

Thematic Strategy Paper

Youth and Social Cohesion

**Prepared by
Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF)**

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List of Acronyms

BBS	Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
COPE	Creating Opportunities for the Poor and Excluded People
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DFID	Department for International Development
EPR	Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh
FYP	Five Year Plan
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LF	Logical Framework
LFS	Labour Force Survey
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
ToC	Theory of Change
UK Aid	A British Initiative for International Development Assistance
EU	European Union
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls

1. Introduction

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is a national Non-government Organisation (NGO) that promotes human rights and good governance through funding, policy advocacy and capacity building of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). MJF assists in supporting entitlements of people by building their capacity to demand basic services and raise voice against rights violation through support to local /national CSO's and peoples movements. MJF also works on the supply side to promote organisations responsiveness towards the demands of people, especially the poor and marginalized. MJF's work includes policy advocacy which has facilitated enactment of some most progressive and pro-poor laws and policies of the last 15 years. MJF is known for testing innovative approaches and willingness to take risks.

MJF has gained credibility over the years as an organisation with high standards of financial and programme accountability along with an effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system capable of reporting on achievements, results and lessons learned. MJF is governed by a nine-member Governing Board comprised of eminent personalities from civil society.

MJF received grant from Department for International Development (DFID) in 2002 as a project of CARE Bangladesh to implement HUGO (Human Rights and Governance) Project. After successful completion of four years under CARE management, MJF started its journey as an independent organisation, obtaining registration from NGO Affairs Bureau and Joint Stock Company. Since then MJF has received A British Initiative for International Development Assistance (UKAid) grants in two more phases. In 2013, MJF received over 26 million GBP for the Creating Opportunities for the Poor and Excluded People (COPE) Project which was completed in June 2017. In October 2017, UKAid awarded a 5-year Project titled '**Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh**' (EPR) to MJF.

MJF Vision:

A world free from poverty, exploitation and discrimination where people live in dignity and human security.

MJF Mission:

Promotion of human rights and governance through partnership with different stakeholders including duty bearers to ensure dignity and well-being of all people, especially the marginalized.

MJF will support CSO's to work on the following programme areas.

- a. Tackling Marginalization & Discrimination (including rights of ethnic people)
- b. Security and Rights of Women and Girls
- c. Decent & Safe Work (Protection of Workers and Working Children)
- d. Youth & Social Cohesion
- e. Strengthening Public Institutions

Moreover, two other cross cutting issues i.e. Disability and Women's Economic Empowerment is integrated with all other programmes.

Youth and Social Cohesion is a new programme for MJF under EPR which will work to provide young people opportunities to become active citizens and agents of progressive change. This will include training in life skills, leadership and support for income generation.

This thematic paper, produced after a series of consultations with all level of MJF staff, stakeholders and experts, builds on strengths and experiences of MJF. The paper highlights lessons learned, contextual realities, EPR Business Case, priorities of the 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) of Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also clarifies specific problems associated with thematic issues, programme brief, programme implementation, approach, coverage, intended key results, Theory of Change (ToC) and monitoring mechanism for the next five years.

2. Youth and Social Cohesion

In 2015, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security to recognize the potential of youth leadership. The resolution recognizes the critical role of youths in promoting and maintaining peace and calls for all community to emphasize young people as critical partners for peace. It is the right time for MJF to engage in this issue and work with youths who are our future leaders to shape a better future for all of us.

Young people, as the most important social force of the country and formulate the energetic and dynamic section of society. They have an important role to play in the current and future social, political and economic development of the country. Youth force is the means through which the country replenishes its values and culture. They can act as a major agent for the socio economic development of the country. (OSCE 2012).

