LESSONS LEARNED REPORT OF PROMOTING PEACEFUL SOCIETY PROJECT

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Social Empowerment and Legal Protection (SELP)
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DISCLAIMER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recognizing the context of a heterogeneous humanitarian-development nexus, SELP, BRAC emphasizes on a whole of the society approach when launching the 'Promoting Peaceful Society (PPS)' project in Ukhiya and Teknaf in 2020 to enhance solidarity, compassion and harmony. PPS continued to mobilize, engage and build network among stakeholders through social dialogue, community cohesion events and local decision-making process for a greater social interaction to reinforce trust.

As PPS has come to an end, documenting the experiential knowledge, specifically about social cohesion, in developing a favorable mindset among the host community in Teknaf and Ukhiya Upzillas accepting the Rohingyas forced displaced and took shelter in their area, as intervened by the program is necessary. This will aid in improving the PPS design to increase its effectiveness both in Ukhiya and Teknaf and in other communities for future endeavors while also helping similar government and non-government efforts in the country and abroad. This study has documented the experiential knowledge for the purpose.

For grasping lessons learned and best practices from the project, the study employed qualitative method comprising different techniques including IDI, FGD, case study, KII, and IGD with relevant stakeholders. While relying on oral history method to develop an understanding about the peace and social cohesion practices, academic ideas, interpretations and subsequent opinions were thoroughly analyzed as secondary data sources. And a communication-cognitive approach to analyze the data was employed.

The study found that there is huge enthusiasm among people across all walks about the peace-promoting program endeavored by BRAC and its partner NGOs. However, as compassion does not always come in unfavorable conditions, the people's conceptualization of peace and cohesion conforms to the BRAC formula of peace and goes beyond. They identified that the lack of peace is a result of mal-politics, bad governance, misappropriation of power, increasing economic disparity, religious intolerance, sub-standard education system and last but not the least, government's behavior, decisions and policies regarding the Rohingya settlement.

The greatest strength for the PPS lies in the universal appeal of peace to everyone. And, indiscriminately engaging youths from schools, colleges, and madrasas, and also from both genders enhanced the essence of the project to engrave a strong influence also on the population soon to take responsibility for the community. Nonetheless, Pollishomaj appeared as a strong platform for marginalized rural women who are highly successful in spreading the notion of peace and social cohesion in the immediate neighborhood. And lastly, collaboration with local partner NGOs was found to be effective both in the sense of implementing efficiency and productive creativity.

The gaps or constraints in implementing the PPS included both internal and external forces which are caused by both human and nature interventions. Such as-

- Half of the project period was disturbed by COVID-19 resulting in starting late, doing events too quickly, and no time for follow-up.
- Proper coordination across different stakeholder groups could not have been done properly.
- The fact that people at large identify the settlement of Rohingyas as one of the prime problems rupturing peace, the program was not able to make its position clear to the people.
- Being primarily an awareness effort, the project was unable to use media.

So, the following challenges were posed inherently and/or frequently-

- Being aware does not necessarily mean a change in behavior
- Not isolating the issue based on the area, rather scale up from within and countrywide expansion
- Making the stakeholders able to work voluntarily on their own as a collective
- Promoting to resolve the crisis inside the Myanmar so the Rohingyas can return
- Ensuring fair delivery of public goods and battling corrupt bureaucracy
- Misappropriating collectives' strength by political or other self-actualizing interest-groups
- Appropriating methodology to follow to understand people's cognition

Emphasizing on PPS's right-based approach, the study recommends local socio-pathology instead of general macro understanding, enhancing state's urge to gain people's trust, longer term and geographically expanded implementation of the project, institutionalizing the regular sanctions of bare-minimum costs, developing a vision beyond the SDG 2030, including more vertical and horizontal partners while emphasizing the expansion, recognizing aligned individual and extra-individual efforts, and incorporating technological interventions.

Lastly, as BRAC SELP's peace and social cohesion intervention in the locality has made a positive jerk in the mind of the community which is now to be continued with necessary reconfiguration in order to genuinely promote peace, the study urges that such a novel drive cannot be left halfway. Furthermore, peace promotion needs to be mainstreamed for every development project and activities as is the case for gender and climate change. It is time that reflecting on the lessons learned from PPS—its success and challenges—BRAC takes a pioneering role in mainstreaming the peace-promotion endeavor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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We remain grateful to Senior District Manager and Program Organizers of Ukhyia and Teknaf for their continuous support and cooperation during the field exploration phase of this study. Our special thanks to the Students and Youth group irrespective of gender of different School, College, and Madrasha students of this project who have spent hours in generously providing us necessary information, opinion and suggestions. We appreciate different religious leaders, teachers in different educational mediums, local journalists, and Union female members and government officials' invaluable support by giving their time along with the experiences, comments, and suggestions they shared.

A couple of members from ACLAB and NONGOR - partner organizations of this project-, deserve thanks for their cordial support in an hour-long discussion. Above all, other stakeholders of the program have been supportive—in spite of the busy schedule filled with important work. They offered time for discussion, which has made possible to complete the study. We thank them for their cooperation.

Last but not least, we feel especially thankful to the Pollishomaj members who enlightened us with their experiential information and insightful opinion. We hope that this report will serve as a useful primer for those wishing to undertake further development programs for building peace and social cohesion between the host population and Rohingya-a forcibly displaced community in Cox's Bazar.

ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-based Organisation
CPD	Centre for Policy Dialogue
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IDI	In-depth Interview
IGD	Informal Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
PPS	Promoting Peaceful Society
PS	Pollishomaj
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SELP	Social Empowerment and Legal Protection
UCF	Union Cohesion Forum
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UP	Union Parishad
VE	Violent Extremism

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Migration is an age-old phenomenon. Some migrations are intentional and harmonic, while others are forced displacement, which, as the world has witnessed, sometimes generates conflict—covert or/and overt—between the host and migrant communities breaking social peace and cohesion. Studies confirm that Refugees generally impose a burden on local infrastructure, the environment, and resources, which necessitates inclusive policies are needed to help refugees and host communities flourish.[1] Bangladesh, at present, is undergoing such a problem as the local community in Ukhiya and Teknaf seem distrustful about the Rohingyas—the sheltered community amounts to more than 742,000—which is progressively sharpening a predicament. BRAC has addressed these emerging problems through several studies and programs that includes but not limited to *Social Network Analysis (SNA) of the Rohingya and Host Communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh: Mapping the Social Capital and Information Flows for Solidarity and Peacebuilding* (2021), *Social Cohesion, Resilience and Peace Building Between Host Population and Rohingya Refugee Community in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh* (1919). The Brac studies find that

- o The overall scenario of social cohesion was being damaged and the groups gradually started to lose empathy for each other
- o The economic outcomes had direct impacts on men and indirect impacts on women, whereas the women were more impacted by the social aspects
- o Social and cultural institutions from cellular level to formalized structures were highly impacted in many ways e.g., distortion in values and cultural practices, polygamy, divorce, illegal marriages, etc.
- o Hosts' access to citizen services and rights protected by the constitution shrunk and gradually causing an existential crisis

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[1] https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/inclusive-policies-are-needed-help-refugees-and-host-communities-flourish

o Violent and non-violent crimes have spiked as displaced communities are allegedly causing the most of it

BRAC Social Empowerment and Legal Protection (SELP) Programme, in November 2021, carried out a study titled *Baseline Study on Social Cohesion* with the objective to evaluate the present situation of social cohesion among the host community, and the findings are

- Social and civil involvements and responsibilities were found to be below average
- People were not happy with their level to access to services offered by government and non-government sources
- The abovementioned scenario was despite the host population's knowledge and awareness of social cohesion and related issues

The problem is primarily an adaptation problem, which BRAC believes could be mitigated by appropriately using the *Promoting Peaceful Society* (PPS) approach and tools. Hence, a two-year, 2021-2022, is in effect in Ukhiya and Teknaf, which will end in December 2022.

PPS is a BRAC project aims to promote a peaceful society by making the community aware, conscious and proactive instead of giving the community any material support. PPS weighs on building social cohesion through community-driven intervention and creating an enabling environment for peaceful coexistence, trust, tolerance, and cooperation. PPS is ending its two years project in Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazilas of the district of Cox's Bazar. These Upazillas distinguish themselves from conventional Upazilas in Bangladesh having been affected by the displaced Rohingyas. Hence, here collide two different levels of peace and cohesion edifice. First, peace promotion inherently needs to address the issues that are important in an ordinary situation, and second, measures to be taken for the extraordinary situation that rose due to the temporary settlement of displaced people from Myanmar. Two levels of peace-building and their constraints are inseparable from one another, and thus promotion of peace in the intervened area is more complex than the other localities in the country.

Attempting to promote peaceful society in Ukhiya and Teknaf—which emphasis on diversity and plurality, universality and identity, and social cohesion—is an a appropriation of the PPS envisioning that the project would contribute to the attainment of SDG 16 by achieving a peaceful society in Bangladesh through building responsive institutions and communities with especial focus on inclusivity of women and all vulnerable community members as they are the farthest left

behind in the society. PPS primarily expects to enhance social cohesion through a multi-stakeholder approach covering institutions, citizens and diversified communities, which is expected for working on any SDGs as they address development as a disaggregated view.

As the program is ending, there is an operational need to systematically collect the lessons learned and identify the best practices while also knowing the challenges for the way forward. Lessons learned will aid better planning future program intervention to promote peace and cohesion.

The study is not an evaluation report but holds people's opinions. It has communicated with all the stakeholders in the field to understand their experiential views about the project and its activities. This provides a corpus of opinions and suggestions—field-based learnings—that the project needs to scale up peace promotion activities in the locality.

PURPOSE

Documenting the experiential knowledge, specifically about social cohesion, in developing a favorable mindset among the host community accepting the people forced displaced and took shelter in their area, as intervened by the program.

OBJECTIVES

1. To know the best practices and lessons of the project in terms of what worked well and what did not;
2. To capture any changes in stakeholders' understanding and knowledge, awareness and engagement in building social cohesion;
3. To identify the challenges and limitations during the project interventions and strategies to overcome those;
4. To find out whether the project interventions are promoting inclusion from a gender perspective.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this study, which aims to accumulate the stakeholder's experiential views, lies in aligning future peace promotion activities aligned to the reality that exists in the community. This has two-fold importance; first, more appropriate strategies and activities could be drawn for the intervened area; second, the learning will help fine-tune the PPS concepts and strategies.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

Guided by the terms of reference and the aforementioned theoretical framework, to understand such an intricate discourse like social cohesion that brings peace and justice for the community life, we will use interpretative and communication behavioral approach.

For grasping lessons learned and best practices from the project, the study employed qualitative method comprising different techniques. To know the program's effects over community life and societal experiences we further conducted in-depth interview, Focus group discussion (FGD), case study, Key Informant Interview (KII) and Informal discussion with relevant stakeholders. For qualitative exploration, we carried out a couple of IDI among the, UP members, social leaders, service providers and govt. officials to know their experiences for making projects sustainable which gives lights to build accountable and inclusive institutions. A number of FGDs were administered among the *Pollishomaj* members, youth and teachers to know their court yard meeting, public hearing, community fair and knowledge camp experiences accordingly from each of the designated area. BRAC staff operating the project were also interviewed in order to comprehend their understanding of the project and its objectives.

