

Search for Common Ground | 2023

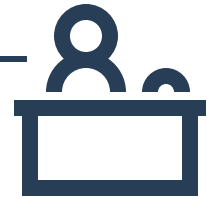
# Champions of Harmony

Inspiring Stories of Unity, Resilience, and Social Change  
Created under the Project *Youth for Humanity*



Developed and Designed at MAHER Consulting | <https://maher.consulting>

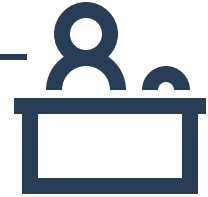
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## Acknowledgement

As we near the completion of compiling success stories for the *Youth for Humanity project*, I, as the CEO of MAHER Consulting, extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who have been instrumental in making this endeavor a reality. This project would not have been possible without the support and dedication of numerous individuals and organizations.

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Each individual and organization involved in this project has played an indispensable role in showcasing the transformative impact of the Youth for Humanity initiative. Through these success stories, we hope to inspire more people to join hands in fostering peace, harmony, and inclusivity in our communities.

With deepest appreciation,

Amer Ejaz,

CEO, MAHER Consulting; <https://maher.consulting>





## Youth for Humanity-An Introduction

The Youth for Humanity project is a transformative initiative aimed at fostering interfaith harmony, promoting peace, and empowering youth to become catalysts for positive change in their communities. This project brings together young individuals from diverse religious backgrounds to engage in dialogue, bridge divides, and work collaboratively toward building a more inclusive and harmonious society. The is implemented by Search for Common Ground with two implementing partners; Shaor Foundation for Education and Awareness and Pakistan Research Institute for Sustainable Media (PRISM).

The project worked on the following lines:

**Promoting Interfaith Harmony:** The project aims to create platforms and opportunities for youth from different religious communities to come together, share experiences, and learn from one another. Through dialogue, cultural exchanges, and collaborative activities, participants fosters understanding, respect, and appreciation for religious diversity.

**Empowering Youth Leaders:** The project seeks to empower young leaders by providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to effectively engage their peers and communities on issues related to intercommunal dynamics. Training programs, workshops, and networking meetings equip youth leaders with conflict resolution, communication, and leadership skills.

**Building a Network of Change Agents:** The project aims to establish a network of young change agents who collaborate, share experiences, and support one another in their endeavors to promote interfaith harmony and peace. Through online platforms, regional gatherings, and mentorship programs, the network serves as a resource hub for continued learning, collaboration, and advocacy.

**Social Action Projects:** Youth leaders implement Social Action Projects (SAPs) within their communities, addressing specific challenges related to interfaith harmony and peacebuilding. These projects focus on raising awareness, promoting dialogue, and initiating grassroots initiatives that foster inclusivity, tolerance, and understanding among diverse religious groups.

The Youth for Humanity project recognizes the vital role of youth in shaping a peaceful and inclusive future. By engaging young leaders, providing them with the necessary tools and support, and encouraging their active participation in promoting interfaith harmony, the project aims to create a ripple effect of positive change that will extend beyond the duration of the project.

Through this project, we envision a society where diversity is celebrated, dialogue is valued, and mutual respect and understanding prevail.

# 01



## Breaking Barriers: Nasreen's Inspiring Movement for Accessible Building Design and Inclusion in Pakistan

*"I want to see a future where accessibility is not an afterthought but a fundamental part of our society." Nasreen Rizwan*

Nasreen's life drastically changed when she developed Spinal TB two years into marriage. The disease left her paralyzed and confined to a wheelchair. Despite the support of her husband and family, Nasreen struggled with the hurtful comments of others who believed her disability resulted from sins. However, she made the decision to live her life again and not let her disability define her. With her determination and her family's support, Nasreen regained her partially lost vision and memory and found a new sense of purpose through her advocacy work.



Nasreen Rizwan  
Lahore, 2023

Still struggling to come to an agreement with the change realities, she learned about a local non-profit organization that provides rehabilitation services to people with disabilities in Lahore. After undergoing training there, Nasreen was inspired to help others like herself.

