

Research Article

Role of Youth in Peacebuilding and Prevention of Violent Extremism in India: A Social Inclusion Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Activities that promote both good and negative aspects of peace are considered to be examples of peacebuilding. This entails engaging in activities that address the underlying causes of conflict, working towards the avoidance and moderation of all types of violence, and pursuing healing and reconciliation as goals. In most cases, younger people take part in and lead activities including conversation, socialisation, education and advocacy. In contrast, throughout the course of the last few years, the globe has seen fresh waves of violent extremism that have resulted in the deaths of a great number of innocent people. Extremist ideologies, regardless of whether they are founded on religious, ethnic or political principles, celebrate the superiority of one group over others and stand in opposition to the development of societies that are more accepting and inclusive. This presents contemporary societies with two distinct yet interrelated challenges: “the rise of violent extremism and its spread across national borders, and the management of increasingly diverse and multi-cultural societies.” Both of these challenges are complicated by the fact that they are interrelated. The fundamental driving reason for India’s participation in international assistance for development is the country’s desire to demonstrate its moral and ideological solidarity with other countries that are economically disadvantaged. This is the case since “India is the most populous democratic nation in the world. In the altered geopolitical and geo-economics context of a globalised world, the additional motivation became the economic factor of access to the market for Indian products and natural resources for its growing industrial sector.” This was the case because globalisation has altered both the geopolitical context and the geo-economics context. This came as a result of the globalisation of the world’s political system as well as its

economic system. People from all over the world are interested in India's strategy for providing assistance for development and peacebuilding in the 21st century. People are also interested in the ways in which India's strategy differs from that of the countries that are members of the "OECD's Development Assistance Committee". It provides an illustration of India's specific guiding principles, tactics and processes for its help in the areas of development and peacebuilding. This study draws the attention towards the inclusion of youth in development and peacebuilding. This study also tries to focus on challenges, issues and concerns in prevention of violent extremism in India.

Keywords: Youth, Peace, Violence, Extremism, India, Social inclusion, Leader

INTRODUCTION

The fact that India was a large beneficiary of development aid from industrialised nations and international organisations makes India a unique development assistance supplier. Despite its own difficulties, India put aside part of its limited resources to help other emerging nations that had been subjected to similar colonial exploitation and enslavement. Its development aid was driven by a sense of emotional and ideological solidarity with other poor nations. During the Cold War, it paid off handsomely since India was able to emerge as the leader of developing nations and use moral weight to influence world affairs. The guiding ideas and methodologies for its development aid are influenced by its lived experiences as a developing nation.

India continues to give development aid to other developing nations despite the changing geopolitical and geo-economics setting of the globalised globe. However, in the globalised economy, the economic desire to increase the market for Indian goods and natural resources for its burgeoning industrial sector provided a new motivator for providing development and peacebuilding help to developing nations.

When the industrialised nations embraced "peacebuilding to meet the issues of post-conflict states of intrastate conflicts in the post-Cold War period, India did not." It had suspicions about the peacebuilding project's intentions. As a result, India did not distinguish between its peacebuilding and development support. The amount of India's development and peacebuilding aid has expanded. As Russia achieved new international stature as a growing economy at the turn of the century, the modes and geographical reach of its support varied as well.

The international community has been drawn to India because of the distinctiveness of its development and peacebuilding concepts, techniques, and mechanisms. They are diametrically opposed to those in industrialised nations. The historical, economical,

and personal realities of India as a developing nation have all contributed to these inequalities.

Definition of Youth

The most significant problem for youth and peacebuilding programmes is that the word “youth” is debatable and difficult to define. Some prefer biological markers, such as defining youth as the time between puberty and parenting, whereas others prefer cultural markers, such as defining youth as a unique social status with defined duties, rituals and interactions (USAID/CMM, 2005). The United Nations (UN) describes youth as everyone between the ages of 15 and 24 years. In developing nations like India, where patriarchal norms predominate, women are expected to take on additional duties at a young age. Motherhood has a considerably greater impact on female youth’s social standing than fatherhood does on male youth’s life.

Understanding Conflict, Violence and Peacebuilding

A dispute in which the party’s concerned feel a danger to their needs, interests or worries is referred to as conflict. Conflict is an unavoidable feature of human interaction, according to the United States Institute for Peace’s (USIP) peace words lexicon. Conflict arises when people or groups have conflicting goals. Wars and elections are examples of violent and peaceful conflicts. Conflict may be useful when channelled constructively towards settlement mechanisms (USIP, 2011) Conflicts are inevitable in contemporary society because they represent the manifestation of opposing interests.

