

THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTER, BARGAD

has long and unique standing among civil society organizations in Pakistan. It has been working exclusively on youth development since 1997 to promote peace, justice and co-operation among youth of Pakistan. Founded by a group of young students, BARGAD has today become a premier youth development organization. Its "Peace and Youth Cooperation Programme" has been operative in 54 universities around the country.

The working approach of BARGAD is to combine rights based training with personal development of youth. In retrospect, BARGAD can take pride to the fact that it has been a rare youth operator in the civil society, amply bringing youth issues to the forefront focus and a valuable agenda for both public and social sectors of the country.

Recently BARGAD in collaboration with UNFPA helped Government of the Punjab to formulate the Punjab Youth Policy. It is the first-ever youth policy by any province in Pakistan. The organization is now providing technical assistance to other provinces for similar policies.

THE PROJECT PARTNER, United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is an independent, non-partisan conflict management center created by US Congress to prevent and mitigate international conflicts through non-violent means.



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Extremism is bred by making youth useless,
idle, and frustrated: Engage them

TACKLING YOUTH EXTREMISM IN PAKISTAN

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To Promote Peace, Justice & Cooperation
among Youth in Pakistan

A Project by:

Bargad-Organization for Youth Development

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Today, Pakistan faces various forms of extremism both as a state and society. The worst takes shape into terrorism; bomb blasts, murders, target killings, kidnapping and other crimes. The core of these extremist actions is driven by intolerant thought process, violent narratives and attitude of the very society which has provided enabling environment for the terrorism to breed rapidly.

Traditionally it is a recent phenomenon of our society that we are witnessing extremists in various forms. Masses of the Pakistani regions were used to live together as communities with religio-ethnic differences. The recent shift of destruction can be particularly traced back to last three decades. The social, political and economic investments by undemocratic governments can be held responsible to bring the negative change. Here we need to examine the issue in two perspectives; one where the roots of the society are coming from and second how it has been manipulated in a certain framework by the state actors.

Successive governments under undemocratic regimes have provided structural incentives to encourage extremism and intolerance in Pakistan i.e. curriculum, use of public media, politicization of religion and recruitment for Jehadi organizations, etc. A whole lot of generation has now grown which speaks only the jargon of sectarian and ethnic divides and is forgetful of its citizenship rights and obligations and the rule of law as a negotiating site within a fully functional state. This has enormously pressurized the very foundations of the state and its writ to equally treat all citizens irrespective of their religion, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.

The state intervention for sponsoring an extremist mindset into the social fabric is particularly affecting its youth – which has outnumbered all other groups with a growing youth bulge in the country. Youth under 29 years of age are estimated at 65.1 percent of the total Pakistani population, while in the active age group of youth between the age of 15-29 years is 30.4%. This population explosion is quickly beating already weak public budgets on social sector development. This has failed us to accommodate youth in education, labour force and employment and civic participation. There is a mass of youth economically vulnerable, out of schools, idle and socially frustrated without having much public platforms to express themselves. All this has inculcated intolerance, hatred, ignorance and a sense of injustice and uselessness in the youth and have made them prone to extremist ideologies.

In this backdrop Bargad – organization of youth development – has planned to initiate a project to re-invoke the spirit of personal vitality among youth and tackle youth extremism in Pakistan.

PROJECT GOAL

- To tackle youth extremism in Pakistan by youth training and media design and promotion of pro-peace youth policies to curb political support to extremism and intolerance.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Comprehensive training of trainers for 50 core faculty and youth activists from at least 20 universities in themes, tools and techniques of tolerance and anti-youth extremism modules will be developed, consolidated, and delivered.
- To establish communication, networking and information links against youth extremism in 20 universities and mainstream media from youth perspectives.
- To link pro-peace work with adaption of pro-peace youth policies and prepare foundations for a national advocacy hub against youth extremism and intolerance in Pakistan.

KEY PROJECT ACTIVITIES

BARGAD will start its projects by holding a project planning meeting, development of a leaflet and conducting a baseline survey. The other objective-wise activities would include:

Training and Capacity Building

- Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop with young faculty members from 20 universities of Pakistan
- TOT workshop with young activists from 20 universities of Pakistan

Media and Communication

- Twelve radio programs
- Six media forums
- Youth Voices: A publication of innovative ideas on youth and extremism

Advocacy and Networking

- Final report
- Establishment of a Youth advocacy forum

