Understanding the Dynamics of Conflict and Peacebuilding in Pakistan

A Perception Study

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Contents

Introduction

Search for Common Ground Pakistan (SFCG) is a non-profit peacebuilding organization, working to transform the way communities and societies deal with disagreement and dispute – away from adversarial approaches and towards cooperative problem solving.

SFCG's current initiatives in Pakistan include:

- Strengthening the leadership and legislative skills of women parliamentarians (at the provincial level) and aspiring women counselors (at the district level) across Pakistan to bolster their engagement in decision-making processes for effective governance;
- Strengthening the capacity of Pakistani media, youth and local leaders across Pakistan in promoting tolerance, inclusiveness and understanding among the country's diverse regional, ethnic and socio-economic groups;
- Enhancing youth engagement with policymakers in KPK and FATA on local issues through the development of collaborative and problem-solving strategies.

This report contains the abridged baseline studies for two projects currently being implemented by SFCG in partnership with other Pakistani organizations. The study titled 'Perception among Youth and Community Leaders about Conflict' was conducted for SFCG's project 'Promotion of Dialogue for Peacebuilding through Media and Youth Mobilization in Pakistan', which is supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Since 2011, SFCG has been implementing this project in partnership with Intermedia Pakistan, Uks Resource Center, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan Press Foundation and Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation. The project covers 25 districts across Pakistan's four provinces (including the Northern Areas and Azad Jammu & Kashmir) with the aim to strengthen Pakistan's fragile context by shifting attitudes and behaviors of the Pakistani population away from adversarial, intolerant approaches towards greater tolerance, inclusiveness and understanding among the country's various regional, ethnic and socio-ethnic groups. The project engages youth and local leaders, as well as television, radio and print journalists, and is designed to increase their capacity to play an active role in creating peace and promoting tolerance and co-existence. It additionally provides the beneficiaries with platforms to apply their new skills in conflict analysis, mediation, dialogue and leadership. More information about the project can be found at: http://www.pakistanpeaceinitiative.net.pk/.

The study titled 'Perception of Youth and Policymakers about Peacebuilding Methods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and FATA', was conducted for SFCG's project 'Promoting Peace in KPK and FATA – Connecting Youth Non-State Actors (NSAs) and Policymakers through Mediation and Dialogue', which is supported by the European Union. Since 2012, SFCG has been implementing this project in partnership with PAIMAN Alumni Trust. The project covers 25 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas with the aim of contributing towards peace and reconciliation in Pakistan by promoting mediation and dialogue in the target region. The project is building the capacity of youth and policymakers from KPK and FATA in mediation and dialogue, and provides platforms for the youth to interact, network and build sustainable relationships with local policymakers. Additionally, the project activities provide youth opportunities to play a leadership role in their districts, engage collaboratively with elders and local influentials, and play a role in decision making processes. More information about the project can be found at: http://peacepromoters.net.pk/.

Acronyms

CL	Community Leaders
Danida	Danish International Development Agency
EU	European Union
F.R.	Frontier Region
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
F	Female
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GB	Gilgit-Baltistan
GoP	Government of Pakistan
KI	Key Informant
KPK	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
M	Male
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PM	Policymakers
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
Y	Youth

Commissioned by Search For Common Ground Pakistan (SFCG), the research studies abridged in this publication have been conducted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Islamabad, as part of SFCG's ongoing peacebuilding programs in Pakistan. The objective of these studies was to gain a comprehensive understanding of how people and affected communities themselves perceive conflict: its nature, underlying reasons, and its impact on their lives. The reports have also tried to highlight how the Pakistani public, in its own perceptions, sees a contrast between the existing and potential roles of various stakeholders in the struggle for peace, and how more effective strategies may exist.

The study on 'Perception of Youth and Policymakers about Peacebuilding Methods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and FATA' was conducted in October 2012 as part of SFCG's project "Promoting Peace in KPK & FATA: Connecting Youth and Policymakers through Mediation and Dialogue", which is supported by the European Union. Whereas, the study 'Perception among Youth and Community Leaders about Conflict' was conducted between August-October 2012, as part of SFCG's national project "Pakistan Peace Initiative: Promotion of Dialogue for Peacebuilding through Media and Youth Mobilization in Pakistan", which is supported by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The latter study was conducted nationwide and its sample included respondents from a select district of each of the five constituent provinces i.e.: Punjab, Sindh, KPK, Baluchistan and Gilgit Baltistan (GB).

Both these studies have taken place inside a historical context. Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has faced multiple challenges due to conflicting interpretations of: political ideology, India-centric nationalism, and influence of religious doctrines. These have been compounded by additional burdens of feudal and tribal politics and pressures of separatist aspirations in various parts of the country. Difficult in themselves, these pre-existing challenges have been further inflamed by various national and international factors, turning them into perpetual conflicts. The first Afghan war and the consequent influx of refugees into Baluchistan and KPK set the stage for the current political and societal instability. Furthermore, post-2001 actions by the U.S. in Afghanistan, supported by the Pakistani government, both deepened and broadened the chasm and conflict in Pakistani society.

In addition, Pakistan has been hit by two major natural disasters in the last decade, both of which have created further economic and social vulnerability for Pakistani populations. The October 2005 earthquake and the 2010-2011 floods caused widespread devastation in the country, which left hundreds of thousands of people dead, injured and homeless. These disasters have had significant human and economic losses. The floods inflicted losses worth $4 billion on infrastructure alone, with estimates of total economic impact of $43 billion for the country[1]. Successive governments have failed to effectively address these challenges and related conflicts. This failure, alongside pre-existing and widespread poor governance, has resulted in social, economic and legal injustices, which have further deepened the sense of deprivation and discontent in society.

The two studies presented herein examine how the Pakistani public itself perceives issues of conflict and peace in this overall context. The first study focuses exclusively on the KPK and FATA region; its survey collects impressions across thirteen districts of the historically troubled province bordering Afghanistan, as well as FR Kohat and Khyber Agency. The study begins with a sharp, intense focus on the question of "conflict": its nature, reasons and impact, and then assembles the perceptions of youth and policymakers and how they see each other's existing and potential role in conflict mediation. In contrast, the second study offers a

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[1] Preliminary Damage Estimates for Pakistani Flood Events, 2010". Ball State University Center for Business and Economic Research. August 2010.

nationwide lens from the edge of the Arabian Sea to the mountains of the Hindukush. It selects a district in each of the four provinces of Pakistan, as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and thus offers interesting commonalities and a few distinct differences. Though essentially related to conflict, in contrast, this study begins by looking upon wider issues of economic & social conditions, peace & prosperity and the roles of multiple stakeholders in the creation and resolution of conflict.

Despite these methodological distinctions, both studies come close in their final assessments. Both studies conclude that conflicts in essence are differences of opinions and a lack of tolerance, an inability to live with the "other point of view", with varying presence of violence in some districts. The reasons for conflict in Pakistan as highlighted by the respondents are: poverty, lack of economic opportunities, weak governance and corruption in the service delivery departments, as well as the overall law and order situation.