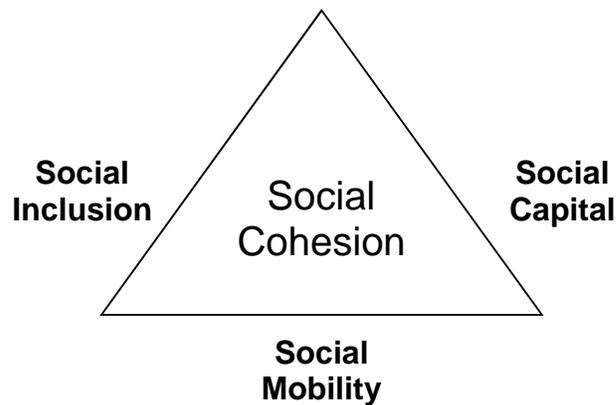
Youths constitute one third of the total population of Bangladesh, therefore, for this important portion of the population, it is critical that a national outlook is determined in order to harness and utilize their true potential. Youths are the strongest, most self-confident, creative and productive guiding force of any nation through whom the hopes and aspirations of a nation is reflected. The endless potential of youths can be utilized for themselves, for the society and for the nation. Development of a nation is, to a large extent dependent on the spirit and aspiration of the youth population. Therefore, it is important to explore and utilize all their potentialities and possibilities. As a Human Rights and Social Development organisation, MJF has prioritized work with the youths in order to explore their opportunities/vulnerabilities and capabilities through a new thematic programme area - Youth and Social Cohesion.

Definition: MJF defines **social cohesion** as the degree of social integration and inclusion in communities and society at large, and the extent to which mutual solidarity finds expression among individuals and communities.

A society is considered cohesive when it

- Works toward the well-being of all its members;
- Fights exclusion and marginalization;
- Creates a sense of belonging;
- Promotes trust among different opinion groups; and
- Offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility (rising from a lower to a higher social class or status).

MJF also considers “**social cohesion**” as a combination of Social Inclusion, Social Capital and Social Mobility.



Social Inclusion: process of improving the terms for individuals and groups among the youths to take part in society. It aims to empower the excluded, poor and marginalized people to take advantage of rising global opportunities.

Social Capital: the resources that result from youths cooperating together toward common ends.

Social Mobility: the ability of individuals or groups of youths to move upward in status based on wealth, occupation, education, or other social variables.

3. What Causes Alienation of Youths from Society

The majority of youths face a variety of problems such as unemployment, lack of skills to match market demand and a general feeling of alienation because of unmet needs of this particular age group. High rate of illiteracy and lack of quality education are major challenges for them. Youth unemployment results in frustration and leading them towards harmful activities such as violence, drug addiction, misuse of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and in extreme cases potential for radicalization. Absence of sound recreation, role models to emulate and lack of vision for future are also other challenges. Many young people are being used and exploited by political parties. Involvement in radicalization process and violent extremism has emerged as a new threat for the youths and Nation as well. (BBC, 2016) Therefore, there is a need to understand and address these drivers of extremism.

Another problem of youths is the different kinds of education being imparted to them in Bangladesh. The English medium, Bangla medium and Madrasa or religious education has created rift and social divisions among the youth population. Except for some private endeavours, no significant effort has been taken to bring them together.

4. Situation in Bangladesh

Youths of Bangladesh like in many other countries of the world are most vulnerable to social alienation. Bangladesh has a youth population of about 52 million, which is more than 33% of the total population (BBS 2015). An integrated development approach for this huge segment of the society is a priority for the

country as well as for the government. According to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2013¹ youth unemployment rate is 8.1% while the national unemployment rate is 4.3%. This survey also shows that among employed persons aged 15-29, those with university degree have highest rate of unemployment (16.4%) and the female unemployment rate of the similar group is much higher (23.5%) (BBS 2015). Bangladesh is one of the ten lowest ranked countries (Ranked 177 in 2016) in the employment and opportunity creation for youth (Global Youth Development Index and Report 2016).

Individuals whose expectations for social mobility and economic welfare have been frustrated are at a greater risk of radicalization. (Bhatia, K., & Ghanem, H. 2017)

It is important to take this youth dimension into consideration and increase engaging them in mainstream policy discussions to avoid growing a sense of disengagement among them which leaves young people vulnerable and unable to contribute positively to society. On the other hand, not addressing needs of youths may lead them towards violence and other anti-social activities.

