously if they chose to do so.
- Participants were able to indicate support for views shared by other participants by directly commenting, or voting up (or down) other content.
- This report has been written by Peace Direct to present the views of the group on a range of the topics discussed. We have taken care to review and present arguments that represent the consensus of participants, noting

dissenting views as well. In this way, the report is a presentation of the 'wisdom of the crowd' of a selection of local experts.

- Background information on certain topics has been contributed by Dr Zahid Shahab Ahmed.
- Participant quotes are included throughout to ensure the voices of local experts are highlighted.
- The contents of the final report are the responsibility of Peace Direct. The text in this report should not be taken to represent the views of any individual participant.



## What is a peacebuilder?

Peacebuilding was originally understood to be in the context of post-conflict recovery efforts to promote reconciliation and reconstruction in the aftermath of war.

But peacebuilding does, and should, start long before the moment conflict ends. It is a long term process which must address the root causes of violence in order to bring about longer term, positive change.

In this report, the term 'peacebuilder' or 'local peacebuilder' refers to a person working in their community to resolve underlying community tensions and prevent violence before it escalates, as well as supporting the process of recovery, rebuilding and reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict. Peacebuilding also

includes efforts to stop violence once it flares up, for example through mediation, advocacy and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. It is stopping violence and destructive conflict as well as building just and sustainable peace.

Often, local peacebuilders have unique knowledge of the context they work in, astute understanding of the issues affecting their communities and yet remain overlooked in broader or external peacebuilding strategies and approaches.

As this report shows, the breadth and depth of knowledge from local peacebuilders of both conflict and post-conflict environments should be a crucial part of all efforts to counter violent extremism in Pakistan, and in peacebuilding more broadly.

Photo of the online consultation, hosted by Convetit.com

**PEOPLE**

**FACILITATOR**  
Bill Baue more than 1 month ago

### Launching Session4: Prioritisation of peacebuilding programmes

After a very active Session3 discussing diverse categories of possible solutions to violent extremism in Pakistan, we now turn our attention to prioritising amongst the solutions discussed yesterday. To do so, we'll be using Convetit's interactive matrix, in which you can "plot" the various issues along a dual axis grid, with the vertical axis representing **impact** and the horizontal axis representing **feasibility**. Simply click on the issue from the text list and a dot will appear in the middle of the matrix, then click that dot and you can move it to the spot in the grid that represents your sense of prioritisation.

In parallel, you can discuss the reasoning behind your plotting in a discussion thread, and in another thread, discuss successful examples. Finally, we ask you to take an off-platform survey (on SurveyMonkey).

I look forward to seeing what comes of today's discussion and prioritisation!

[View/Add Comment](#)

1 comment here

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

4 Solution Prioritization

“ The more efficient/mature and stable is a political system, the more honest and competent would be leadership of a state, and the more honest and competent is the leadership, the more stable and peaceful would be a society in every sense.

1

“ People wont be violent or become extreme if they don't either nurture or perceive threat... The bottomline argument is that to strip violence out of the mind, the system must take care of economic security which begins with 'food, survival' then socio-political security, which include the actualisation of serious and competent political representation, and equitable justice system.

“ CVE cannot be carried out in isolation and through [peacedirect.local internet access](#)

# Executive summary

Violent extremism has wreaked a terrible toll on Pakistani society, and threatens further damage in the coming years. In 2010-2015, more than 10,000 people died from violent extremism, and Pakistan is consistently ranked among the top five countries in the Global Terrorism Index.

In such circumstances, there can be few higher priorities for Pakistani policymakers and civil society, and members of the international community who wish to support them, than devising effective programmes and policies to counter violent extremism.

The field of 'countering violent extremism' (CVE)

is a relatively young and fast-evolving one. Its origins in the security and defence arena<sup>1</sup>, combined with a dominance by Western-based institutions and researchers, has resulted in little focus on locally-led peacebuilding perspectives and strategies. This report aims to redress that balance by highlighting local analysis and solutions.

The results of the consultation held in September with over 60 Pakistani peacebuilding practitioners and academics indicate serious areas of concern, including particular and growing threats. The participants identified the following key findings:

## Violent extremism is the greatest threat to peace in Pakistan.

Violent extremism is the gravest threat that Pakistan faces today. Traditionally, security approaches in Pakistan have prioritised international threats, but these are now eclipsed by the dangers posed by violent extremist groups operating in Pakistan. The urgency in focusing on preventing violent extremism in Pakistan has never been higher.

## Violent extremism in Pakistan cannot be narrowly understood by looking only at violent extremists themselves.

The causes of violent extremism are wide ranging. Some of these can be understood by looking at the factors driving individuals to join violent movements. However, focusing

only on individuals and their motivations obscures the root causes of violent extremism. These include regional and geopolitical developments, political factors in Pakistan, and issues of corruption and governance. Whilst simplistic links between poverty and violent extremism are unproven, social exclusion and resentments based on unequal access to resources and representation are critical in driving support for violent extremists.

## The Pakistani government's National Action Plan (NAP) to counter violent extremism is too focused on military solutions, and has not paid sufficient attention to the root causes of violent extremism.

To be effective, the NAP will need to take a longer-term approach as well as tackle issues

<sup>1</sup>United States Institute of Peace, "Countering Violent Extremism: A Peacebuilding Perspective." Special Report 336, September 2013.

such as governmental corruption and the broader ideological climate that supports violent extremism. In other words, the NAP needs to address not only the most visible symptoms but also the causes of violent extremism. Addressing violent extremism will require a “whole-of-government” approach.

**Radical reform of the education system is required to equip young people with the critical analysis skills to challenge violent extremist narratives.**

Educational reforms need to go much further than looking only at the much-discussed madrasas. While it is vital to better integrate madrasas into the mainstream education system, this can only be done through a root and branch reform of the state school system. Reform of social studies and Islamic teaching can equip young people with the critical thinking skills and theological knowledge to challenge extremist narratives. Reform of the curriculum is also needed to promote greater tolerance.

**New national narratives, with a central focus on the role of women in society, need to be shaped to counter the appeal and narrative of violent extremist groups.**

The simplistic messages of extremists, often rooted in a misreading of religious teachings, have been remarkably effective in attracting support across Pakistani society. The weakness of counter messages needs to be addressed. However, this should not be done through a state-centric, top-down narrative. Rather, they should be challenged through a range of narratives that celebrate the diversity of Pakistan. Both civil society and the state can develop broader narratives through participatory approaches. In particular, alternative narratives should be developed by and include a central focus on the role of women as builders of social cohesion in Pakistan.

**All peacebuilding and CVE strategies must draw on local knowledge to ensure they are context-specific.**

Dynamics of violence, and violent extremism, vary from region to region, as do the specific social and political roots of violence. Only by adapting approaches to the specific contexts of each region can interveners develop successful peacebuilding approaches to counter violent extremism. This can be done through working with local groups who best know the regions, and by supporting better connections between practitioners and academic and policy institutions with the capacity to analyse the deeper causes of conflict.

These findings underline the size of the task that Pakistan faces in dealing with the threat of violent extremism. However, despite this, most Pakistani experts feel optimistic about a more peaceful future in the coming years. This report helps identify some opportunities for effective efforts for peace.

The report includes practical suggestions for how peacebuilding interventions in Pakistan can better respond to the challenges presented by violent extremist groups.

# Language around 'CVE'

The language that peacebuilders use matters a great deal. Language can be used to frame issues in a way that can emphasise commonalities and bring people together. Equally, language can offend and divide people, either by accident or design.

In this report, and the online dialogue which was facilitated by Peace Direct and Convetit, we have used the terms 'violent extremism' (VE) and 'countering violent extremism' (CVE).

The term 'CVE' has gained increasing popularity in policy circles, and is used to incorporate a very wide range of actions, from military and intelligence based approaches, to addressing structural causes, to approaches that might be more traditionally seen as fitting with peacebuilding, such as dialogue-based programmes.

The language around CVE is a contested and controversial area, and participants shared their apprehensions and concerns about its use in a Pakistani context:



*When we borrow terms coined by Western media or academia, we also borrow their discourse, which quite often sees events from a single perspective.*

Dr. Fatima Sajjad, University of Management and Technology

This is reflected in some apprehension about using such terms in communities:



*With communities, we have been very careful in using certain words. The use of these words in areas affected by violent extremism can become a source of problems not only for the organisation but for the communities we work with and for. Therefore we use the positive words of engagement of youth and communities, social cohesion, tolerance, and interfaith harmony etc. This has worked perfectly well.*

Mossarat Qadeem, Paiman Alumni Trust



*Such terminologies are mostly donor driven and their use by local organisations reflects the fact that local organisations themselves have limited bargaining power (or capacity) to pursue local solutions to local problems. This also sends negative messages to the communities we work with.*

Zeenia Shaukat, Independent Expert

**Despite this apprehension, the widespread acceptance of this language among donors and policy makers means that local actors feel that they have little option but to use it:**



*We use CVE/ preventing violent extremism (PVE) in all our programmes/projects for our international partners, policymakers and shapers. Unfortunately, the concept around CVE/PVE is still not very clear to many, as there has been little or no public discussion and discourse held around this in Pakistan.*

Mossarat Qadeem, Paiman Alumni Trust



*Even I had to use “Islamist militancy” in my papers for international audience consumption, even though I never felt okay with these terms. These*

*are loaded words and Muslim communities across the globe feel they are offensive.*

Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, Community Appraisal and Motivation Program (CAMP)



*To bridge this gap, I would suggest that several consultations should be initiated involving local practitioners, policy-makers and researchers to develop and define*

*terms which are acceptable to local communities – they should be culturally and religiously sensitive*

Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, CAMP

There is clearly a need to find better, more culturally sensitive language, acceptable to all, which could be done through collaboration between policy makers, researchers and practitioners. Naveed Ahmed Shinwari and Raza Shah Khan offered suggestions as to how this can be achieved:



*Projects that engage and work with local communities can only produce better acceptance and impact if an appropriate communication strategy is in place.*

*That is why development partners and local organisations have now started giving local names to peacebuilding projects such as Umeed-e-Jawan (Hope of Youth), Azm-e-Jawan (Commitment of Youth), and many other very effective and localised terms.*

Raza Shah Khan, Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO)

## Background on violent extremism in Pakistan

The map on the next page shows the toll that violent attacks have taken in Pakistan since the start of 2015. There have been almost 4000 fatalities. As the map indicates, no region of Pakistan has been immune from attacks. Consequently, there have been increased efforts towards CVE in Pakistan.

In general terms, CVE is aimed at stopping extremists from using violence to achieve their goals. A combination of factors – grievances aimed at the state, helplessness, inequality

and exposure to violence (both directly and indirectly) – push young people towards radicalisation and ultimately violent extremism or acts of terror.