In addition, a number of informal interviews were useful for collecting micronarrative information of the community people in relation to their learned experiences. This particular technique was administered in each of the community for addressing comprehensive achievements towards cohesive peaceful societies.

Moreover, the research relied on *oral history* method to develop an understanding about the peace and social cohesion practices followed in the research areas. Apart from these, academic ideas and interpretations and subsequent opinions regarding the subject matter were thoroughly analyzed as secondary data sources.

Stakeholders' opinion on the effectiveness of communication medium and channels were collected from their oral narrative. Apart from this, we facilitated a couple of sessions among the project staffs which was helpful to identify the overall project's challenges and its future execution strategy and steps. Next page is a one-shot view of data/information collection.

Table 1: Techniques for different Stakeholders under Thematic issues in Thana level

Objectives	Recognize	Technique	Stakeholders	Applied Techniques		
				Techniques	*Ukhiya*	*Teknaf*
Grasp project's best practices and lessons on peace and social cohesion	Laudable lessons State of social Cohesion	IDI KII FGD IGS Case study	Union Cohesion Forum (UCF) members, Pollishomaj (PS) members, Students, Teachers,	IDI	5	3
				KII	4	4
				Case study	3	3
				FGD	2	3
				Informal Discussion	4	4
Grasp Community's knowledge, awareness, and engagement in social cohesion		IDI FGD IGS Case Study	PS members, Students, Teachers, Religious Leaders, Partner Organisations	Group Discussion	1	1
				Session Observation	1	1
Identify Project's challenges and limitations and strategies to overcome	Shortcomings and future scope	IDI FGD IGS Case Study	UCF members, PS members, Students, Religious Leaders, Journalists UP Members			
Find out how interventions are promoting gender inclusion	State of gender perspective	IDI FGD	UCF members, PS members, Students, Teachers, Partner Organisations			

*In-depth Interview (IDI), Key Informant Interview (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Informal Group Discussion (IGD)

**Total number of data collection techniques identified at the point of data saturation.

*** Crosscutting findings gathered from different FGDs, IDIs and KIIs.

Data Collection

To collect vivid information in relating the study objectives we conducted different sessions based on the different qualitative techniques among the different beneficiaries of intervened areas of Cox's Bazar to better understand the lessons, practices and challenges and identified the overcome strategies which used in the future activities.

Data Analysis

We applied a *Cognito-communicative* approach for data analysis. This approach uses communication techniques by employing *ethnomethodology* to understand the substantial meaning of an individual and community's cognitive understanding. Here cognition means the way in which people process, remember, and use information in social contexts to explain and predict their own behavior and that of others.[2]

Notes from interviews were translated directly. All data were categorized under various categories and sub-categories on the basis of the underlying themes. A discourse analysis helped unveil the meaning inherent in the conversations, opinions, and comments. The result of discourse analysis was further matched with the findings of desk analysis of project documents and literature review. Concurrently, we sync the conversation meaning to the interviewees' experiential context, and thus the inner meaning of the utterance nested in the community's cognition was unraveled.

Research Limitations

The community of Ukhiya and Tekhnaf speak a hard Chittagonian dialect that was not easy to understand. This hampered a seamless conversation. Besides, most of the people most of the time for any issues brought the Rohingya issues when talking about peace and cohesion, which was a challenge for the investigators to bring them to concentrate on other issues.

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[2] *Yuki, Masaki; Schug, Joanna (2012). "Relational mobility: A socioecological approach to personal relationships". In Gillath, O.; Adams, G.; Kunkel, A. (eds.). Relationship Science: Integrating Evolutionary, Neuroscience, and Sociocultural Approaches. American Psychological Association. pp. 137–151.*

Ethical Considerations

Personal peace and its underlying causes sometimes, if not often, are matters of the private domain. We took their permission to ask personal questions, and in many cases, we did not proceed further as the conversation tended to become too personal.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Peace, social cohesion and settlement of foreign population: A critique

Johan Galtung, the Norwegian sociologist, is one of the first to academically studying the concept of peace[3]; he has been working in this field since 1959. In a lecture organized by Social Science Baha, Kathmandu, on February 13, 2013, he outlined four tasks required for peace building, which are constructing equity, constructing harmony, reconciling past trauma, and resolving present conflict, constructing equity, constructing harmony, reconciling past trauma, and resolving present conflicts[4]. Galtung's formulation matches with the brief discussion on peace precedes in previous sections, and strengthens the need for social capital, social inclusion, and social mobility. For all these three to work in a coordinated manner one people needs to have trust in the community and the governing system that they are supposed to be protected with. As it is seen that Galtung emphasizes on reconciling (past) trauma and resolving (present) conflict, here we see the organic connection of peace and social cohesion in the present Teknaf and Ukhiya that is undergoing anxiety, fear, distrust and conflict, at least in the deep psyche, caused by temporary but long-time settlement of Rohingyas. Social science's understanding of social cohesion, i.e., social cohesion is a process of increasingly harmonious coexistence in a given society between individuals, groups, and institutions, prerequisites wiping up all kinds of trauma and conflicts—overt or covert.