The backgrounds of the Gulshan attackers demonstrates that radicalization can affect individuals of all educational levels and socio-economic backgrounds. Thus an important short and medium- objective is to understand the drivers of radicalization and extremism. According to Global Terrorism Index 2017 by Institute for Economics and Peace, Bangladesh ranks 21 for its trend towards extremism, this is higher for Bangladesh than any previous time. Moreover, the security experts apprehend the risk of radicalization and social instability in some parts of Bangladesh due to the Rohingya influx and its consequent social impact.

Bangladesh is passing through a phase called “Demographic Dividend” where 60% of the population is between the age of 16 to 35 years. This is a time of great opportunity as well as challenge. This situation will remain for the next 20 years only and therefore Bangladesh has the potential to go forward, develop as a modern progressive, inclusive democratic poverty free nation if the potential of the youth population is utilized fully. With this in mind, government has formulated a National Youth Policy to ensure favourable environment towards productive practical education, training and self-employment for the youths and bring out their dormant potentialities including leadership and responsible citizenship aiming at national progress.

5. MJF’s Previous Work

In the last DFID supported COPE Project, MJF reached the youths population through different programmes and interventions. A huge number of children graduated from the ‘Protection of Working Children’ programme who belong to this group now and in need of some interventions for their protection and development. The previous ‘Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)’ programme targeted young and adolescent boys and girls, mostly girls to stop early marriage, other programmes on persons with disability, ethnic minority, and marginalized groups also focused on youths. Recent dialogue with youth representatives provided some insights for MJF intervene in this area. These are: decent employment, skill development matching market needs, protection from all kind of harmful activities including drugs, misuse of ICT, protection from being used by political parties to fulfil their agenda;

¹ Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). 2015a. Report on Labour Force Survey (LFS) Bangladesh 2013. Dhaka: BBS Statistics and Information Division, Ministry of Planning.

political terrorism etc. and moreover, development of leadership and democratic values to become active citizens.

For the last six years MJF has worked with different youth platforms like debate clubs, film society, cultural clubs and university based youth platforms on an ad hoc basis particularly on the issue of misuse of ICT for spreading radical religious propaganda. At present MJF is implementing a Project, Torun Alo, funded by Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), which aims to engage youths in constructive ways so that they can protect themselves and communities from radicalization and violent extremism. MJF has a long experience to work with disadvantaged young population for their empowerment. Besides, MJF has experience to involve children and youth in policy advocacy through child parliament and social engagement initiatives.

6. Lessons from Previous Work

MJF has been working with the youth community for a relatively shorter period of time and so, there is no significant lessons that can be branded as worked well or did not work well. However, following are few issues that can give a glimpse of some lessons derived from various initiatives globally.

What worked well

Inventory of the best practices on de-radicalization from the different Member States of the European Union (EU), published by TERRA, where the best practices of 22 countries have been compiled and a common strategy developed recommend to equip the youth with proper information for youth development and engage them with constructive role including sports and cultural events. The youth development programmes were focused on economic assistance, counselling, and placed little emphasis on ideological concerns linked to de-radicalization and the well-being of their lives (Koehler, 2015, p. 127; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013, pp. 99-100).

The internet is a new tool for broadcasting terror in real time with live video streaming from different countries. In future, more sophisticated forms of technology, the Internet of Things (IoT), self-driving cars and smart cities will create even greater cyber vulnerabilities that any vested interest group can exploit (Global Terrorism Index (GTI), 2017). Globally cyber literacy, security and safer use of ICT is being promoted as a mean to develop youths with proper skill for personal and professional life.

There are precedents for such programmes in a range of countries including Denmark, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Indonesia, and Malaysia. The government should carefully study and audit these programmes to see which models (or which aspects from multiple models) would work best in a Bangladeshi context.

A more long-term solution involves greater political engagement, including creating spaces for lawful political activism and participation by youth. Mature democracies must fully commit to establishing a robust marketplace of ideas, and vigorously protect their citizens' rights to express themselves and participate in social and political life in a peaceful manner.

What did not work well

As mentioned earlier, MJF is working for a relatively short period of time in this area, limitation of strategies from those activities are yet to be measured.

