

The Role of Kashmiri Diaspora in Community Development and Conflict Resolution

Workshops Report

19th December 2010, Birmingham, United Kingdom

and

6th March 2011, Rochdale, United Kingdom



Organised by:

Kashmir Development Foundation (KDF) and Conciliation Resource (CR)



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The Role of Kashmiri Diaspora in Community Development of Conflict Resolution

Introduction

In the United Kingdom Kashmiri Diaspora community is one of the largest minority ethnic communities. Majority of the members of Kashmiri Diaspora Community are actively and fully linked with their place of origin through social, cultural, religious, business and family links. However, their true numerical strength has never been identified through existing official statistical monitoring systems within UK Census or other monitoring systems due to the legacy of Kashmir conflict and structural inequalities that exists to carry forward status quo on many policies/practices regarding immigration laws and socio-economic policies in this country.

This official blackout of Kashmiri community in ethnic monitoring systems has created a huge gap in available information about the contributions, Kashmiri Diaspora community has made in the development of civic, economic and cultural life of United Kingdom in the available research, and their capacity to influence change in the UK, and in their place of origin.

Kashmir Development Foundation (KDF) in association with Conciliation Resources (CR) has organised two workshops in December 2010, Birmingham and in March 2011 at Rochdale to explore baseline information and understanding among Kashmiri Diaspora Community members and their organisations about their role in influencing the change and community development in the United Kingdom as well in their place of origin, and potential contribution in peace building and conflict resolution programmes in Jammu and Kashmir.

Kashmir Development Foundation (KDF) is a voluntary organisation committed to ensuring that members of Kashmiri Diaspora community in the UK, Europe and elsewhere, are supported and empowered in the process of shaping and influencing policy and projects that affect their lives and livelihood in their countries of residence and in Jammu Kashmir. It supports small to medium Kashmiri voluntary and community groups nationwide through research, training, policy development, fundraising advice and networking opportunities.

Conciliation Resources (CR) is an independent charity with over a decade of experience working internationally to prevent and resolve violent conflict, promote justice and build lasting peace. CR's vision is a world where people affected by conflict and their leaders are able to work effectively with international support to prevent violence, resolve their armed conflicts and build more peaceful societies. We believe conflicts can be transformed peacefully and that peacemaking and peacebuilding are essential in helping lay the foundations for more just and inclusive societies.

The aim of the workshops

The workshops aimed;

- To provide a sharing, learning and networking opportunity for a wide range of Kashmiri Diaspora community activists, professionals and organisations working in different fields.
- To find out more about existing initiatives and methodologies applied by Kashmiri Diaspora community in identifying key issues affecting their life and livelihood in UK and their influence in making positive change at various levels in UK, Europe and in Jammu and Kashmir.
- To assist members of the Diaspora to understand more about conflict transformation and help them to make meaningful interventions in the Kashmiri process.

Key themes of the workshop

- Identification of key issues in the United Kingdom, Azad Jammu Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Indian administered Jammu Kashmir and priorities for effective interventions by Kashmiri Diaspora in Community Development.
- Identification, Networking and Relationship with Key actors, Organisations and Groups on the Ground in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir.
- Identification of key information sources who influence public opinion. e.g. Print Media, Electronic Media, Social Media, face to face communication, personal visits, general public hearsay
- Identification, Networking and Partnership Working with institutions, Think Tanks and Key players in Conflict resolution field in the United Kingdom, Europe and beyond
- Identification of methods/ channels, networking and Influencing the Parliament in the United Kingdom and Europe e.g. letters, e-mails, lobbying, oral/written evidence in committees

Workshops Methodology

Both workshops were facilitated by Mr. Sardar Aftab Khan. Mr. Tahir Aziz led the training session on the key theme “out of box thinking” in the 2nd workshop with the introduction of theoretical and practical best practice models in conflict resolutions and peacebuilding.