The major impacts of conflict, as perceived by the respondents, include: economic deprivation, lack of social and economic development and the projection of a bad image of Pakistan. While it was felt that youth in the country is one of the main victims of conflict, it was also believed that the youth were most likely to be swayed towards violence as a means to solving issues and generally were not being utilized for peacebuilding efforts in the right ways. The prime role of youth was recognized by respondents and it was felt that their ample energy, initiative and ability should be directed into: spreading awareness about peacebuilding, engaging in public discourse, facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties and contributing to socio-economic development.

Respondents surveyed from both studies were highly critical of the current role played by policymakers and perceived they had not been up to the mark. Nevertheless, respondents were convinced that policymakers and community leaders remain potentially the most influential stakeholders that could make parties sit down, talk and resolve issues. Community leaders were also believed to have a potential in counseling the youth and guiding them to play a bigger role in peacebuilding initiatives.

The role of the media in peacebuilding was also fully supported by respondents in both studies. Although the KPK and FATA study had limited observations regarding the actual ways media should be used, the all-Pakistan study had an extensive discussion over the role of media as a stakeholder and the best medium and methods to be used in various districts of Pakistan to spread awareness. Respondents of this second study felt that the media should depict youth as role models, show dramas that promote moral values as well as play an umpire role between opposing parties by providing a platform for discussion.

There were also some interesting differences in observations between the two studies. While both picked up on the Afghan war and the influx of Afghan refugees as one external reason for the conflict, respondents in the all-Pakistan study also point to conflict arising from U.S. policies in the region. This was particularly highlighted by respondents from Lahore and Karachi. In terms of impact of conflict on people, the youth has been highlighted as a victim in both studies; although the KPK and FATA study respondents also emphasize impact on women and children. The all-Pakistan study points out that the most affected were the poor, youth, men, women and children, in that order.

Overall, both studies add value to the existing sphere of knowledge on conflict in this region by helping us arrive at a clearer picture of how conflict is actually perceived at the grass-roots. These studies clearly suggest that other in-depth studies are needed that - in addition to the national issues – can also highlight specific local/district level issues and solutions. The aggregate views emerging from these studies support the case for a multi-dimensional and inclusive approach to peacebuilding that may include: sustainable development, improving civil and political rights, and creating and leveraging effective political leadership that has the necessary ability and will to resolve conflicts.

This effective leadership may in turn need: a strong grassroots democratic culture; accountability of position holders; transparency in decision making; representation of marginalized groups; and participation by youth and media.

Overview

This baseline study provides an in-depth analysis of people's perception about the role of youth and policymakers in peacebuilding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The report is based on the primary data collected from 13 districts of KPK, as well as Frontier Region Kohat and Khyber Agency. Data was collected using a number of tools including: structured surveys, open-ended Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant (KI) interviews[2]. Within the quantitative instruments, qualitative questions were also incorporated to allow respondents to elaborate on their responses. The respondents included a sample of policymakers, youth and community members in selected union councils.

The survey findings from the respondents illustrate perceptions about the nature of conflict, the actors involved, the underlying reasons of conflict and how conflict impacts the respective districts. It also examines perceptions about the strategies or initiatives undertaken by locals to resolve conflicts or build peace, such as mediation and dialogue, as well as perceptions on their suitability and efficacy. Perceptions about the existing and potential roles of stakeholders in peacebuilding are also assessed. The stakeholders discussed include the government, media and, most importantly, youth and policymakers.

Overall assessment suggests that conflict is perceived to be essentially a different of opinion, but it extends to the presence of violence and intolerance. The reasons for conflict in Pakistan were perceived to be quite diverse and included: political, economic, social, legal, institutional as well as external factors. The Afghan war was perceived as a major factor in the deterioration of the region. Internally, poverty and inequality, poor governance, weak law and order, corruption and religious fundamentalism were perceived to be the most critical reasons of conflict. The impacts of conflict were also perceived to extend to nearly every population and socio-economic segment. Youth, women and children were perceived to be amongst the most disadvantaged or victimized by conflict. The economic and business sectors have also been impaired due to chronic outbreaks of conflict and violence.

Given the circumstances, all respondents shared the view that many of the current government initiatives, particularly the use of force or governance reforms, have not borne much fruit. However, some of the traditional methods such as arbitration by Jirga have proven to be successful in many conflict situations and further work should be done to enhance its effectiveness. Moreover, according to respondents, the existing roles of youth and policymakers have not been very significant in peacebuilding. It was believed that youth rather showed an inclination towards violent ways of dealing with conflict.

Nevertheless, respondents recognized that the youth could potentially help resolve conflicts by spreading awareness about peacebuilding, engaging in public discourse on peace, facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties and contributing to the general well being of the community through a positive and productive attitude. Policymakers and other community leaders could also make a positive contribution in consensus-building and enhancing the role of youth and other stakeholders in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The role of

Overall assessment suggests that conflict is perceived to be essentially a difference of opinion

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[2]Youth and policymakers were given structured survey questions and will be referred in the report as the respondents; Focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with local community members and the general public. KI interviews were done with individuals from NGOs and district government officers.

media was perceived to be potentially helpful for the actions of youth and other peacebuilders: as it can spread positive awareness and work as a watchdog.

Key Findings
Perceptions on the Nature and Types of Conflict

A great diversity of opinion was observed over the term "conflict" in every district. The majority of respondents (60 percent) mentioned that conflict is essentially a difference of values, ideas, beliefs, opinion, goals and views between individuals or groups. Political (42 percent) and ethnicity (41 percent) were seen to be the dominant bases for conflict followed by religious and class differences. Some of the respondents supported the view that conflict is the presence of violence, war or battle. There was a consensus among respondents that conflict can exist between both individuals as well as groups depending on the nature of conflict. However, a significant 67.2 percent of total respondents from all districts believed that conflicts were between groups rather than individuals.

Figure 1: Which Type of Conflict is Dominant in KPK/FATA?
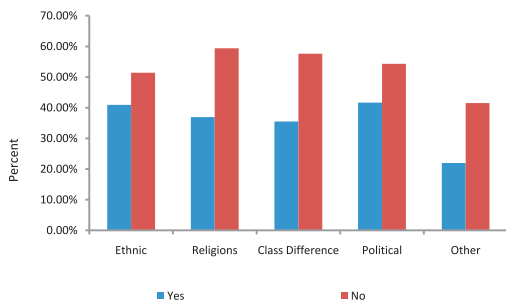
Most FGD and KI participants, youth and policymaker respondents all pointed to political parties (23 percent) as the primary actor in local conflicts.

Amongst the urban youth respondents, religious leaders (23 percent) are seen as the main actors in conflicts versus their counterparts in the rural areas who viewed political parties (28 percent) as the main culprit. On average, the political parties, religious groups, and feudals combined were perceived as the main actors in conflict by about half of the respondents, followed by militant and extremist groups at 30 percent.

Perceptions on the Reasons for Conflict

According to the youth and policymaker respondents, the most significant reasons for conflict in all districts are: lack of economic opportunities (51 percent) especially for the youth, poverty (24 percent), lack of true understanding of religion (22 percent), motivation by political or religious leaders (18 percent), lack of education (11 percent), and intolerance (7 percent).