7. Programme Brief:

Goal: Young people have opportunities to become active citizens and agents of progressive change.

Outcome:

- Young people are developed as leaders and engaged in community level voluntary activities.
- Evidence base is built to understand and address drivers of extremism and radicalisation.
- Increased opportunities for young people to develop their skills and income generation activities.

Outputs:

- Youths are equipped with proper life skills to contribute positively in society.
- Youths are capable of logical thinking and engaged in constructive debate.
- Youths have improved skill of rationale decision making.
- Youth seek support to understand and address agents and drives of extremism.
- Youths received vocational training on different potential trades.
- Youths are linked with job market and income opportunities.
- Developed skill on sustainable livelihood management.
- Involved in collective economic forums.
- Enhanced leadership skills among youths.
- More engagement of youth in social and cultural activities.
- Youth forums are activated at different level.
- Youth Parliament speaks on behalf of the need of youths
- Youths learn use of social accountability tools to ensure responsiveness of relevant public institutions.

8. Programme Approach:

MJF approach to promote youth and build social cohesion is basically promoting economic citizenship, creating income opportunities, leadership development, promoting youth as change agents, awareness and mobilization.

Programme Priority Areas:

- Develop youth leadership and promote active and responsible citizenship.
- Engage in income generation activities and opportunities.
- Understand and address drivers of violent extremism and other forms of violence.

Economic Citizenship: MJF emphasises on the “Economic Citizenship” of youths that refers to “economic and civic engagement to promote sustainable livelihoods, sustainable economic and financial well-being, a reduction in poverty and rights for self and others”. Ashoka, the global association of the world’s leading social entrepreneurs, defines economic citizenship as existing in “an environment where every citizen has the opportunity and the capacity to exercise his or her economic, social and cultural rights”

Economic citizenship consists of four components: financial inclusion, financial education and social and livelihoods education.

Income Opportunity: The programme has planned to integrate the Economic Citizenship of youth as a means to the broader framework of Social Cohesion. Targeted youths will be equipped with knowledge, skills, social exposure with a sense of purpose to develop themselves as positive change makers in society while other youths will also be benefitted to exchange of ideas, learning and replication. Youths will be linked to vocational skill development and employment creation.

Leadership Development: The positioning of youth in society has a bearing on their leadership potential and their possible roles in peace building. Leadership development training will be given to targeted youth. The programme will be implemented in partnership with youth focused organisations across the country. Maintaining the major framework and the result areas, innovative approaches will be adopted with different youth groups. Youth Parliament will be one such initiative where youths from different regions and background will come to raise their demand to the policy makers. Media in different forms will be used to disseminate positive messages to motivate youth towards positive citizenship.

Youth as Change Agents: Youths will be encouraged to act as progressive change agents to create a prosperous society that promotes peace and social harmony. Involvement of youths in social action to encourage responsible citizenship and build resistance towards VAWG.

Awareness and Mobilization: Youth and Social Cohesion programme will develop awareness of targeted youth community by promoting awareness campaigns against all forms of violence to motivate them to be gender sensitive and prevent VAWG. Involvement of youths in cultural events and sports, youth dialogue with duty bearers and relevant social actors, innovative engagement of youths in social causes and community work will develop themselves as positive change makers in society.

Certain policy interventions and advocacy will be undertaken to influence the policy makers for creating conducive environment and formulating laws that will address the challenges that present day youths face.

9. Programme Coverage:

Target Population: A total number of 100000 youths will be covered under this programme. The target population will be youths between ages of 15-30 years group. The gender ratio of the programme participants will be deliberately maintained to reduce gender disparity and to ensure girls and women's engagement in the programme.

Stakeholders: As stakeholders, both state and non-state actors will be involved according to their relevance and interest during the different phases of the programme. Youths from vulnerable community will be prioritized to engage with programme interventions. A cross cultural exchange opportunities also will be created among the beneficiaries to have a wider social network and understanding of the issues that will be dealt by them.

Geographic Location: The programme will cover both urban and rural areas all over Bangladesh.

