Strong Cities Network

Regional Assessment Report: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism at the Local Level in South Asia

**Strong Cities Network**

Launched at the UN General Assembly in September 2015 and led by the [Institute for Strategic Dialogue](info@strongcitiesnetwork.org), the Strong Cities Network currently comprises 125 official member cities spanning every major global region. It engages mayors and local policymakers as well as frontline practitioners on preventing and countering all forms of violent extremism and works to deliver increased connectivity, effective peer learning, expert training, and proactive, targeted prevention strategies at the municipal and local level on a global scale. For further information, visit our website or contact info@strongcitiesnetwork.org.

**Introduction**

From its inception, the Strong Cities Network (SCN) has supported local leaders and practitioners to share first-hand experience and learning on preventing all forms of violent extremism, informing and improving policy and practice in their own communities. Over the course of 2017-2018, the SCN intensified its work in South Asia, engaging eight member cities from across Bangladesh, India, the Maldives and Pakistan. As cities, towns and local communities the world over have borne the human, economic and social costs of terrorist attacks and social polarisation, so too are they best positioned to effectively counter and prevent them. Moreover, the rapid urbanisation and population growth in the region gives cities a particularly important role in addressing such issues (three out of the ten largest cities in the world are in South Asia, including SCN member city Dhaka). As South Asia has been considered the region most impacted by terrorism since 2002, engaging in preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) work in the region is paramount.

At the local level, the SCN led **city consultations** in Pakistan and Bangladesh to assess local needs and capacities, identify areas for development, and provide tailored advice and expertise on the basis of international best practice. In Pakistan, this activity took place in the margins of a capacity-building workshop that ISD’s core local partner Individualland (IL) convened for Mayors and district officials from all three SCN member cities (Nowshera, Peshawar and Quetta). The second city consultation took place in Bangladesh (Dhaka South and Narayanganj) in February 2019. In Spring 2018, the SCN awarded two **Local Innovation Grants** to Individualland (Pakistan) and SMART (India). The intention of these grants is to strengthen partnerships between communities and local government to develop inclusive and collaborative projects and activities to strengthen community resilience and social cohesion against violent extremism. Finally, in October 2018 two District Council Members from Peshawar travelled to Birmingham for the third SCN city exchange. These exchanges aim to promote and share on a city-to-city basis vital practical tools and initiatives to reduce local risk, prevent violence and build cohesive communities.

At the regional level, the SCN organised a **practitioners’ workshop** in Kolkata, India, in January 2018, which brought together 30 frontline practitioners from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Over two days, participants had in-depth discussions and training on a broad spectrum of violent
extremism affecting the region, each bringing valuable individual experience and local expertise to the table.

The 2018 SCN Global Summit in Melbourne, Australia, gave the opportunity to all SCN member cities to engage at an international level. With a specific focus on the Asia-Pacific region, delegates had the opportunity to meet fellow municipal officials as well as practitioners from all over the world to discuss specific issues pertinent to their own context, including youth engagement, disengagement and recruitment trends.

Continuing this work over the next two years, the SCN will seek to deepen its engagement and support selected partner municipalities in their efforts to counter violent extremism. The SCN will focus on piloting programme models for the development of regionally-tailored thematic expertise. Complementing this model of sequential training and engagement, delivery of these pilot programme models will aim to build impact, sustainability and scalability through building local partnerships with civil society organisations.

This assessment report draws on SCN engagement to date across the region and the local knowledge gained through the various events. It is further informed by recent research and policy analysis, and is designed to augment and provide local context to existing threat assessments and activity overviews. To this end, it looks specifically at how regional trends tie into – or are driven by – localised dynamics, what locally-focused initiatives exist and how they operate, and the role of cities and municipalities in delivering, coordinating and/or owning local responses and prevention measures. It concludes with a set of recommendations on how cities and municipalities can continue to develop their role and what support they require from governments and the wider international community.

SCN Member Cities in South Asia (March 2019)

Terrorism & Violent Extremism: Regional Background & Context

Since 2002, South Asia has been considered the region most impacted by terrorism. Half of the countries in South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh) are in the top 25 of countries most impacted by terrorism (out of 163 countries).\(^3\) In 2016 3,137 attacks took the lives of 5,949 people. The absence of the Maldives from the 2017 Global Terrorism Index (GTI) report could indicate that the country does not, like Bhutan, follow the general trend in South Asia.\(^4\) Nonetheless, failure of
the GTI to depict the Maldives as one of the first countries to produce Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF)\textsuperscript{5} in the world demonstrates the limitations of using purely quantitative CVE assessments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GTI Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GTI Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>8.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>7.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>5.697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ranked</td>
<td>The Maldives</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Global Terrorism Index 2018

Extremist movements are not a recent phenomenon in South Asia, with groups such as Sangh Parivar, a Hindu nationalist movement, dating back to the 1920s. Various conflicts in the region since the end of colonial rule have given rise to numerous permutations of extremism and militancy. This has also had long-lasting negative consequences for the relations between India and Pakistan, as well as between Pakistan and Bangladesh, inhibiting collaboration in this area between those countries.\textsuperscript{6} This chapter will outline general trends and challenges in violent extremism that apply to the four priority countries in this report: Bangladesh, India, the Maldives and Pakistan.

Religiously-inspired extremism has been present in the region for decades. At the transnational level, the Soviet-Afghan conflict of the 1980s played a critical role in the development of regional jihadist narratives. Religion was widely used as a pull factor for recruitment for the war in Afghanistan in 1979, with young Muslims from around the world rallied around the fight against the Soviets.\textsuperscript{7} The war was portrayed as a legitimate jihad, and resulted in creating a vast network of religious seminaries (madrassas) that provided the ideological impetus for the Afghan resistance. The militant networks fostered during the Afghan jihad were not dismantled when it ended and their radicalising influence endured and expanded in subsequent years. The second wave of transnational jihadism in the region is considered to have taken place with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The sporadic U.S. presence in the region has thus fostered a strong anti-Western sentiment, particularly in majority-Muslim countries, after having contributed to the population’s radicalisation in the last two decades.\textsuperscript{8}

In recent years, there have been a number of FTFs from South Asia joining Daesh ranks in Iraq and Syria, with the Maldives leading in terms of per capita rate (see table below). Concerns have also been raised by the affiliation of most of home-grown extremist groups with either Al-Qaeda (AQ) and its regional entity, Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), or Daesh, which strengthens their recruitment capacity. Moreover, this trend can potentially further complicate the regional dynamics, as AQ and Daesh vie for influence.