The government's lack of response to citizens' concerns was arguably the principal source of discomfort for the people in

Figure 2: Importance (percent) Given to the Different Social Issues Contributing to Conflict: by Rural and Urban Policymakers and Youth Respondents
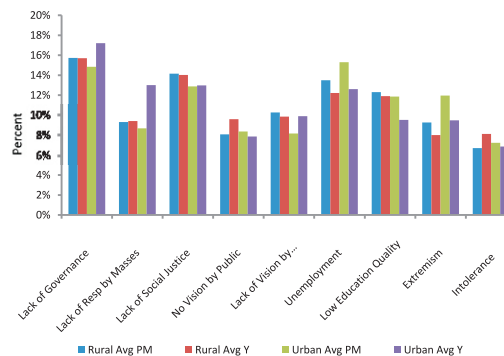
KPK/FATA. On average, 78 percent of all respondents believed that the lack of government's response to the needs of people was a reason of conflict. Survey respondents found corruption by people in authority as the prime reason for poor performance of service delivery departments (66 percent). Additional reasons included poor or inhospitable attitude of government officials towards the public (18 percent). This was especially the case among the urban youth group where it was cited as the most important reason (22 percent). This combined with the scarcity of social facilities and basic necessities is encouraging people to resort to violence and other counter-productive actions.

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Lack of economic opportunities, unemployment and poverty were significant reasons behind conflict in almost all districts. On average, 51 percent of all respondents perceived lack of economic opportunities for youth as the most important factor in economic disparity that causes conflict. Results from the survey on the perceptions of poverty as a reason of conflict in the local areas were staggering. An overwhelming majority in all the districts viewed poverty as a major reason for conflict.

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Low literacy rates, low female to male enrolment rates and a high rate of drop-outs are among the factors which are perceived to be exacerbating economic or social conflicts in KPK and FATA. A significant proportion of policymaker and youth respondents agreed that differences in the educational system inflate local, inter-regional and national conflicts. A particularly important factor causing conflict, cited by all respondents (urban: 41 percent, rural: 37 percent), were the differences in the school and madrassas system. This was followed by differences in the government and private schooling system.

The impotence of the justice system in Pakistan has been a major cause of concern for people from all walks of life, regardless of economic status or political stature. In KPK, law enforcement has been very weak and in FATA, an accessible judicial system has been almost non-existent. Overall, the disappointment with the lack of justice by the government has been highly emphasized by almost every survey participant and Key Informant interviewee. On average, around 35 percent of total respondents believed that

a dysfunctional judicial system is a reason of conflict, while 28 percent thought attitude of law enforcement agencies, 23 percent thought lack of laws addressing public needs and finally, 15 percent thought that lack of gender responsive laws are causing conflicts in the region.

The study also covered questions on whether lack of social facilities such as physical infrastructure, schools, hospitals or power etc. were perceived to be linked with the existence of local conflicts. Survey participants were asked their opinion on nine social facilities, which in their opinion were causing conflicts due to their mere shortage: schools (31 percent), economic opportunities (17 percent), hospitals (14 percent),

Figure 2: Importance (percent) Given to the Different Social Issues Contributing to Conflict: for the Rural and Urban Policymakers and Youth Respondents
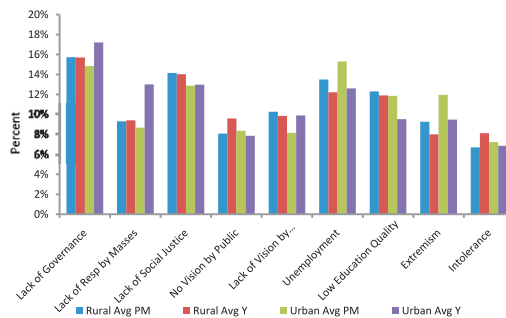
electricity (11 percent), roads (10 percent), public transport (9 percent), etc. There was a difference between order of preference between urban and rural groups; both had schools as their first priority (urban group: 40 percent; rural group: 26 percent). However, the relative order of importance of other factors changed; for the urban group the importance of economic opportunities (18 percent) is prime followed by electricity (13 percent) and hospitals (8 percent); while for the rural group it is hospitals (18 percent), economic opportunities (17 percent) and then roads (11 percent). See Figure 3.

Perceptions on the Impacts of Conflict

According to both urban and rural respondents, the most significant impacts are crime (20 percent), depression/stress (19 percent), frustrations (15 percent), and

financial instability (13 percent). Impacts on social integration (11 percent), attitudinal changes towards violence (10 percent) and destruction of infrastructure (8 percent) were not considered relatively significant. There was not a great amount of variation between policymakers and youth responses.
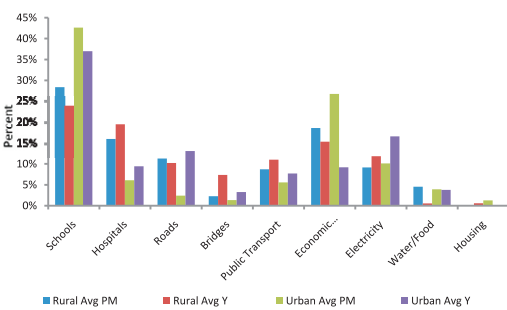
Respondents thought that youth (22 percent) was the most impacted segment of society in all districts, followed by children (20 percent) and women (17 percent). In Bannu and Lakki Marwat, respondents also ranked government personnel and workers as amongst the most impacted segments (10 percent).

The key competencies cited for conflict resolution and conducting dialogue include: good communications skills, active listening, being influential and wealthy, and support by the government.

Perceptions on the Status of Existing Peace Initiatives/Methods

It was highlighted by FGD and KI respondents that despite the willingness of the community to sit together, militant groups are refusing to do so. Policymakers as well as law enforcement agencies were identified as important players in bringing conflicting parties together on one platform for dialogue.

Figure 3: Lack of Social Facilities as a Cause for Conflict

Rural Avg PM Rural Avg Y Urban Avg PM Urban Avg Y

Figure 4: Perceptions on the Best Methods to Resolve Conflict

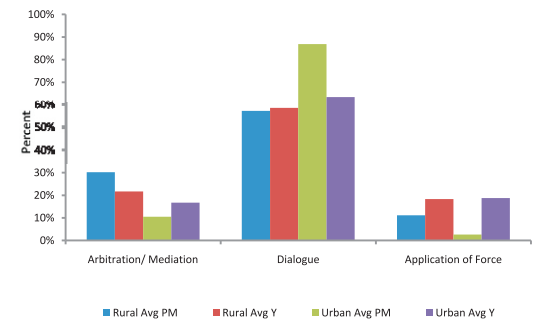Rural Avg PM Rural Avg Y Urban Avg PM Urban Avg Y

Youth and policymaker respondents thought that the most impacted sectors were government institutions (19 percent), education (18 percent), law and order (18 percent), and the judicial sector (16 percent). Sectors perceived to be less affected include the economic and production sectors, and the infrastructure sector.