All the Participants of these workshops were from diverse background having significant contribution and experience in working within Kashmiri Diaspora Community in the UK and in Jammu Kashmir. A particular focus in extending invitations was given to encourage participation from those members of Kashmiri Diaspora community who do not participate in usual Kashmir conferences or workshops but they are key members of Diaspora Community with regards to their influence and contributions.

Detailed discussions on key themes in an open and neutral space with an opportunity for individual interventions and group discussion afforded to identify key issues and recommend way forward for action and follow up activities.

At the start of the 1st session participants encouraged to share their expectations from the workshop while introducing themselves and their particular areas of interests and expertise.

In order to identify key issues participants were divided into four groups. They discussed and shared key issues in the United Kingdom, Azad Jammu Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Indian Administered Jammu Kashmir with view to determine the role of Kashmiri Diaspora in Community development and Conflict Resolution in each area. They have also identified key priority needs to focus for future action and activities in the future.



Workshop 1- 19th December 2010, Birmingham

The Role of Kashmiri Diaspora in Community Development

Based on the participant's information, experience and analysis of key issues; following key priorities were identified as a focus for future work and strategic plan of action.

In the United Kingdom and Europe Establishment of a Kashmiri information/media resource centre. Involvement in wider race equality initiatives and work. Recognition and inclusion of Kashmiri identity in race equality monitoring. Awareness campaign to write in "Kashmiri" in Ethnic Category in Census Form on 27 th March 2011 Census Kashmiri Diaspora community members currently serving as governors in schools and colleges should play a role in establishing links with schools and colleges in Jammu Kashmir. Formation of links/ partnerships between Kashmiri Diaspora Community organisations/ groups and community groups/NGOs in Jammu Kashmir. Development of links and networking among Kashmiri Diaspora professionals in different fields. Awareness and development of Kashmiri youth networks at local and national level. Providing infrastructure support for volunteering opportunities for Diaspora Kashmiri youths and professionals to work in different parts of Jammu and Kashmir. To enable them to contribute in their area of interest and expertise for transfer of knowledge and technology.	In Azad Jammu and Kashmir Information and Awareness about the development needs of the people of AJK. Infrastructure support for developing links/ Partnerships with Community Groups/ NGOs Support for transparency, accountability and free, fair and independent democratic process in AJK Support in establishing links with schools/ colleges/ University at international level Support in establishing Youth and professional networks and exchange visits. Research and publications on natural and human resource potential of AJK.
In Gilgit Baltistan Information on cultural heritage, history and significant stories about the area and its mountains. Involvement of the people from the area at all levels in conflict resolution process. Establishing links between Kashmiri Diaspora community organisations and local	In Indian administered Jammu & Kashmir Awareness among Kashmiri Diaspora community about needs of diverse communities in J&K Establishment of Civil Society links/networks via projects/initiatives Facilitation in Volunteering opportunities to involve Kashmiri Diaspora community

community groups/ NGO's in Gilgit Baltistan.	members in community development projects Facilitate linking international development organisations to local community groups/ NGOs.
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The Role of Kashmiri Diaspora in Conflict Resolution



In the second session of the workshop participants were asked to focus on four key areas and recommend a way forward.

1- Identify Key actors, Organisations and Groups on the Ground in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir

Azad Jammu Kashmir

Local and National NGOs, Political parties of all opinions, Mosque committees, death committees, tribal and caste based charity organisations, Village based links/groups, religious networks e.g. Pirs and Khalifa's

Gilgit Baltistan

Nationalist political parties of AJK, All Parties National Alliance, Gilgit Baltistan National Alliance, Agha Khan Development Network,

Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir

All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), Democratic Freedom Party, Panthers Party, National Conference, Peoples Democratic Party, Bar Associations, Ladakha Hill council, Coalition of Civil Society Organisations, Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB).