**Foreign Terrorist Fighters joining ISIS\textsuperscript{5}**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number of FTF</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Per capita FTF rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>40 (October 2015)</td>
<td>161,200,886 (2015)$^\text{10}$</td>
<td>0.0025 in 10’000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>100 (March 2017)</td>
<td>1,339,180,127 (2017)$^\text{11}$</td>
<td>0.0075 in 10’000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Maldives</td>
<td>200 (December 2016)</td>
<td>427,756 (2016)$^\text{12}$</td>
<td>4.7 in 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>650 (August 2016)</td>
<td>193,203,476 (2016)$^\text{13}$</td>
<td>0.034 in 10’000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The evolution of territorial disputes such as that over Kashmir from nationalist into Islamist narratives have also contributed to the proliferation of Islamist groups operating across borders. At the time of partition (1947), the then ruler of the state of Kashmir officially acceded to India. Rejecting his arbitrary decision, a large proportion of the Muslim-majority state protested against the accession to India. Pakistan also demanded a plebiscite to decide Kashmir’s fate based on majority vote – a demand ratified by the UN in 1948 but which remains unrealised to date. The Kashmir dispute has therefore been at the focal point of several violent insurgencies since partition. Whilst the focus of the insurgency remains on territorial and political separatism, there are some groups that have ‘Islamised’ the conflict to widen its scope, particularly post-1980 with Pakistan-based Islamist groups orchestrating attacks in Kashmir and other parts of India.14

At the domestic level, extremist Islamist movements in Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh have sought the establishment of a state and a system of governance to lead under specific interpretations, and generally selective applications, of Sharia law. Socio-economic inequalities as well as the failure to engender an inclusive, representative political culture have played a major role in the ability of radical Islamist groups to mobilise and accentuate localised grievances. Such grievances are then woven into extremist narratives, more recently by transnational Islamist groups such as AQ and Daesh, and this grants them significant influence at the domestic level: two of the five Daesh-affiliated groups that scaled up their attacks in 2016 were in Bangladesh and Pakistan.15

In the Indian context, Islamist movements are generally either linked to the conflict in Kashmir or seek to avenge violence against fellow Muslims mainly perpetrated by Hindutva nationalist groups.16 Hindutva ideology, also known as “Hindu-ness”, “has three pillars – common nation, race, and culture – and forms the basis of an exclusionary national narrative focused exclusively on the rights of Hindus”17. These groups have gained political influence in recent years, as will be seen in the chapter on India. Far-right movements also exist in Pakistan and Bangladesh, though they are reported as being insignificant and uninfluential. India has the most varied extremism profile of the four countries, being home to left-wing extremist movements (Naxalites and Maoists) and separatist movements as well.18

South-Asian history in the last few decades has been shaped by a number of formative conflicts with lasting legacies and divisive impacts that have created polarised societies and animosities between geographic neighbours. Relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan have been fragile since Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan) fought and won independence from Pakistan (formerly known as West Pakistan) in 1971. Bangladesh has accused the Pakistani military of covertly supporting Islamists fighting against Bangladeshi secular movements. Recently, Bangladesh expelled a Pakistani diplomat accused of smuggling money for extremists in 2015.19 Pakistan has in the past supported Islamist groups in Afghanistan and Kashmir in an effort to mitigate India’s influence and consequently its own strategic vulnerabilities in the region.20

India and Pakistan have generally had a complicated relationship since partition in 1947. A dominant existential threat narrative, heightened by mutual nuclear capabilities, underscores Pakistan’s global and regional positioning, its military ‘revisionism’,21 and reflects its opposition to regional Indian influence. Current economic partnerships, the most significant recent example being the expansive China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), can also be situated in this context to offset the impact of the perceived U.S. ‘tilt towards India’.22

Much of South Asia is deeply impacted by issues relating to socio-economic inequality, marginalisation and discrimination relating to age, gender, ethnic background, unemployment, weak rule of law and
governance, human rights violations, political exclusion, and a lack of adequate resources and service delivery within member states. These are just some examples of strong grievances underpinning violent extremist movements, which exacerbate the trajectory of polarisation in this region.23

Local demographics also contribute towards the threat of violent extremism in the region. According to a recent estimate close to 50% of the South Asian population was under 25 in 2017,24 and in Pakistan this percentage was estimated at 52.5%.25 Young people are generally more vulnerable to radicalisation, both on- and offline and comprise a majority amongst radicalised populations in the region.26 Participants of the SCN regional workshop in Kolkata highlighted the specific region-wide risk related to youth unemployment especially amongst youth in higher-education or with university degrees, whose skills were more often exported to foreign markets rather than engaged domestically. Major points they raised indicated that not only were governments in the region failing to capitalise on a significant and growing pool of home-grown technical expertise and talent, but the feeling of a labour market stacked against the highest achievers and best educated was a growing risk in terms of youth disenfranchisement and lack of opportunity, and consequently a potential push factor for violence and conflict.