Other factors include local and external issues. These include bad governance, the presence of the Taliban and al Qaeda, and Western military action against Muslim countries<sup>2</sup>. In the section below, participants weigh the importance of these issues. Feyyaz<sup>3</sup> highlights another pull factor: ‘inspirational and extremist

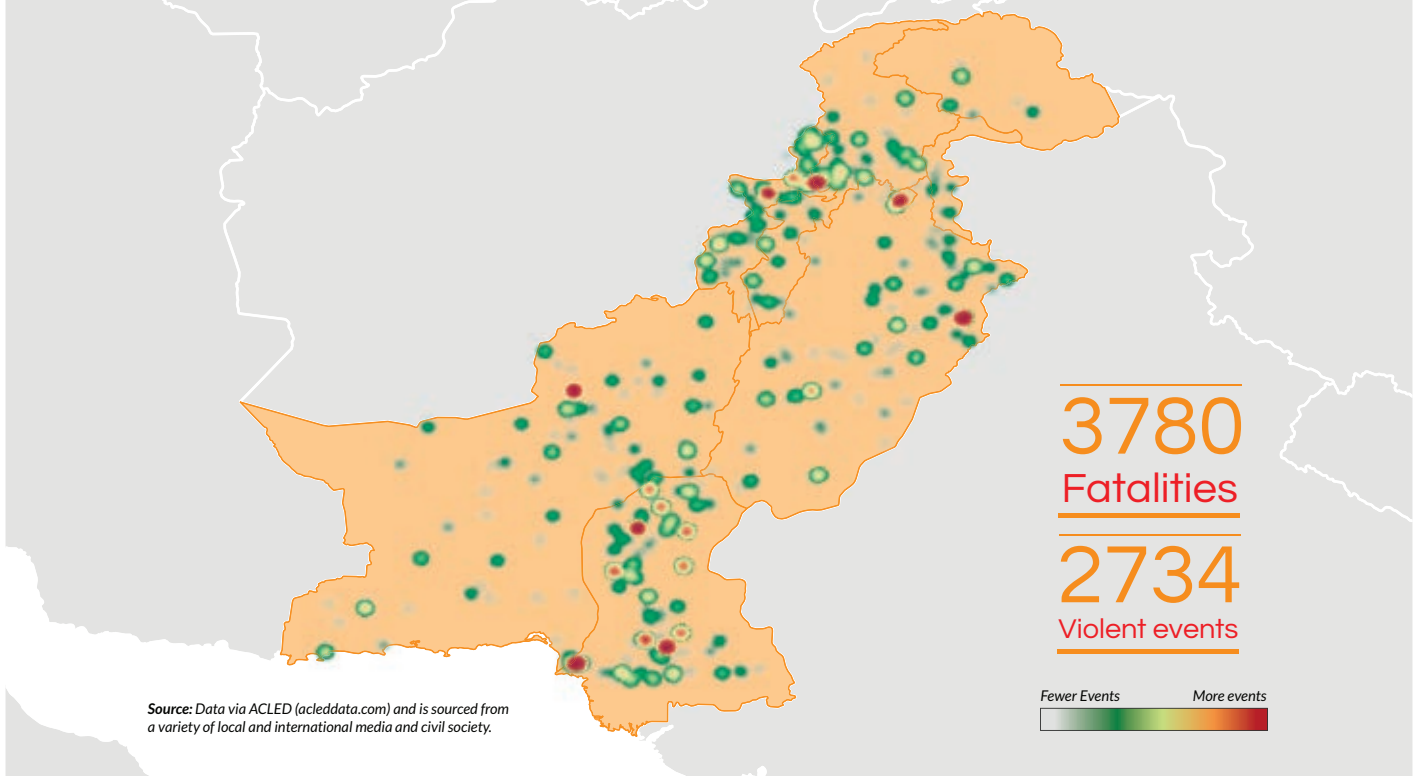
<sup>2</sup>Khan et al. 2012, “Causes and impact of radicalization on youth people inside and outside Pakistan.” *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences* 1 (3):146-157, 154.

<sup>3</sup>Feyyaz, 2014, “Youth extremism in Pakistan - magnitude, channels, resident spheres and response.” *Defence Against Terrorism Review* 6 (1):63-92, 71.



## Recent violence in Pakistan

Violent events Jan 2015 - Oct 2016. Hotspots represent multiple incidents in the same location.



role models', who have significant backing in what is an ideological state, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Feyyaz names several such role models, including Syed Abul Ala Maududi (founder of Jamaat-e-Islami), Hafiz Saeed (founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba), and Haq Nawaz Jhangvi (founder of Sipah-e-Sahaba). Some, like Maududi, have even received state backing for spreading their views of Islam, in the form of numerous books that are re-published and circulated by Jamaat-e-Islami. The party established strong links with the state through its direct participation in the Afghan-Soviet War<sup>4</sup>.

Concurrently, there is also an increase in militant groups. According to Amir Rana<sup>5</sup> of the Pak Institute of Peace Studies, there are around 100 militant and Taliban groups in Pakistan. For example, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) operates in all four provinces of the country,

through alliances with locally based militants<sup>6</sup>.

The Jinnah Institute has explored an increase in extremism through tracking the number of extremist attacks across the country<sup>7</sup>. While the frequency of extremist attacks decreased during 2015-16, extremists are gaining political voice. Recently, in 2016, Masoor Nawaz Jhangvi, son of the founder of extremist group Sipah-e-Sahaba, won elections in Jhang, Punjab.

The rise of extremism can also be seen through an alarming increase in the number of attacks on religious minorities in Pakistan – one reason for which the country is ranked among the world's most dangerous for religious minorities by Minority Rights Group International. For example, since 9/11, there have been nearly 170 attacks on Christians, killing 378 and injuring 987 in Pakistan<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>4</sup>Ahmed, 2012, "Political Islam, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Pakistan's Role in the Afghan-Soviet War, 1979-1988." In *Religion and the Cold War: a global perspective*, edited by P Muehlenbeck, 275-296. Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press.

<sup>5</sup>Rana, 2010, "What is young Pakistan thinking?" *The Express Tribune*, 2 September.

<sup>6</sup>Feyyaz, 2014, 79.

<sup>7</sup>Jinnah Institute, 2011, "Extremism Watch: Mapping Conflict trends in Pakistan 2010-2011."

<sup>8</sup>FD, 2015, "Islamic terror attacks on Pakistani Christians (Since 9/11)." *Freedom Declared (FD)*.

## Target groups for recruitment

The phenomenon of youth recruitment by extremist groups is not new to Pakistan. The process has been ongoing since the Afghan-Soviet War in the 1980s. The process has now been expanded to both intra-state and external groups. For example, the Punjabi Taliban continues to recruit youth from marginalised South Punjab<sup>9</sup>.

There are also reports of ISIS (Daesh) expanding its operations in Pakistan through youth recruitment. According to a report by the Interior Ministry of Pakistan, ISIS recruited 40-50 Pakistani youth for their cause in Afghanistan. The report specifically mentioned that, “the youngsters are brainwashed and given training in Afghanistan. They are also paid between PKR 30,000 and PKR 50,000 [\$300-500] each.”<sup>10</sup>

External factors, such as wars in other Muslim countries, can push Pakistani youth to become involved in terrorist activities. These young people are sometimes graduates of premier educational institutions, as was the case with Saad Aziz, who was involved in the Safoora Goth bus attack<sup>11</sup> and the murder of a human rights advocate. Aziz told the investigation team that he was ‘inspired’ by the sectarian conflict in Yemen and ISIS<sup>12</sup>. However, it is still disputed whether educated youth are participating in acts of terrorism for purely monetary benefits, for ideological reasons or both.

Nonetheless, radicalisation of the educated middle class is a new challenge for the government of Pakistan. According to Yusuf, “militancy on university campuses is quickly becoming Pakistan’s next major counterterrorism challenge<sup>13</sup>.” Similarly, according to Yusuf, most terrorist recruiting in Pakistan happens ‘in person,’ unlike ISIS’s approach of radicalising youth through social media<sup>14</sup>.

The December 2015 case of Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik - who killed 14 people in San Bernardino in California - has raised concerns of radicalisation of youth in Pakistani educational institutions. Malik studied at Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan, graduating in 2012. While in Multan, Malik also attended the Al-Huda International Seminary, a women-only religious academy with branches in the U.S. and Canada. According to experts, Al-Huda “draws much of its support from women from educated, relatively affluent backgrounds.”

Since then the government has been carefully monitoring youth radicalisation in Pakistani universities, but greater political will is required to go after organised groups, such as Jamiat – a student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami.

It is clear that violent extremism has established roots all across the country. The government therefore needs to develop a comprehensive policy for protecting youth from the reach of extremist groups.

<sup>9</sup>Khalid and Leghari, 2014, “Radicalization of youth in Southern Punjab.” *South Asian Studies: A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 29 (2):537-551.

<sup>10</sup>“Youngsters from Pakistan being recruited in Daesh: report”, *Pakistan Today*, 2 January 2016.

<sup>11</sup>Ali, 2016, “How a student of elite institutions turned to terrorism, JIT reveals.” *Dawn*, 13 May.

<sup>12</sup>Ali, 2016

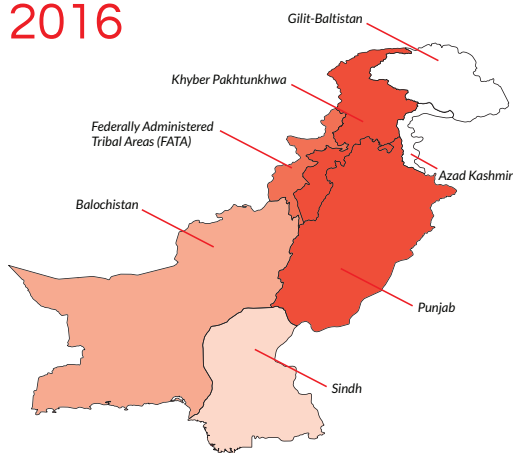
<sup>13</sup>Yusuf, 2016, “University radicalization: Pakistan’s next counterterrorism challenge.” *CTSENTINEL* 9 (2):4-8, 4.

<sup>14</sup>Greer, 2016, “Pakistan’s counterterrorism challenge.” *Foreign Policy*.

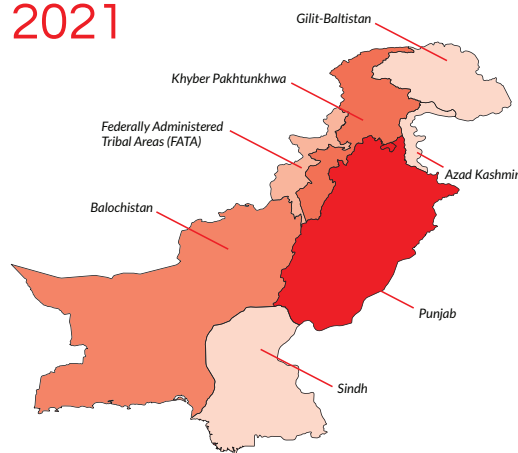
# The evolving threat of violent extremism across different regions of Pakistan

Regions facing the greatest threat from violent extremism now and in five years.

2016



2021



Maps based on threat level assessments by participants. Darker red = higher threat.

The different regions of Pakistan require context specific approaches, since the drivers of conflict vary across provinces. Given these dynamics, participants in our consultation were asked to rate which regions of Pakistan face the gravest threat from violent extremism, both now (in 2016) and looking five years ahead.

Predicting patterns of future violence is notoriously difficult, but participants shared some thoughts on why they think the areas at greatest risk will change in the coming years.

There were interesting shifts in the regions the experts expect to be most affected by violent extremism. There was a predicted overall increase in Balochistan and Punjab, while participants expected relative reductions in threat levels in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The views of participants can be attributed to a range of factors:

**1)** The decline of violent extremism in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to the expected

impact of military operations in Swat and FATA.

- 2)** A potential increase in violent extremism in Balochistan due to the insurgency in that province.
- 3)** A potential increase in violent extremism in Punjab because the province is home to multiple militant groups. For example, Masoor Jhangvi, the son of the founder of Sipah-e-Sahaba, was openly supported<sup>15</sup> by Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, which is a banned organisation.
- 4)** This shows the expected spread of the threat of violent extremism in Pakistan. In particular, a rising threat of sectarian violence is seen as a significant factor in changing patterns of violent extremism.

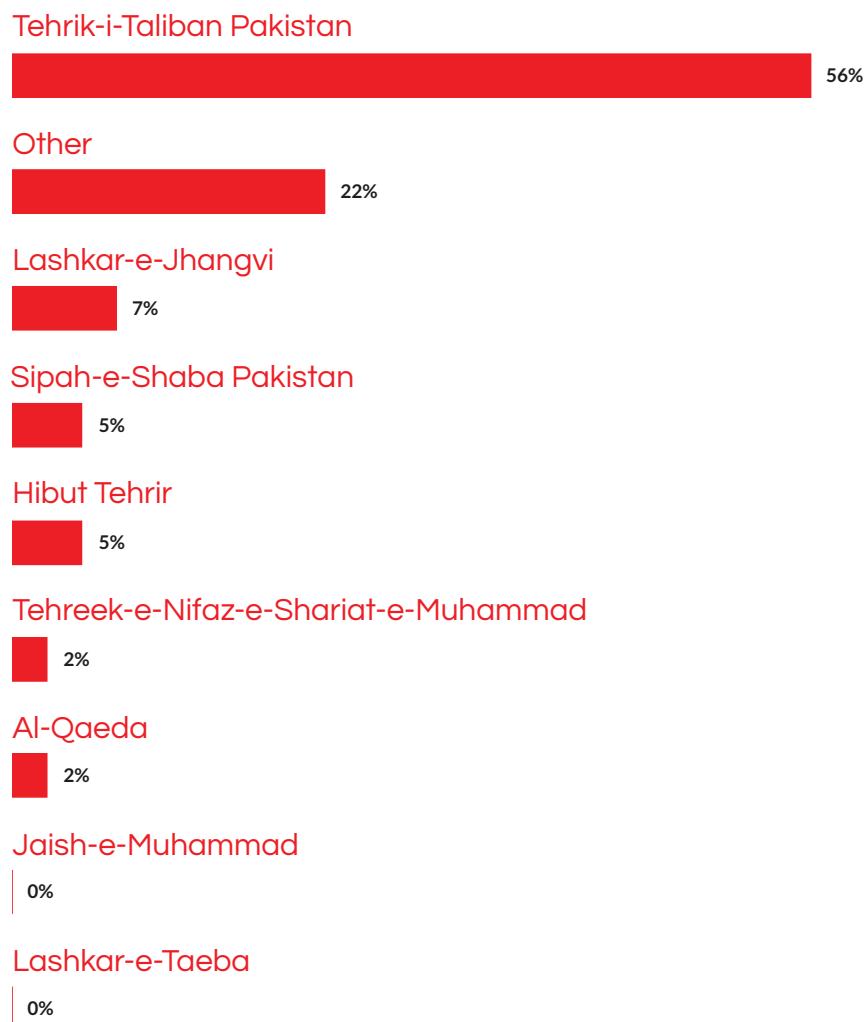
This shows the expected spread of the threat of violent extremism throughout Pakistan, in particular with a rising threat of sectarian violence as being significant in shifting the patterns of violent extremism.