Violence, on the other hand, is the outcome of ineffective discourse in resolving a problem. Violence is defined as the use of psychological or physical force to threaten, injure, damage or abuse people or property. Violent conflict is a term used in international relations to describe a collision of political objectives between organised organisations marked by the use of force on a significant scale. Inequities incorporated into the social structure, such as income distribution inequalities, are referred to as structural violence (USIP, 2011).

Peacebuilding is used in a variety of conflict-torn countries across the globe. However, there is no universally accepted meaning for the phrase peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is a term that is often used, yet it may imply various things to different people in different contexts. Various authors and groups have differing views on what peacebuilding is and what instruments it entails. Peacebuilding, according to the UN publication *An Agenda for Peace*, encompasses a broad variety of initiatives related to capacity building, reconciliation and social change.

John Paul Lederach, a major academic in the field of peacebuilding, defines the moral imagination as the essence of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is linked to people's ability to imagine new and dynamic patterns of connections and involvement, as well as the bravery to see such visions realised in the world. Peacebuilding principally relies on human ingenuity to turn the generally unknown, entrenched patterns of peace into the norm in the goal of wide-ranging societal transformation. Peacebuilding involves government and civil society actors addressing the core causes of violence and protecting people before, during and after violent conflict. Peacebuilders settle problems by diplomacy, negotiation and mediation. Multidimensional, conflict-specific peacebuilding is effective. Every quarrel has options for peace. Peacebuilders assist belligerents avoid bloodshed. Peacebuilding aims to minimise violence.

India and UN in Peacebuilding

With a long history of UN peacekeeping extending back to the 1950s, India is fully committed to assisting the UN in maintaining international peace and security. India has sent over 2,41,500 personnel to UN operations, the most of any nation, and has participated in over 49 deployments. A total of 168 Indian peacekeepers have sacrificed the ultimate sacrifice while serving in UN missions. In addition, India has produced and continues to offer distinguished Force Commanders for UN Missions. With 6,430 people deployed in 09 of the 14 current UN Peacekeeping Missions, India is the fourth highest troop contributor, with 429 police officers, young people always. The excellent standards of performance continuously maintained by Indian soldiers and policemen deployed on UN missions in difficult conditions have earned them international acclaim.

Inclusion of Youth in Peacebuilding and Development

Confirming youth's active, organised and meaningful engagement in peace and security problems is a demographic and democratic necessity that helps to avert violent conflict. It is well known that social exclusion is a significant element in the recurrence of violent conflict. Young men and women's engagement in peacebuilding is mostly unexplored (United Networks of Young Peacebuilders, 2015: 2). The majority of youth are angry because of the injustice and lack of equal opportunity caused by their corrupt governments, trivial media and false policies, and if their anger is not properly controlled, it will lead to exclusion and atrocity, which is why militant groups are constantly targeting and recruiting angry and disappointed youth. Many scholars, politicians, the media and academia regard adolescents as perpetrators in conflict, however, there are many youngsters who have been victims of different forms of violence and are now working as peacebuilders to promote peace and peacebuilding.

Young people always intend to be contributors of all kind of changes, either that is social, political, economic or something else. The participation of youth tends to be more meaningful when they have an opportunity to participate from bottom to top-level in all sectors. The societies are profoundly affected by different types of violence. Due to the evolution of social media, the world has become like a small village and people can easily know all the information within the fraction of seconds, which enhance them to increase their needs and demands. Most of the times, youth have been used as an active agent during the violence and armed conflict and people who have involved in such kinds of activities need diverse help. Perpetrators of violent, conflict and war are the majority of youth because they are the people who are courageous and risk bearers.

Several studies supported that youth can play a vital role in peacebuilding and also focussed on some challenges young people face in peace processes. Mohammadi (2021) found that most of today's reformers and reformers come from all over the globe because of the pervasiveness of education, which has impacted every part of human existence. This century's biggest debate is about how to prevent people from becoming radicalised and violent. It was also discovered that certain extreme organisations are actively seeking new members among students. Anon (2021) examined the legal, political and policy framework for the role of youth in peace and security, especially in the north-eastern area of India, in terms of participation and engagement in peace processes and found that international legal and policy frameworks that support active youth, including young men and women, equitable engagement and involvement in post-conflict reconstruction in violent conflict-ridden and severely divided communities are overlooked in India's youth policies. Taufik (2020) revealed that peace practice continues to overlook the role of religious peacebuilding actors, particularly youth, as religious peacemakers. As a result, it is common for young people to be portrayed in religious conflict as either victims or perpetrators of violence.

