Formulating Policy Frameworks for Youth Peace and Social Justice under the Messenger of Peace Programme in Bangladesh

Submitted By

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Introduction

Bangladesh, being a country with a young population, is confronting interrelated challenges of peace building, social justice, and sustainable development. With political polarization, exposure to climate, and socio-economic disparity sharpening society cleavages, young people are certain to be excluded from mainstream decision-making spaces. Under such conditions, youth peace building initiatives hold catalytic opportunities for transformation. This Social Change Initiative (SCI), "Developing Policy Frameworks for Youth Peace and Social Justice under the Messenger of Peace Programme in Bangladesh," seeks to institutionalize peace actions initiated by youth through policy-making and outreach to communities.

With the exposure I have had as a Rotary Peace Fellow, I learned theoretically and practically diplomacy, sustainable development, and conflict resolution within the context of the MENA region. Transferring these lessons to my national context, the SCI aims to bridge informal grassroots youth work and formal policy influencing and establish a replicable model for other nations in South Asia with an equivalent socio-political context.

Country Context: Youth, Peace, and Policy in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is youthful in terms of population, with over 45% of its population under the age of 25 years (UNDP, 2021). Youth are blessed with such immense potential, but politicking,

limited civic space, and high unemployment plague them (World Bank, 2020). Despite the nation having national plans such as the National Youth Policy 2017 to appreciate the merit of youth contribution, pragmatic avenues for youth participation towards peace and social justice remain minimal.

Moreover, issues like gender violence, ethnic clashes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and religious intolerance exemplify the need for peace building inclusivity (International Crisis Group, 2019). They are echoing some of the worries symbolized in MENA countries, whose splintered communities have not seen enduring peace. Omitting young people in policy involvement has the potential to result in Bangladesh missing out on a highly valuable sector in the nation's improvement process.

Theoretical Framework

Social Change Initiative (SCI) depends on a highly expansive development and peacebuilding theory. It finds its foundation in the conflict transformation model of John Paul Lederach, whereby the imperative to build sustainable, people-oriented relationships as the bases of lasting peace is the core (Lederach, 1997). As an addition to this bottom-up approach, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) give a wider global benchmark that calls for inclusive government, true access to justice, and inter-sector coordination as the keystones of lasting societies (UN, 2015).

Also, SCI's approach tightly reflects the goals of UN Security Council Resolution 2250 regarding Peace, Youth and Security, which shifts young individuals from being passive recipients to involve creators of peace processes (United Nations, 2015). By focusing its policy guide on real community involvement, SCI aims to implement these global mandates— connecting macro-level policy with grassroots realities. In doing so, it promotes youth systemic participation in decision-making to the point that policy interventions are context-sensitive and able to drive sustainable, transformative change.

Lessons from the MENA Region

The MENA has shown both the promise and risks of youth-led peace work. From Lebanon's civil society reconciliation to Tunisia's National Dialogue Quartet, young individuals have driven peace and justice innovation (Barakat & Milton, 2015). But MENA also knows authoritarianism, sectarian violence, and limited civic space—constraints not fully novel to the Bangladeshi experience.

Through rotary peace fellowship studies and courses, I examined how dialogue, hybrid governance arrangements, and inclusive MENA diplomacy can be used to apply localized peace building. These experiences provide useful lessons on how to develop inclusive, culturally responsive, and participatory policy processes in Bangladesh.

Practical Skills Acquired and Uses

The Rotary Peace Fellowship benefited me greatly in obtaining a multilateral and sustainable skill set that will be of immense significance in effective project implementation of this Social Change Initiative (SCI). These skills are not only practical but also transcend many fields of study, including conflict analysis, facilitation, project management, diplomacy, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The real-world application of the skills will therefore result in the success of the project as well as bring about sustainability.

Conflict Analysis Tools:

From the Fellowship, I gained overall training in conflict analysis, such as tools for diagnosing and mapping tensions and power relations, and more specifically those engaging youth in conflict-affected areas. The tools will be used to identify the root causes of conflict in the MENA and Bangladeshi contexts so interventions can be context-specific and strategically targeted. The analysis will be aimed at ensuring that accurate profiles of all the key actors and roles are created to enhance the effectiveness of peace-building interventions.

Facilitation Skills:

Most important learning area for me in the Peace Fellowship will be facilitation and this will form a fundamental element of this SCI. Facilitating through participatory dialogue tools will enable me to involve diverse constituencies—policy makers, civil society groups, young people, local leadership, and people living in community—their assessment of conflict, recommendations for solving issues, and concerted efforts for building peace together. Cooperation, via collaboration, will ensure collaborative stewardship of and understanding on processes of peace together with a climate of confidence.