<sup>15</sup>Islam, 2016, "Jhang by-poll: Masoor Jhangvi beats PML-N man by almost 13,000 votes." *The Express Tribune*, 2 December.

# The threat from extremist groups in Pakistan

Survey findings from the online consultation, with commentary by Peace Direct's Local Peacebuilding Expert, Dr Zahid Shahab Ahmed

Which insurgent/violent extremist group presents the gravest threat to Pakistan?



In the consultation, participants from across the country identified the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as the biggest threat to Pakistan. TTP is commonly known as the local or Pakistani Taliban. It is the deadliest terrorist group in the country. Most of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan are

carried out by TTP and its affiliated organisations, such as Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, which has targeted religious minorities across the country.

Since its founding after 9/11, TTP has grown and established deeper roots in Pakistan. The group

became more visible after its leader Baitullah Mehsud made an announcement in 2007 of an alliance of around 13 groups in FATA under the banner of TTP. Since 2009, TTP has frequently attacked both military and civilian targets in Pakistan. Civilian targets have included mosques, gas stations, Sufi shrines, and the US Consulate in Peshawar, among many others. The group also claimed responsibility for the deadly 2015 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar.

Participants also identified Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and Hizbut Tahrir as particularly dangerous. SSP is a Sunni sectarian group that has been present since the early 1990s. The group aims to ensure Sunni dominance in Pakistan. LeJ also aims for a Sunni state and was formed in 1996 as a Sunni-Deobandi terrorist group<sup>16</sup>.

Hizbut Tahrir is one of the newest extremist organisations in Pakistan. It is a transnational group and recently the government has arrested some Pakistanis working for it.

In 2009, Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammad (TNSM) was responsible for the rise of extremism and terrorists in Swat. Interestingly, participants did not see Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammad (TNSM) as a particularly significant threat. This is probably because the Pakistan Army almost eliminated TNSM's influence in Swat through operations in 2009, although the leader of TNSM, Maulana Fazlullah, was not captured until his death in an airstrike in 2016. While on the run, Fazlullah joined TTP and became its head following the death of Hakeemullah Mehsud in November 2013. It should be noted that while such military operations in targeted regions offered short-term achievements, their impact has not been sustainable, not least due to the sheer number

and size of groups active across the country and their inability to address the root causes of the growth of extremist groups.

Though Al Qaeda has operated in Pakistan through like-minded groups, it is regarded by participants as less threatening because attacks have generally been conducted by local groups.

The groups that received no prominence in the poll operate mostly outside of Pakistan. Included in this list is Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). LeT was founded in 1990 in Afghanistan, but is based near Lahore under the leadership of Hafiz Saeed. The group has mainly been operating in Jammu and Kashmir or Indian Administered Kashmir. Another such group is Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), accused of the 2001 attack<sup>17</sup> on the Indian parliament and considered a terrorist organisation by the US government.



© Nadir Burney.

<sup>16</sup>In the nineteenth century, Deobandi school of thought emerged as a movement of Sunni Muslims in British India. Deobandis wanted to preserve Islamic teaching and practices at the time when they felt that Islamic practices were threatened under the rule of non-Muslims. Deobandis also taught spiritual transformation through Sufism.

<sup>17</sup><http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/95>.

# Background to the current Government responses: NAP, NACTA and NCEP

Local Peacebuilding Expert for Pakistan (as described elsewhere)



Dr Zahid Shahab Ahmed

In Pakistan's more than decade-long 'war on terror', policy has often been developed in response to events. For example, following the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, the National Action Plan (NAP) on countering

terrorism was quickly developed.

This is a 20-point action plan that covers topics from political settlement in Balochistan, to military operations in Karachi and countering militancy in Punjab. Although it has a range of objectives, it offers little detail. The following section explores the NAP and other policies in more detail.

## The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA)

A major failure of the implementation of the NAP is the slow start-up of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), which can partly be blamed on a shortage of funds. After roughly two years, the main developments have been the recruitment of officers for NACTA's Joint Intelligence Directorate. While the government claims it activated NACTA in December 2014, the Authority remained dormant for nearly a year. Activities like press briefings on the NAP's progress have been conducted occasionally.

## National Counter Extremism Policy for Pakistan (NCEP)

Under NACTA, a move has been made to formulate the first National Counter Extremism Policy for Pakistan (NCEP). Its focus is on contextualising the problems, causes, sources, and perspectives regarding extremism in Pakistan. However, NCEP has not yet been finalised and approved by the government so it is premature to say anything about its effectiveness.

## The National Action Plan

1. Implementation of death sentence of those convicted in cases of terrorism.
2. Special trial courts under the supervision of Army. The duration of these courts would be two years.
3. Militant outfits and armed gangs will not be allowed to operate in the country.
4. NACTA, the anti-terrorism institution will be strengthened.
5. Strict action against the literature, newspapers and magazines promoting hatred, extremism, sectarianism and intolerance.
6. Choking financing for terrorist and terrorist organizations.
7. Ensuring against re-emergence of proscribed organizations.
8. Establishing and deploying a dedicated counter-terrorism force.

9. Taking effective steps against religious persecution.
10. Registration and regulation of religious seminaries.
11. Ban on glorification of terrorists and terrorist organizations through print and electronic media.
12. Administrative and development reforms in FATA with immediate focus on repatriation of IDPs.
13. Communication network of terrorists will be dismantled completely.
14. Measures against abuse of internet and social media for terrorism.
15. Zero tolerance for militancy in Punjab.
16. Ongoing operation in Karachi will be taken to its logical end.
17. Balochistan government to be fully empowered for political reconciliation with complete ownership by all stakeholders.
18. Dealing firmly with sectarian terrorists.
19. Formulation of a comprehensive policy to deal with the issue of Afghan refugees, beginning with registration of all refugees.
20. Revamping and reforming the criminal justice system.

# Pakistani government policies to counter violent extremism: expert analysis



*It is quite unfortunate that having suffered for decades we are yet to devise effective government policies to deal with issue of violent extremism. CVE policies can only*

*be effective if these are inclusive and all major stakeholders are engaged and contributing.*

Raza Shah Khan, SPADO

The main Government policy to counter violent extremism is outlined in the NAP, established in January 2015 in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar.

Some aspects of the NAP have had significant impacts, in particular in targeting the operational capacity of violent extremist groups. While the government has been trying to disrupt operations

of militants in Pakistan, for example, through the closing of bank accounts<sup>18</sup>, it has not done enough against all groups. One participant noted this issue citing the fundraising capacity of the Jamaat ud Dawa group, which is believed to be able to fundraise through a linked foundation<sup>19</sup>:



*Implementation on National Action Plan has effectively broken the terrorists and extremists network all across the country.*

*However, the implementation apparently seems 'selective'. For instance, various Kashmiri Jihadist groups, publicly Jamaat ud Dawa (JuD) are raising funds publically facing no restraint from government institutions.*

Anonymous participant

<sup>18</sup>Zahid, 2016, "Pakistan Freezes Bank Accounts of Suspected Terrorists." VOA News, 24 October.

<sup>19</sup>Jamal, 2016, "Pakistan's Jamaat-ud-Dawa Challenge." *The Diplomat*, 2 August.

Participants felt that there is plenty of room for improvement, with some noting that:



*It is unrealistic to expect NAP to achieve all which is directly or indirectly contributing to the case of violent extremism in Pakistan... Perhaps, the greatest success is that major stakeholders, if not all, are sitting at a table with a single point of CVE thus creating a shared understanding slowly but surely.*

Shahab Khalid, Independent Expert

However, there are fears that the implementation of some aspects of the NAP risk further human rights violations, with the potential to create a backlash that could exacerbate the situation. There are concerns<sup>20</sup> from human rights organisations about the trial of civilians through military courts, and concerns have been raised about military operations in Karachi. For example, since the commencement of the NAP, there has been a reported rise in extra-judicial<sup>21</sup> killings in Sindh and Balochistan.

There was broad consensus amongst participants that the NAP is far too narrow in conception, relying primarily on military and policing solutions, without sufficient focus on longer-term, root causes of violent extremism. The following contributions indicate the shortcomings of such a narrow approach:



*The National Action Plan (NAP), formulated after the horrific massacre of school children in Peshawar, is an attempt to treat only the symptoms and is not*

*addressing the root cause.*

Asma Nasar, Centre for International Peace and Stability, NUST



*Violence has reduced due to Operation Zarb-e-Azb, [but] it is unlikely to diminish due to structural causes endemic in the*

*body politics and constitutional*

*provisions of Pakistan.*

Muhammad Feyyaz, University of Management and Technology



*This plan identified several important areas of operations but missed one most crucial area – youth disengagement. The vast majority of recruits are children and young men. It is a formula that hardly varies.*

Ali Khan, YES Network Pakistan



*The government [is] yet to task a specific ministry or department to work on “registration and regulation of the religious seminaries” – one of the key*

*points of NAP. Firstly, the ministry of interior was mandated the responsibility; then the ministry of religious affairs was directed to take the charge. As of now, confusion remains as to which institute actually looks after this point.*

Rashad Bukhari, Peace and Education Foundation

Furthermore, broader involvement from across government will be required. For example, Naumana Suleman pointed out some of the efforts needed in the area of education:

<sup>20</sup>Amnesty International, 2016, “Pakistan 2016/2016.”

<sup>21</sup>Rizvi, Farheen, 2016. “Pakistan’s Karachi Becomes a Human Rights Nightmare.” *Huffington Post*, 11 May.





*We need to eradicate hate material from the curriculum (Education Ministry), develop a policy for peacebuilding and conflict resolution and*

*interfaith harmony (Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony), and build the capacity of governmental bodies in the peacebuilding area as well as enhance public private partnerships.*

Naumana Suleman, Center for Social Justice

The development of the new National Counter Extremism Policy (NCEP) has been achieved through a broader consultation process, according to participants. This, they hope, should result in a broader, more effective set of strategies than the NAP:



*A lot of policy work is in progress and the Government of Pakistan has engaged relevant stakeholders and practitioners since February 2016.*

Dilawar Khan, CODE Pakistan



*[The] government has put some thought into the NCEP where it will address a larger set of issues that contribute to intolerance and violent extremism.*

Manizeh Bano, Sahil Pakistan

## Operation Zarb-e-Azb

Launched in June 2014, Operation Zarb-e-Azb is a joint military action by the Pakistani armed forces against various militants groups operating in FATA, such as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, al-Qaeda, Jundallah and the Haqqani Network.

According to a number of reports, Operation Zarb-e-Azb has achieved military success against groups operating in FATA.

While there has been a significant decline in the number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, and civilian and military elites claim success of their policies and operations, militant groups continue to exist and operate in the country. As yet, many of the push and pull factors that drive recruitment into the various extremist groups have not been addressed.



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# The government's approach to countering violent extremist narratives:

The view from Peace Direct's Local Peacebuilding Expert



Dr Zahid Shahab  
Ahmed

Since 2002, the Pakistani government with the support of the US government has been engaged in measures to counter extremist ideologies. However, the message of these campaigns has not been clear.