10. Institutional Capacity of MJF

MJF, at present, is implementing two projects on youths funded by GCERF which is focused exclusively on addressing violent extremism. Beyond that MJF has working relations with relevant stakeholders on

youth development programmes. MJF is one of the few organisations in Bangladesh that is implementing Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) programme targeting youths. MJF is in the process of gradual development of its institutional capacity in this programme area. Meanwhile, it has developed a working relationship with important state actors and international platforms. A Programme Coordinator will be responsible for the programme with a team already managing another programme focused on youths, moreover, this programme being new will be directly supervised by the Executive Director (ED). MJF also has the capability to bring in expert advice as per the need of the programme. A strong and well managed Capacity building Unit within MJF will address all training needs of partner organisation.

Being a new programme, MJF will be open to learning from other similar initiatives in and outside Bangladesh. Evidence gathering of what works well will be a prime objective of this programme.

11. Integration of Cross Cutting Issues

Youth and Social Cohesion programme will contribute to meet the overall target of EPR Project by sharing achievements in these areas: women's economic opportunity creation, child protection, disability, gender, and ethnic minority issues.

The Programme will try to make optimum integration with the above mentioned programmes and issues so that a holistic approach is followed in the project areas to create a synergy effect. Each of these cross cutting issues will have specific interventions and result indicators so that periodic monitoring can be done. Most importantly, segregated result targets for this programme will have supplementary programme relations with respective programmes progress, lessons and other relevant information will be shared with the broader programme team of EPR. The programme will be linked to networks and platforms with similar objectives and target group to create larger impact.

12. Risk Analysis

Risk of Youth and Social Cohesion programme will be dealt with by MJF's overall risk management strategies.

13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system of MJF has been developed in light of its core principles of a rights based approach. In the EPR Project it will be focused on gaining knowledge and evidence and explore best practices to evaluate progress and apply learnings to enhance programme efficiency and effectiveness.

MJF will adopt a simplified M&E system for the EPR Project, which will emphasize routine process monitoring and tracking results from the grassroots level. During inception phase, MJF will develop a detailed plan for process monitoring and framework for capturing evidence and learning. Based on the Logical Framework and ToC, MJF will revisit its M&E framework to make sure that all programmes are well aligned with the ToC and on track to achieve milestones of the LF. However, the LF and ToC are living documents and will undergo revisions to outline data requirements, data sources, data collection and analysis, and how monitoring and evaluation will be undertaken, including key evaluation questions. The

revised M&E system will guide MJF and its' partners' projects to track the regular progress and capture the changes.

M&E system will emphasize learning and sharing to gain critical analysis from wide range of relevant stakeholders and embrace critical insights to fine tune programme strategies. This system will give emphasis on systematic documentation of lessons from the EPR. A number of surveys and action research will be undertaken to collect programme and project's M&E information, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Detailed indicators will be finalised through a participatory discussion process with DFID and MJF. However, some of the research questions and indicators are suggested in the following table:

Name of the Programme	Key research question (suggested)	Key Indicators
Youth and Social Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How youth engagement contribute to social development? • How youth engagement contribute to protect themselves from counter violent extremism? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of targeted youths are involved in community level voluntary activities. • Number/ percentage of youth understands drivers of extremism

Since this is a new theme for MJF, the programme paper and strategies will be reviewed every two years through consultations with different stakeholders including youths. The programme will evolve gradually and MJF will bring in expert advice as necessary. Effort will be made to identify other DFID funded projects around the world to access best practices and learning.

A huge research gap exists as limited work has been done with youths in Bangladesh, therefore, it will be important to identify research gap first. After that a series of research and surveys will be commissioned to understand the present situation of youths and the strategies required to address the challenges. The engagement and representation of youths will also be ensured in this process. For the assessment of the progress and learning specific issues based study will be initiated from the programme. These study findings will be used for the further development of the programme as well as part of knowledge base of Youth and Social Cohesion programme.

MJF sees this thematic paper as a living document which will be reviewed periodically to integrate new ideas, learning and experiences while working with the youth population.

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Annex 1: Theory of Change (ToC)

