

iTAG^e

Talking Across Generations on the State of Prevention of Violent Extremism in South Asia

led by the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**
in partnership with **UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute for
Peace and Sustainable Development** and
UNESCO New Delhi Cluster Office

1. Background

The South Asia region is experiencing increasing levels of ideological polarization, hate speech and intercommunal tensions. The region's overall peacefulness deteriorated in the Global Peace Index 2020, making it the world's second least peaceful region.

Driven by a desire to build sustainable peace among South Asian communities, the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace and Sustainable Development (MFIEP), the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), and UNESCO's New Delhi Cluster Office joined hands to work together to promote social cohesion and to place young South Asians at the center of efforts to prevent violent extremism.

In the first phase of this collaborative work, in February 2020, UNESCO MGIEP, UNAOC and the Sri Lanka National Commission of UNESCO organized a regional workshop on preventing violent extremism (PVE) in South Asia. The #YouthWagingPeace regional workshop brought together 35 young leaders from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Myanmar, and fostered their social and emotional, critical media literacy, and project management skills.

The youth leaders curated 20 community-wide activities to be implemented in six countries, directly impacting 1,000+ community stakeholders. In addition to the individual community-wide activities, the youth agreed to undertake a short study on the state of PVE in the region.

The State of PVE in South Asia Youth-led Report

An output of the second phase of the #YouthWagingPeace project, implemented by UNESCO MGIEP and UNAOC, is the production of a Youth-led Report on the State of PVE in South Asia. Since fall 2020, a group of 12 young authors from South Asia have been leading the drafting of this report with the support of 3

academic authors. The study will provide an overview into violent extremism, its manifestations, drivers and preventative efforts in the context of South Asia. Pertinently, it will conclude with youth-centered actionable recommendations for policymakers. Each chapter will combine uncensored youth case studies with the latest research to produce fresh and robust perspectives for policymakers in specific communities, countries and the region as a whole.

Concretely, it will give policymakers an accessible, youth-centered overview of violent extremism in South Asia: what it is, how it manifests, what drives it, what regional stakeholders, especially the youth, are doing about it (through the lenses of formal and non-formal education) and finally, areas for policy intervention to help build resilient and pro-social cultures that organically prevent violent extremism. The report, expected to be published in late 2021, will be widely shared as a PVE resource among key stakeholders (including educators, politicians, media, decision-makers, peacebuilders, religious and community leaders, and young activists). It will also provide young South Asian leaders and peacebuilders with an instrument to mobilize and seek support from their policymakers for youth-led action to prevent violent extremism in the region.

iTAGe: Talking Across Generations on the State of PVE in South Asia

For the purpose of the youth-led report, the youth authors are collecting inputs from young people in South Asia as an attempt to include and amplify youth voices in the efforts to prevent violent extremism across the region. Within this framework, UNAOC, in collaboration with the youth authors, UNESCO MGIEP and UNESCO New Delhi, will organize a youth-driven intergenerational dialogue, called “iTAGe: Talking Across Generations on the State of PVE in South Asia”.

2. Objective of the iTAGe

The iTAGe event provides a non-hierarchical platform for youth to interact, discuss and debate critical issues with senior officials. The event is preceded by a survey, social media interactions and focus group discussions, and hence will serve as one of the key mechanisms to collect representation of young people from the region and serve as an input for the youth-led report.

The ultimate objective of the event is to attract a critical mass of youth who are actively engaged in the issues related to the prevention of violent extremism and peace education in South Asia.

3. Components

- **Survey:** The young authors of the report, with support from UNAOC, UNESCO New Delhi and UNESCO MGIEP, will call on South Asian youth to raise their voices through a survey. The brief survey will be launched through a global social media campaign, calling for youth inputs on

prevention of violent extremism in the region, while online social media discussions are being provoked on different channels.

- **Online Focus Groups:** 30 participants, who provided the most interesting inputs through the survey and online discussions, will be selected by the youth authors of the report for subsequent online focus group discussions. The objective of this focus group discussion is to brainstorm and ideate possible actionable solutions to problems/issues identified through the replies to the survey, and to push forward a youth-led dialogue on important issues related to education for peace and sustainable development and the prevention of violent extremism in South Asia. The focus group discussion will provide the young authors of the State of PVE Report with additional qualitative data while triangulating the information collected through the survey.
- **iTAGe event:** From the focus groups discussions, the young authors will select six active participants to participate in a virtual high-level intergenerational dialogue with three senior officials/experts, working in the field of PVE. The discussion will build on the topics addressed in the focus group meeting and the role of youth and education in the prevention of violent extremism in South Asia. Youth and senior officials will be given equal opportunity to voice their opinions. Utilizing live web streaming, a larger global “audience” will also be able to participate in the live iTAGe event and viewers will be encouraged to participate in the discussion by submitting their questions.

4. Tentative Timeline

- Survey: April 22 - May 27.
- Focus group discussions: June 7.
- iTAGe event: Mid-June.

5. Project partners

The UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) is a specialized “category 1” institute of UNESCO that promotes education for peace and sustainable development and works to foster global citizenship by leading the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4; target 7.¹ The institute develops innovative online pedagogies that teach skills related to socio-emotional learning (SEL), targeted at youth in the age range from 18 to 34.

UNESCO’s New Delhi Cluster Office covers six countries of South Asia – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka. UNESCO’s approach to PVE is intersectoral and integrated, harnessing its

¹ The target is to, by 2030, ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.



expertise in the fields of education, cultural heritage, communications and information, and social and human sciences (encompassing social inclusion, gender, youth, and sports).

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations is a soft-power political tool of the United Nations Secretary-General for conflict prevention and conflict resolution. It is a coalition against extremist forces; a movement to advance mutual respect for cultures, traditions and religious beliefs, and a platform to bridge divides and overcome prejudice, misconceptions, misperceptions, and polarization.