The identification of extremists has become more difficult because of the US-Pakistan alliance. In the words of Greer<sup>22</sup>, “many of the radicalisation risk factors in Pakistan may be exacerbated by the security-focused priorities of the Pakistani and U.S. governments.”

Since the Swat operation<sup>23</sup> against local Taliban fighters of TNSM in 2009, there have been limited steps taken towards de-radicalising ‘at risk’ groups. So far, the de-radicalisation centres have been limited to certain conflict affected areas in Swat and FATA in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For example, Sabawoon and Naway Sahar are two de-radicalisation centres run by the Pakistani army. In 2015, the government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa established another de-radicalisation centre in Bara Tehsil, for the psychological counselling of radicalised members of society, mostly youth. The government has so far opened three centres in Bara Tehsil for 600 students.

During their time at these centres, students

are given a \$60 stipend per month and the government has allocated \$3.8 million for de-radicalisation centres. But their reach has been limited to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – a mistake that has also been made by international actors.

The government first needs to take ownership of military-run centres. De-radicalisation centres should then be established in other areas of the country to benefit vulnerable youth, for instance in South Punjab and Sindh. There is also a need for the national narrative itself to change<sup>24</sup>.

Since the start of the US-led war in Afghanistan, millions of dollars have directly and indirectly been invested in Pakistan for peace-related projects. Consequently there arrived a wave of international organisations such as the United States Institute of Peace, International Alert, and Search for Common Ground, who have supported numerous programmes, especially in the area of peace education.

However, many of the projects have been focused on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a region known to have a strong presence of the Taliban and their local allies. This has led to the neglect of countering religious extremism in other parts of the country. It is only recently that organisations like USIP have supported peace initiatives in Punjab and Sindh. The experiences of international actors and

<sup>22</sup>Greer, 2016.

<sup>23</sup>Witte, 2009, “Pakistani Forces Retake Swat Valley's Largest City From Taliban.” *Washington Post*, 31 May.

<sup>24</sup>Khan, 2015, “Deradicalization programming in Pakistan”, 1.

local civil society are valuable and the government should show interest in learning from them.

As far as producing a counter narrative is concerned, that responsibility has been assigned to NACTA. The government has also made some progress in areas like limiting funding for extremists. In this regard, the government's campaign "Haq, Haqdar Taq" is noteworthy. This aims to raise awareness on individual responsibility while making donations (for example, through Zakat) so that the money is not used for illegal purposes. It has been a very strong media campaign. However, a proper counter narrative is still required to shield people against extremist ideology through

textbooks and media campaigns.

So far, the government's message through the NAP and other counter extremism measures is limited to:

- 1) De-radicalisation programmes only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA e.g. Mishal, Sparley, Rastoon, Python, and Heila.
- 2) Counter terrorism/radicalisation policies, such as madrasa reforms (limited to registration only), the NAP, and the Pakistan Protection Act 2014.

This approach suggests that the Government's approach to countering extremism is reactive and short-term.



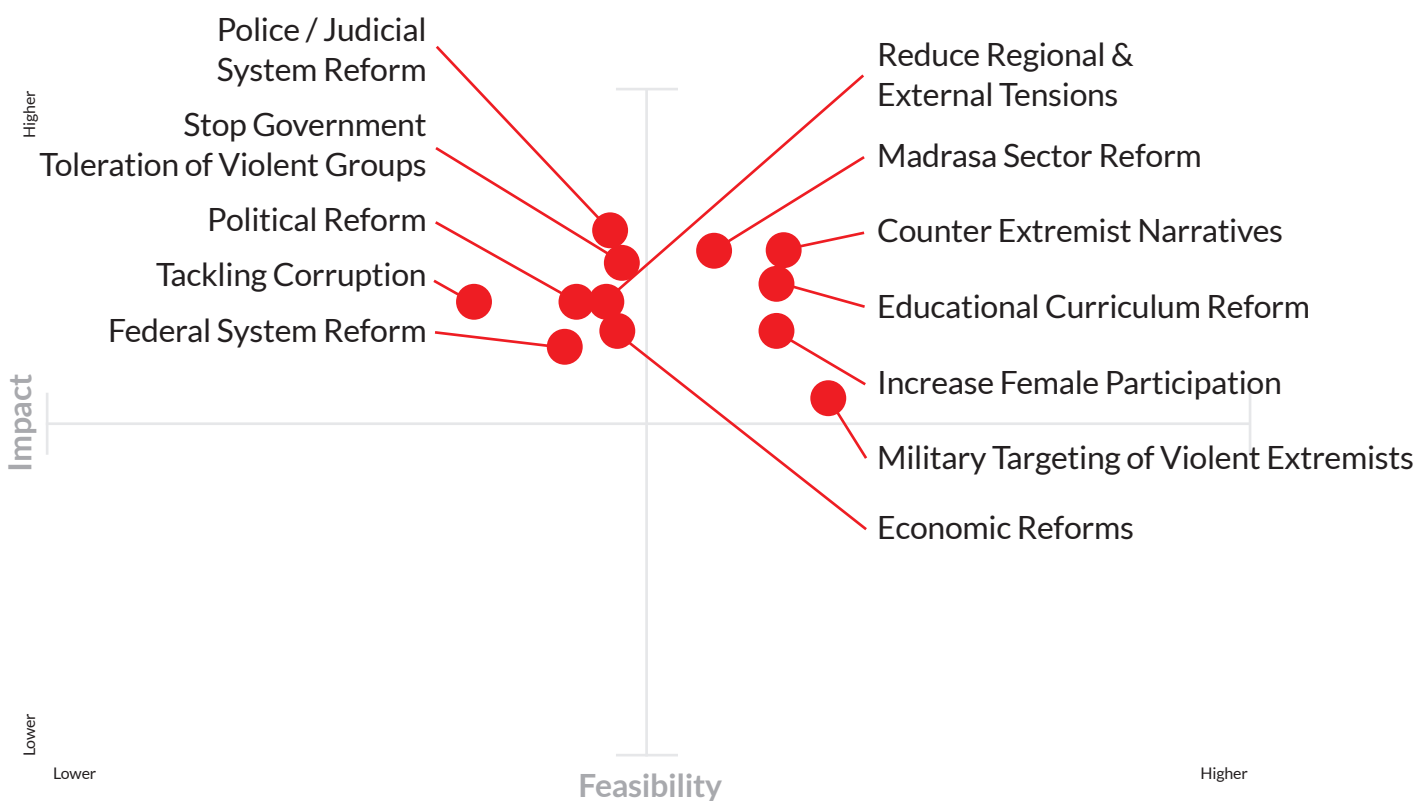
# Strategic priorities for countering violent extremism

Given the broad range of issues and causes of violent extremism in Pakistan, there are a wide range of potential areas for programmes to focus on. The key question for developing strategies is considering which approaches are the most feasible, and likely to have the greatest impact.

Based on a discussion of programmatic areas, participants were asked to evaluate both the **feasibility** and **impact** of a range of potential 'solutions' on a two dimensional axis. The results are shown in the table below, which shows an average of the views of participants.

## SESSION 5 SURVEY:

### Assessing solutions to violent extremism



The results of the table reveal some interesting findings. Although all approaches had proponents, the average results indicate that some approaches are seen as much more viable, and with greater potential impact, than others.

It is notable that 'military targeting of violent extremists' was the approach considered both 'most feasible' and lowest impact. Since the group

of analysts was made up of experts from peacebuilding organisations and researchers, it is not surprising that less emphasis might be placed on military approaches. However – many participants were able to acknowledge where military approaches have had an impact on extremists groups. Overall, however, such gains were seen as being counteracted with the ability of groups to recruit, and were not seen as sustainable.

## Police and judicial reform (moderately feasible, highest impact)

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It might seem surprising that the solution that scored highest for impact was police and judicial reform. These areas of reform are less a feature of the work of peacebuilding organisations, but this finding suggests that it should have much higher focus. The poor quality of the police forces across Pakistan is seen as an ‘open invitation’ to extremist groups to operate, and increases dependence on military involvement.

The recent Human Rights Watch Report<sup>25</sup> on the police and judiciary in Pakistan notes that ‘Pakistan’s police are widely regarded as among the most abusive, corrupt, and unaccountable institutions of the state’ noting further that ‘The corruption and abuse endemic to the Pakistani law enforcement system are often described as “*thana* culture,” after the Urdu word for police station.’ Meanwhile, corruption, politicisation and inefficiency have led to critical failings in the judicial system, weakening its ability to apply the rule of law, and allowing violent extremist groups to flourish.

## Educational reforms, including madrasas (moderately feasible, high impact)

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Educational reforms, including of the madrasa system and the curriculum, are seen as strong areas to focus on, with moderately potential for impact and moderately high feasibility. Given the reputation of madrasas as key generators of extremist narratives, this might seem surprising. But participants emphasised that there is

significant potential to work with the madrasa sector, as well as increasing the oversight of their operations. Meanwhile, participants felt that there is considerable opportunity to reform the curriculum and teaching in schools, to promote the greater tolerance and critical thinking essential to change extremist ideologies.

## Tackling corruption (lowest feasibility, moderate impact)

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Countering corruption was seen by many participants as having potential to reduce levels of violent extremism. However – it was seen as the least feasible, by a considerable margin (less feasible even than a reduction in regional and external tensions). Corruption was a recurrent theme throughout the consultation. The challenge will be for peacebuilders and other activists to find ways to counter it, and this result indicates low levels of optimism for how this can be achieved. This suggests an opportunity for peacebuilders to seek alliances with anti-corruption groups.

## Prioritising peacebuilding actions

The views of the participants on the feasibility of a range of programmes allowed us to focus on specific areas of action. In the next section, we analyse the challenges and options for locally led peacebuilding strategies in three main areas, emerging from the group analysis of the drivers of violent extremism:

- Reforming the education system
- Finding new national narrative(s)
- Political, structural and governance reforms

<sup>25</sup>Human Rights Watch, 2016, “This Crooked System”: Police Abuse and Reform in Pakistan.” 25 September 2016.

# Reforming the education system

The education system is both a cause and potential solution to the problems of violent extremism in Pakistan. Some participants felt it is the key area to focus on in order to counter violent extremism.



*Education remains the key to changing the face of Pakistan. A large scale change is needed considering the fact that youth under the age of 25 constitutes*

*63% of the total population.*

Dr. Fatima Sajjad, University of Management and Technology



*With one of the most rapidly growing populations in the world and a national literacy rate of less than 50%, Pakistan faces critical educational challenges.*

Rashad Bukhari, Peace and Education Foundation

The education system in Pakistan is in need of significant reform. The country has a class-based education system, whereby the rich and elite go to expensive private schools, the middle class to public schools, and the poor to state schools or else to madrasas. Government policy has repeatedly failed to ensure 100 percent enrolment in primary school; 12.3 million children are out of school<sup>26</sup>.

In addition, the curriculum needs a major overhaul, as a number of participants noted:



*A crucial area to be addressed is the curriculum and contents of our textbooks and other teaching materials, from primary to post-graduate levels, in our educational*

*institutions. Such material includes hate-based messages and lacks civic education and human rights contents.*

*Our education and social systems should also be restructured to promote a sense of civic duty, tolerance and human-friendly attitudes, in the society and that will help to break the nexus of corruption and violent extremism.*

Bashir Ahmed Tahir, Independent Expert



*Educated youth in Pakistan become an easy prey to extremist discourses because of the following gaps in our education system:*

*a) Marginalisation of social studies education to hone critical thinking skills of the students and to expose them to multiple perspectives on social, political issues.*

*b) Marginalisation of Islamic Studies (Islamiyat), which if properly taught can become the most effective counter extremist strategy for Pakistani students.*

Dr. Fatima Sajjad, University of Management and Technology

<sup>26</sup>Wasif, 2016, "12.3 million children out of school in Pakistan." *The Express Tribune*, 30 July.

## The role of local groups in highlighting hate sentiments in government textbooks



By Anam Zakaria,  
Independent Expert

For many years, international research has focused on the impact of illiteracy and madrasa education in promoting violent ideologies in society. It is local organisations and activists who have ensured a focus on hate sentiment in government textbooks and schools, where many are educated. Projects such as The History Project and The Citizens Archive of Pakistan's School and College Outreach Tours are excellent initiatives that are effectively tackling extremism.

Inspired by Indians and Pakistanis staying together in a conflict resolution camp, the History Project (THP) aims to broaden young students' understanding of history and how it relates to their identity. The way that history is depicted in textbooks shapes present and future attitudes.

