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NETWORKS FOR PEACE

OVERVIEW

Identity-based violence and hate speech are on the rise in South and Southeast Asia. Yet actors working to address these issues often do so in isolation and/or lack support to magnify their impact. Networks for Peace uses its regional convening power to collectively engage and support civil society organizations (CSOs) and key influencers in advancing understanding and peaceful coexistence to mitigate growing polarization of ethnic and religious identities across the region. Working with partners in Burma, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and the Tibetan community in exile in India, Networks for Peace fosters intra- and interfaith harmony and social cohesion through grants, capacity building, research, and regional knowledge sharing.

GOALS

The overarching goal of Networks for Peace is to have stronger and more effective regional initiatives promoting regional security and amplifying moderate voices of peace and inclusivity in Asia, which is supported by two development objectives: (1) to strengthen capacities and inclusive linkages among organizations, networks, and key influencers working in the region to prevent nationalist and extremist sentiment from growing and turning violent; and (2) to expand access to a regional knowledge base dedicated to understanding and addressing religious nationalism and extremism.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Inclusive Programming. Women, youth, and other marginalized groups are often discriminated against and excluded from traditional peacebuilding spaces. To address this issue, Networks for Peace provided comprehensive Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) training and mentoring so that CSOs and religious leaders can effectively advance inclusion through their policies, practices, and activities. Successful examples of putting this training into practice include:

- A Burma-based organization built on their experience working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) activists in the region to design a practitioner's note for the organization and alumni which outlines the steps and skills required to work collaboratively with LGBTQI+ activists and communities in designing a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQI+ individuals in faith-based peacebuilding dialogues.
- A Sri Lanka-based organization incorporated sign language interpretation into their social media content addressing online mis- and disinformation. The organization is the first in the country to integrate sign language into their online content, giving people with disabilities the opportunity to be included and informed about harmful campaigns in Sri Lanka.

Non-Traditional Partnerships. Effective peacebuilding requires a whole-of-society approach. Networks for Peace supported 99 new initiatives and engaged 3,791 civil society representatives and key influencers including non-traditional actors, such as religious leaders and members of marginalized communities, to strengthen regional networks of peacebuilding. It also partnered with 17 local CSOs, communications organizations, faith-based organizations, and private tech companies to support inclusive and locally-led initiatives that promote peace, pluralism, and understanding. A few examples include:

- A Thailand-based organization established a gender-diverse network of regional peace influencers from Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand that included ordained female monastics, a youth leader, women, LGBTQI+ advocates, and Buddhist monks.
- The establishment of the *Dangerous Speech Monitoring and Mitigation Network in Thailand*, which brought together one CSO, one communications firm, and two private tech companies, leveraged their diverse and unique expertise to collectively address dangerous and hateful speech in Thailand.

Knowledge and Evidence. The project has produced and shared 587 knowledge and learning products featuring topics such as best practices on intra- and interfaith dialogue, the role of women and youth in peacebuilding, and addressing online dangerous speech. 92 percent of partners reported using knowledge and evidence from these learning products and exchanges to design and implement more effective and inclusive approaches to mitigate extremism and violence, and 100 percent of partners reported increases in knowledge on ethnoreligious conflict and extremism in Asia through tools and resources generated by Networks for Peace.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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