UNFPA and UNV (2019) discovered that the younger generation longs to have a part in the nation's politics, economy and culture. There is a profound desire in their hearts for acknowledgment. However, the gap between what young people can do and what they have access to is expanding. Although there have been several efforts to change this, the degree of youth representation in government institutions at all levels is still alarmingly low. Young people are distrustful of the political, administrative and social leaders who have been in place for decades. Civil society organisations often fail to gain the confidence of young people. Young people need positive role models in their lives. Cromwell (2019) found the positive effect of peace education programmes on youth and found that peace education programmes that included multiple theories of change, focussed on follow-up initiatives and provided support structures for alumni

had a positive effect on peacebuilding. Programmes should be more open to the public in order to maximise their influence on alumni initiatives that were inspired by their own programme experiences. Hinestroza (2018) focussed on understanding peacebuilding's history, philosophy and current use. Moreover, it sought to discover how essential a youngster is in peacebuilding, as well as their importance and reach. Youth and peacebuilding, particularly in two Nepalese areas, have been the emphasis of the content and revealed the focus on Nepal's Saptari and Kathmandu districts. As a bonus, this research provides useful conversation points, results and suggestions.

United Nations (2016) revealed that most kids are not aggressive and do not engage in violence, despite the injustices, deprivation and abuse they may face every day, especially in conflict circumstances according to a growing body of data. Recent "adoption of Resolution 2250 by the Security Council" acknowledges the important role played by young people in maintaining international peace and security. Bennett et. al. (2012) revealed that the chance of returning to violence after a post-conflict context is quite high. One of the most important demographics to consider in such a circumstance is the young people. Throughout, 6.6 million young people have been displaced due to armed conflict around the globe (Abayomi, 2004). To live, these young people have been displaced from their villages; they are at risk of being raped; and they are subjected to violence. War and bloodshed have a particularly heavy toll on the next generation, according to popular belief. As a result, "these young people typically confront the additional challenges of inadequate education, health care, protection, economic options, leisure activities, friendships and family support" (Youth and Peacebuilding, USIP). If we do not involve the young constructively, conflicts and wars throughout the globe are inevitable. In the real world, however, there is general agreement that children must be safeguarded.

On the basis of the above discussion, it can be said that peace cannot be achieved unless we ensure the establishment of the democracy good governance, human rights and dignity as well as a sound economic system. The challenges and roles of the youth can be listed as follows.

Challenges of Youth in Peace Building

The difficulties that young people face in peace processes may be summed up as follows:

- Young individuals are sometimes overlooked owing to a "perceived lack of experience and qualifications. Their practical and real-world experience in combat zones and in their communities is not taken into account to the level that it should be. They seldom have access to a steady stream of funding that would allow them

to continue working on the ground without interruption. Although young people want more opportunities for capacity building, their exclusion from peace processes prevents us from taking advantage of their unique skills and capabilities, supporting their capacity development and shaping peace processes based on youth's lived experiences and grassroots insights." The difficulty of negotiating regulatory processes for youth organisations as well as misgivings about young people's ability to manage financial resources, combine to obstruct their access to funding. Young people, especially those from more marginalised communities, are prohibited from reaching out to and engaging with other young people due to a lack of financial resources. Furthermore, they are unable to form equal cooperation with other organisations as a result of this.

- Young people are still stigmatised as being disruptive, which is the root cause of the local reluctance in certain communities to accept them as agents of social transformation. This is especially prevalent in hierarchical cultures, in which the elderly has sway over decision-making and leadership roles, stifling the voices and contributions of younger generations and preventing them from rising to positions of power.
- In the face of pressing economic concerns, "inclusive peacebuilding and peace-making may not be seen" as a top local priority; moreover, young people who talk about peace may see local communities that reject outside interventions as too foreign or even too western.
- The broader conditions and situations that many young people live in make it difficult for them to take leadership roles or participate in peace initiatives. For some young people, the need of shifting their focus from the promotion of peace to the protection of their livelihoods is compelled by circumstances such as living in poverty and having restricted access to essential social and physical infrastructure.
- Young people are grossly under-represented in political institutions at all levels as well as in official peace processes, which are the sites where choices that affect their reality are made. Even in instances when young people are officially engaged in conflict resolution procedures, not all young people are given a voice. It is significantly more difficult for young people who come from economically disadvantaged, rural, minority or politically marginalised backgrounds to participate in the decision-making process during peace negotiations.
- Despite living in situations that are risky for them to do so, "young people seldom have access to protection from actors that may target them for their work and