The adversative relationship between peace and cohesion with displaced people's settlement-induced trauma and conflict could be shown in the following diagram:

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[3] Boulding, Elise. 1982. "Review: Social Science—For What?: Festschrift for Johan Galtung." *Contemporary Sociology*. 11(3):323-324
[4] https://soscbaha.org/lecture-series/peace-four-components/

| Uncertainity Trauma Conflict | Developes angst and hatred Discourages adaptibility | Shatters social mobility Breaks trust Discourages inclusivity |

Essential qualities of cohesive societies include high levels of trust, a shared vision for a common future, and responsive and legitimate governance institutions, which actively support inclusive economic development. Refugees generally impose a burden on local infrastructure, the environment, and resources[5]. The trauma that the resource will be snatched away and its subsequent translation in lessening the trust in the government hampers already poor social capital and mobility, which is an obstacle to promoting peace and social cohesion. In the context of the study area, people, i.e., the host community, are tensed with the worries that the scarce resources that the country can offer them will become even shorter if the settlers continue to stay here.

BRAC Promoting Peaceful Society Program

Responding to SDG16, BRAC's Promoting Peaceful Society (PPS) project is an initiative to creating awareness for social cohesion among people of all strata- male and female, representatives of the civil society, teachers, students, Union council, and women development forum to achieve sustainable peace in society (BRAC: 2018)[6]. Social cohesion is the catch-word and also the target for promoting peace. For PPS, it is a logical process that progressively works on building awareness through messages and public dialogue, building linkages among diversified

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[5] https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/inclusive-policies-are-needed-help-refugees-and-host-communities-flourish

[6] Pilot Initiative to Promote Peaceful Society: Proposal for testing community based model for future expansion to contribute to SDG 16 in Bangladesh. Dhaka: CEP, BRAC.

stakeholders, ensuring peoples' rights through responsiveness and social accountability of local institutions, equity, justice and social harmony leading to enhancing social capital and social mobility to strengthen social cohesion. PPS draws on a socio ecological conceptual framework as shown in the following diagram:
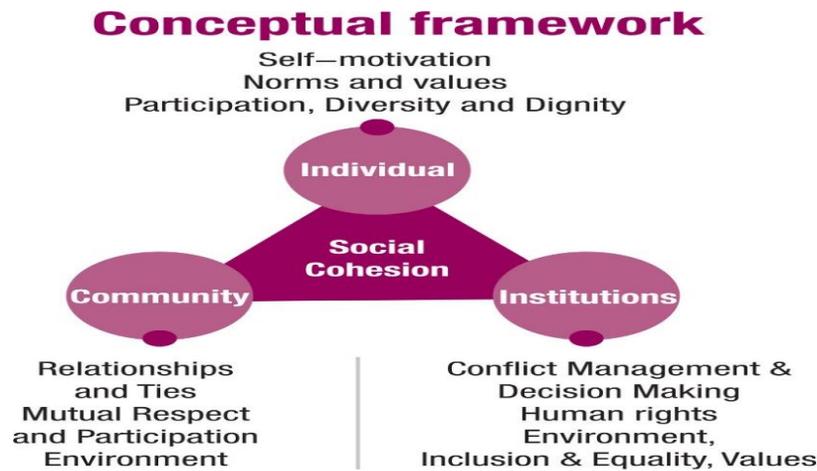

Figure 1: Socio ecological framework for building social cohesion

Furthermore, the conceptual framework has developed the following strategic approach for mitigating peace.
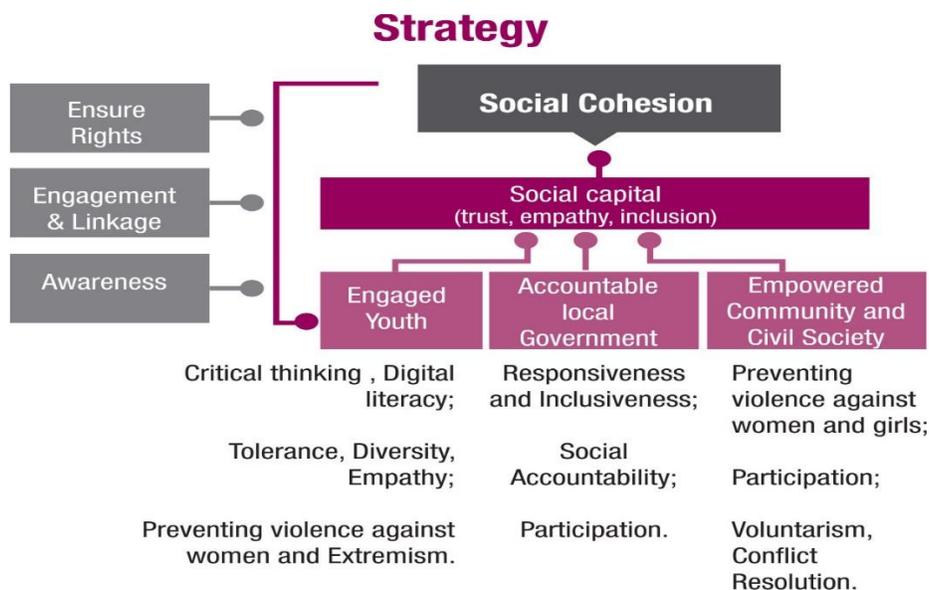

Figure 2: strategic approach for PPS

In addressing the causes for the absence of social cohesion, the major interventions PPS undertakes included community engagement, engaging local government, connecting youth through the campaign, research and study, and partnership with other organizations for staff capacity building. Stakeholders for this pilot included community people, local opinion leaders, Pollishomaj, faith leaders, students and teachers, Union Parishad (UP), Women Development Forums (WDF), and Upazila Parishad officers, and very recently, as in the case of Ukhiya and Tekhnaf, journalists.