With widespread internet penetration, radical recruiters have found effective new ways of radicalising youth. The use of social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter or Facebook enables recruiters to reach both a vast audience across the world and specific potential recruits through private messaging and closed groups.27 In South Asia, both Daesh and AQ as well as their affiliates have been known to make extensive use of social media to recruit new members. Given South Asia’s demographics, the high percentage of young population makes the region particularly vulnerable to online radicalisation. In January 2018, South Asia registered 375 million monthly active social media users, ranking second after Eastern Asia. Although social media penetration rates in South Asian countries remain lower than the world’s average, the recruitment basis remains very large in absolute terms.28

Current Regional Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Efforts

This section provides an overview of the region’s current programming on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), violence prevention and social cohesion. Whilst this report seeks to adopt a broadly analytical methodology, the impact of regional P/CVE efforts remains hard to assess, particularly in relation to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and/or civil society organisations (CSOs) projects.

Bangladesh

Islamist extremist recruitment in Bangladesh, both under the auspices of AQ and Daesh as well as domestic groups, exploits a number of socio-economic push factors, as well as contextually specific issues such as the ongoing war crimes tribunals, the Rohingya crisis, and corruption. Although the origins of Bengali nationalism have traditionally been framed in terms of tolerance, diversity and secular ideas, political dynamics have increasingly mobilised Islamist forces within Bangladeshi society. A struggle for power between the dominant political parties in Bangladesh resulted in a politicisation of religion in the decades following independence from Pakistan in 1971.29 Common extremist tactics include targeted killings (mainly of influential secular personalities) and bombings within civilian locales. There is also some presence of far-right extremist groups but their influence and presence is not formative in the broader national context.30
Stronger presence of both Daesh and AQ, however, presents new challenges in the spread of violent extremism in Bangladesh. Whilst local dissident groups have been able to strengthen their capacities by affiliating themselves with disparate transnational terrorist organisations, this has also inadvertently resulted in a race for supremacy in the Islamist space that may have lasting consequences should the Bangladeshi government fail to restrain their influence.31

As these dynamics have evolved, the profile of extremist recruitment has also shifted in recent years. In the past, extremist groups were observed to direct recruitment efforts towards rural populations or youth from impoverished backgrounds; attacks today are often perpetrated by urban, middle class youth that have had the benefit of secular, often advanced levels of education. This trend also accounts for the shift in recruitment patterns from madrassas to mainstream educational institutions.32

The Government of Bangladesh has attempted to address the issue of violent extremism through both hard and soft security measures. It has carried out mass arrests and increased collaboration with India and the U.S. to increase border control capacity and train security forces. It has also brought a number of educational institutions under surveillance for suspected extremist activity. Soft security measures include limited P/CVE programming aimed at raising awareness about alternative religious discourse and community engagement to build social resilience. In 2009, the Government created the 17-member National Committee on Militancy Resistance and Prevention that includes a range of relevant actors including intelligence services, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The committee has sought to adopt a comprehensive P/CVE approach that includes: religious education; P/CVE messaging through print and online media; engagement with educational institutions and with youth through sports and extracurricular activities; revising Madrassa curriculum; controlling extremist messaging on the internet; and local community initiatives. Nonetheless, P/CVE efforts in Bangladesh lack coordination and a clearly defined strategy.33

There have been nascent grassroots initiatives addressing issues related to violent extremism recently in Bangladesh. For instance, the Manusher Jonno Foundation34 is partnering with international organisations to deliver P/CVE activities in both urban and rural areas, while CSOs like the Centre for Research and Information (CRI)35 and the Empowerment & Human Development Society (EHDS)36 are also delivering relevant programming. The major Bangladesh-based NGO, BRAC, which has a primary focus on poverty alleviation, education and development, is increasingly engaging with a P/CVE agenda and has extensive reach across the country.37 The Community Support Mechanism formed through the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) in 2015 funded a programme in Bangladesh to enable religious scholars and local imams to produce counter-narrative messaging.38 A Network for Radio and Communication targeting mass audiences over the radio waves even in the most remote areas hosts talk shows and facilitates public information campaigns to engender positive dialogue and counter messaging against extremism. Other projects, funded by Democracy International and delivered by local NGOs, target social environments around potential recruits by training parents and monitoring extremist content online.39 Closer to government, the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), headed by former senior Bangladeshi diplomats, has high level in-roads to government and is its trusted domestic partner in developing strategy and action planning. Whilst a host of international actors are attempting to support and influence the strategy development, the involvement of BEI is seen as a means through which to ensure policy remains Bangladesh-authored and not foreign-imposed. BEI also aims to establish a nationwide P/CVE networking platform for CSOs and has been working towards providing relevant training for female teachers in the country through a series of training and capacity-building activities.40
India

Of the four countries observed in this report, India has the most diverse extremism profile. Religiously-inspired extremist groups operate on mainly two fronts: those claiming to fight for Kashmiri independence, or those engaged in communal violence.\textsuperscript{41} The latter are often associated with religious extremist movements based on Hindutva ideology, which regularly target minority communities, predominantly Muslims and Christians. Popularised in the early 1920s, Hindutva represents a communal identity based on Hinduism as the predominant form of Hindu nationalism in India. The first such specifically Hindu nationalist organisations such as Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (founded 1925) were founded at that time.\textsuperscript{42} Extremist factions have since mobilised and exploited Hindutva and in recent years the conditions relating to common religious freedoms have progressively deteriorated and facilitated intolerance.\textsuperscript{43}

Other extremist movements in India include left-wing extremism (Naxalites and other Maoist groups), sometimes taking the form of a low-level insurgency. Naxalite issues for instance are directly related to ethnic violence, as testified by local practitioners from north east India during the SCN South Asia Regional Workshop in Kolkata in 2018. Northeast India has suffered from continuous violent uprisings since partition due to separatist movements. In a region inhabited by nearly 213 tribes that resist integration, such groups focus their attacks towards the Indian government and illegal immigrants. Dominant separatist groups in this region include organisations like the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a secular non-Islamic group, as well as Sikh and Tamil separatist groups.\textsuperscript{44}

The Indian government has generally had a reactive hard security approach when responding to violent extremism. In a paper detailing the success of counterterrorism strategies implemented by the Indian government, a former Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army’s Central Command lists all measures taken within the government’s multi-dimensional, overarching approach. Taking a closer look it is clear that most of those measures relate primarily to law enforcement, with very little detail on the efforts made towards addressing the root causes of rising extremism. The same military official lists three initiatives aimed at fostering the government’s approach. The first one looks at strengthening the relations between the government and madrassas and ensuring “a good quality and modern education system”. The second one, led by the Naga Mother’s Association, seeks to create a dialogue between mothers and warring rebel groups. Finally, he mentions that “a few states have provided incentives to various groups to promote their local languages, culture, traditions, art, craft and music at various fora”.\textsuperscript{45} However, there are no details regarding the implementation or tangible results of these initiatives, making any assessment of their effectiveness difficult.

