



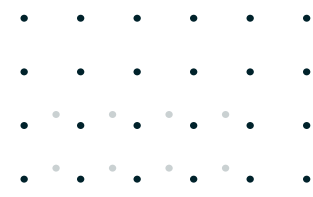
Youth Development Foundation

# Awareness with Human Actions (AHA)



Funded by:

**THE EUROPEAN UNION**



# Partners

FCA (Finn Church Aid), Sarvodaya (Sri Lanka), Centre for Communication and Development of Bangladesh; World Faiths Development Dialogue, the Center for Peace and Justice, Brac University, Islamic Relief Worldwide.

# Project Background

One of the biggest challenges in the global crisis of COVID-19 was to provide the essential and factual information that the community urgently needed. These challenges are particularly acute in the populous and diverse countries of South Asia, and situation-specific information that is relevant to the most vulnerable people is not readily available. Existing identity-based conflicts can and have been used to stigmatize certain groups of people. Given the often-existing lack of trust between communities and authorities, even when appropriate messages are shared, the communities are still not compliant with guidance issued by governments and public health agencies that cannot deliver messages comprehensively. In any society, Women, especially in the digital space, are affected to varying degrees by their responsibility for care and reduced access to information. Since the Pandemic arrived in Pakistan, a heated exchange of online hate speech and hostility has



been observed throughout all social media platforms since its first reported case. The first reported case was alleged to be of a religious pilgrim who returned from Iran and belonged to a specific sect. The misinformation and hate speech was widely spread, and the masses started to add fuel to this conspiracy. Some instances of religious prejudice and blasphemy accusations were also observed in different regions of the country.

In this context, there was a clear need for reliable information about COVID-19 that strengthens peaceful and inclusive societies. This work required motivating critical community influencers, including religious leaders and youth and women leaders, to spread factual messages and promote human solidarity. Peacemakers, including religious and traditional leaders, women, and youth, are well-positioned to function at the time of crisis as resilient community actors, potential opinion leaders, and innovative collaborators in addressing the Pandemic and responding to the immediate needs of countering misinformation and hate speech. In addition, they are well-positioned to detect early signs of potentially escalating conflict, narratives used by violent extremist groups, misuse of power and violence that may be otherwise hidden while the global attention is on the Pandemic.



# Project Objective:

The overall AHA objective in its implementation areas could be stated as "To contribute to the response efforts of the COVID-19 Pandemic by preventing conflict and building social cohesion in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and broader South Asia.

But given the Specific objective of the project, it could be stated as:

***"To increase outreach for initiatives that promote awareness of COVID-19 and constructive narratives that reduce discrimination, hate speech, and stigmatization against specific communities, primarily targeting religious leaders, and women and youth leaders as community influencers."***







# Project Activities:

- Youth Development Foundation (YDF) designed, planned and organized the communications and dissemination actions to raise awareness, counter hate speech and spread constructive narratives through social media channels and traditional media.
- The project targeted activities focused on the use of media to advance social cohesion and prevent hate speech and discrimination by developing an effective communication package and overall strategic communication campaign to disseminate and amplify messages in targeted countries and regions. The project activity was designed so that these communication actions will engage key religious leaders, youth and women leaders and change-makers, media actors, CSOs, policymakers and the wider public. YDF developed 20 Audio/Video messages of diverse natures and broadcasted/Published them through traditional media (Radio/TV/Cable TV) and social media, reaching a massive audience across the region.
- YDF also developed more than 13000 offline communication material and disseminated it across Pakistan to be publicly posted/published/displayed at key venues such as Universities, educational institutes, worship places, vaccination centres, hospitals, public offices, Government offices, civil society offices and bus stops etc.
- The project outreached to shortlist 15 small grants / local initiatives from Pakistan to strengthen local peacebuilders, mainly women and youth, to foster social cohesion at the grass-root level. The 15 small grants recipients were selected from a pool of 100+ applicants
- YDF worked on capacity building and Mentorship of the selected small grantees on organizational development, gender mapping, inclusion, and operational and technical aspects.
- YDF did the capacity building of more than 100 stakeholders on Social media and fact-checking involving the country's best mentors and Trainers.



## Outcomes of the Project:

Based on the activities devised to attain the maximum proximate of the objectives, the project's successful outcomes have been:

1. Enhanced capacities of religious and traditional leaders and women and youth leaders to increase awareness on COVID-19 prevention and response that emphasize collaboration by different faiths and communities
2. Increased conflict prevention-focused collaborative initiatives at national and regional levels to strengthen inclusive communities beyond COVID-19.





# Project Beneficiaries

Through the AHA project, YDF reached more than half a million masses through social media. In addition, the communication material published by YDF through traditional media reached more than 20 million masses across Pakistan. AHA project benefited 15 grassroots initiatives from Pakistan that further increased the project's reach to more than 100,000 masses, mainly youth, women and religious leaders. Through consultation meetings, YDF assisted more than 300 potential stakeholders in sitting and talking with community members (youth & women), considering the recommendations, and developing a possible plan of action to counter hate speech and hostility through misinformation. More than 130 individuals were capacitated to learn in-depth about "social media and fact-checking" through two days of training following a module developed by Media experts.



# IEC Developed

YDF reached out to local community leaders, religious leaders, women and youth leaders/opinion makers for the AHA narrative and brought many famous names on board. The Messages were broadcasted on National and Regional Television along with the radio to reach rural masses, mostly household and working women. The Messages were also supported with regional language to enhance comprehension and reach grass root level. Meanwhile, the messages were also shared on social media through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. As a result, the message reached more than one million masses through television and radio. While on social media, the messages reached more than 350,000 consumers accumulatively. YDF engaged Doctors, especially female doctors, to promote a message of denouncing the hysteria, misinformation and hoax created among the masses and produced 5 video



messages for the campaign. The five videos went on air through social media, Television and Radio. For Electronic media, the messages reached more than a million audiences altogether. On social media, the same messages reached up to 150,000+ audiences. To commemorate the work of extraordinary women that have been the epitome of strength, social cohesion, and harmony amid the Pandemic, YDF contributed to a regional campaign titled "Hygiene Heroine". For Offline Communication, YDF printed, distributed and monitored the publishing of 9100 posters to be shared through local peacebuilders and civil society. The offline material additionally reached approximately 250,000 masses across Pakistan.



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