CHAPTER 4: TEKNAF AND UKHIYA: EXTRAORDINARY SITUATION

Teknaf and Ukhiya are the two Upazillas of Bangladesh located in the last part of Southern-East bordering Myanmar. Except for a few social-media-induced unrests, the locality is known to have very little communal problem. The problem that has signified Teknaf and Ukhiya is the problem of narcotics, notably Yaba, smuggled from Myanmar. Drugs and smuggling sometimes invoke violence. Besides people here have less than 19 percent literacy while employment opportunities are narrow. According to WFP ENA methodology-based analysis found 84 percent of people in the locality are severely food insecure

These Upazillas are characterized by a temporary settlement of Rohingyas amounting to 943,000 whereas the size of the native population totals to totals 355,794, i.e., the size of settlers is significantly more than the host community, which has made many natives feeling angst that the already majority of Rohingyas soon or later will take away land and everything from them. To them, it shatters the last fraction of peace that they have thinking that they are becoming distant people in their own motherland.

Regarding peace, the problem here has two dimensions, first, people, in general, do not have strong social capital, and second with the settling of Rohingya a feeling of uncertainty and angst-induced hatred that works against social cohesion. It is a complex problem requiring an understanding of functional odds and structural ills.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Nature the problem: Views from the field

As described in the preceding section, in Ukhiya and Tekhnaf the hindrance to peace and social cohesion has two levels—ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary level indicates the problem that is usual in this locality many of which are nationally embedded, and the extraordinary levels problems caused by the settlement of Rohingyas. The table below depicts a categorical picture:

Ordinary level	Extraordinary levels
• Most of the people are poor having no opportunity for occupation. Jobs are temporary and ill-waged • Influential people are actively involved in drug smuggling. • Polygamy exists. • Early marriage is common. • Low-standard educational institution. Curriculum does not adequately reflect social cohesion by exposing to plurality. Besides, educational institutes are governed by inappropriate vested groups. • Low education rate. Girls' attendance is even lower. • Eve-teasing is a common problem that negatively contributes to girls' early marriage and school drop-out. • Government officials are corrupt, and therefore people have difficulty accessing the public goods and services.	• The number of Rohingya settlers outnumbers the host community, which threatens the community as the Rohingya might permanently stay and therefore the host will become minorly oppressed by the settlers. • Previously existing drug smuggling is awfully amplified by the settlers. • Killing and robbery inside and outside the camp are dreadful. • Settlers often snick out of the camp and take the already scarce jobs from the host community. • Woman trafficking has increased. • Some of the Rohingya women work as sex-worker in the locality. • Some married men from the host community are marrying Rohingya women, which is causing domestic violence in the host community • Due to the development workers influx to support the settlers, who get high

Ordinary level	Extraordinary levels
• Communal, i.e., religious, problem is rising, which was not the case even a decade ago. • Human affection is alarmingly decreasing, even at the family level. •	salaries and their purchasing capacity is much higher than the locals, the price hike is unbearable in the locality.

The ordinary-level problem in everyday situations keeps people economically vulnerable and socially segregated. This inevitably makes individuals incohesive—they don't bear the group feeling, in other words, such a society lacks social capital. Besides, due to being located in the periphery, people suffer from social and occupational mobility, which is notoriously filled by drug smuggling and violence as its snowball effect. Families suffer from diminishing affection. Inter-religion hostility is on the rise. Seeing the scenario from a structural perspective, citizens here do not have rightful access to public service—education, health, law enforcement, etc., due to government servants' corruption and the elected body's partiality. This as an effect decreases people and community's trust in the state.

Extra-ordinary level, i.e., the situation created by the settlement of the Rohingyas, has worsened the scenario. This has affected almost every aspect of community life. People are shocked to see there are no effective measures to solve the problem—meaning Rohingyas will be included in the host community. Such inclusion, people think is not acceptable. The community is already suffering economic degradation, gun-fight, and domestic violence, which, the host community believe, will take a permanent frame if Rohingyas continue to leave. Such feeling is extremely devastating for peace and social cohesion.

PPS intervention: A reflection from the field

BRAC Social Empowerment and Legal Protection (SELP) has intervened in the Ukhiya and Tekhnaf primarily to make people aware of the needs and what to do in achieving social cohesion. Following the PPS measures, several committees were formed, awareness orientation and training

were provided, and friendly sports, community fairs, and knowledge camps were held. The intervention was primarily of convincing people about the functional meaning of peace and cohesion and thereby motivating them to engage themselves in promoting a peaceful society. Below is a reflection from the field.

People's comprehension of peace and cohesion

There is huge enthusiasm among people across all walks about the peace-promoting program endeavored by BRAC and its partner NGOs. Peace is a basic human urge though various reason obstructs it since the dawn of civilization, and hence human history is the history of peacebuilding and experiencing rupture in peace and again to restore peace. Promoting a peaceful society to people is a novel attempt that demands them to be reciprocally respective and have compassion for others. However, compassion does not always come in unfavorable conditions. People as a citizen expect easy and rightful access to public goods, in absence of which they feel deprived and hence lose trust in the governance. Therefore, their conceptualization of peace and cohesion conforms to the BRAC formula of peace and goes beyond. They see a lack of peace as a result of mal-politics, bad governance, misappropriation of power, increasing economic disparity, religious intolerance, sub-standard education system. Besides, people without any exception are indicating Rohingya's settlement as a threat, for which they blame the government.

It is encouraging the way people, at least some of them, critically investigate some subtle issues, which include but are not limited to the education system, sports and entertainment, and the environment.