Perceptions on the Best Potential Initiatives/Methods for Peace

An overwhelming 67 percent of all r e s p o n d e n t s (u r b a n / r u r a l , youth/policymakers) believe that dialogue is the best method for peacebuilding. This can be in the form of community dialogue or Jirga in which the local leaders or the Jirga would act as mediators. This is followed by 20 percent of respondents also supporting arbitration and 13 percent supporting use of force (18 percent of urban/rural youth support use of force).

The existing initiatives identified by FGDs and KIs in Khyber Agency, Peshawar, Bannu, Buner, Hangu and Malakand is predominantly the use of Jirga while in Swat, Dir, F.R. Kohat, Kohat, Mardan, Lakki Marwat, it is the use of force by the army or the other law enforcement agencies.

As far as the current operational condition of these initiatives are concerned, the youth and policymakers vary in their opinion. The methods are proven to be effective according to both youth & policymakers in Peshawar, Swat, Dir, Kohat, Buner and Hangu. However, according to the youth, the initiatives that are currently being used are no longer working in Charsadda, Malakand, Mardan, and Khyber Agency. There is stronger support for the application of force as a way to achieving peace among the youth (urban/rural: 18 percent) then there is amongst policymakers (rural: 11 percent; urban: 3 percent).

Policymakers as well as law enforcement agencies were identified as important players in bringing conflicting parties together on one platform for dialogue

Perceptions on the Roles of Stakeholders in Peace building

Existing and Potential Role of Youth

According to policymakers, the youth's role in peacebuilding in society has been very limited. According to the majority of respondents in the survey, youth have been made part of local peacebuilding efforts, but in general they are aggressive and are not interested in non-violent resolution of conflicts, only 11 percent of youth have been involved in mediation or dialogue. Furthermore, FGDs and key informants perceived that youth lack motivation and energy and social deprivation has further deepened their sense of isolation from their community and nation.

However, youth involvement is relatively high in six districts: Bannu, Dir, Hangu, Kohat, Malakand and Swat. In these districts, they have played major roles in community mobilization (40 percent), opponent mobilization (19 percent) and awareness raising (39 percent). In some districts such as Buner, Peshawar and Lakki Marwat, youth are actively contributing by helping to reduce street crimes, spreading awareness about peace and volunteering for social work. They are also active in peace committees.

The potential role of youth in bringing peace in society was highly emphasized by respondents although with reservations. In almost all districts; people linked lack of education and guidance for youth as the major inhibitors to youth contribution in society. Their efforts would have a greater impact if they were better educated in peacebuilding and conflict resolution strategies. Nevertheless, respondents were mindful of the advantages of involving youth in peacebuilding efforts. Many were supportive of the idea of involving youth simply because they are naturally more energetic and passionate, and are more efficient in getting things done, as compared to their older counterparts.

Participants in the quantitative survey were asked about the potential roles that youth could play in conflict resolution. On average, 38 percent of total respondents suggested that youth could play a bigger role in helping to resolve conflicts, followed by helping in bringing opposing parties together (34 percent) and helping in mediation and dialogue (27 percent).

According to both policymaker and youth respondents, the major potential difficulties faced by youth in peacebuilding include security threats (33 percent), convincing political opponents to sit together (30 percent), complications in mediation (23 percent) and biasness (12 percent). These difficulties are significant across the districts.

Existing and Potential Role of Policymakers

KIs and participants in the FGDs suggested that policymakers have not made any substantial contributions towards the betterment of the local communities. 37 percent of urban youth and 34 percent of rural youth respondents suggested that policymakers had 'never' been engaged with their district. They were described as being corrupt and only working to serve their own political interests, or too scared to stand up against social and legal injustices. Policymakers were described as often lacking positive attitude, charisma and leadership skills.

FGD and KI participants from the more troubled regions, such as Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Peshawar and Mardan, felt that policymakers rarely make public appearances and when they do, it is mostly to garner votes. They reside in the main cities such as Islamabad and hope to remotely control the situation from there. The greatest involvement of policymakers in resolving issues was observed in Buner (70 percent), Hangu (67 percent), D.I. Khan (63 percent) and Dir (60 percent).

According to FGD and KI respondent, the

> **There is stronger support for the application of force as a way to achieve peace amongst the youth**

> **In general, youth are perceived to be aggressive and uninterested in non-violent resolution of conflicts**

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roles and responsibilities of policymakers are being exercised by non-elected officials such as the army or Jirga leaders. However, while they have been effective in dealing with many conflict situations, the downside is that they are not accountable and representative. In Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsada and Malakand, people are generally more supportive of the work of the police and the army than the politicians.

Nonetheless, most respondents still perceive policymakers to be highly influential, regardless of whether their role is perceived as positive and effective. Most positive reactions were seen in Bannu, Swat, F.R Kohat, Malakand and Peshawar. Most negative reactions to the role of policymakers were seen in Hangu, Mardan and Lakki Marwat.

Both youth and policymaker respondents believed that policymakers can effectively end violence if they properly use their power and authority. They can help in creating inclusive peace strategies. They can help in resolving conflicts (45 percent), bridging gaps between political opponents (35 percent) and mediation (20 percent). They can provide capacity-building programs for youth and other segments of the population.

With regard to potential difficulties faced by policymakers in improving the situation of the area, policymaker respondents suggested that most of their efforts are weakened due to security threats (31 percent) and potential difficulties in convincing political or religious opponents to sit together and reach a peace agreement (30.7 percent). Youth responses also indicated that the aforementioned two factors were the biggest constraints (34.5 percent and 31.5 percent respectively). Difficulties in mediation and discrimination were considered as less significant by both groups of respondents.

At the district level, in F.R Kohat, Hangu, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Malakand and Swat, 46 percent of respondents considered life threats as a hindrance to policymakers

involvement in resolving conflicts. However, in Buner, Charsada, D.I. Khan, Khyber Agency and Peshawar (41 percent) and mediation Bannu and Dir (37 percent) as the biggest difficulty.

Existing and Potential Role of the Media

The role of media has been criticized for exaggerating the state of violence in KPK and FATA and for framing incidents in a sensational manner for program ratings. In Hangu, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, Malakand and Khyber Agency, people were frustrated with the media for not playing an active role in the mitigation of conflicts. Many FGD respondents in several districts, including Mardan and Hangu, were very cautious of any role played by the media. Moreover, they felt that the media has not given due coverage to many of the positive changes in the region in recent times. Development is thus perceived to be stagnant in the region which is not entirely true.

Some specific responses were also noted. In Swat, Dir and Buner, it was suggested that the media should play a leading role in addressing the root causes of conflict in the region. In D. I. Khan, people believed that the local media is corrupt and often blows matters out of proportion when it decides to intervene. In Kohat, respondents believed that the media chooses not to give an unbiased perspective because it runs at the whims of corporate interests. The FGD respondents in Charsada, Peshawar and Nowshera were of the view that the role of media is limited to awareness spreading; there is no focus on censoring or editing violent or indecent content in television shows and movies that have been associated with increased aggressive behavior in both the short and the long term.