In addition to its failure to develop and implement an effective and comprehensive P/CVE strategy, there is a perception that the government actions can serve to foster a discriminatory attitude towards religious minorities. State authorities have on occasion reportedly allowed, justified or even allegedly facilitated attacks against minority groups, for instance during the riots in Gujarat in 2002, where over a thousand people were killed. In its operations against insurgencies in Kashmir and the North-eastern regions, as well as against left-wing groups, government forces stand accused of committing wide-ranging human rights abuses, including torture and sexual misconduct. Moreover, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) “gave unconditional permission to Indian security forces to shoot on sight, arrest individuals without a warrant, and conduct searches without consent”\textsuperscript{46} and has been heavily criticised for causing civilian casualties. This law was effective in all seven states of Northeast India in the past, and is still applied in Kashmir today.
On the civil society side, SMART has created television programmes featuring mothers of radicalised individuals and victims of terrorism in both India and Pakistan in an effort to develop and disseminate counter-messaging. The NGO is also partnering with local radio stations to reach out to audiences who lack access to the internet or social media to deliver counter-messaging initiatives in north India. Under an SCN local innovation grant, SMART gathered relevant stakeholders from the education sector in Kashmir (government officials, school directors, education officers, teachers, students, mothers, international organisations and civil society representatives) to discuss ways of providing quality and sustained education throughout the lasting conflict as a means of preventing youth recruitment into extremist groups. The Confederation of Voluntary Associations (COVA), a national network of over 700 organisations working for communal harmony, peace and social justice, has introduced P/CVE-related projects such as the launch of Cyber Operations For Fraternity and Integration (COFI) networks, a mechanism to check hate campaigns in social media and ultimately promote tolerance and peace within communities.47

The Maldives

The archipelago of the Maldives in the Indian ocean comprises 26 atolls and a population of 392,709 (2017). A third of the population is concentrated in the capital city of Male, which has one of the highest population densities in the world.48

In the 2008 elections President Gayoom was defeated by Mohamed Nasheed after 30 years of rule. Since then, the Maldives has been suffering from continuous political unrest as different groups vie for political power. In 2012 President Nasheed resigned, but later claimed that he was actually forced out of power after a coup. In 2013 the old regime returned to power with President Gayoom’s half-brother, Abdulla Yameen, at its helm.49 President Yameen’s rule was characterised by corruption, human rights abuses, jailing of political opponents, rising debt – and religious violence.50

Radicalisation in the Maldives intertwines with gang violence, which has become part of the country’s landscape since the first democratic elections in 2008. A number of politicians are reported to have ties with gangs, using them “to intimidate opponents or stop rallies”.51 Gang members are predominantly under 30-year-old males. The World Bank reports the main reasons for young people joining these gangs as unemployment, drug use and drug-related violence, a desire to prove masculinity, and well as political violence. Hence, radicalisation in the Maldives is a result of a “combination of radical preaching, organised crime and social problems.”52

Recent events demonstrate that radical Islamism has made some inroads within Maldivian society, despite the country’s reputation as moderate and tolerant. At the domestic level, pro-Islamist demonstrations and targeted killings of secular personalities on religious grounds have increased. The Maldives gained international attention through reports of their high numbers of FTFs when over 200 Maldivians left the country to fight with Daesh in Iraq and Syria. In 2015, the Maldivian government issued the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), setting out legislation for acts of terrorism and their perpetrators. The previous administration sought to address the FTF phenomenon by training its security forces and strengthening security systems in airports and seaports. A National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) was then established in 2016 within the Ministry of Defence and National Security. This new institution was intended to coordinate between the various agencies and serve as a point of contact for international security partners.53

In 2016, the Maldives issued a State Policy on Terrorism and Violent Extremism that iterated a zero-tolerance policy. It also indicated a willingness to focus on community-based prevention and cooperation with international security partners to develop counter terrorism and preventive law enforcement mechanisms. Following this, the NCTC published a National Strategy on Preventing and
Countering Violent Extremism in November 2017. This was supposed to complement the National Counter Terrorism Strategy but the latter remains under review.\textsuperscript{54}

The Maldivian government has attempted to foster some P/CVE initiatives since 2011. To that end, it has actively intervened in religious life, regulating the training of imams and officially sanctioning sermons for Friday prayers. The government has sponsored an Islamic university to deliver workshops on “moderate” Islamic scholarship. Recognising unemployment as a factor of radicalisation, de-radicalisation programmes have been developed to include vocational training to increase individuals’ chances of integrating in the job market.\textsuperscript{55} Despite these efforts, there remain concerns around the potential use of counterterrorism policy, and particularly the Preventing Terrorism Act (PTA), to target political opposition and restrict media content.\textsuperscript{56}

A number of Maldivian NGOs are also actively engaged in P/CVE efforts. The Maldives Institute for Psychological Services Training and Research (MIPSTAR) provide mental health services and took part in the recent regional practitioners’ workshop in Kolkata. MIPSTAR presented its work with gangs and prisons, and demonstrated how urban crime and violence shares multiple patterns with violent extremism and should not, in some contexts, be seen as mutually exclusive.\textsuperscript{57} The Maldivian Democracy Network (MDN), which aims to promote human rights and democratic values, has also worked within the field with a range of activities.\textsuperscript{58} It organised a project that resulted in a first baseline study assessing level of radicalisation in the Maldives. To do so, it reviewed school textbooks, published material, religious sermons and online Islamist activity. It hosted public forums in different island communities and interviewed officials of the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and public schools principals across the country.\textsuperscript{59} The MDN also developed a social media campaign called “In Other Words” aiming at countering violent extremist narratives.\textsuperscript{60}

In November 2018, Ibrahim Mohamed Solih took office as new President of the Maldives. His rule represents a new opportunity to address the grievances of the disenfranchised youth and make bigger strides towards tackling the root causes of violent extremism in the country.