Diplomacy and Advocacy Training:

The advocacy and diplomacy acquired through the Fellowship will be critical in collaborating with civil society actors, international agencies, and local governments. I will leverage these skills to build stakeholder relationships, promote youth-led peace initiatives, and access required resources and policy backing. In addition, the acquired skills will be useful for working in complex political situations, making the voices of young people heard, and ensuring the peace-building is mapped to broader political and social agendas.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):

M&E systems learned through the Fellowship will be at the core of assessing the efficacy of the SCI. I will apply M&E practices in tracking the progress of the initiative, measuring the impact of interventions, and making any changes in methodology. These tools will keep the project on course and ensure results are documented in a systemic way, allowing open accountability and ongoing improvement.

By utilizing these competencies, the SCI will be well-positioned to thrive, successfully addressing youth-related tensions and building peace, and enabling the wider goal of social justice and sustainable development in the MENA and Bangladeshi environments.

Project Description: Messenger of Peace & the SCI

The Messenger of Peace (MoP) programme of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) empowers young people to create a positive change in their communities. I, being the National Coordinator of MoP in Bangladesh, have witnessed how scout programmes in the area incorporate social cohesion, leadership, and service.

This SCI will apply the MoP platform to implement a policy-influenced project that includes: (1) regional workshops involving Scouts and young people from the community, (2) policymaker dialogue forums, (3) creation of a Youth Peace and Social Justice Framework, and (4) lobbying for acceptance by the respective ministries and NGOs. The project will run for nine months with outputs of policy recommendations, reports on workshops, and youth advocacy campaigns.

Implementation Plan

The project will be rolled out from June 2025 to February 2026 as follows:

Time	Subject
June–July 2025	Stakeholder mapping, recruitment of youth leaders, curriculum development
August–October 2025	Regional workshops, dialogue sessions, data gathering
November 2025	Drafting the policy framework
December-January 2026	Policy advocacy, validation workshops
February 2026	Final report, presentation, evaluation, and dissemination

Organizations involved as partners are the Bangladesh Scouts, local rotary clubs and academic institutes. Mitigation of risk includes flexibility in delivery modes (e.g., hybrid sessions), robust local partnerships, and contingency budgeting.

Expected Outcomes and Impact

The SCI envisages the following outcomes:

• Increased youth knowledge and capacity on peace and justice issues

• A policy document crafted through collaborative efforts between youth and community stakeholders

• Strengthened networks among youth, civil society, and policymakers

• Greater institutional recognition of youth as peace builders

The project will serve as a replicable model for youth-led policy advocacy in South Asia.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

The M&E system for this SCI will employ a multi-dimensional approach to measure the effectiveness and influence of the program. Pre- and post-surveys will be one of the major actions to assess changes in participants' attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Regular feedback forms will be employed to gather data from participants and stakeholders to facilitate continuous adaptation and improvement of the program. In addition, reflection groups will also be arranged to allow more discussion on lessons learned and create collective experience among participants.

Indicators of progress will track several aspects of success, including:

Levels of Participation: Measuring the extent of engagement and inclusivity of the project.

Knowledge Acquired: Tracking the extent of learning, both on peace-building ideas and local governance dynamics.

Stakeholder Input: Monitoring the input of local stakeholders, such as community leaders, NGOs, and government institutions.

Policy Impact: Evaluating whatever change in policy or procedure has resulted from the effect of the findings of the initiative.

Upon conclusion of the initiative, a terminal assessment report will be drafted. The report will draw together lessons learned, reaffirm achievements, and outline challenges encountered in

putting the project into preparation. The report will provide valuable recommendations to be utilized on upcoming projects and thus create a knowledge capital of peace-building in the area that remains continual.

Conclusion:

This Social Change Initiative is the fruition of my own personal commitment to peace and justice values and complemented by technical expertise and pedagogical experience acquired through the Rotary Peace Fellowship. In transferring peace-building models and approaches tested in the MENA region into the Bangladeshi setting, this project is proof of the youth-universality of peace-building processes. The initiative reaffirms that youth can be a powerful catalyst for good in bringing about change, especially among post-conflict communities.

In the future, I am dedicated to ensuring that this project is sustainable beyond the fellowship duration. I will strive to continue fostering institutional changes that recognize youth not only as the recipients of peace-building programs but as the central designers of social justice and peace. My ongoing dedication is to ensure the lessons learned are institutionalized and youth are consistently involved in peace initiative designing, implementing, and monitoring.

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