2- Key information sources that influence public opinion. e.g. Print Media, Electronic Media, Social Media, face to face communication, personal visits, general public hearsay

- Telephone/ text messaging, Personal visits to AJK, family Visitors from AJK, Pir's and Khalifa's, Political leaders and AJK government officials visiting U.K. Pakistan Embassy and its various channels.
- Urdu News papers print and on internet. Local Newspapers, Free community news papers, National English News Papers.
- Local Radio Stations. Radio Excel, Asian Sound Radio, BBC Asian Network (Mirpuri Programme), Avaaz, Crescent Radio and seasonal radio station (Radio Ramadan) etc.
- Local and South Asian TV channels : Geo, ARY, DM digital, NDTV, Star News, Religious TV channels e.g. Noor TV, Ummah channel, Hadayat channel
- International TV Channels: BBC, CNN, Aljazeera, ITV News

- Social Media: Facebook, Kashnet, Twiter, blogs, E-mail groups

3- Identification, Networking and Partnership working with institutions, Think Tanks and Key players in Conflict resolution field in the United Kingdom, Europe and beyond

- Pugwash, Amnesty International, Berghof Peace Support, Conciliation Resource, International Alert, South Asian Forum for Justice, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Peace, conflict, development and security study departments in different Universities.
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Commonwealth Foundation, Department for International Development

4- Identification of methods/ channels, networking and Influencing the Parliament in the United Kingdom and Europe e.g. letters, e-mails, lobbying, oral/written evidence in committees

- MPs, MEPs, Members of the House of Lords.
- E-Petitions, Signed petitions, letters to members of parliament, meeting them in their surgeries, early day motions, oral and written evidence before different committees.

Way Forward

In concluding the workshop, participants were encouraged to identify areas of work for their participation: being members of Kashmiri Diaspora community in the short, medium and long term. Participants unanimously recommended that our first priority should be working in the United Kingdom.

- To educate, inform and raise awareness about Jammu and Kashmir. Our people, landscape, culture, heritage and rights
- Involvement of Kashmiri community in decision making process
- Representation of Kashmiri interests at strategic forums
- Recognition of Kashmiri identity and inclusion in race equality monitoring systems at all levels
- Resource development for effective participation in community development and conflict resolution process.

Participants also unanimously recommended for community action on mobilising and launching awareness campaign about the importance of Writing in “Kashmiri” in ethnicity category, in Census forms in forthcoming Census, to be held in England and Wales on 27th March 2011.

Kashmiri Diaspora Community 2nd Workshop, 6th March 2011, Rochdale

In continuation of Kashmir Development Foundation’s strategic consultation with Kashmiri Diaspora Community members in partnership with Conciliation Resources, the 2nd workshop was held on 6th of March 2011 at Castlemere Community Centre, Rochdale.

The format of workshop was similar to the 1st workshop with the exception of a training session on “out of Box Thinking” exercise and focusing to answer one question: Identification of one of the most important positive and one of the most negative development with regards to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Jammu and Kashmir in the last three years.

Participants were divided in four groups to discuss and identify positive and negative developments with regards to Kashmiri Diaspora Community development and influence in the UK, and conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Azad Jammu Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Indian Administered Jammu Kashmir. Each group was encouraged to come up with a common consensus on one key important development.



Positive Development	Negative Development
Group-1 Media and Communication access in AJK. Overwhelming use of nonviolent means in the people resistance movement in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir.	Group-1 Non- Inclusion as a distinct ethnic minority category in UK Census 2011 form. Change in the status of Gilgit Baltistan. Increased influence and presence of Pakistani Political parties in AJK.
Group-2 Kashmir Development Foundation and Conciliation Resources partnership working approach on involving Kashmiri Diaspora Community from UK in conflict resolution process and initiatives.	Group-2 Change in the status of Gilgit Baltistan. Brain drain within AJK.
Group-3 Increase in the number of Kashmiri heritage members in both houses of parliament from 2 to 5. Awareness among Kashmiri Diaspora community on their ethnic identity and heritage	Group-3 Shift in international community focus from Kashmir conflict due to war on terror and changing political landscape in Middle East and North Africa.
Group-4 Cross Line of control (LOC) trade and movement. Overwhelming use of nonviolent means in the people resistance movement in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir. Retention of Governance control of Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) within J&K.	Group-4 Lake of proactive participation in Kashmir identity campaign among Kashmiri independence advocacy organisations.