beliefs or to psychological treatment to help them cope with and recover from traumas produced by conflict and violence. Despite the fact that young people are often unprotected in the face of threats” to their lives because of their views and profession.

Role of Youth in Peace Building

- To make a public opinion regarding the essence of peace and humanity.
- To create as well as lead peace movement against the racism.
- To work for democracy, human rights and gender justice.
- To established network among the youth organisations that are dedicated to peace and prosperity.
- To strength the fight against discrimination, poverty, gender injustices, malnutrition and hunger.
- To provide voluntary service to the people during human-made and natural disasters.
- To participate in policy making.
- To create within them a strong desire to serve the international community and a sense of responsibility towards the future of it.
- To create public awareness about the problem, that is, climate change, wider spread of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism and so on.
- To make a network of multi-cultural co-operation in economic, social and cultural areas and so on.

Media and Peacebuilding

If we see them as such, the instruments we employ in new media may be powerful peace-building tools. With the arrival and continued usage of new media, all of the actions that print or electronic media, as we have known it for a long time, engage in with respect to developing and sustaining peace and decorum in society have improved. In terms of disseminating awareness for peace-building tasks, the groups that do effort for peace in humanity convert modern media into a highly utilitarian entity. In general, the media is used to spread agendas, convey messages and communicate on behalf of both authorities and the general population. This is accomplished via the employment of mass media techniques, as well as new media. The use of media to entice people into a specific course of action, inspire them to do or not take up a task, and create a

global perspective of circumstances, events, communities and individuals has an established track record throughout the history. It has also been observed that the media has the potential to incite animosity within society's communities, as well as conflict and bloodshed. This holds true for new media tools as well. If this is the case, media and new media technologies may be highly useful in promoting and preserving peace in diverse parts of society. They may be used to raise awareness about conflict resolution procedures and can even serve as one by talking along such lines. It has the potential to be a powerful tool for mobilising people to promote peace. In terms of youth, new media may be effectively used by them to engage in peace-building activities.

Drivers and Pathways of Violent Extremism

Underlying causes of "violent extremism" are complex, dynamic and linked, and relate to radicalisation and extremism's structural environment. Extremism is caused by historical, political, economic, social and power politics reasons. Inequality fuels violent extremism. Not only unemployment or poverty incites violence and extremism, but also feelings of unfairness, human-rights abuses, social-political isolation, systemic corruption or continuous maltreatment of specific populations. When horizontal inequities converge for a group, radicalism and violence are more probable.

Failure to provide basic rights, services and security increases inequality and allows non-state organisations to dominate state sovereignty and territory. Inadequate institutions, law enforcement, and checks and balances may breed violent extremism. Weak nations attract radical groups. Rejecting a state's socio-economic-political system and increasing diversity are structural pressures. Media, literature, movies, journals and video games normalise violence, which promotes aggression.

Causes of Violent Extremism

According to Ferguson, Burgess, and Hollywood (2008), it is worth noting that religion is not mentioned as having a direct causal link with violence in this list. It has been hypothesised that religious ideology has a bigger role in bringing people together. Finally, concentrating on a limited number of criteria like "religious ideology or mental health" does not help us understand why certain individuals get engaged in violent extremism. There is no one road to violent extremism, according to several experts.

Focusing on how violence becomes legitimate in the perspective of the offender, as well as the political conditions and types of political narratives that are necessary for violence to be perceived as legitimate, may be more fruitful.

Measures Taken to Counter Violence Extremism

India has conducted counter-terrorism drills with its partners as part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, situated in Tashkent, would be a good framework for information exchange. In September of this year, India conducted counter-terrorism drills as part of the "Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation". In September, India held the second meeting of the High-Level Group of Eminent Experts to improve the anti-terrorism mechanism of the "South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)." In August 1988, the SAARC Regional Convention on Terrorism Suppression came into existence. India also maintains bilateral Joint Working Groups on counter-terrorism cooperation with a number of nations. On a bilateral basis, India and China have conducted joint counter-terror military exercises, the most recent of which took place in India in early December. Despite the existence of several of these channels, many nations' collaboration has fallen short of expectations.