Existing and Potential Role of Government

The results from the FGDs and KI interviews indicated that the government can contribute to peacebuilding in significant ways given its sheer power and authority. It was perceived

Troubled regions, such as Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Peshawar and Mardan, felt that policymakers rarely make public appearances

The roles and responsibilities of policymakers are being exercised by non-elected officials such as the army or Jirga leaders

The role of media in exaggerating the state of violence in KPK and FATA, has been criticized

that the government should take immediate steps to address the inequality in the allocation of resources; and that it should invest on physical and social infrastructure development on a priority basis, and open up employment opportunities for the local people. There seemed to be a greater concern for this in Hangu and FATA than other districts covered in the study.

Raising awareness was also one of key roles identified for the government. The FGDs in Peshawar revealed that the government has taken certain initiatives in this regard: they are helping in spreading awareness about the causes and consequences of conflict. In Lakki Marwat, Charsada, Bannu, Swat and Malakand, the FGD participants suggested that the government could build peace through the establishment and enforcement of rules and regulations, particularly concerning the use of force, corruption and misuse of authority. Concerns were also raised about the inaction of the government in resolving local conflicts.

Overview

The framework of this study, is similar to that conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and FATA. It also investigates public perceptions about conflict: its duration at various places, its underlying reasons, and its impacts. The study also explores the existing and potential role of various stakeholders in peacebuilding. However, despite some initial similarities, this study is different in many ways: first, it is a nationwide survey; second, it also focuses on economic and social issues of Pakistan; third, it attempts to define peace and prosperity as understood by the public; and finally, it discusses existing and potential stakeholders including: the government, Jirga and the media.

The nationwide quantitative survey takes a sample of respondents, of youth and community leaders, from five districts (Lahore, Quetta, Peshawar, Karachi and Gilgit), one from each of the five provinces, i.e. Punjab, Baluchistan, KPK, Sindh and GB, of Pakistan. This was further supplemented by in-depth interviews with Key Informants (KIs) from each district[3]. Survey respondents were asked questions with regard to Pakistan and also specifically about their own districts. Results garnered from this nationwide survey were often similar to the KPK-FATA study.

Conflict is perceived, by the majority of respondents, to be disagreement and intolerance towards the "other view". The major reasons behind conflict in Pakistan, according to the respondents, are: poverty, lack of good governance and corruption in

service delivery departments. The major impacts of conflict include economic deprivation, lack of social and economic development and a 'bad' image of Pakistan. While it was felt that the youth (Y) were the main victims of conflict, it was also argued by the respondents that youth, along with community leaders (CLs), could play an important role in: peacebuilding, facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties and contributing to socio-economic development.

The potential role of the media was also highlighted – in that it could help to reduce conflict through awareness campaigns – however, respondents also believed that currently the media is giving disproportionate coverage to negative elements and promoting political biases and agenda.

Key Findings

### Perception about Social and Economic Issues in Pakistan

Respondents from across Pakistan believed that the lack of good governance and social justice leads to social and economic issues in the country. Poverty (Male (M):26 percent, Female (F): 31 percent) was ranked as the main social issue by the respondents, followed by lack of justice (M: 21 percent, F: 15 percent), deficit of economic opportunities (M/F: 17 percent) and low quality of education (M: 15 percent, F: 17 percent). According to the survey respondents, both males and females, these socio-economic challenges translate into impacts such as: widespread crimes (male ranked this as the no. 1 impact), societal depression (females ranked this as the no. 1 impact), social disintegration and conflicts.

Social inequities between the rich and poor (34 percent), the powerful and powerless, and lack of economic opportunities for youth (51 percent) were amongst the highest ranked reasons for conflict in all districts. Such

> Major reason behind conflict in Pakistan, according to the respondents, are: poverty, lack of good governance and corruption

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[3]Community leaders included religious, social, political leaders as well as local entrepreneurs. Key informants included representatives from local NGOs/community based organizations, district governments and academia.
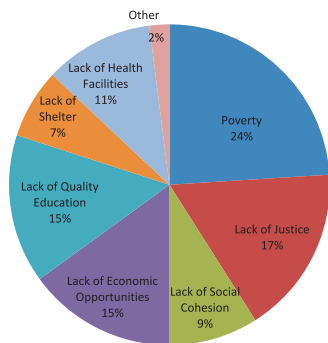
inequities were perceived to be relatively greater in Lahore and Peshawar than other districts
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Perceptions on the Nature and Reasons of Conflict

Perception about the Term Conflict

Respondents across Pakistan were of the view that conflict may be defined in many ways including: difference of perspective or opinion between people (83 percent), or the presence of violence (87 percent), lack of tolerance (86 percent) and personal rivalries (86 percent). However, there were some interesting findings; for instance: the presence of violence was perceived as a bigger factor in Gilgit (80 percent) and Karachi (75 percent) but not Peshawar (35 percent), which has suffered more from terrorist violence recently than any other city included in the survey. Ethnic and class differences were also considered the major conflicts prevalent in Pakistan by more than 70 percent of youth and 77 percent of community leaders; these were seen as particularly important in Peshawar and Quetta.

At the district level, political parties were seen as promoting or backing conflict to pursue their interests by all respondents across the country. This was the major factor cited in Karachi (88 percent), Gilgit (80 percent) and Lahore (65 percent) and by Quetta's youth (80 percent). In Lahore, the US government was also seen as playing a role, whilst in Gilgit the number one cause of conflict was attributed to religious political

parties (94 percent) which encouraged sectarianism.

Duration of Conflict

Conflict, according to 67 percent of community leaders and 57 percent of youth respondents across the four provinces and GB, has existed in Pakistan for more than 10 years. However, there were slight variations

Figure 2: Perception of Respondents about the Duration of Conflict in their Respective Districts
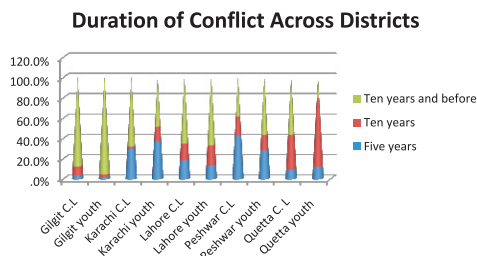
in the views about the duration of conflict within each district.

Perceptions on the Major Reasons Behind Conflict

Across all districts the number one reason, without exception amongst all respondents, for conflict was poverty (close to 90 percent across all districts); followed by lack of government response to the needs of the people, lack of economic opportunities, corruption, social differences amongst classes (order changes in different districts). In Lahore and Peshawar, social differences were considered the number two reason and respondents pointed out this was further compounded by the government's irresponsive attitude. In Quetta, over 80 percent of respondents cited weak governance, as a factor, which is further exacerbated by a lack of accountability, leading to corruption in the service delivery departments. In Karachi, it was felt that the lack of accountability at the institutional level is causing resentment amongst the masses against the authorities.