The Role of Kashmiri Diaspora in Community Development and Conflict Resolution

As an overarching theme participants in four groups identified key issues and agreed through mutual consensus on one key issue, to work on in coming years, for Kashmir Development Foundation and Conciliation Resources (CR).



The key recommendations from the four groups for work in the United Kingdom, Azad Jammu Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Indian Administered Jammu Kashmir are as under;

<p>In the United Kingdom and Europe</p> <p>Mapping of existing Kashmiri Diaspora groups/organisations, Networks and institutions working on Kashmir within U.K.</p> <p>Recognition and inclusion of Kashmiri identity in race equality monitoring systems at all levels.</p> <p>Awareness campaign about Kashmiri identity heritage, and to write in “Kashmiri” in Ethnic Category in Census Form on 27th March 2011 Census.</p> <p>Research and publications on Kashmiri Diaspora community oral history, heritage and contribution in the economy to inform and influence policy making.</p>	<p>In Azad Jammu and Kashmir</p> <p>Support for the development of Civil Society Networks/ Forums at inter and intra districts level to influence change, democratic accountability and governance structures reform.</p> <p>Advocacy for increase in the number of Overseas Kashmiris (Kashmir Diaspora) seats in the AJK assembly according to their numbers in the U.K and different countries through elections.</p> <p>Increase in Inter and Intra Kashmir trade volume e.g. Sunday trade Markets at trade link points. Establishing more trade and people crossing points e.g. Bhimber- Jammu, Kargil-Sakardu.</p> <p>Effective utilisation of remittances from Kashmiri Diaspora for economic regeneration and monitoring of International Aid e.g. DFID, Asian Development Bank, World Bank.</p>
<p>In Gilgit Baltistan</p> <p>Restoration of State subject rule in Gilgit Baltistan.</p> <p>Support for the development of Civil Society Networks/ Forums at inter- intra districts level and with Azad Jammu Kashmir to</p>	<p>In Indian administered Jammu & Kashmir</p> <p>Campaign for lifting restrictions on freedom of movement and visit facilitation for Kashmiri Diaspora community members to Indian Administered Jammu and Kashmir.</p> <p>Support for the development of Civil Society</p>

<p>influence change, democratic accountability and governance structures reform.</p> <p>Support for building community harmony; recognising local ethnic, religious and cultural diversity.</p> <p>Campaign for Gilgit Baltistan people's control and equal share on natural resources, Karakorum Highway Trade and investment.</p>	<p>Networks/ Forums at inter and intra districts level within Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and across Line of Control to influence change, democratic accountability and governance structures reform.</p> <p>Resource development for effective participation in community development and conflict resolution process through facilitation of cultural, religious, sports and educational visits, joint celebrations and participation.</p>
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Way Forward

In concluding the workshop, participants were encouraged to identify one key area of work for their participation: being members of Kashmiri Diaspora community in the short, medium and long term. Participants unanimously recommended that Kashmir Development Foundation and Conciliation Resources should work on the following key priorities;

- Mapping of existing Kashmiri Diaspora groups/organisations, Networks and institutions working on Kashmir within U.K.
- Support for the development of Civil Society Networks/ Forums at inter and intra districts level to influence change, democratic accountability and governance structures reform in all parts of the state of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Restoration of State subject rule in Gilgit Baltistan
- Resource development for effective participation in community development and conflict resolution process through facilitation of cultural, religious, sports and educational visits, joint celebrations and participation.

Kashmir Development Foundation will work closely with Conciliation Resources to take these recommendations forward and find innovative solutions in addressing the identified needs of Kashmir Diaspora Community within UK to enable them in making specific, measurable, achievable, resourced and timely contribution in developing community, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

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