India is keenly cognizant of the danger that CVE/terrorist presents to civilisation and the globe, and it continues to work towards a clear and agreed-upon definition of terrorism. The international community must increase its reaction to this disease in a non-geopolitical way.

Preventing Violent Extremism

Development practises plays a key role in developing the framework for combating violent extremism. The conceptual framework of the United Nations Development Programme presents 11 linked building pieces for a philosophy of change that explains how development may help avoid violent extremism. Some of the building pieces that will be leveraged to inform global, regional and national PVE strategies are as follows:

1. Promoting a rule-of-law and human-rights-based approach to PVE.
2. Improving the efficacy of anti-corruption initiatives.
3. Expanding civic space and improving citizen participation in decision-making at the national and local levels.
4. Giving vulnerable individuals realistic socioeconomic alternatives to violence.
5. Improving local governments' service delivery and security capacities.
6. Assisting dependable internal mediators in establishing dialogue with marginalised groups and the reintegration of former extremists.
7. Gender parity and women's empowerment are emphasised.
8. Including children and teenagers in the creation of social cohesion.

9. Collaborating with religious leaders and faith-based organisations to oppose violent extremists' exploitation of religion.
10. Using the media to promote human rights and tolerance.

Promoting human rights, diversity and a global civic culture in schools and universities. UNESCO's work in this area help to realise the global education agenda – Education 2030 – and, in particular, Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on Education. From Headquarters and its Field Offices, collaborative activities and intersectoral collaboration between the Education, Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Culture Sectors are being developed.

Education as a Strategy to Fight Violent Extremism

UNESCO aims to help nations implement education programmes that increase young people's resistance to violent extremist message and create a positive sense of self and belonging. This study is being done as part of a programme called Global Citizenship Education.

Alliances in the Media and Internet to Combat Violent Extremism

UNESCO is mobilising stakeholders, particularly youth, policymakers, researchers and media actors, to take effective actions, both online and offline, to prevent and respond to violent extremism and radicalisation on the Internet by leveraging the Internet's global reach and diverse network of partners. This involves supporting in the establishment of alternative discourses to extremist material online, countering online hate speech and increasing stakeholders' ability to generate creative solutions, all while preserving freedom of expression, privacy and other basic freedoms.

Youth Involvement and Empowerment

The mission of the UNESCO Youth team is to foster youth empowerment and democratic involvement by working to establish conditions that are conducive to these goals. These conditions will ensure that young women and men have the chance to participate as active global citizens. Young women and men are at the centre of this multi-sectoral response to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. This response puts young people at the centre of efforts to tackle the basic causes of violent extremism. Education, the Social and Human Sciences, Communication and Information and Culture are all interconnected in order to ensure that young people receive the all-encompassing training, skills and support they require to participate as active citizens and to take the lead in the global movement for a more peaceful world.

Celebrating Cultural Variety

Through the #Unite4Heritage campaign and Educational Programs on Heritage and Creativity, UNESCO is including youngsters in the conservation of all kinds of heritage and the promotion of cultural diversity in order to promote fairer, inclusive and peaceful communities. These programmes make it easier for young people to become involved in the preservation, promotion and transfer of all types of heritage, as well as their active involvement in cultural life.

CONCLUSION

We can seldom see the movement of the world which had successes without help and participation of youth. Most of the conflicts give both the negative and positive impacts on the society. Conflict helps to bring structural and cultural changes in the society. Youth can play a very important role for peacebuilding and development all over the world. Peacebuilding is not possible without the consensus of youth. They can play a very important role in post-conflict reconstruction. The role of youth in grass-root level is very indispensable. They can convince the people of the particular area for sustainable peace operating various activities better than others. Most of the time international and national organisation prefer youth for peacebuilding and other activities at the ground level. The energy of youth can be used for negative to positive and destructive to constructive and vice-versa. Young people take shape according to the way they live in, the environment they grew up, and the system we taught them. In nutshell, it can be said that preventing extreme violence and peacebuilding is a collective effort of education, media, administration and people. India is leading the world with its distinguished way of helping others in maintaining the peace and preventing extreme violence.

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