Perceptions regarding the involvement of external agents in local conflicts were quite diverse. The Afghan War was seen as a major

Political parties were seen as promoting or backing conflict

Across all districts, the number one reason for conflict, without exception amongst all respondents, was poverty

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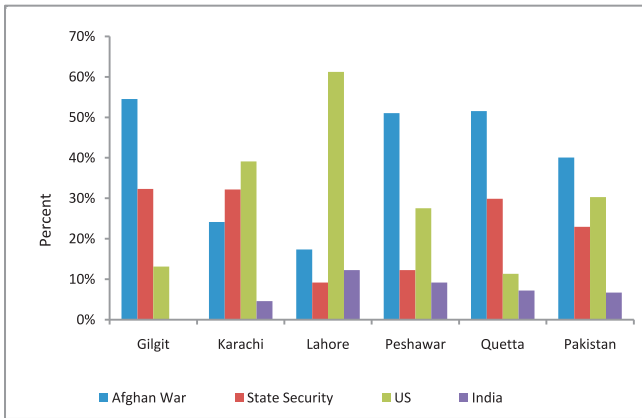**Figure 3: Reasons for Conflict – External Factors Cited by Respondents**

Figure 3a: Reasons for Conflict – Social, Legal, and Economic Injustices
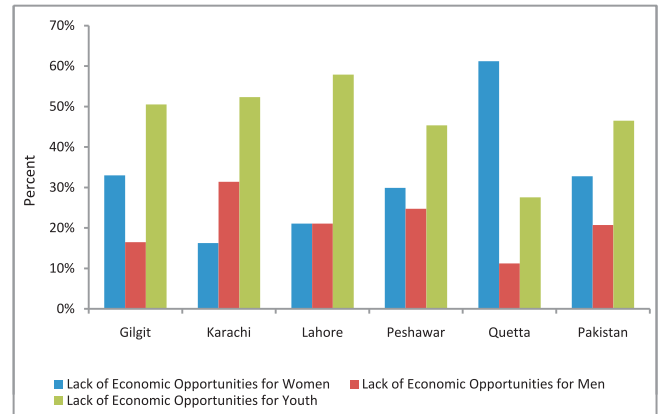

Figure 3b: Reasons for Conflict – Religion

Figure 3c: Reasons for Conflict – Lack of Economic Opportunities

Figure 3d: Reasons for Conflict – Lack of Social Facilities
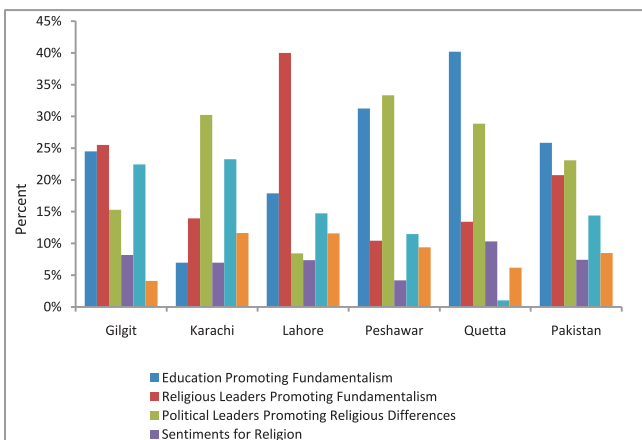
**Figure 3e: Reasons for Conflict – Legal System in Pakistan**
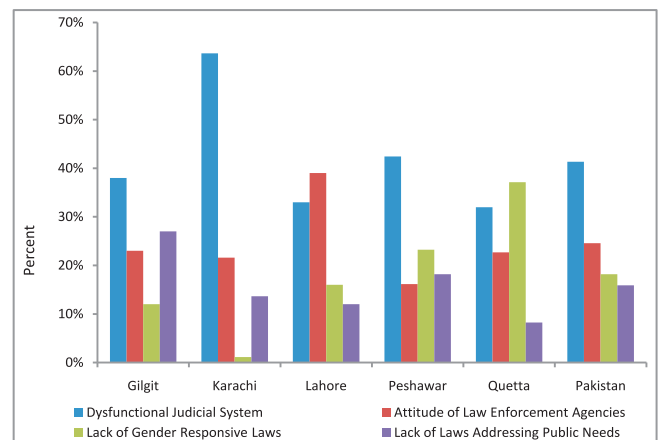
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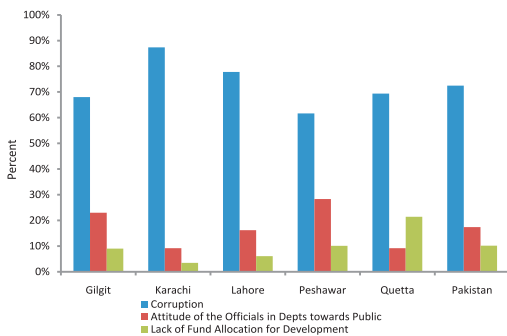
stimulant of conflict in border regions such as Gilgit, Peshawar and Quetta (greater than 90 percent), but not in Karachi and Lahore. In Karachi and Lahore, a lower proportion of people blamed national foreign policy for conflict, but at the same time believed that US foreign policies in South Asia and Middle East have instigated more conflicts than any other factor (Lahore: CL-38 percent; Y: 37 percent). Considering, that only a small minority believed that the Indian government is a culprit is an indication that people may not be entirely hostile to the idea of regional cooperation efforts.

Impacts of Conflict

Most respondents believed that in its aftermath, conflict leads to: distrust in the community and state's ability to tackle conflicts; weakening of social structures and a climate of paranoia. People felt less secure and there were even psychological effects on marginalized groups such as women and children. These effects were given particular importance by respondents in Quetta and Gilgit.

While discussing the impacts of conflict on overall social, economic and psychological situations in Pakistan, the respondents ranked: slow economic growth (29 percent), lack of economic opportunities (27 percent), lack of development (21 percent), lack of foreign investment (13 percent), and bad global image (13 percent) of Pakistan as the most important impacts. The political and economic impacts of conflict were perceived to be stronger and more diverse in Gilgit, Peshawar and Quetta; Karachi and Lahore,
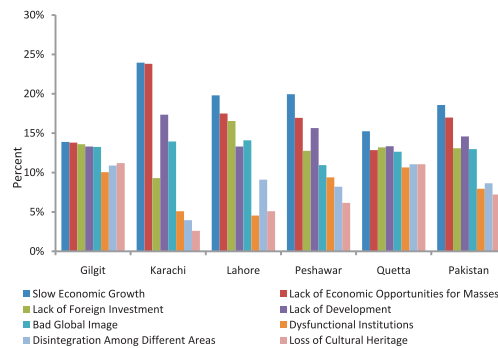
being economic hubs, have still managed to survive the crisis better.

Respondents from Karachi said that conflict has raised issues such as: reduced economic opportunities (CL: 25 percent; Y: 21 percent), indigenous communities being forced to migrate from Karachi to other parts of the country and the negative impact on the business sector as well as a decline in foreign investment.

In Lahore, community leaders highlighted sluggish economic growth (29 percent); while most of the Youth respondents highlighted lack of economic opportunities (25 percent) as the major impact of conflict. Both respondents here also felt that conflict has culminated into more mistrust of state institutions (CL: 12 percent; Y: 16 percent).

For Peshawar, law and order in the district has been badly affected due to the ongoing conflict and this was seen as the most important impact of conflict; additionally, it has led to a decline in economic opportunities and economic growth and has also impacted development in the district of Peshawar.

