



Project Proposal Summary

Rotarian Peace Projects Incubator's Thematic Area	Cultural Resources for Peace
Rotary Focus Area	Peace and Conflict Prevention
Contact: Contact person within your group (Name and email)	Lablu Barua, lablubarua@yahoo.com Natalia Sineaeva, nsineaeva@gmail.com
Project Title: Provide a full title (and acronym if any)	<i>The Neighbours. Enhancing dialogue and peacebuilding among young people in Bangladesh</i>
Project Partners and Participating Organisations: List all your project partner organisations, including participating Rotary clubs and districts if any	Rotary Club of Chittagong Peace, Dharmarajika High School Dhaka, Dhaka University and 'NEVER AGAIN' Association Team members: Lablu Barua, Dharmarajika High School, IEP Ambassador; Ranjan Barua, Rotary Club of Chittagong Peace; prof. Biman Chandra Barua, professor at Dhaka University; Natalia Sineaeva, Rotary Peace Fellow (Poland); Dr Matthew Johnsen, Rotary Peace Fellow (USA)
Geographical Scope	Dhaka, Chittagong, Ramu in Cox's Bazaar in Chittagong division
Summary: Please provide a concise summary with a maximum of 500 words outlining the project and explaining the community needs your project will address and how these needs were identified. Ensure that you include what your project aims to achieve (objective) and how (method/procedure). What will be the main outcomes? Explain in a few sentences how you will incorporate the objective of sustainability into your project.	<i>NOTE: The project focuses on young people, but the message of intergenerational solidarity will be included into it to deal with one of the COVID-19 related challenges: discrimination of older persons.</i> The project focuses on enhancing the culture of conflict prevention, peace, and dialogue in violence-prone areas in Bangladesh through activating potential and empowering young people with skills to overcome challenges and for peacebuilding in their own communities. The project suggests a highly interactive community engagement approach such as researching and bringing histories of families and neighbourhoods into it through storytelling, story writing, interviewing, objects, photographs, and arts. The participants will build up their cultural awareness by exploring the

histories of co-existence, cooperation, solidarity, resilience, shared practices, and rituals, as well as conflict in their diverse local communities, and linking it to contemporary challenges and possible solutions.

What are the challenges?

Bangladesh is diverse: it is predominantly Sunni Muslim (90%), but with communities of Shia Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, and people of other faiths, as well as various indigenous groups. Bangladesh remains one of the least peaceful countries, ranking 97/163 on the Global Peace Index. There is a growing trend of interethnic and interreligious tensions, including incidents of communal violence and violent mob attacks against minorities. The escalation in violence is linked to growing radicalisation and activity of extremist groups. Minorities and indigenous groups are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence, too. Direct violence often comes from hate speech in social media, as the country is experiencing a rapid growth in internet use. The situation has been further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which contributed to the spread of conspiracy theories and hate speech, particularly online, directed against various groups, among others. Bangladesh has been one of the countries most hit by the pandemic in South Asia. Conspiracy theories and hate speech are a threat to public health and harmonious relations, escalating tensions in various communities.

Moreover, there is a lack of sufficient training/education in the field of peace and interfaith/intercultural dialogue among young people in Bangladesh. Many young people are interested in learning about peacebuilding and interfaith/intercultural dialogue initiatives to be utilised in Bangladesh, especially in the regions threatened by communal strife and conflict. There was not enough work done to identify and counter hate speech related to the pandemic and beyond. There is an urgent community need for addressing existing challenges in the context of the pandemic crisis and growing polarisation. This project will focus on developing and strengthening the capacity of young people to deal with those challenges. The community itself will be a source of learning and action.

The community needs assessment for the project has been supported by published sources (reports by such organisations as Minority Rights Group International), interviews, and a short survey among young Bangladeshis conducted by the project partners.