The project uses an interactive textbook comprised of excerpts from three Indian history textbooks and nine Pakistani textbooks. By providing an inclusive outlook on the historical events leading up to partition, the project works to remove

historic biases, allowing school children to think critically about the past.

It showcases voices from either side through a comparative viewpoint. For example, the chapter on Partition includes an interview with Urvashi Butalia, an Indian feminist and publisher. When rescue stories are juxtaposed with violent stories of Partition and children are exposed to diverse narratives, they are equipped with the skills to think critically about history and how it has influenced conflict.

This cultivates a deeper understanding of diversity and works to curb intolerance and prejudice which leads to 'spill overs in attitudes and behaviours towards different groups within Indian and Pakistani societies'. THP's Beyond the Classroom initiative has seen a 5 point increase (based on a long term external study of 300 schools) in levels of empathy and tolerance in the classes.

Local organisations have the benefit of exploring issues at the grassroots level, which is vital to address extremism in practical rather than theoretical terms. It is thus essential that international research be combined with local insights to create holistic CVE frameworks.

As Zeenia Shaukat noted in our consultation:

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*Wouldn't a functional state education system provide an effective alternative to the madrasas which offer a very convenient solution to the poverty-affected and low income population to ensure a decent future for their children?*

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One of the most notable developments in the education system is the growth in the madrasa sector. At the time of Pakistan's creation in 1947, there were less than 300 madrasas. The number now exceeds 35,000. Many studies point to the rise of Islamisation during General Zia-ul-Haq's era, and the Afghan-Soviet War, for the widespread network of madrasas in Pakistan.

The momentum of the growth of madrasas in the 1980s was carried forward. During 1988 to 2002, there was a significant growth of Deobandi madrasas, whose numbers increased from 1,779 to 7,000. "The total madrasas in 1988 was 2,801, which shot up to 9,880 in 2002."<sup>27</sup>

One key factor for the growth in the number of madrasas is that they are often the only option for poor parents. As per one estimate, 9.3 percent of school going children in Pakistan are students in 35,000 madrasas<sup>28</sup>.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Pakistani madrasas came into the limelight. Since then, several studies have pointed to structural violence and madrasas radicalising youth. It is often discussed by scholars that poverty is the root cause of terrorism in Pakistan, because it forces parents to send their children to where education is free.

There is also a discussion among policymakers in Pakistan about the relationship between poverty and terrorism. Hina Rabbani Khar, a former

Foreign Minister of Pakistan, has also pointed out the significance of eliminating policies and practices that alienate people and make them easy victims of exploitation at the hands of extremist<sup>31</sup>. According to Joshua, "poverty and deprivation" have driven hundreds of Pakistani youth towards terrorism<sup>32</sup>.

Participants were wary of approaches to countering radicalisation through simple poverty reduction. Aside from the fact that poverty reduction reforms are difficult to achieve in the current political structures of Pakistan, there was concern that they would have little direct impact on CVE:



*There is very little empirical evidence available on social deprivation or frustration triggering violence by forcing the vulnerable to join violent extremist groups.*

Dr. Zahid Shahab Ahmed, Peace Direct's Local Peacebuilding Expert for Pakistan

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*I examine traces of 'latent radicalism' among highly educated, financially well off Pakistani students. Here the analyses linking extremism to poverty, lack of education, marginalization do not hold true.*

Dr. Fatima Sajjad, University of Management and Technology

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Although simplistic links between poverty and extremism are unproven, the impact of social exclusion should not be discounted.

<sup>27</sup>Pakistan Today, 2015, "Report says over 35,000 madrasas operating in Pakistan." *Pakistan Today*, 31 July.

<sup>28</sup>The Express Tribune, 2015, "Religious reforms: 9.3% of school going children are madrasa students." *The Express Tribune*, 1 August.

<sup>29</sup>Ali 2009, Ahmed 2009.

<sup>30</sup>"Terrorism a socio-economic and political phenomenon with special reference to Pakistan." *Journal of Management and Social Sciences* 3 (1):3-14.

<sup>31</sup>Khar, 2011, "Remarks by the Foreign Minister of Pakistan H.E."

<sup>32</sup>Joshua, 2013, "Young, educated and dangerous." *The Hindu*, 10 April.





*Poverty alone may not be a driver but poverty and the gap between the rich and poor based on injustices and uneven distribution of economic resources indeed*

*generate severe grievances.*

Raza Shah Khan, SPADO

However, reforming the madrasa sector is still seen as critical to preventing violent extremism. In a 2015 analysis on the state of madrasas in Pakistan, Umair Khalil<sup>33</sup> noted that while the majority of madrasas do not play a role in the supply of militants to jihadi networks, madrasa students are more likely to back war and militant conflict and are less inclined to support equal rights for members of oppressed groups than their counterparts in secular schools.

He goes on to argue that madrasa education may produce students with an exclusivist worldview which rejects the notions of modernity. “This mindset”, he says, “...combined with certain legitimate socioeconomic grievances and the belief in sharia as the perfect system of governance, is the basis for radical ideas. These radical ideas are then disseminated through Friday prayer sermons (khutbas) which have become much more politicised over the years and may appeal to political agitation.”

Importantly, while the links between poverty and radicalisation in Pakistan are hotly contested, Malik cites a study by Saleem H. Ali, who found that sectarian groups have the greatest following in areas where there is a high degree of economic inequality. Ali believes that the prevalence of the feudal elite and economic inequality have given madrasas a greater sense of legitimacy as a social movement in the region. This point was echoed by a number of participants:



*Pakistan’s madrasas primarily serve the poorest of the poor, providing room, board, clothing, and books in addition to education for many of Pakistan’s most vulnerable*

*and disadvantaged children, who would otherwise likely go without. Yet the madrasas typically lack the capacity to provide a modern, comprehensive, and quality education.*

Rashad Bukhari, Peace and Education Foundation

However, reforming the madrasa sector is a widely acknowledged recommendation from all types of stakeholders.

CODE Pakistan has addressed madrasa reforms by working with the leadership of madrasas and breaking down barriers between the madrasa and mainstream education systems. These barriers often exist because many in mainstream education institutions believe the education offered by madrasas to be inferior.



© Angela Catlin.

<sup>33</sup>Khalil, 2015, “The Madrasa Conundrum: The state of religious education in Pakistan.”

## CODE PAKISTAN: Participatory approaches to madrasa reform

CODE PAKISTAN's approach is based on participatory action with madrasa leadership, working together to find ways to improve the education offered to students. They believe that change should come by engaging with madrasa leadership and building a good rapport with them. They also believe madrasa reform should be viewed as an education issue, rather than a law-and-order issue, and should not be singled out in knee-jerk reactions to high profile terrorist incidents.

They are working in collaboration with the government to develop strategies that address the financial oversights of the madrasas. CODE PAKISTAN are also leading initiatives aimed at removing the barriers between madrasa and mainstream education systems, such as the University Madrasah Interaction Program, which has successfully generated dialogue on national issues between university students and madrasa students. The programme sees enthusiastic participation from university students and madrasa students who are eager to discuss problems and find tolerant and inclusive solutions.



© CODE Pakistan

At the same time, the question is not simply about quality or resources, and Anam Zakaria points out the dangers of generalising about the likelihood of support for violent extremism based on the economic background of an individual:



*I think one needs to be extremely wary of generalising about poor/illiterate individuals being prone to extremism. In my work across schools in India-Pakistan, I have*

*found that upper middle class students can often hold more hardline opinions than their counterparts from low-income backgrounds. Another interesting trend to ponder over is why so many extremist attacks happen in Punjab (especially in terms of mob violence, blasphemy charges, etc.) when Punjab is the “more literate, well-off” province. It makes one question the link between poverty and extremism and illiteracy and terrorism.*

Anam Zakaria, Independent Expert

The point made by Anam Zakaria is important for future policymakers, since so much of current CVE programming is focused on madrasas which cater for poor and illiterate target groups. As the case of Tashfeen Malik illustrates (see P8) middle class and educated students are arguably a greater risk than the poor students who enrol into madrasas.

Writing in the CTC Sentinel, a magazine aimed at staff from the US West Point military academy, Huma Yusuf<sup>34</sup> points out that: “there is no strategy yet to confront what officials fear is growing radicalization among Pakistan’s affluent, middle-class population, particularly university students... militants with higher education are better positioned to plan sophisticated attacks, infiltrate elite government and military circles, and facilitate increased connections between Pakistan-based groups and transnational movements... in the absence of a holistic approach to checking the radicalization of university students, this demographic will continue to pose a growing threat within Pakistan.”

## Insan Foundation Trust: engaging with youth in higher education

Insan Foundation Trust works across rural and urban Pakistan in collaboration with five universities in four provinces. Insan is an Urdu work that stands for ‘human’ and the organisation works “for and with all humans irrespective of any identity”. They provide opportunities for youths, women, communities and civil society organisations from various ethnic, religious, sectarian and linguistic backgrounds to engage with each other.

The aim is capacity building, which starts with supporting a transformation from within.



Notably, Insan has deeply impacted the life of a young trained militant whose violent actions of the past caused many families living in his area to leave.

He was nominated by his university teachers to take part in a project with Insan and over

<sup>34</sup>Yusuf, 2016.

the course of a year he has transformed his attitude through attending workshops, developing material and producing a prize-winning documentary<sup>35</sup> on the rights of religious minorities – demonstrating that art can act as a platform for peace.

He is now reaching out to all the families he forced out of the area and apologising to them. Insan also focuses on promoting women's participation in peacebuilding by taking part in women centric peacebuilding networks and facilitating initiatives that advocate for gender equality.

## YES Network – harnessing young people for peace

YES Network Pakistan is promoting a gradual shift in youth development. In a concerted effort to promote youth-led peacemaking efforts that are reflective of local conventions, the organisation has launched several social enterprise competitions on peace which offer technical, financial and mentoring support to youth living in conflict-stricken settings.

The projects were launched to address underlying violence in communities by moving beyond the labelling of youth as victims and/or perpetrators of violence to engaging them in peacebuilding efforts, giving them ownership over their efforts and providing them with opportunities for leadership. They encourage youth to use music, sport, media and information technology while designing and delivering innovative peace projects that promote tolerance, conflict resolution, reconciliation and interfaith harmony.

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) confirmed the project has successfully promoted innovative ideas for peace in areas where they are needed the most, such as FATA and Quetta. The Social Enterprise Competition on Peace has directly transformed the lives of the youth, who went on to influence others through sensitisation on issues relating to peace and

conflict. 56.3 % of participants in the Social Enterprise Competition on Peace said that as a result of participating in the activity they will engage their friends on topics related to peacebuilding within one month, and 43.8% said they would share with their friends within the next week.

As one participant of a YES project stated “This whole program changed my ideas of individualism and changed them to collective goals. My personal success is not only making myself good but also making a difference in the society which needs an overall change.” By empowering socially excluded youths and focusing on the opportunity of young people as transformative agents in society, YES Network Pakistan facilitates meaningful lives free of violence, extremism, poverty and unemployment.



Three events were held to showcase the talents and projects of students on peace to the wider public and promote peacebuilding through the medium of live performance, storytelling and sport.

<sup>35</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4H929p\\_0duY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4H929p_0duY).

# Political, structural and governance reforms

There are key areas of governance and policy reform that can reduce the threat of violent extremism. In these areas, the capacity of civil society groups to directly implement changes are more limited, but they can play a role in advocating for change.

The nexus between corruption and violent extremism is a high priority focus for peacebuilders, but also one where doubts exist about how much can be achieved, at least in the short term. Inevitably, a key challenge in achieving reform in this area is government willingness to tackle the problem, which is why participants rated reform in this area as less feasible than other areas.

The role of the Pakistani government and army as a patron of some violent groups was cited repeatedly as one of the long-term causes of the situation today. Ending policies of supporting some violent groups for strategic reasons has had unintended consequences, and stopping those policies as soon as possible could reduce the threats of violent extremism groups.

Different governance structures and institutions have also played a role in fostering conflict. For example, the existence of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) is viewed as a major cause of conflict in FATA:



*There is a need to understand how specific institutional settings (formal and cultural) under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) have prevented and hindered opportunities, which arguably has resulted in the marginalisation of tribal communities, especially poor tribal Pukhtuns.*

Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, CAMP

The government's inability or unwillingness to enforce the rule of law across the country has aided the growth of violent extremist groups. Violent extremists continue to have bases in Pakistan for fundraising and youth recruitment. Here the writ of the state is very important and the government should ensure that places breeding violent extremism, such as training camps, are stopped from operating<sup>36</sup>.