- ✓ Himu Barua, a teacher at Teknaf High School, methodically shows the ills and odds of the school curriculum that does not allow pupils open to the knowledge about other religions and universal morality and ethics. Instead, the curriculum is confined to some mechanical readings creating separation and exclusion. Such an education system, according to Himu, will only produce block-headed citizens intolerant to others. Such people will disrupt peace instead of promoting it.
- ✓ Many youths, boys and girls, feel the lack of playground and scope for healthy entertainment that will socialize youth to keep them engaged in concerted activities precondition for inclusion and compassion.

- ✓ Members of the Youth group and a religious leader feel scared as the way forest is eradicated in order to make camps for Rohingyas. One even observed that over the years after the camps were set up, rainfall has lessened in the area.
- ✓ Both Pollishomaj of Ukhiya and a religious leader Mr. Jafor Alom acutely engaged in humanitarian activities in Ukhiya emphasized decreasing our sense of affection obstructing peace and social cohesion. They boldly recommend especially including this in peace-making activities. Affection should start at home and reach out to the neighborhood and beyond class and religion.

While appreciating the PPS, people recommend widening its conceptual coverage and engaging people in various activities. They showed disappointment knowing that they as the host has to do all the adjustments and adaptations, which does not seem to them fair. Rohingyas need to be preached about peace and cohesion as well.

Assembling changemakers

One of the best things that the field has confirmed that the PPS project in its way of motivating people towards peacemaking, eventually found out some extraordinary persons who has been devoting their time and other resources for peace and social cohesion. Such a person is Md.

Kamruzzaman is a mathematics and science teacher at Lambari Malka Banu High School in Teknaf **Upazila**. For years, he was working hard to prevent the teachers and students of his school from consuming betel leaf and Jorda (chewing tobacco). He thinks that most people in the Teknaf area have a habit of consuming betel leaf, betel nut, Jorda, and energy drinks regularly from a young age. A large portion of his school's

> "When I joined such a forum through BRAC, received training, participated in knowledge camps, and saw BRAC's Peace and Social Cohesion Project, it inspired me to work for peace in the area as much as possible. Then I continued to carry on with my work with full vigor".
>
> Md. Kamruzzaman

students too consume betel leaves, betel nuts, and Jorda every day and litter the classroom. He feels that this practice is causing problems among the students in maintaining the peace of the class and the extended society connected to it. So, he started a movement against it, and nevertheless, he felt alone in this movement while being skeptical too about how far he could achieve. After joining PPS, Kamruzzaman does not feel alone any longer. People like him are the changemaker in need of platforms like PPS to actualize their good spirits.

Strength of youth group

It is universal that the youth easily get motivated to good ventures. It is their nature to get involved in productive activities as their common dream is to become a hero. This is a spirit that needs to be nurtured. Cognitive science confirms that what one learns at this stage is more likely to sustain when one grows up. It is appreciable that the program especially orients the youths by arranging knowledge camps, debates, etc. Field has convinced us that the youth group's strengths could be widened by taking additional efforts like inter-group communication and engaging them in voluntary work. Important thing is to create scope for using public goods in creating opportunities for sports and other entertainment. Students need support to go beyond the school curriculum as that does not suffice their development.

> A Youth Club member Rakib's classmate's 7-year-old nephew was diagnosed with cancer and due to the financial crisis of the child's family, treatment was stopped at a point. This matter being discussed by his classmates in the Facebook messenger group, Rakib along with 12-14 of his classmates took the initiative of funding the treatment. They discussed the source and process of raising money by themselves. They also got advice from a teacher who is associated with various voluntary social organizations. The teacher gave them a box to collect money with. First, they contributed according to their own means. Later they went to shops and various other organizations and collected money. Later this collected money was given to the family in the presence of friends.

Power of organized groups

Meticulously governed organized effort leads to productive outcome, which is vividly confirmed by the way Pollishomaj (PS) is battling for promoting cohesion within their limited resources. The PS itself is the symbol of social cohesion. Homogenous poor women assemble here with the spirit and motivation to empower themselves by combating social odds. Together they mitigate community problems and make active drive to access public goods.

> "Last December I went to an event on Community Policing Day and got the opportunity to meet our SP in person. I talked with him about a woman in my ward - I won't say her name - and said, look, today this woman is not getting any justice for your fellow police members. Her husband tortured her daily as he is addicted to drugs. In broad daylight, he chases through the streets with a dagger in his hand to kill his wife. We conducted an arbitration with the support of our member and it's not working. A month later, he kicked out his wife along with his 6 children. I informed the police but they did not cooperate. The husband roams freely and her wife goes from door to door for food and shelter." After hearing this, the SP ordered to take care of the matter within 24 hours. Later, the police arrested the husband and sent him to jail within the given timeline. The SP arranged to send the woman to her house.
>
> Kulsuma Begum is the President of Puran Pallanpara Pallisomaj (PS), Teknaf Sadar union

- ✓ Lessons learned here is that organized effort generates social capital, one of the requirements of peace and social cohesion, and therefore there is a need to spread the program beyond orientation and transform the assembly into an organized group.
- ✓ In the same logic, aggregation turned into the registered group will have a structural base to sustain and grow further in power and promotion. Partner NGOs is already helping peace groups to get registered. ACLAB, a partner NGO, funded 7 clubs for becoming formal group by registration.
- ✓ Similarly, the learning echoes that the youth groups need to bring under a platform that may have an apex body.

Widening of coverage

Including journalist is an appreciable widening of the program as the oriented and motivated journalist will broadcast peace and social cohesion-focused news and information. An especial agenda for including journalist was to stop mis-information. There are many professions that are still left out, of which one of the catalytic groups is local entrepreneurs. Every citizen is embedded in economic life and thus dependent on merchants and traders. A social overhauling effort cannot go further when entrepreneurs are left out. Many of the interviewees feel the need for widening the orientation and peacebuilding activities to all professional groups with an emphasis to immediately including the local entrepreneurs.