The proposed project aims to:

design a training toolkit focused on peacebuilding, conflict prevention/resolution, and intercultural dialogue (training trainers); conduct training, seminars, and lectures specifically oriented to

Bangladeshi young people, and create a network of peacebuilders across the country. Its goal is to strengthen the capacity of young people in peacebuilding and conflict prevention, develop skills for resilience, empathy and solidarity, empower co-existence and cooperation among local communities through promoting intercultural/interfaith diversity and peacebuilding in the areas affected by violence with a large percentage of minorities, initially in Chittagong, Cox's Bazaar's Ramu, and Dhaka as the center, with a large number of students arriving from various parts of the country and of different backgrounds, with expansion to other divisions/cities in other parts of the country, and inclusion of other groups in the future. Young people will be trained to address challenges related to the pandemic and beyond.

In addition, it aims to strengthen the capacity of young people to deal with media content, and build up critical thinking in how to deal with social media and address such challenges as hate speech as an important part of the training.

Pedagogical approach will be supported by cultural resources

The project's educational approach and training will include and be supported by various cultural resources and new technology to engage and facilitate dialogue and build peacebuilding knowledge and skills among young people.

- For example, young Bangladeshis of diverse backgrounds (e.g. Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian) will develop their peacebuilding and other skills by curating an (digital) exhibition by direct engagement of researching and bringing the history of their families and neighbourhoods into it through storytelling, story writing, interviewing, objects, and photographs. They will build up their cultural awareness by exploring the histories of co-existence, cooperation, solidarity, resilience, shared practices, and rituals, as well as conflict in their diverse local communities, and linking it to contemporary challenges and possible solutions.
- Visiting and learning from diverse cultural/religious sites as well as sites and spaces of memory will contribute to building cultural awareness, too.
- Popular culture, including sport and music, will be used as a tool to unite and build connections and inclusivity, to motivate and empower for peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities. Creative arts and drama (role play) will be utilised to explore peace and conflict prevention issues and find solutions. This highly interactive community engagement approach will also help them to become active and responsible citizens, develop their creativity, critical thinking, research and analytical skills, as well as certain professional skills in certain types of culture, so they can contribute to peacebuilding in the country.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The participants will be invited to translate their knowledge and skills into an action, as well as act as multipliers and work with their own communities. They will develop their capacity – through designing their own actions/small projects to be implemented in their own communities. <p>Project’s sustainability will be achieved by: 1. creating a training toolkit, which will also be posted online, and used by other institutions in the future, including an exhibition and other products 2. developing skills and creating a network of young peacebuilders, who will act as multipliers and work on the subject in the future 3. cooperating with organisations which will provide future support to the project, and those resources will be utilised through the project implementation at Dharmarajika High School, Dhaka University, and schools in Chittagong and Ramu, as well as international partners.</p> <p>Short-term outcomes include elaborating a training toolkit in partnership with local and international experts. The project will result in the publication of toolkit, social media materials, and the creation of a digital educational exhibition/platform by young people themselves.</p> <p>Intermediate outcomes include enhanced knowledge and awareness of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, intercultural/interfaith dialogue between neighbours of diverse backgrounds, and other new developed skills among young people in the regions potentially threatened by conflict and violence and inhabited by minorities. Its outcome will be enhanced empathy and humanisation of experiences, as well as strengthened capacity to deal with social media content among young people.</p> <p>Long-term outcomes include a more peaceful, tolerant, open-minded, and historically conscious society, enhancing the culture of conflict prevention, peace, and human rights.</p>
<p>Beneficiaries: Who are the beneficiaries? Please include the estimated number of direct beneficiaries</p>	<p>At least 150 female and male young people of diverse cultural, religious and social backgrounds including members of minority/indigenous groups including those with disabilities will participate in the training as direct beneficiaries with potential to reach a broader audience in their communities and create the network of peacebuilders for Bangladesh.</p> <p>Young people and students will be recruited with participation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dharmarajika High School ● Dhaka University ● Schools at Chittagong and Ramu ● Rotaractors <p>Social media materials, a digital exhibition as well as the process of its creating will reach many more young people. The project will be expanded to other parts of Bangladesh in the future.</p>