Conflict in Quetta, according to community leaders, directly slows economic growth, reduces economic opportunities for the masses, slows development and additionally leads to: dysfunctional institutions of state, bad global image, lack of social cohesion and lack of foreign investment.

In Gilgit, the economic, education and health sectors have been greatly affected by the

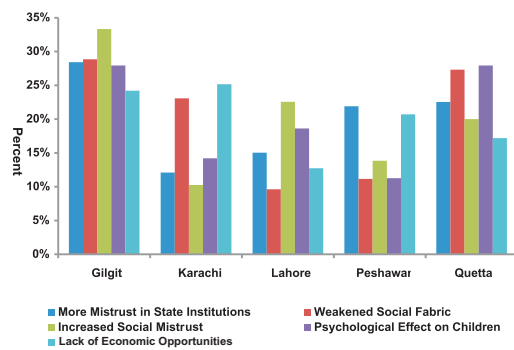**US foreign policies in South Asia and the Middle East have instigated more conflicts than any other factor**

Most respondents believed that in its aftermath, conflict leads to distrust in the community and state's ability to tackle conflicts

conflict in the area according to the respondents. The threat to people's security, extensive killings and clashes between groups of varied backgrounds and mindsets is a major impact of the conflict. The natives are at risk of losing their livelihood owing to the shrinking of the tourism industry, thus leading towards the economic instability in the region.

Overall, most respondents believed that youth and the poor were amongst the worst influenced by conflict. Surprisingly, women were perceived to be the least affected by conflict even in cities such as Peshawar where religious conflicts restrict women from fully exercising their right to education or work.

Figure 5: Top Five Critical Issues Resulting from Conflict

Legend:
- More Mistrust in State Institutions
- Increased Social Mistrust
- Lack of Economic Opportunities
- Weakened Social Fabric
- Psychological Effect on Children

Defining Peace and the Peace Process in Pakistan

The respondents defined peace as tolerance, listening to each other, and agreeing and accepting views of the opposing parties. According to 98 percent of community leaders and 96 percent of youth, there is a need to bring peace in Pakistan. According to the respondents, factors hindering the peace process in Pakistan include: lack of political will (21 percent), absence of a platform for dialogue (20 percent), difficulty in bringing together opposing groups (16 percent), and security threats for those who want to build peace (15 percent). These limitations were particularly important in Gilgit and Quetta.

Religious opposition and ethnic differentiation is another critical issue in Gilgit and Peshawar where radical elements

continue to enforce fundamentalist ideologies that neglect freedom of expression and association. In Karachi and Lahore, vested political interests are cited as the main hindrance to peacebuilding, followed by lack of platforms for dialogue and problems in trying to bring opposing parties together. However, in the larger developed cities, the existence of media channels and social networking allows public officials and peace activists to voice their concerns to a relatively large audience more easily.

Role of Stakeholders

Findings of the study revealed that more people in troubled regions, such as Gilgit, Peshawar and Quetta, thought that stakeholders are or should play an active role in peacebuilding, as compared to people in Karachi and Lahore. The government is seen to be the main stakeholder in peacebuilding (24 percent of all respondents), followed by Community leaders/elders (23 percent) and Jirgas (8 percent overall, 17 percent in Peshawar). The role of the media was also considered vital in building peace in Pakistan according to one-fifth of all respondents, whilst the youth considered it as the main stakeholder in bringing peace in Pakistan.

Community leaders were by far considered the most influential group (CL: 50 percent; Y: 80 percent) within the community in terms of either creating conflict or building peace. Youth, in almost all districts, was not considered as playing any significant role; however in all districts, it was believed that youth could contribute by spreading awareness and can work for socio-economic development of the local area. In less developed regions, such as Gilgit and Quetta, more respondents believed that youth can contribute to peacebuilding by helping to facilitate peace dialogue at the national level due to the significance of their numbers and access to technological resources.

Community Leaders

In all the five districts sampled for the survey, community leaders were considered as the

most important stakeholders in bringing peace in a society. According to 26 percent of CL respondents from the 5 districts, community leaders are helpful in bringing together conflicting parties for dialogue. Some 25 percent of the CL respondents also believed that community leaders can act as moderators in building consensus and can provide counseling to the two opposing parties. Some 23 percent of CL respondents also considered that it was their responsibility to support youth in order to spread awareness about peace in society.

Similarly, youth respondents (26 percent), from the 5 districts selected for survey, said that community leaders are ideal for bringing opposing parties together at one platform to have a dialogue over conflicting issues. Some 26 percent of youth respondents considered community leaders to have the potential to support youth in creating awareness in society. 25 percent of youth respondents also believed that community leaders should act as Counselors to guide the youth.

Media

According to respondents (CL: 77 percent; Y: 79 percent), the media has a vital role in peacebuilding and resolving conflicts. The media can help bring peace in society by: producing programs for youth through which they promote positive role models (CL: 21 percent; Y: 20 percent), dramas promoting moral values (CL/Y: 18 percent), and setting up dialogue between opposing groups (CL: 18 percent; Y: 16 percent). Furthermore, respondents agreed that media is a tool that can: help eliminate violence (CL: 25 percent; Y: 29 percent), build peace (CL: 22 percent; Y: 21 percent), change attitudes of the masses towards co-existence (CL: 18 percent; Y: 17 percent), eliminate hatred amongst the masses (CL/Y: 17 percent), portray the positive side of issues (CL: 18 percent; Y: 17 percent).

Most Effective Medium for Peacebuilding

An overwhelming majority of community

leaders (88 percent) and youth (83 percent) believed TV to be the most effective medium for peacebuilding. Newspapers were ranked

Figure 6: Perception about the Potential Role of Media in Peacebuilding
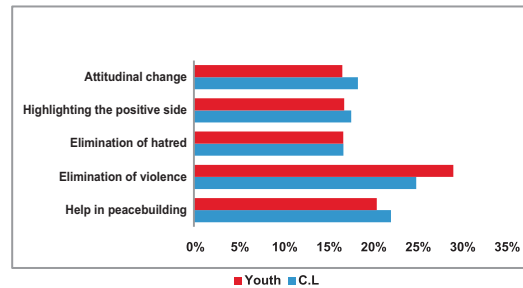
as the second most effective medium by 63 percent of community leaders and 60 percent of youth respondents. Radio was ranked third by 42 percent of community leaders whereas youth (47 percent) considered the internet to be the third most effective medium for peacebuilding.

At the district level, there was a difference in the preference for a medium. In Karachi, TV was selected by an overwhelming number of respondents (both Y and CL) as the most effective and preferred medium. In Quetta and Peshawar, newspapers and TV were selected as the most effective medium by community leaders and youth. Youth respondents from Lahore selected TV, newspaper and the internet as the most preferred tool of media. In Gilgit, all forms of media were considered very effective by the youth respondents. However, it was also felt that the media should do more to highlight marginal issues which currently it does not.