**Pakistan**

Conflict and terrorism in Pakistan has a significant bearing on transnational ideological patterns and violent extremism pull factors. Post-colonial legacies as well as chronic issues such as the conflicts in Kashmir and neighbouring Afghanistan have inspired disparate local groups towards violent extremism. Due to its unique geo-strategic position at the cusp of South and Central Asia, Pakistan can play a mitigating role in regional conflict and violence as well as transnational Islamist trends and influences. Furthermore, terrorism levels and efforts to prevent and counter terrorism in Pakistan may play out in diaspora communities across national borders.

Domestic terrorism in Pakistan has led to the death of 15,908 people since 2000.\textsuperscript{61} Under Prime Minister Imran Khan, the new Pakistani government looks to have renewed the emphasis on developing formal counter-terrorism and CVE activities. So far, a few de-radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes have reportedly de-radicalising 2,500 ex-militants.\textsuperscript{62} Parallel measures have included several attempts to regulate and reform the country’s religious educational establishment, as well as updating existing legislation such as the Anti-Terrorist Act (ATA) to give law enforcement agencies more power to combat terrorism. A specific CVE directorate was also created within the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) in 2014, after a four-year wait for parliament to approve it. This gave some *raison d’être* to NACTA, which had been dormant since its creation in 2009. This directorate has attempted to engage religious clerics, organising workshops and seminars,
as well as sending NACTA officials abroad to learn from other countries’ strategies. However, efforts to address these issues have been highly inefficient and unsubstantial.63

Pakistan’s National Internal Security Policy (NISP) 2014-2018 was formulated as a broad strategy to overcome internal security challenges and primarily included hard security measures, the implementation of which remains difficult to ascertain. Following the announcement of the NISP and the bloody attack on a Peshawar school that killed 132 children, a National Action Plan (NAP) was made public in December 2014.64 The 20-point NAP was envisioned to contribute considerably to positive developments if implemented appropriately. It identified crucial areas for action, from religious (registration and regulation of madrasas to mitigate sectarian extremism) to migration issues (return of IDPs to FATA, as well as Afghan refugees). The NAP also planned for strengthening and activating NACTA, which continues to be largely ineffective due to a lack of affirmative political will.65 Thus, despite official measures, “major stakeholders are not on board” and domestic extremist violence persists.66

The SCN was able to better understand efforts led by local districts during the city consultations held in Pakistan in November 2017. The cities of Nowshera and Peshawar both operate a series of local ‘police-community liaison committees’, used as dispute resolution councils to settle local disputes before they reach higher courts. Local government leaders describe an operational set-up wherein the committee is chaired by a local councillor, who acts as a neutral arbitrator between contending parties, whilst police remain on hand to take forward any criminal charges beyond the remit of dispute resolution. District Members cite the Police Order Act 2017 as an example of positive attempts to ensure better coordination of police with local government, emphasising the importance of simultaneously limiting political interference in policing and justice. A 90% success (settlement) rate is claimed by the authorities, arguably incentivised by the fact that it represents a free, swift and ostensibly fair alternative to an otherwise protracted and expensive legal process.

Significant domestically-led P/CVE efforts are largely delivered by NGOs and CSOs such as Individualland, PAIMAN, the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, Jinnah Institute and CIRCLE.67 Civil society initiatives obtain support from a range of international donors, but international support has predominantly centred on security assistance, intelligence cooperation, governance reform and infrastructure development. In part, this may be due to the complex nature of the Pakistani socio-political and religious contexts and the reluctance to engage with prevention initiatives in an unstable political and social environment, where the perception and framing of foreign involvement can add to, rather than diminish, problems. The Pakistani government perceives foreign-funded organisations with increasing suspicion. Recently, 18 international NGOs were expelled from the country, mostly without any clear justification.68 Islamabad also seems to be continuously increasing bureaucratic challenges for local NGOs in an effort to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. Such administrative burdens prevent NGOs from relevant project implementation partly due to a lack of operational capacity, but also because access to local authorities is significantly impeded as a result.69 Pakistan’s current approach towards NGOs and CSOs could thus lead to a critical gap in P/CVE-related activities, leaving with a purely hard security approach to extremism.

Finally, the recent case of Asia Bibi was a powerful reminder of the political weight that blasphemy laws and their use can carry and incur in Pakistan. The reaction of certain religious groups to her acquittal and follow-up measures taken by the government limiting her freedom of movement demonstrated not only the speed of mobilisation and political eloquence that such legislation
entails, but also the widespread international ramifications that can develop. This can pose significant challenges to P/CVE programming in Pakistan, which need to be taken into account.

**Challenges and Obstacles to Local P/CVE Activity**

In delivering programmes and initiatives that are well targeted, effective and sustainable, local municipalities face multiple challenges. These may be:

- **structural**, concerned with how processes and mechanisms work internally or in cooperation with national governments and other bodies;
- **environmental**, in terms of multiple additional issues that come into play when addressing violent extremism in the region;
- **cultural**, in terms of how embedded ideals and religious beliefs reflect the quotidian relations between individuals and the state, and within society.

In each case, the SCN seeks to engage cities on practical outcomes and improvements in safety and cohesion, with a full and realistic awareness of complicating factors and their interplay with the P/CVE terrain.