## The Frontier Crimes Regulation

All civil and criminal cases in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan are ruled by a *jirga* (council of elders) under the Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1901 (FCR). This means that the laws of Pakistan do not apply to FATA because the region has its own laws based on local customs and traditions, for example relating to dispute resolution.

Often *jirgas* implement strict penalties in order to enforce their verdicts, and citizens cannot appeal outside FATA's *jirga* system in either provincial high courts or the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The FCR continues to receive criticism from legal experts and human rights groups for its provisions, particularly pertaining to collective responsibility. Other than the mechanism of

<sup>36</sup>Khalid and Leghari 2014, 550.

implementation, the FCR has been heavily criticised for section 21 relating to collective responsibility that punishes the whole tribe for one person's crime.

According to Afridi<sup>37</sup>, "the application of collective punishment thus disregards individual culpability and identifies the innocent with the guilty."

## Finding new national narratives

A consistent fear for peacebuilders is that while violent extremist groups can offer simplistic but compelling narratives, those who oppose them have struggled to present compelling alternatives that can be more attractive to vulnerable groups targeted for recruitment. The weakness of the state has also allowed extremist narratives to flourish, as Dilawar Khan Notes:



*To me the structural cause of VE in Pakistan is the weak image of the State in the eyes of a local Pakistani. Imagine a public school, a public hospital, and a local court*

*in remote area of Pakistan. The broken benches of the bar, the wall-less schools and the doctor-less hospitals represent the image of the State in the minds of a local. They look at these broken promises and decide to look for an alternative - that is when the extremist groups ensures them of justice, and a speedy one.*

Dilawar Khan, CODE Pakistan

One strength of extremist narratives is the sense of identity it can offer to young people, as Naveed Ahmad Shinwari notes:



*For young and marginalised groups, various manifestations of identity may be conceived as coping strategies or tactics, depending on the environment in which they live.*

*For example, Oskar Verkaaik in his ethnography of the Muhajir Qaumi Movement<sup>38</sup> (MQM) in Karachi shows that urban youth imagine large-scale ethnic-religious violence as an opportunity for self-assertion and 'fun'.*

Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, CAMP

Those who oppose violent extremist groups need clear narratives that challenge the world view of the extremists. As defined by the Stronger Cities Network, "a counter-narrative is a message that offers a positive alternative to extremist propaganda or pushes back by deconstructing, delegitimising or demystifying extremist narratives."<sup>39</sup> According to Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, the Pakistani state has struggled to offer a sufficiently positive vision that can offer a compelling alternative for those at risk of joining or supporting violent extremist groups:

<sup>37</sup>Afridi, 2012.

<sup>38</sup>MQM is a movement that emerged initially as the sole voice of Urdu speaking migrants from India. It has been behind violence and numerous targeted killings. There continue to be allegations of MQM using violence as a political tool and of perpetrating criminal activity such as election rigging and money laundering. Many of its leaders have now left the country due to military operations against the organisation.

<sup>39</sup><http://strongercitiesnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Briefing-Paper-1.pdf>



*The narrative from the state is missing, while the terrorist narrative is clear and helping them recruit. National consultation of all stakeholders—including civil*

*society—may help us come up with a clear narrative and direction to beat militants’ narrative. I would reiterate that young generation should be given a voice in decision making processes.*

Naveed Ahmad Shinwari, CAMP

**Some participants went further and suggested that the Pakistani state has actually strengthened the extremist narratives, through toleration or encouragement of specific extremist groups:**



*Successive military and civilian governments have undesirably toyed with religion, making its socio-political discourse inevitably Islamist. In other words,*

*because of its failure to create an alternative national narrative for a federation comprising diverse ethnicities and cultures having cross-border linkages, the state has held on to the crutches of religion. The trend has manifested itself in various jihads waged by Pakistan’s “tolerated” extremists in Afghanistan and Kashmir in the past and within Pakistan now.*

Aarish Khan, CODE Pakistan

**However, defining counter-narratives should not solely be the preserve or the responsibility of the government. Civil society in Pakistan can play a key role in developing a wide range of different narratives. Policymakers and peacebuilders need to encourage diversity in messaging, tolerance, and sensitivity to specific contexts, as suggested by Dr Fatima Sajid and Nasreen Samad:**



*In my view building ‘one national narrative’ and imposing it ‘from above’ is counterproductive. Let us instead encourage respect for diversity of perspectives and*

*a dialogue among plurality of opinion.*

Dr. Fatima Sajjad, University of Management and Technology



*Deep understanding of the local contexts and target audience is crucial before coming up with any peace messages. Similarly, any counter narrative without clear-*

*cut understanding of the extremist narratives and local context might not have much value and even can be counterproductive. For instance, Sufi teachings and messages might have more positive influence in South Punjab or Sindh than KPK.*

Nasreen Samad, SPADO



*Our education and social systems should also be restructured to promote civic sense, tolerance, sense of responsibility and human-friendly attitudes, in the society and*

*that will help to break the nexus of corruption and violent extremism.*

Bashir Ahmed Tahir, Independent Expert



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The role of women needs to be central to narratives that challenge that of violent extremists. The narrative used by violent extremists in Pakistan has been consistent in claiming that women need to be excluded from the political sphere. Many participants noted how important it is that this narrative is challenged:



*Historically in our local traditions and culture, women have played an important role for the promotion of social cohesion and harmony in the society. We need to revive our true culture where women have equal rights and participation but they have suffered the most due to violent extremism.*

Raza Shah Khan, SPADO



*Women's perspective should be the core. Why women? Extremist narratives in patriarchal societies bring socio-economic, political, psychological, sexual, emotional impact on women. These range from verbal abuse to rape. Women are more than 50% of world's population - it is their right to be part of every decision making process about the future of their families and communities.*

Kishwar Sultana, Insan Foundation

The case study below tells the story of a project run by local organisation, Aware Girls, which directly challenges the extremist narrative by encouraging young women to participate in the political process. The organisation was founded by sisters Gulalai and Saba Ismail, who have been selected by one national newspaper as amongst the ten most influential women in Pakistan<sup>40</sup>. The project has not only increased female participation in the electoral process but has used citizen committees to ensure female participation is increased more broadly in the communities.



© Peace Direct/Aware Girls

<sup>40</sup>Ashfaq, 2016, "10 Pakistani women who made us mighty proud in 2016." The Express Tribune, 23 December.



# Aware Girls: promoting peace and empowering women



© Aware Girls

Aware Girls (AG) is a non-profit organisation working in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the north-western province of Pakistan. They are a youth led organisation working at a grassroots level to build peace, promote tolerance and counter violent extremism. Aware Girls run programmes that train young people in conflict resolution.

Once trained, peace activists go into schools, universities and madrasas to engage other young people on topics of peace, non-violence and the negative role of militant groups. Others run local campaigns or start youth groups aimed at pulling young people away from militancy. The founders, sisters Gulalai and Saba Ismail, advocate for women's rights. They recognise that women and

girls can play a powerful role in CVE and work to empower them as agents of peace in a deeply patriarchal society.

A recent project: *Strengthening Women's Participation in Political Processes* in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (2013 -2016) focused on improving public awareness of electoral procedures. As a result, the percentage of women participants interested in civic and political processes in their community and country increased from 49% to 86%. Weak governance structures are one of the factors that allow the Taliban to recruit in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the project inspired a vital step towards a more peaceful society by strengthening those structures.

*“When I joined the training and attended Gulalai’s sessions, I was amazed that whatever she was telling the participants was not against the religion. She was only advocating human rights and peace. She talked about respecting the beliefs of other religions. I ended up completing the five-day training and volunteered myself for the cause of promoting pluralism. I told Gulalai about my initial motive of attending the training and pledged that I would work to counter extremism. I was a totally changed person by the time I returned home”.*

Jahangir, project participant

*“When Talibanisation was on its peak in Waziristan, I was very sceptical and confused; on one hand I used to hear about Jihad and on the other about peace and tolerance. I was very patriotic about Waziristan therefore, I wanted to know what was happening in my area. That is when I learnt about Aware Girls and attended their Peace Building Training, which focused on the youth of*

*FATA and discussed the Taliban issue. My basic drive to understand the issue led to a complete transformation of my thinking. The late-night discussions with Gulalai and the participants of this training gave me a new understanding of the world around me, about women’s rights, political leadership, and peace and conflict resolution. I started volunteering for the first time in my life, with Aware Girls... I am looking after two projects, one on peace and the other on political leadership... I feel greatly empowered when I help other girls expand their horizons through Aware Girls. Many of my female students have joined active politics. Some have established their businesses and a number of youth have been saved from losing their lives at the hands of Taliban. Aware Girls empowered my life and polished my leadership skills and I will continue to do so for other young women.”*

Alina Shah, project participant



# Renaissance Foundation for Social Innovation: countering extremist narratives in universities



By Muhammad Ayub

Renaissance Foundation for Social Innovation works for peace and tolerance. It was established in 2011 in response to increased violent extremism and radicalisation. Its objective is to counter violent extremism through social innovation. After conducting nationwide research, it found that extremist organisations across Pakistan influence vulnerable young people on the basis of guilt and shame.

The Foundation identified early dialogue as an effective form of conflict prevention, and so

runs conflict resolution programmes and peace fellowship conferences. It aims to create social harmony in Pakistan by countering negative social influences that can lead to uninformed decisions or unconscious engagement with extremist organisations.

In 2015 they launched “Mashal e Rah”, a counter narrative campaign to challenge extremist ideologies, which engaged with more 2000 students in 17 universities of Pakistan. During the campaign, it received very difficult questions, which were addressed in dialogue sessions. The Foundation recently launched a website aimed at countering cyber extremism and raising awareness, particularly among the youth.



© RASIP-website

## PAIMAN: CVE through networks of mothers

PAIMAN works to 'eradicate injustice, poverty, disharmony and conflicts from society'. It established Pakistan's first Centre for Conflict Transformation and Peace Building, in Islamabad. The Centre acts as a resource centre and training institute on peacebuilding and related topics, and seeks to generate organic conflict resolution practices and structures.

The EU has cited PAIMAN's model of internal community peace structures in the form of youth and mother Tolanas – a Pushto word meaning togetherness – as best practice for CVE, because it is rooted in the cultural milieu and religious traditions of the area, which makes it sustainable. With this model, communities are empowered through mediation and dialogue, which creates awareness on the early signs of violent extremism in individuals and communities. It also allows communities to develop locally appropriate responses accordingly.

Working closely with community groups, Tolanas have contributed to the resolution of 54 feuds and the prevention of 8 cases of violent extremism. Communities which were once victim to violent extremism are now conscious of early warning signs and able to address the root causes of violent extremism before they are amplified.

Youth and mothers are called PAIMAN Peace Practitioners after receiving capacity building training. They become members of Male and Female Tolanas in their area. They have worked at the community level in FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province since

2008. The 65 male and 35 female Tolanas carry out community meetings to sensitise their respective communities regarding the negative impact of violent extremism, and their role in recognising and responding to early signs of violent extremism in individuals and communities.

It also motivates them to work collectively to develop social cohesion and peace through the use of various tools. Tolanas have explored local ways of mediation, negotiation and reconciliation, and have been very effective



in addressing some of the fears and issues pertaining to violent extremism in KPK and FATA. So far PAIMAN has been able to reach out to 45,000 male and 17,500 female directly in different parts of KPK and FATA.

PAIMAN's TV drama series, *KhobVeenumAlama* ('I have a dream') was aired in 2013. It is based on the true stories of PAIMAN's de-radicalised youth and their mothers. After this, 67 educated mothers including doctors, lawyers and teachers from different parts of Pakistan called PAIMAN to ask to participate in their Mother's training, so they could learn the skills to prevent their sons from becoming extremists.

# The role of civil society in preventing violent extremism

The growth of peacebuilding worldwide over the past 20 years has been mirrored in Pakistan. The peacebuilding sector in Pakistan comprises a wide range of actors, including local NGOs, think tanks and academia working with communities and policymakers.

There has also been growth in international organisations and donor agencies for peacebuilding work, and groups including USIP, Search for Common Ground and International Alert now have offices in Pakistan. Peacebuilding work is often carried out through support to local civil society groups, not least since the security situation in much of the country precludes direct international programmes. Many embassies have also supported local civil society groups.