Community demands to have the local government staff be effectively oriented about PPS towards attitudinal and behavioral changes required for rightful access to public goods and services.

Productive collaboration

BRAC in this project has collaborated with a number of NGOs, which came out as notably effective. EKLAB is one of the partner NGOs that successfully achieved their targets. Due to their previous work in the area and experience with gender, cohesion, and income generation, EKLAB implemented the project in an innovative way. A part of their innovative effort is introducing football matches believing that such healthy competition will bring the communities together. EKLAB runs a community radio that would be able to continue with peace and social awareness after the project ends. Such collaborations widen the program's coverage while adding value to the concepts. Also, one can draw on other's resources.

Coverage of the activities of PPSP in different local media:
The local newspapers covered a couple of activities like Sompreetir Mela and Knowledge Camp. Such coverage was informing the wider communities about the project and its core activities.

Gender inclusion: Project activities amidst patriarchal order
The locality is conservative in social behavior reflecting on the treatment of women. It is a highly patriarchal community; girls are teased as they go to school, which subsequently discourages parents letting the girls continue schooling as they reach adolescence. Instead, girls are married off before they reach a proper age.

However, the project, being aware of the problem and with an intention to confirm women's rights and access to social dynamics, implemented well-planned activities. Female representation in UCF and youth groups is maintained while Pollishomaj is a forum exclusively for women.

Being oriented about the preconditions for a peaceful society that includes women's empowerment, interviewed females showed their enthusiasm to have the courage to choose their own future and career. Through orientation, they are becoming conscious of their right and are able to make analytical assessments. So, the Collage Para Youth group female members said that in school they face 4 types of teachers- 1) Teaches well but only teaches, 2) Teaches well and also makes them laugh 3) Don't bother about teaching by themselves (e.g., talks frequently on the phone in class), and 4) Can't help themselves and get distracted while disturbing the students too (e.g., brings their kids in the class; the kids cry in between lessons which is disturbing). They prefer the 2nd type.

However, the prevailing structural constraints, which is in fact national in nature, does not yet allow nor encourage female voice to be heard. It is reported that the Pollishomaj leaders remain relatively low-tone when in mixed-gender forums. There is a fear among some of the women in the locality that their husbands may marry a Rohingya girl in the camp. The sole interest of such marriage is to have a share of the relief that the Rohingya girls receive. Few cases like this have happened, but we cannot confidently say if it is the trend. Marriage before the proper age is still pronouncedly prevailing in Teknaf

Project's intention towards gender inclusion is appreciated by the people made aware by the project, while they understand the structural barriers. Mr. Himu, a high school teacher, said,

"The program's intention of inclusion from a gender perspective is visible, but what couldn't have been accomplished is due to powerful socio-structural reasons".

CHAPTER 6: **STRENGTHS AND IMPACTFUL TOOLS**

- The greatest strength lies in the universal appeal of peace to everyone. No sensible person could refuse the concept and intention. It is such a phenomenon that goes beyond any denial.
- Indiscriminately engaging youths from schools, colleges, and madrasas, and also from both genders made the project able to engrave a strong influence on the population soon to take responsibility for the community. It was found that some of the youth oriented by the project are now sharing their learning with their parents, and even sometime they stop their parents from wrong-doing.
- Pollishomaj   as a strong platform for marginalized rural women was highly successful in spreading the notion of peace and social cohesion in the immediate neighborhood. Among all the groups, this has proved to be most dynamic since they are the most organized one. Their dynamics could work as example for other groups in making.
- Collaboration with partner NGOs seemed productive. Collaboration helps drawing on other resources. ENCLAB's strength is having a community radio in the area that partners can use. Local NGOs obviously know the locality better than any outsider, and hence they can mobilize community better.

CHAPTER 7: GAPS AND CONSTRAINTS

- **Pandemic:** Half of the project period was disturbed by COVID-19 resulting in starting late, doing events too quickly, and no time for follow-up. Follow-up is extremely important for any awareness-building program. Hence, one cannot strongly say what impact the orientations on peace and social cohesion that have been carried out might bring. It gives a lesson that any program must have a contingency plan for unanticipated problems or obstacles.
- **Silencing on Rohingya:** Though the project especially bases on the recent problem of settling Rohingyas, and the fact that people at large identify the settlement of Rohingyas

as one of the prime problems rupturing peace, the program was not able to make its position clear to the people. Such silence, we are afraid, may have negative effect on the intention of the project. In fact, few people have expressed their dissatisfaction. We find it as a strategic limitation that the project needs to overcome.

- **Non-Coordination:** Youth groups, most of them are not aware of UCF and vice versa, which hints that proper coordination across different groups could not have been done properly.
- **Time limitation:** The project could use only a litter over one year; extremely little time for awareness building. A behavior change works on three Hs, Hit, Hook and Hold, that works on a constant campaign and activities. There was hardly any time for any follow-up.
- **Limited media use:** Being primarily an awareness effort, the project was unable to use media—conventional press and social media. Community radio was not used either.