Critical to this process, SCN training on local action planning, delivered during the Regional Practitioners’ Workshop in Kolkata, India, worked with municipal officials and civil society practitioners to complete local risk assessments, from which a comprehensive risk profile could be developed for – and, importantly, led by – each city. Participants discussed and compared the numerous risks identified across SCN membership, demonstrating those which held commonality throughout the region and those which were specific to individual communities or at least varied significantly in nature from one city to the next, before also discussing the requisite partners and resources for addressing each identified risk.

It is important to recognise that P/CVE is one of several policy areas which municipalities in the region are under pressure to deliver against, whether from their own national governments or (mostly) the international community. City resources are often stretched by multiple and competing demands, and the fatigue of having to maintain multiple focuses often driven by an outside party, is palpable across many practitioners and policymakers in the region. Moreover, P/CVE work is widely set within a broader, and arguably more complex, field of peacebuilding, community and ethnic integration and stabilisation agendas, only repackaged to varying degrees given more recent political pressure.

On the one hand, this can mean that P/CVE-specific programming is more commonly found in municipalities subjected to more extensive international scrutiny and pressure (as in the Maldives where the disproportionate number of FTFs attracted extensive international media coverage). On the other, it suggests that P/CVE engagement and programming needs to take greater account of these broader local policy needs, and work more effectively to integrate the prevention of violent extremism within them, rather than treating it as exclusivist or short-term. Working at local levels, with municipal actors who are only too aware of the interplay between such issues in their communities and their cumulative contribution to overall risk patterns, offers a more effective and relevant solution than framing prevention initiatives only in terms of national security and regional threats. This section illustrates some of the key additional factors that complicate current P/CVE programming in the region, with focus on the interplay between violent extremism and multiple other forms of regional and localised threats and vulnerabilities.
Corruption

In its corruption perceptions index, Transparency International (TI) allocates corruption scores to countries on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Based on these scores, TI ranks countries from the least corrupt to the most corrupt.

In 2017, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives and Pakistan all scored 40 or below, indicating widespread corruption throughout the region. Whilst India and Pakistan have stagnated in comparison to the previous year, they actually rank lower on the list as the situation in similar countries has comparatively improved. Bangladesh has slightly improved its situation although still ranking towards the bottom of the list (180 in total). The Maldives’ corruption score has deteriorated since 2016.71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Score in 2018</th>
<th>Rank in 2018</th>
<th>Score in 2017</th>
<th>Rank in 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maldives</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corruption has consequences for violent extremism, as it creates an enabling environment where (1) state institutions’ ability to prevent or counter the phenomenon becomes limited; (2) perceptions of inequality increase people’s vulnerability to extremist ideologies; and (3) recruiters’ can “validate their ideology and facilitate the recruitment of vulnerable groups.”72

Political factors

Notwithstanding the differences in political cultures and historical experience, religious and social issues are deeply politicised with polarising domestic political agendas at play in each country in the region. In such contexts, successful and sustainable P/CVE programming requires specific conditions for both implementers and beneficiaries. On the one hand, national government buy-in is necessary, as well as a recognition that trust building is integral and that a stable and democratic politics serves to enable more far-reaching prevention initiatives. On the other hand, implementers need a keen awareness of both the national and localised political agendas as well as the interplay between the two. The disruption, violence and polarisation that generally takes place during election seasons in particular demonstrates the need to navigate these political junctures and select areas of work with care, including sensibly planning implementation timelines, in order to ensure that programmes are not irrevocably disrupted.

Demographics and urbanisation trends

High population growth rates in South Asia will continue to contribute to the youth bulge in the coming years (see table below). This represents a risk for further increase in violent extremism given the higher vulnerability of young people to radicalisation. If governments do not address youth concerns, they will continue to seek alternatives for socio-economic development and political participation. Developing comprehensive youth engagement programmes as well as integrating a P/CVE lens in education curricula will be paramount to address this challenge.
Parallel to the population growth, high birth rates and an increasing rural-urban migration have led to rapid urbanisation. Correspondingly, South Asia is now witnessing new iterations of extremism and religiously-inspired radicalisation. Five of the 20 largest cities in the world are in Bangladesh (5. Dhaka), India (10. Mumbai, 14. Delhi) and Pakistan (3. Karachi, 16. Lahore). Whilst there is a plethora of reasons behind rural-urban migration depending on context, the economic pull of these megacities across the region is an important dynamic. This tends to result in high inequality and an abrupt collision between social classes, with important implications for P/CVE programming. Given the regional extremism profile, P/CVE work in South Asia generally focuses on two target audiences: the urban educated youth, and the uneducated or informally educated rural or suburban poor populations. As P/CVE programmes tend to address only one or the other audience, without examining the interplay between the two, cities offer a valuable lens to develop a more integrated approach to programming.

**Foreign influences**

Foreign influences have shaped ideological histories of South Asia for decades. Whilst some foreign powers such as the U.S., Russia and the Gulf States have previously played a central role in impacting regional dynamics, growing investments from China are now shifting the balance of power in the region and, consequently, influencing the foreign policies of South Asian neighbours. P/CVE implementers need to have a sound knowledge of such formative international dynamics, as they can have a significant impact on local communities.

**Kashmir**

Recent developments in Kashmir have intensified the traditional stresses in India-Pakistan relations. A suicide attack on 14 February 2019 claimed by Jaish-e-Muhamad (JeM) an Islamist militant group based in Pakistan resulted in the deaths of over 40 Indian security staff in Indian-administered Kashmir. The situation in Kashmir quickly escalated leading to direct conflict between the two countries’ air forces for the first time since the India-Pakistan war of 1971. When two Indian jets claiming to target a JeM militant camp inside Pakistan-administered Kashmir were shot down and an Indian pilot captured by the Pakistani military, this raised the stakes of the conflict significantly. Amidst fears of a nuclear confrontation, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan invited his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi to the negotiating table, adopting a pragmatic and diplomatic approach different from his predecessors. Nonetheless, there have been multiple ceasefire violations at the line of control since the suicide attack, with both sides reporting civilian casualties. Whilst the international community closely monitors the situation between the two hostile neighbours, local communities in Kashmir are at the frontline of the conflict, giving an opportunity to extremist groups to broaden their basis of support. This remains a significant concern for civilians on both sides of the LoC. On one side the Indian military stands accused of human rights violations against Muslim communities in Indian-Administered Kashmir and on the Pakistani side the state stands accused of supporting Islamist militant groups to fuel local uprising against Indian occupation. The everyday
hardships suffered by local communities including forced detentions, extrajudicial arrests and emotional as well as physical violence renders them vulnerable to radicalisation.