Peace Direct has been researching the peacebuilding work of Pakistani organisations since 2010. We have profiles of over 140 local peacebuilding organisations on Insight on Conflict, our mapping project for peacebuilding groups around the world. The Pakistan section is the largest and most vibrant of the 44 countries profiled, showing the level of peacebuilding activity that exists in Pakistan.

A repeated concern of all participants is the importance of understanding the specific local dynamics of violent extremism. Local civil society groups have a vital role in peacebuilding strategies because of their proximity to the drivers of violent extremism. Examples of effective programmes by local groups have been included as case studies in this report to highlight key successes:



*Local organizations have the benefit of exploring issues at the grassroots level which is essential if we are to address extremism in practical rather than theoretical terms. It is thus essential that international research is combined with local insights to create holistic CVE frameworks.*

Anam Zakaria, Independent Expert



*The causes, dynamics and approaches to CVE have to be very context specific, localized and it may not be accurate to always take international research as a yard stick for designing projects.*

Shahab Khalid, Independent Expert

However, there are obstacles to the work of civil society peacebuilders, not least security concerns; over 40% of surveyed participants felt the security situation for peacebuilders in Pakistan is 'dangerous' or 'very dangerous'. They face further practical obstacles:



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*Some level of coordination is lacking between state institutions and CSOs. The attitude of government institutions towards NGOs/INGOs is not very positive*

*and if state institutions have such a negative approach towards local organisations and international NGOs then the same is reflected in the local communities where CSOs face a lot of challenges while dealing with local communities and state institutions.*

*Many good projects and programmes are unable to get permission from the government to operate in conflict-affected areas. The government is further squeezing local CSOs by imposing extra procedures and approval to get foreign funding.*

Shahab Khalid, Independent Expert

**These challenges can be exacerbated by a lack of coordination and cooperation:**



*There is a great lack of coordination and communication among the CSOs themselves and mostly organisations work either in isolation or in quite unhealthy*

*and non-productive competition. Hence, there is a need to create an environment of learning and sharing so that better understanding about the issues are generated and debated.*

Raza Shah Khan, Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO)



# Lessons for the international donor community

International support for peacebuilding work in Pakistan has increased markedly in recent years. Participants noted that without international support for peacebuilding activities in Pakistan, it would be hard to find alternative options for funding. One participant summed up the reliance on international funding:



*Neither the government nor the philanthropists or corporate sector are interested in the field of peacebuilding. It's only the INGOs who are funding peacebuilding*

*projects in Pakistan.*

Mossarat Qadeem, Paiman Alumni Trust

Whilst many good programmes have been developed, participants noted key lessons for improving support.

## 1. Allow local groups space to devise their own programmes

Above all, participants expressed fears that dependency on donors, and acting under donor restrictions, will counter the effectiveness of local groups. Donors need to allow more freedom to local groups to devise their programmes. This also means a greater tolerance for risk and experimentation in programmes. The risks for NGOs in becoming dependent on funding was encapsulated by one participant:



*Pakistani NGOs, by pursuing and becoming dependent on funding for executing their agenda have somehow become trapped into an order where their very basic*

*operations are defined and controlled by the donors. This is not to say that donors have any ill will. But this approach stops NGOs from expanding their outreach, and working effectively. If they fail to work effectively and follow up on their initiatives, and merely act as an executing agency for agendas not crafted by them, they will not only lose support from the general public and the state, this will also erode their own capacities to evolve and grow into solid, resilient structures contributing positively towards addressing issues in the society.*

Zeenia Shaukat, Independent Expert

At the same time, Aarish Khan noted that donor processes are a key factor in killing the ideas and initiatives of local groups:



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*Most of the international donors have so many process-related requirements for their local partners, even in relatively smaller projects. So even if the idea is*

*brilliant and the work plan is great, but the organization is not old enough, or has not done a similar work in the past, or cannot provide the required “cost-share” in the project, or does not have three years’ worth of audit reports complying to certain locally unheard of (and at times inaccessible) documents, the local organization will not get the project. Bureaucracies are skilful killers of ideas and initiatives. It would help the international donors to be less bureaucratic to enable them to take little risks worth taking for the sake of learning and trying out new ideas.*

Aarish Khan, CODE Pakistan

The potential negative effects of international aid for groups in Pakistan have been most notably written about by Masooda Bano in her book ‘Breakdown in Pakistan: How Aid is Eroding Institutions for Collective Action’. Since Pakistan is one of the world’s largest recipients of international aid, there are dangers that funding can create perverse incentives and stimulate the creation of agencies whose primary aim is to generate funds for themselves, rather than to benefit the communities they represent. The experiences of participants backed this analysis, as for example noted by Dr Syed M. Ali Shah and Lubna Javaid:



*There is a lucrative business model called “NGO programming”, whereby sassy imported ideas and concepts that make no contextual sense or relevance are brought to*

*the table to obtain funding from donors and to make colourful news photos.*

Dr Syed M. Ali Shah, Independent Expert



*The majority of local organizations work on a business model by developing and implementing projects to ensure their sustainability and existence...*

*They lack proper direction and skills to comprehend the vast areas of CVE and deliver accordingly. Further, the organisations at times shift their paradigm with donor trends and hence are not fully focused on the subject.*

Lubna Javaid, Independent Expert

**When donors have good local partners, they also need to give higher priority to in-project learning, rather than just pre-determined project goals. Zeenia Shaukat gave one suggestion as to how this can be achieved:**



*Donors should think outside time-bound, quantitative result oriented measures.*

Zeenia Shaukat, Independent Expert

## 2. Support more collaboration between researchers and practitioners

One specific strategy to improve local peacebuilding interventions identified is to increase collaboration between academic and policy institutions in Pakistan with local peacebuilders. Several participants highlighted the current paucity of collaboration between researchers and practitioners, as summarised by Lubna Javaid:





*Local peacemakers are key stakeholders in the entire process. They have the understanding of the issues and the wisdom to address those. However, they*

*seldom make part of the policy discussion forums. Lack of channels to feed in their voices and recommendations in the policy further makes it difficult to understand and address the issues at the local level.*

Lubna Javaid, Independent Expert

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This is symptomatic of a wider problem within the peacebuilding sector in many countries: the yawning gap between those who conduct research on conflict and peace, and those who practice it.

It is critically important that this gap is closed, to enable practitioners to participate in research so that it becomes more operationally relevant, and to ensure that practitioners benefit from the lessons generated by researchers.

### 3. Support capacity development in CVE

The rise of violent extremism presents a severe challenge to civil society activists. Participants acknowledged that in many cases local peacebuilders lacked sufficient skills in analysis, and then developing effective programmes to counter violent extremism; a finding that was echoed in a recent USIP report<sup>41</sup>. Therefore, international partners can play a role in providing capacity support in this area. Participants suggested some specific priorities:



*Enhancing capacities in the area of 1) peacebuilding concepts approaches and tools, 2) peacebuilding designing, monitoring and evaluation, and*

*3) conflict analysis and resolution would be helpful. In order to bring in the perspective of attaining positive peace in the stated objectives of the peacebuilding initiatives, a long term and intense engagement is required from both the implementing organisation and the donor partner.*

Naumana Suleman, Center for Social Justice

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*Local organisations need to build their capacities in conflict sensitive approaches to peacebuilding and CVE. Even development interventions when implemented*

*in the conflict areas become part of the conflict context hence conflict sensitivity need to be adopted during such interventions.*

Raza Shah Khan, Sustainable Peace And Development Organization (SPADO)

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### 4. Find new ways to talk about violent extremism

The international community also needs to consider different ways to talk about 'violent extremism'. This could be done through extensive consultation amongst practitioners and communities affected by violent extremism. (See the discussion on language and violent extremism on pp 7-8)

# Recommendations for government policies

Below are some recommendations generated through the consultation:

- Military action will not eliminate extremism from Pakistan. Instead, a ‘whole of government’ approach is needed, including simultaneous reform of the education, police and judicial sectors, as well as tackling corruption across all branches of government. Relevant interagency mechanisms are necessary in order to ensure effective communication and coordination.
- Specific efforts must be made to reform the education system in order to equip young people with the critical analysis skills to challenge violent extremist narratives. This must go further than reforms of the madrasas and must include reform of the school curriculum, particularly in social studies, history, Pakistan studies and Islamic studies.
- Addressing economic, social and gender inequality is essential in order to foster a culture of pluralism and tolerance in Pakistan. Good practice already exists across Pakistan, some of which is contained in this report, so the government must build on what it and civil society has been able to achieve in specific locations and replicate it nationwide (for example the de-radicalisation centres for former militants; the History Project featured on P23).
- The National Action Plan (NAP), which was rushed through in the wake of the Peshawar Army School massacre, needs to be reviewed and revised. It needs to be based on a broader consultation with stakeholders across the country, including civil society practitioners and analysts, so that objectives do not undermine efforts at CVE, and to ensure that targets are more relevant and are clearer.
- The NAP also needs to have greater transparency and accountability mechanisms, to improve governance and minimise the risk of corruption.
- The Government needs to implement a clearer policy to tackle hate speech. While the Cyber Crime Bill includes a provision on hate speech, there is lack of a specific/comprehensive legal framework on the issue.
- The presence of militant organisations across the country, especially in Punjab, raises questions about the selective implementation of the NAP. There is a need to show “zero tolerance” in letter and spirit towards all militant organisations.
- The National Counter Terrorism Authority Pakistan (NACTA) should play a greater role in producing a national level counter narrative to extremist ideology that continues to spread hatred and violence in the country. However such a counter narrative must be flexible enough to adapt

to local contexts and to accommodate other counter-narratives developed by civil society and citizens.

- The NAP should focus on vulnerable and 'at risk' groups, for instance young people, who are the biggest segment of the population and most vulnerable to extremism.
- The government should assign a ministry/ department for the registration of madrasas. Curriculum reform should cover public schools and madrasas, and there needs to be a greater level of engagement with madrasas, rather than simply registration.
- There is a need to address the structural issues of poverty, inequality and marginalisation as root causes of violent extremism.
- Constitutional issues such as the status of FATA and the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) continue to fuel extremism. Therefore a constitutional review should be enacted to resolve these contentious issues.
- As several NGOs have been working on CVE in Pakistan for over a decade, the government should work closely with a select group of NGOs in order to learn from their best practice.



# Conclusion

Peace Direct's approach is rooted in the belief that local groups are critical to the success of any peacebuilding process. This does not just mean at the point of delivery of a project, but also at the earlier steps of analysing the conflicts and evaluating possible responses.

In the case of Pakistan, too often the voices of local experts are overshadowed by external experts, where international donors have sometimes shown a lack of trust in local expertise or capacity. The quality of analysis as part of this consultancy is proof that there is no shortage of capacity amongst Pakistani civil society groups to creatively analyse and devise



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strategies to tackle the problems of violent extremism. What is required is more space and support for these strategies to be enacted, both from the Pakistani state, and other supporters within Pakistan and beyond.

The problem of how to prevent violent extremism is an immensely complicated one. As this report demonstrates, the causes of violent extremism are many, and contested. On one level, the decision to join violent extremist groups is one made at an individual level, with as many complex motivations as there are people. At the same time, there are a range of structural factors in Pakistan which have allowed violent extremist groups to take root. It is unsurprising therefore that there are a range of competing priorities for anyone seeking to counter the rise of violent extremists.

Given the complexity of the issue, and the range of possible courses of action, it therefore makes sense to bring in a range of perspectives when devising policies. Through dialogue among experts from across sectors and regions of Pakistan, we have explored different analyses of the key causes of violent extremism, and weighed the benefits of a range of strategies.

Inevitably, participants were unanimous that there is no one solution to violent extremism, and it can only be addressed by a broad range of actors and activities. In a sense, a wide range of possible actions remain open to practitioners, and those who wish to support them. At the same time, we hope this report helps indicate some avenues likely to be particularly fruitful. In particular, participants explored options for programming in three areas:



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- Reforming the education system
- Finding new national narratives
- Political, structural and governance reforms

Whilst the report highlights the capacity of local experts to combat the threat of violent extremism, there remains a critical role for external actors who seek to support them. The report highlights the priorities of local experts in this regard, which includes a radical shift in programming, from a model that has sapped the initiative and control of many local groups, to a new approach that allows them more latitude to develop their own initiatives.

