

BACKGROUND

Political violence and violent extremist groups had long been present in Bangladesh, but from 2013 onwards, and particularly after the July 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery attack in Dhaka, where 17 foreign nationals were killed, violent extremism unrelated to elections and national politics intensified, targeting foreigners, LGBTI activists, secular bloggers, and religious minorities. However, since 2017, Bangladesh witnessed a declining trend in violent extremism, with no major attacks reported. The Global Terrorism Index improved, and members of communities reported an increased sense of security.

Bangladesh became a GCERF partner country* in 2015 and graduated from GCERF programming in June 2024. Over 09 years GCERF has invested USD 10.9 million in the country, with 2 active grants worth USD 1.15 million in round 3 supporting two local civil society organisations (CSOs). The investment supported the active involvement of civil society organisations in strengthening community resilience, increasing community agency, equal access to opportunities, institutionalising youth peace platforms and resource mobilisation for preventing violent extremism initiatives.

GCERF pioneers a unique model of investment designed to promote a whole-of-society approach and ensure the sustainability of our programmes. Under this model, in each partner country, we support national governments in establishing a steering committee called the Country Support Mechanism (CSM).

In Bangladesh, the CSM was chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) and brought together relevant government agencies, civil society organisations, and donor representatives to provide strategic direction for the programs, ensure results, and progressively take ownership of funding community-level efforts to prevent violent extremism.

GCERF'S INVESTMENT STRATEGY IN BANGLADESH

GCERF's investment strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to address the drivers of violent extremism and guides civil society organisations in designing their programmes. According to GCERF's needs assessment and consultations with relevant stakeholders, there were three main drivers of violent extremism in Bangladesh:

1. Lack of trust in government
2. Lack of socio-economic opportunities
3. Religious divide



WHERE

- Chattogram – Cox's Bazar
- Greater Dhaka – Dhaka
- Rajshahi – Chapai Nawabganj
- Khulna – Satkhira

WHO

- Secondary school and madrasa students (male and female)
- University-level students (male and female)
- Out-of-school and unemployed youth (male and female)
- Virtual youth (male and female)
- Religious and Community Leaders (male and female)
- Governance Actors (Local authorities, Security and Justice Actors, male and female, National authorities)

*Partner countries are those in which GCERF funds civil society organisations to implement initiatives aimed at preventing violent extremism.

STORY OF CHANGE

TRANSFORMING HEARTS: MONK SREE TAPOSH SEN'S JOURNEY IN PVE

In the serene setting of Rajarkul Union Historical Rangkut Buddhist temple, nestled in the heart of Cox's Bazar – The revered residential chief of the temple, Monk Sree Taposh Sen's journey towards PVE began in November 2019 – When he joined the YPSA CEVEC project as a religious leader of Ramu. Initially uncertain about the nuances of violence and extremism, Monk Sree Taposh Sen's understanding deepened through orientation and training provided by YPSA CEVEC, leading to an increase in his commitment to safeguarding his community against the dangers of anomy, smuggling, and terrorist activities.

Driven by a sense of duty, Monk Sree Taposh Sen embarked on a mission to spread awareness and understanding of peace. He engaged in dialogue with fellow monks and followers during each sermon, urging them to disseminate the messages of PVE to their acquaintances and practitioners, fostering a culture of resilience against VE and promoting brotherhood among all.

His dedication did not go unnoticed. Principle Sree Jyotisen of the Historical Rangkut Buddhist Temple commended Monk Sree Taposh Sen's integrity and unwavering commitment to guiding his community towards the path of righteousness. Monk Sree Taposh Sen's influence extends far beyond the confines of his pagoda walls.

His advocacy for peace and unity reverberates throughout the community, inspiring others to join the cause.

Monk Sree Taposh Sen continues to plant the seeds of change, nurturing a future where violence and extremism hold no sway.

"I received training and information on PVE from the YPSA CEVEC project, and I shared these insights with my fellow monks. I urged them to disseminate these messages to their followers and practitioners. I also engaged in discussions about this issue with my followers and practitioners, and I am committed to continuing these efforts."

Monk Sree Taposh Sen, Cox's Bazar



PVE messages are delivered during the Regular sermon in the Pagoda

KEY RESULTS

Cumulative from 2017 until 2024

169,000

individuals joining interfaith/religious, intercommunity, intergenerational dialogues, consultation and roundtable to foster social cohesion and solidarity

152,790

civic and safe spaces established to foster dialogue, mental health, and well-being

129,950

individuals trained on PVE, conflict sensitivity, critical thinking, conflict resolution skills to strengthen community resilience and susceptibility to extremist agenda and recruitment

9,980

people receiving livelihoods or economic support to strengthen their economic resilience against violent extremism

GCERF'S VALUE PROPOSITION

GCERF'S UNIQUE MODEL OF INVESTMENT PRIORITISES:

Community-ownership and localisation: We invest in trusted grassroots civil society organisations that prioritise the needs and grievances of communities most affected by violent extremism. Many of these organisations have never received international funding before.

Sustainability: Our programmes involve all groups of society and strengthens trust between government, civil society and community members to build stronger, more resilient societies. This ensures that initiatives and structures continue to be relevant and effective.

Robust monitoring and evaluation processes: Our multi-layered monitoring and evaluation system, operating locally and globally, provides continuous feedback on programme effectiveness, identifies areas for improvement, and ensures objectives are consistently met.

Knowledge sharing: Our global network of civil society organisations working on PVE facilitates the exchange of good practices and lessons learned, fostering collaboration and enhancing the effectiveness of interventions. We also share our experiences through our participation in various conferences, publishing of articles and research papers in reputed journals to advance the understanding of PVE.

Capacity strengthening: We strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to manage large-scale grants and implement effective initiatives, while also enhancing government capacity to develop comprehensive, holistic strategies to prevent violent extremism.



GCERF
Preventing Violent Extremism
and Terrorism

Find out more about becoming an investor, our work, and the collective impact we make at:
www.gcerf.org
contact.bangladesh@gcerf.org

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