Youth

The respondents were asked about their perception of the youth's role in peacebuilding and to elaborate on the strengths and weakness of youth in Pakistan that may hinder or promote their role as peacebuilders. Education was believed to be one of the main strengths of youth in Pakistan by 18 percent of community leaders and youth respondents. Some 15 percent of community leaders also considered skills to be one of the strengths that can help youth in

Community leaders were by far considered the most influential group within the community in terms of either creating conflict or building peace

The media can help bring peace in society

An overwhelming majority of community leaders and youth believed TV to be the most effective medium for peacebuilding

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bringing change as opposed to 16 percent of youth respondents who considered their level of motivation and energy as more important. 15% of Community leaders also ranked energy as a positive strength for youth.

However, according to community leaders, major weaknesses of the youth are: lack of vision (17 percent), low understanding of issues (14 percent), negative attitude towards life in general (13 percent), lack of education (13 percent) and lack of representation (12 percent). According to youth respondents in the 5 districts sampled, their major weaknesses were considered to be: lack of vision (21 percent), low representation (13 percent), negative attitude (13 percent), bad education (12 percent) and low understanding of issues that confront the country at this time (12 percent).

How Can Stakeholders Work Together?

Importance of Dialogue in Peace-building

It was agreed by both groups of respondents in the 5 sampled districts that dialogue is very important in building peace in a society. It is important to bring together stakeholders so that they could resolve the issues that confront them. While illustrating the data according to district, one can see that most of the respondents agreed to the importance of dialogue for peacebuilding; however, 33 percent of youth in Quetta disagreed with the notion. In the majority of districts, it was thought that religious leaders are able to play a much bigger positive role both in mediating conflicts and in voicing collective opinions on social concerns.

Perception About Skills Essential For Peacebuilding Across Districts

According to community leaders and youth, stakeholders need skills to bring about peace in a society. Majority of community leaders and youth selected education as the basic skill for a stakeholder to be able to work towards peace. Moreover, the second largest majority selected communication as the

basic tool necessary for a stakeholder involved in peacebuilding processes, followed by the skill to mobilize and engage community members. The skills were ranked differently at the district level owing to the difference in level and type of conflict.

Media Role

It was perceived that media can be used as a tool by the youth to spread awareness amongst the masses on pertinent issues faced by the country and for the welfare of society. The media can also serve as a platform for young role models to offer their vision. It can further draw the attention of the masses towards issues that are not considered important right now but can have serious repercussions in the future. One of the most important benefits of the two stakeholders working together can be peacebuilding in society by avoiding negative projection and promoting positive attitudes.

Community leaders, it was perceived, can help support youth in development efforts in their respective areas. Youth can raise awareness whereas community leaders can support them in bringing together opposing parties for mediation and dialogue. Furthermore, community leaders can engage the law enforcement agencies through their influence for easy and quick dispensation of justice.

Education was believed to be one of the main strengths of youth in Pakistan

Majority of community leaders and youth selected education as the basic skill for a stakeholder to be able to work towards peace

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The recommendations proposed by both studies are as below:

How Can Stakeholders Worked State level Response to Economic Issues

Policy level interventions are needed in order to improve the economic and social conditions (especially education) of the community. Laws and economic policies should be designed to attract investment and stimulate growth. Due to lack of economic and business incentives, youth are increasingly being engaged in counter-productive activities, and violence in particular. The government needs to prioritize development projects and develop tourism in the affected regions, which would enhance the self-sustaining capabilities of the local communities.

Easing access to resources and creating funds for entrepreneurship – targeted especially at women and youth - is needed to promote business initiatives. In addition to this, vocational training and short technical courses should be arranged for youth to empower them with relevant skills and expertise for the labour market or for self-employment.

Bridging Communication Gaps Between Stakeholders

The sidelining and non-involvement of many stakeholders has also been identified as yet another challenge to peacebuilding. This is particularly relevant for youth and women in Pakistan. Communication between the state and its people needs to be bridged. One way to do this is by establishing associations of: political leaders, community leaders, women and youth, to work together for specific projects or causes at the grassroots.

It was also suggested by respondents that youth and community leaders could be good mediators in conflict. The government, army and the law enforcement agencies should also be involved in the mediation and arbitration process including the establishment of peace committees. For them to play this role effectively, they will need to be trained. In particular, what is required is training programs in conflict management and prevention techniques that are essential for the grooming of policymakers as successful peacebuilders. Management training programs in performance appraisal and impact assessment would allow decision-makers to measure and analyse how their policies and strategies are adding value to the betterment of society and the economy.

Educational workshops and training courses are effective ways to build the skills of young peacebuilders, and to provide a platform for: exchange of experiences, networking opportunities, and dialogue platforms for young people from different backgrounds. Capacity-building programs should provide training on: concept of peacebuilding; conflict dynamics; mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution skills; non-violent communication; and advocacy & networking. The studies herein suggest that respondents perceived effective communication skills as one of the key competencies for successful dialogue function. Training programs should train youth as well as community leaders to become effective communicators.

Youth involvement in mediation and dialogue should be encouraged through awareness campaigns and the use of media in garnering public opinion and disseminating them to a larger relevant audience. Joint initiatives with NGOs, capacity-building institutes, colleges and universities could help improve the delivery of training programs for youth.

Laws and economic policies should be designed to attract investment and stimulate growth

Management training programs in performance appraisal and impact assessment would allow decision-makers to measure and analyse

Given the importance that respondents have attached to Jirgas in two provinces in particular - KPK and GB - as being an effective mechanism for arbitration and conflict resolution, it will help if training is given to the participants of the Jirgas to build their legal capacities, to understand conflict dynamics, to understand the advantages of co-existing peacefully with people of diverging views and to amicably lead to resolution through consensus building. Jirgas should also be 'encouraged' to have more participation from women and youth participants.

Changes in Education System

The provision of equal and good quality education to all children is very important, so the concerns regarding schooling differences between madrassas and government schools need to be addressed.

'Education for Peace' can be another effective method for enhancing the role of youth in peacebuilding. Concepts of peace and conflict should be streamlined in school and college curricula, and the entire peace education process should be deliberated and kept dynamic. Peace education may involve teaching the importance and effectiveness of non-violence in satisfactorily regulating conflicts. Educational reforms to syllabi should also reinforce the importance of non-discrimination among locals.

Media Involvement

Media should be involved in different ways: spreading awareness by engaging the youth; providing them a platform to express their views about the situation in Pakistan; and presenting youth role models to develop optimism and vision amongst the young generation. Media should show programs that develop a sense of tolerance and co-existence amongst its audience. The nature of these programs should be solutions-oriented rather than promoting violence. Similarly, the media – TV, Newspapers or Radio - to be used in different areas should be selected on the basis of the preferences found in individual districts.

Media and youth are the two main stakeholders that can effectively spread awareness about the notion of conflict, can demystify stereotypes and reduce biases against social strata (cast, color, creed, religion, provinces etc.). TV programs, intelligently made tele-dramas, peace songs, theatre, cultural festivals, acting as platform for dialogues and shows on the theme of peace and involvement of youth can play a vital role in changing the mindset and approaches towards conflict and peace.

Media and youth are the two main stakeholders that can effectively spread awareness about the notion of conflict

Acknowledgments