This will require a greater degree of tolerance of risk on the part of funders, but could allow for more sustainable achievements in the longer-term. There is also an opportunity to support

greater collaboration among practitioners and researchers. The current gap between the two means that much of the high quality research in Pakistan is still not resulting in better programmes by practitioners.

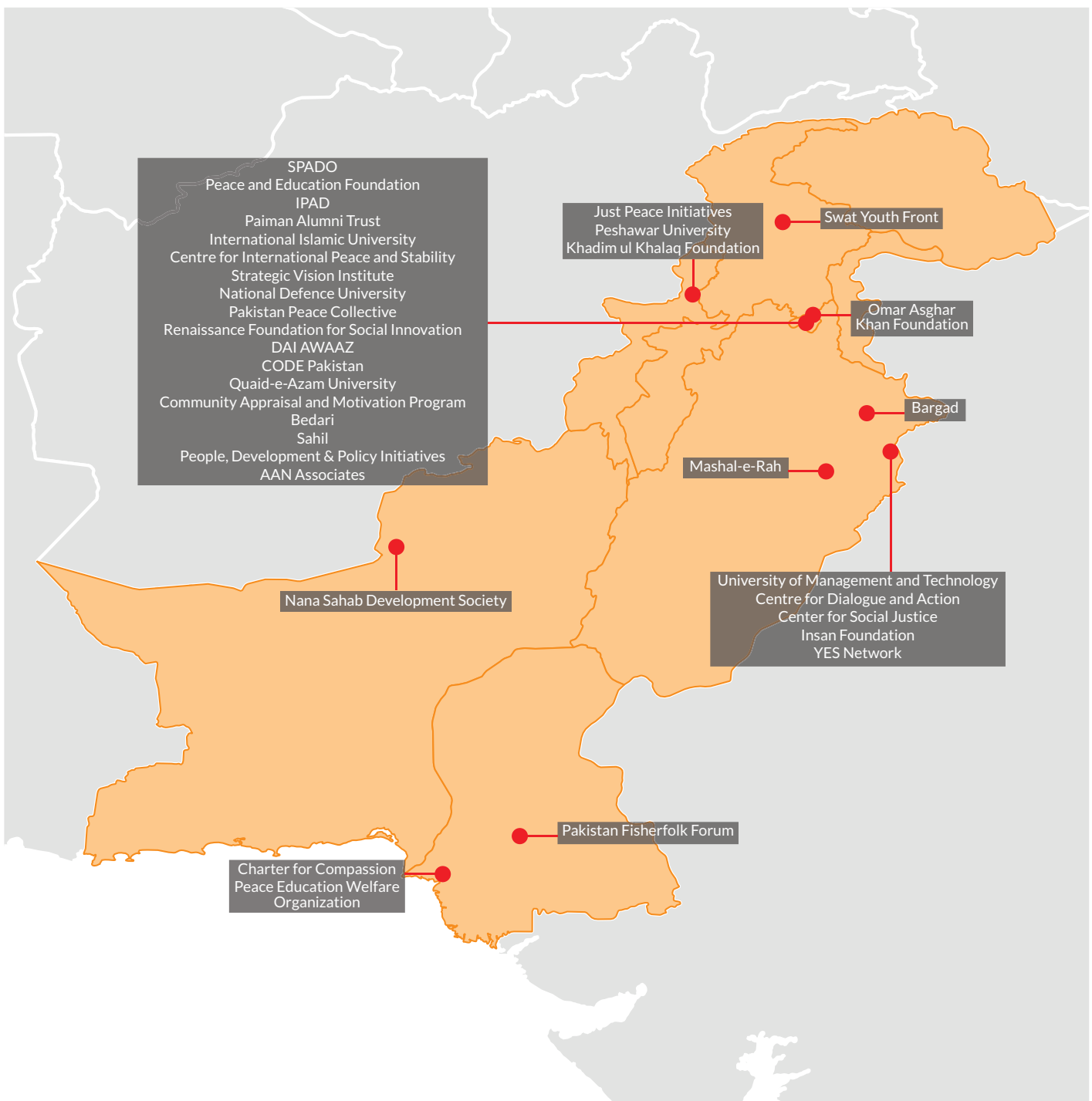
All participants who contributed to this analysis had to focus on the brutal impact that violent extremism has had on Pakistan. And yet despite the difficult topics we discussed, what was most noticeable were the positive contributions that came from the group. Rather than despair at the levels of violence, instead participants were spurred to share their ideas on confronting the violence. Furthermore, when surveyed, most felt optimistic that Pakistan will have a more peaceful future. At the end of this report, all participating groups are listed. Finding more ways to support such civil society is a practical way to bring that peaceful future a step closer.

# Participants

Since 2010, Peace Direct has mapped local peacebuilding groups in Pakistan. For an interactive map of more than 140 local organisations, visit:

[www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/pakistan/](http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/pakistan/)

This research formed the initial basis for participants for this consultation. A map of participating organisations, plus short profiles, is included below.



## Participating organisations

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### **AAN Associates**

AAN Associates operates as a social enterprise, where the work is driven by motivation to facilitate and enable development partners to explore innovative, sustainable and contextually relevant solutions to development challenges.

Participant: Nadeem Haider



### **BARGAD**

BARGAD engages with young people across the country in colleges and universities, both secular and those affiliated with religious seminaries. More than 800 volunteers work for BARGAD.

Participant: Sabiha Shaheen



### **Bedari**

Bedari promotes peace and harmony as a prerequisite for women's empowerment in Pakistan.

Participant: Safer Ullah Khan



### **Charter for Compassion (CFC)**

CFC teaches peace education in schools around Karachi, Pakistan.

Participant: Zareen Qureshi



### **Centre for International Peace and Stability**

The Centre for International Peace and Stability (CIPS) runs academic and research programmes, promoting Pakistan's contribution to peacekeeping around the world.

Participants: Musharaf Zahoor, Asma Nasar, Waseem Janjua

### **Centre for Dialogue and Action, FCC**

The Centre for Dialogue and Action, at Forman Christian College (a Chartered University), promotes peace through research, classes and activities that foster appreciation of ethnic, religious and gender divisions in Pakistan and the wider global context.

Participant: Dr Amineh Hoti



### **Centre for Social Justice**

The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) advocates for human rights, democratic development and social justice in Pakistan, particularly for marginalised groups.

Participant: Naumana Suleman



### **Community Appraisal and Motivation Program**

CAMP works with underprivileged communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) on peace and security, human rights, and development.

Participant: Naveed A Shinwari



### **CODE PAKISTAN**

CODE PAKISTAN works to build an inclusive and prosperous Pakistan through development and education initiatives.

Participants: Dilawar Khan, Aarish Ullah Khan



### **DAAI/AWAAZ**

AAWAZ works towards enhancing tolerance for diversity and strengthening the capacity of communities to prevent disputes peacefully, without resorting to violence.

Participant: Uzma Latif



### **International Islamic University, Islamabad**

The International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) is a multi-cultural hub of learning for the students of more than 40 countries with 9 faculties.

Participant: Ali Tariq



### **Initiative for Peace and Development (IPAD)**

IPAD focuses on marginalised communities to provide a platform to discuss peace and promote it through sport and community interaction in Pakistan.

Participant: Fatima Jafferri



### **Insan Foundation Trust**

Insan Foundation Trust (IFT) works with all parts of society to promote the ideas of peace, democracy and equality. IFT is currently running a programme called 'Act for Change' with about 4,000 Pakistani and Afghan refugees, in NWFP.

Participant: Kishwar Sultana



### **Just Peace Initiatives**

Justice Peace Initiatives (JPI) works to build a society based on peace and justice by harnessing the creative energies of the poor and disadvantaged.

Participant: Ali Gohar



### **Khadim UL Khalaq Foundation**

Khadim UI Khalaq Founadation (KKF) is a social welfare organisation focusing on youth, education and peace in Pakistan.

Participant: Farooq Afridi



### **Mashal-e-Rah/Journalist with Tajzyat**

Mashal-e-Rah is a program that aims to counter the social influence that often leads to uninformed decisions and unconscious engagement with religious, social and political cults.

Participant: Umar Qasmi

### **National Defence University**

The Department of Peace & Conflict Studies is part of the Faculty of Contemporary Studies at the National Defence University (NDU). Pakistan is one of the leading contributors to UN Peacekeeping Missions, so the department helps prepare soldiers for such duties.

Participants: Maria Saifuddin Effendi, Dr Khurram Iqbal



### **Nana Sahib Development Society (NSDS)**

Nana Sahib Development Society (NSDS) is an independent think-tank working to strengthen civil and political society based on principles of social justice and peace.

Participant: Mujeeb ur Rehman



### **Omar Asghar Khan Foundation**

Omar Asghar Khan Foundation (OAKDF) strives for a peaceful and just Pakistan. They are active members of the 'Pathways to Peace' network of civil society organisations working for peace.

Participant: Rashida Dohad



### **PAIMAN Alumni Trust**

PAIMAN is involved in a range of activities with women and young people in some of the areas worst affected by Pakistan's conflict.

Participant: Mossarat Qadeem





### **Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum**

The Pakistan Fisherfolk Forum (PFF) works for the advancement of social, economic, cultural and political rights of fisherfolk and peasants in Pakistan.

Participant: Jamil Junejo



### **Pakistan Peace Collective**

The Pakistan Peace Collective (PPC) is a project of the Government of Pakistan which has bolstered resilience against extremism and violence in Pakistan.

Participants: Muhammad Akmal Khan, Usman Zafar



### **Peace & Education Foundation**

The Peace & Education Foundation (PEF) works to prevent, mitigate and transform religious conflicts through education and non-violent means.

Participant: Rashad Bukhari



### **Peace Education Welfare Organization**

Peace Education Welfare Organization (PEWO) provides support to schools that have shown commitment to creating and maintaining a culture of peace in Pakistan. It has over 100 member schools.

Participant: Nadeem Ghazi



### **People, Development & Policy Initiatives**

People Development & Policy Initiative (PDPI) works to promote a just and progressive society, free of discrimination.

Participant: Shahid Ehsan



### **Quaid-e-Azam University**

The Quaid-e-Azam University is a public research university located in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Participant: Bashir Ahmed Tahir



### **Renaissance Foundation for Social Innovation**

Renaissance Foundation for Social Innovation (RESIP) works with young people in Pakistan to promote a peaceful, harmonious future.

Participant: M Ayub Ayubi



### **Sahil**

Sahil is an organisation that is working to develop a protective environment for children free from all forms of violence especially child sexual abuse.

Participant: Dr Manizeh Bano



### **Sustainable Peace and Development Organization**

Based in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO) is a network of more than 50 NGOs involved in awareness raising, research and lobbying on small arms and landmines.

Participants: Raza Shah Khan, Nasreen Samad



### **Strategic Vision Institute**

Strategic Vision Institute (SVI) aims to offer foresights on issues of national and international importance through professional expertise and independent research.

Participant: Prof Zaffar Cheema



### **Swat Youth Front**

Swat Youth Front (SYF) is a youth organisation working in the areas of peace, poverty reduction, women's empowerment and human rights.

Participant: Haris Badar



### **University of Management and Technology**

The University of Management and Technology (UMT) is a private university located in Johar Town, Lahore, Pakistan. It is government chartered and recognised by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

Participants: Fatima Sajjad, Muhammad Feyyaz



### **University of Peshawar**

The University of Peshawar, is a public research university located in Peshawar, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Participant: Dr Kashif Saeed Khan



### **Youth Engagement Services Network**

Youth Engagement Services (YES) Network Pakistan is a leader in the field of youth social entrepreneurship in Pakistan.

Participant: Ali Raza Khan



## **Individual experts**

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Lubna Javaid

Dr Syed M Ali Shah

Anam Zakaria

Imran Munir

Madiha Shafi

Zeenia Shaukat

Sarfraz Ahmed Rana

Mian Khuram Shahzad

Shahab Khalid

Zulfiqar Shah

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## About Peace Direct

Peace Direct works with local people to stop violence and build sustainable peace. We believe that local people should lead all peacebuilding efforts, and this report is the second in a series that will canvas local views on violent conflicts around the world in an effort to highlight local capacities for peace and local expertise.

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Photo: Gulalai Ismail of Aware Girls leads a local community training session on women's rights, gender equality and peace in Pakistan. Aware Girls run training sessions to train young men and women to turn away from violent extremism through peer-to-peer outreach and support.