The dynamics of this conflict extend far beyond India and Pakistan, reverberating across the region and influencing diaspora communities and Muslim populations globally. Whilst the issue continues to be exploited by transnational extremist groups to heighten grievances, so too it serves to destabilise South Asian countries and represents a key perceived risk to community relations and peace.

China

China is gaining considerable influence in the region through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), often described as a 21st century new silk route. Expected to spend more than one trillion U.S. dollars, China is “engaging in construction work across the globe on an unparalleled scale.” Whilst the BRI is developing infrastructure and increasing trade opportunities for the countries involved, local levels throughout the region may only have experienced its negative impact thus far. In the construction sector, local contractors have been outweighed by China’s dominance. Employment opportunities for local stakeholders have been scarce as BRI’s employees are mostly exported from China. Such an approach can exacerbate grievances among the communities the BRI affects, possibly manifesting in violent acts, as was shown by the murder of a Chinese businessman in Karachi last year. Moreover, countries have deeply indebted themselves to China through the BRI. For instance, the previous Maldivian administration borrowed over a billion U.S. dollars from China to upgrade its international airport and develop a large-scale housing project. This debt, representing over a quarter of the country’s annual gross domestic product, could have lasting negative consequences on Maldivians’ socio-economic situation, one of the main push factors for radicalisation on the archipelago.

United States

The U.S. has both the capability and capacity to play a significant role in positively influencing counter-extremism efforts within the key states in South Asia. With China’s increasing economic footprint in the region and a parallel rise in anti-western populist sentiment, it may be important to contribute towards articulating coherent institutional responses to violent extremism. Engaging proactively with civil society institutions and local government bodies, and facilitating positive interactions between them may hold the key to fomenting strong and effective counter-extremism efforts.

U.S. engagement represents a key foreign influence across the region, with its ‘tilt to India’ in particular marking a major shift over the past decade. Large-scale U.S. aid and security assistance to the region focusing on economic growth and trade partnerships, poverty alleviation, education and development brings with it political, social and cultural responses that play out across the region.

Gulf states

Gulf states have a significant influence over the region due to large emigration rates from countries across South Asia. The scale of remittances that flow back to Bangladesh, India and Pakistan indicate a high level of dependency from emigrants’ families back home. This results in a necessity to maintain stable diplomatic relations and positive cooperation between South Asian countries and Gulf states. There is also a risk that Wahhabi Salafist influence will grow as a result economic migration. Whilst there is no evidence of Wahhabism gaining ground as a result in South Asian countries, this has happened before elsewhere and remains an important risk.
Number of foreign resident population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of residence</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>98,221 (18.8%)</td>
<td>257,663 (49.4%)</td>
<td>48,991 (9.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>190,171 (8.3%)</td>
<td>692,525 (30.1%)</td>
<td>120,040 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman (2010)</td>
<td>107,125 (13.1%)</td>
<td>465,660 (57.1%)</td>
<td>84,658 (10.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar (2013)</td>
<td>130,630 (9%)</td>
<td>452,578 (31.2%)</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia (2013 est.)</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
<td>2,000,000-2,800,000</td>
<td>1,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>25,000 (2014 est.)</td>
<td>145,000 (2012 est.)</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remittance flows in U.S. dollars in 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin country</th>
<th>Bangladesh</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>191,000,000</td>
<td>1,216,000,000</td>
<td>305,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>705,000,000</td>
<td>4,173,000,000</td>
<td>1,067,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>279,000,000</td>
<td>2,957,000,000</td>
<td>403,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>441,000,000</td>
<td>3,769,000,000</td>
<td>483,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>3,274,000,000</td>
<td>10,225,000,000</td>
<td>5,809,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>2,429,000,000</td>
<td>12,575,000,000</td>
<td>5,698,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Russia

Russia’s policy in South Asia “has been largely motivated by a desire for resurgence and establishing a renewed role for itself in the region, while still remaining India-centric in nature”. Russia has significant economic importance across the region, financing the construction of a gas pipeline between Karachi and Lahore, building a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh, which also involves India, or through significant tourism to the Maldives. But Russia also has a widespread security influence in the region. The country is expanding its existing security and defence relationships with China and India to Pakistan having signed a defence cooperation, increased arms exports and organised joint military exercises. Hence, Russia has been able to maintain stable relations with India, while building “a speculative Russia-Pakistan-China axis”. The situation in Afghanistan also plays a central role in determining Russia’s foreign policy in the region. Whilst Moscow officially supports an internal peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban movement, Afghan officials have reported that Russia has been supporting Taliban fighters with weapons in an attempt to counter the presence of Daesh in Afghanistan.

Whilst there is no record of Russian disinformation campaigns in South Asia, such a tactic has become common use by Moscow, most recently during national elections in Sweden and sub-national ones in Bavaria. Disinformation campaigns generally aim to “sow division, muddy the availability of accurate, transparent information, subvert democratic processes and spread exclusionary and extreme political agendas”, and could become a strategy to undermine liberalisation efforts across the region.
Monitoring of online extremist content and its geographic origin would be necessary to assess this potential threat of foreign interference.