CHAPTER 9: CHALLENGES

- In Ukhiya and Tekhnaf, a special strategy is required to address the *ordinary* and *extra-ordinary* problems in unification with one another. Local authority cannot solve the Rohingya problem, it has to be solved at the national level in collaboration with the international counterparts. Law enforcement agencies can reduce the problem by stopping Rohingyas from joining job market, stopping women trafficking and other similar problems. However, it is too much to expect from an inefficient law enforcing agency.
- In a seemingly corrupt local level bureaucracy one cannot expect an overnight change in confirming access to public goods.
- Voluntarism is not likely to last long if the spirit of people is not organized into a rational structure. Biggest challenge of PPS is to make the stakeholders able to work on their own as a collective directed by a constitution managed by a defined group of people. The governing constitution may have bylaws appropriating the nature of a given locality and community. Besides, it is also important to have adequate fund to carryout activities.
- Chances are there that the vested interested group—political or others—may use the collective's strength in actualizing their own interest since the collective is a vote bank.

CHAPTER 9: RECOMMENDATIONS

❖ Promoting peace and social cohesion in Bangladesh, or in any country, needs projecting the problem from a macro national socio-economic, political, and socio-psychological angle while also investigating the contextual uniqueness of a given locality. BRAC PPS seems to have an exhaustive but general macro projection, whereas in the case of Teknaf and Ukhiya the local socio-pathology was not adequately addressed. Therefore, it is recommended that local-level methodical comprehension be conducted to appropriately address the uniqueness of the locality, in this case settlement of Rohingyas and subsequent problems.

❖ We propose using the *Social Cohesion and Reconciliation* (SCORE) index, which is a tool designed to measure social cohesion and reconciliation as two indicators of peace in multi-ethnic societies around the world. The SCORE index can provide a good snapshot of what the relationships within and between groups are in a country at a specific point in time.

❖ As the religious leader Mr. Jafor says, fishlings need constant oxidization to survive, a spirit or movement requires constant activities for accomplishment. To promote social cohesion a two years program will bring no good unless a long-term execution of a well-knighted program. PPS to make an impact requires short-term, mid-term, and long-term plan and execution

❖ Since promoting peace is a fundamentally a behavior change program materialized through awareness building translated into action, there is a dire need to formulate a full-blown communication strategy.

❖ The principal task is to order people's enthusiasm and spirit into a structured collective to make the peace promotion sustainable. It is certainly expected that soon civil society will

run the movement on its own. This will require a strategic step to formulate pragmatic constitution and bylaws that will govern the collective. No organization can sustain without financial support or relying on the voluntary donation, and therefore systematic financial support needs to be confirmed.

❖ Promoting peace is a longitudinal endeavor, not likely to be achieved in full by 2030, as targeted by SDGs. Therefore, youth need primary emphasis, who will develop a mindset required for the change attempted to bring. The youth of today, if properly nurtured and mobilized will govern the society in twenty years down the road. National examples of *Khelaghor*, etc. suggest forming a formal group with registration that will keep oriented youths together throughout decades. Else, the sudden burning of the spirit will fade.

❖ PPS needs to widen its stakeholders. Including local private sector or entrepreneurs will be a great support to fund the activities. Besides, specially challenged people's inclusion is a vital requirement as SDGs core mantra is not to leave anyone behind.

❖ There are people, like Md. Kamruzzaman, a mathematics and science teacher at Lambari Malka Banu High School in Teknaf Upazila (See Case 3), and Md. Ismail, senior teacher at the Sonar Para Dakhil Madrasa in Ukhiya Upazila, (See Case 2), being filled by their personal spirit have been doing reformative works on their own. Coming in touch with PPS they feel more able to accomplish their goal. PPS program may map out such personalities in the country and make a platform with them having them as the changemaker.

❖ Living in the information age inherently demands the best uses of social media for awareness building, which has not been the case for the project, at least not yet. We suggest a strategic intervention to effectively use the existing and upcoming ICTs

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

Promoting Peaceful Society (PPS) is a right-based approach, which unlike the needs-based approach like income generation etc. fundamentally work on the human right to live peacefully. And as it is the case that peace is something innate and not always tangible. Social scientists use a three-level theoretical framework to define peace: an individual peace, within the human person.

Social peace, relationships between people and social groups. Political peace, ethical values, political infrastructures and accountability of actors and institutions in charge of peace and security. And social cohesion refers to the strength of relationships and the sense of solidarity among members of a community. One indicator of social cohesion is the amount of social capital a community has. Social capital is unevenly distributed in an unjust society caused by bad governance. Lawlessness, syndicated economy and corrupt administration negatively affect social capital. As a result, citizens cannot keep their trust on the state, and fellow citizens—the consequence of which is conflict and shattered peace. In Bangladesh, at a macro level, one may feel a trend of mistrust. In the intervened areas, i.e., Teknaf and Ukhiya, situation is worse due to the temporary but long-time settlement of Rohingyas.

BRAC's tested PPS program had been implemented for two years in Teknaf and Ukhiya which has been enthusiastically welcomed by the community. The intervention was mainly awareness building impetus with a few activities. To bring an impactful outcome, which will bring change in the socio-political realm correlating to peoples' behavior change requires a long time and constant push. Nevertheless, BRAC SELP's peace and social cohesion intervention in the locality has made a positive jerk in the mind of the community, which is now to be continued with necessary reconfiguration in order to genuinely promote peace. Such a novel drive cannot be left halfway.

Peace in life is an inherent desire of humankind, but due to mundane interests, lusts, and many other ills that spirit our life, humans pathetically lack peace. Social cohesion in these circumstances is the precondition that can ensure a community with peaceful coexistence. However, cohesion-building is an all-encompassing task for which projects like PPS may form a wave but are unlikely to achieve the target. Peace promotion needs to be mainstreamed for every development project and activities as is the case for gender and climate change. It is time that reflecting on the lessons learned from PPS—its success and challenges—BRAC takes a pioneering role in mainstreaming the peace-promotion endeavor.