As with other global regions, Russian activities and influence in South Asia represents a check on NATO influence (and vice-versa), a critical dynamic given regional economic development, trade ties and geo-strategic and security interests. Importantly, its influence is not restricted to security and diplomatic channels but heavily impacts localised perceptions of foreign-supported initiatives and moreover civic attitudes to terrorism risks and P/CVE programming.
Recommendations

Prevention in Cities: SCN Global Recommendations

1. Recognise and empower the role of cities and local authorities as critical partners in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism

Whilst broader regional and transnational narratives serve to catalyse a combination of push and pull factors that drive violent extremism, radicalisation and recruitment are frequently concentrated in specific local areas. Multiple and complex local factors contribute to individual local environments, with cities and local authorities best placed to understand the unique factors in their own areas and work with an array of partners to address local risk, which in turn contributes to regional threat levels. National governments need to recognise cities as having a vital role in non-law enforcement prevention efforts, which can involve both targeted intervention and broader societal resilience. Though not without their own political agendas, cities and local governments offer an opportunity to coordinate and implement P/CVE programming in South Asia in a less politicised space than at national levels. Moreover, in spite of a relative lack of devolved powers, city leaders have a number of formal and informal mechanisms to consult and build dialogue with vulnerable communities, develop trust and inform risk assessments. Depending on context, they can also be well placed to bring together key services and actors to develop a cohesive and integrated approach to prevention and protection.

2. Expand cooperation between municipalities and civil society organisations in P/CVE efforts

Civil society organisations across the region are engaged in substantive local programming spanning a range of issues. Programmes are either explicitly targeting a violent extremism threat or are making interventions in the surrounding enabling environment which, if unaddressed, can continue to be weaponised for radicalisation and recruitment. The latter group of programmes, which occupy a greater market share, are largely delivered by major international development entities and/or local civil society groups working on poverty alleviation, youth and women’s empowerment, and the promotion of democratic values. Both sets of programmes run the risk of operating in silos without the involvement of national and local institutions or coordination between implementers. So too they risk failing to capitalise on the potential for existing and relevant projects to make a positive impact on the extremism landscape. Growing the coordination between cities and civil society programmes offers an opportunity to steer programming towards greater coordination and institutional adoption, and away from a perception of independent and largely foreign-implemented projects. The SCN model for establishing multi-stakeholder Local Prevention Networks led by municipalities in Jordan and Lebanon offers a useful template for strengthening this cooperation effectively where limited resources or support institutional infrastructure is available.

3. Facilitate exchanges and peer learning between cities with shared commitments to P/CVE

Key to the SCN’s mission is developing the capacity for municipalities to learn from one another, have effective channels of communication, and provide peer advice based on individual experience and best practice. This can support the development or improvement of local action plans, provide tried and tested advice and inspiration to drive local project implementation, and expand the coherence of otherwise disparate local programming.
South Asia: specific areas of improvement

1. **Promote a common definition of extremism among governments and implementers**
   Those currently implementing P/CVE programmes and projects lack alignment in defining the challenge they seek to address, with a limited and uncoordinated framework of what is within and outside of their scope. Concurrently, there is little overt guidance from national governments in the form of national P/CVE strategies and action plans which could build an agreed definition. Whilst governments are politically resistant to such a definition, international partners and P/CVE implementers have a responsibility to better define and agree on the definitions within their own projects and promote a common understanding at regional and national levels. A common definition between cities across the region, promoted by the SCN and its partners, could serve to be an integral part in this shift.

2. **Identify the impact of current P/CVE programming and ensure better coordination**
   More research is needed to understand the scale, scope and the impact of present P/CVE work within each South Asian state under consideration. Currently P/CVE work within each country is undertaken on an ad hoc and unstructured way, mainly led by NGOs or civil society activists. At the national level, the CVE response can be arbitrary and, for the most part, uncoordinated. It would therefore be recommended that existing P/CVE efforts be scoped and organised in a more systematic way, and for local governments to take the lead role in encouraging a consolidation of these initiatives. This would mean establishing effective communication between local government bodies, NGO and civil society programmes, and the central government. It is also contingent on greater donor coordination, as well as the political will of governments throughout the region.

3. **Engage young people in programmes promoting social cohesion and tolerance**
   South Asian states host a formidable youth bulge. Combined with the high levels of unemployment and poverty, it is important to incorporate a heightened focus on youth engagement within policy to undercut the pull factors of violent extremist movements and their targeted radicalisation and recruitment of young people. This is particularly important in countries with large internally displaced communities as well as those witnessing a rapid rural-to-urban migration challenge. Prioritising the engagement of young people in programmes that promote social cohesion, inclusion and civic tolerance should also encompass involvement of the education sectors, both formal and informal.

4. **Identify and utilise existing formal and informal local mechanisms to coordinate programming**
   Local governments and city administrations throughout the region have a number of administrative mechanisms or informal means to coordinate local services and partners while ensuring dialogue and trust at the community level. Local governments are too frequently side-lined by P/CVE efforts due to the lack of devolved powers, in particular surrounding law enforcement. The presence of longstanding councils, committees and civic decision-making bodies, however, offers an important opportunity not only to improve the coordination among local actors and services on both daily issues and major incidents, but for the community to have a greater stake in P/CVE efforts whilst actively informing understandings of risk and local dynamics.
3 Ibid.
9 Providing statistics on number of FTF per country for the same year is difficult to the scarcity of data. The statistics provided are nonetheless helpful in demonstrating the varying scale of this phenomenon.


31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 See http://www.manusherjonno.org/

35 See http://cri.org.bd/about-us/

36 See https://www.facebook.com/EmpowermentHumanDevelopmentSocietyEhds/

37 See http://www.brac.net/

38 See https://www.gcerf.org/lessons-from-gcerf-funded-programmes-in-bangladesh/


40 See https://bei-bd.org/


47 See http://www.covanetwork.org/about-us/overview/


52 Ibid.


55 Ibid.


57 See http://mipstar.org/

58 See http://mdn.mv/


63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.


78 Sarah Ashraf, ‘How India Became Pakistan’s Unlikely Saviour’, Huffington Post, March 2019, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/india-pakistan_uk_5c7ce5f3e4b0e1f77653ac9a (last accessed 14 March 2019)
81 Ibid.
85 We refer here to member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council.