*"The construction of ramps benefits students and ensures inclusivity and accessibility for disabled voters during elections, as the school serves as a polling station. It's a step towards creating a more inclusive democratic process." - A Resident of the area.*

***"With the support and guidance of the Youth for Humanity project, I have been empowered to advocate for equal access to public spaces and opportunities. With sustained efforts, we can create a more inclusive and just world for all, where everyone, regardless of their abilities, can thrive and contribute." Nasreen Rizwan***

Nasreen's colleague recognized her passion for promoting inclusivity and referred her to the Youth for Humanity project, knowing it would provide her with valuable opportunities to enhance her capacity and knowledge on peace, interfaith dialogue, and social inclusion issues. One of the Youth for Humanity Project's objectives is to promote youth leadership in Pakistan. The project is managed by Search for Common Ground with the help of two local implementing partners, Shoor Foundation and PRISM. This referral opened doors for Nasreen to actively participate in project activities and contribute her unique perspectives, ultimately amplifying her impact in advocating for a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Nasreen found that the project activities like network meetings, peace dialogues, and Common Ground Approach training truly embraced the concept of inclusivity. These activities ensured her voice was heard and valued, creating a supportive environment where her unique perspective as a PWD was acknowledged and respected. The project activities fostered a sense of belonging and empowerment for Nasreen, enabling her to actively engage in discussions and promote peace and inclusivity within her community.

It was then that she noticed a lack of accessibility in public and private buildings, with few having ramps for wheelchair users. She decided to start a campaign to make public buildings more accessible. The foundation was impressed by Nasreen's commitment and agreed on a mini-grant to support her Social Action Project.

With the support of her organization and her peer group in the project, She surveyed public and private buildings in the community to identify potential locations for the ramps. Initially, Nasreen's request to build a ramp in a shopping plaza downtown was denied by the building authorities on the plea that the ramp was seldom used and was not required. Despite this setback, Nasreen did not give up. She identified a high school in the vicinity for the construction of the ramps. Nasreen used the mini-grant provided in the project to build two ramps in the school. Her organization arranged the labor, and she personally supervised the construction of the ramps. Nasreen's determination paid off, and the ramps were eventually built.

The building of the ramps in the school was a major milestone for Nasreen and her community. It represented a tangible improvement in accessibility and inclusivity, and it served as a symbol of Nasreen's commitment and determination. The ramps not only made it easier for people with disabilities to access public spaces, but they also raised awareness about the importance of accessibility and inclusivity in society.

The success of the Youth for Humanity project is exemplified through stories like Nasreen's, which inspire and empower young individuals to become agents of change in their communities. Nasreen's journey demonstrates that regardless of challenges and obstacles, there is always the potential for hope and transformative action. Her story highlights the project's core message of inclusivity and reinforces the belief that every individual, regardless of their circumstances, has the power to create positive change and contribute meaningfully to society.





## The Colors of Harmony: Ajay Kumar's Vision for Interfaith Unity in Pakistan

*"My dream is to see a Pakistan where people respect and celebrate each other's differences and work together to build a brighter future." Ajay Kumar*

How did Ajay Kumar, a young Pakistani professional from Umerkot, Sindh, become a symbol of peace and harmony in his community? Growing up, he was taught the values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence by his parents, who were not very educated but believed in these values. Inspired by these teachings, Ajay started a campaign called "Share and Care" in Umerkot while still in school. It was a humble start where he collected clothes and shoes from his community to distribute Diwali boxes to people experiencing poverty. Later, he extended this campaign to other faiths, distributing boxes to Muslims on Eid and Christians on Christmas.



Sensing his interest in advocacy work for interfaith harmony and peace, a friend introduced him to the Youth for Humanity Project. The Project's goal is to increase inter-communal respect and peaceful coexistence among religious communities. The project is managed by Search for Common Ground and implemented by two local partners, Shaoor Foundation and PRISM. Ajay's reputation for promoting interfaith harmony led to his selection by PRISM for training on using digital media to promote peace and harmony. During the training workshop, his thoughts and ideas impressed all.



With a deep commitment to fostering a more tolerant and harmonious Pakistan, Ajay remains dedicated to exploring the full potential of digital media in spreading the message of "share and care" across the country. The only difference is that the transformative experiences and learnings he gained through the Youth for Humanity project has not seen him use social media for a bigger impact. Since completing digital training, Ajay has used his enhanced capacity to accelerate the drive for peaceful coexistence. Ajay's stories of peaceful coexistence from Sindh province, such as the Friendship bond beyond faith, Hindus Ramadan Drive Umerkot, and Holi Celebration, plays a crucial role in enhancing understanding among diverse communities and promoting interfaith harmony, which aligns with the project's goal of fostering peaceful coexistence. In particular, the 2023 Holi in Umerkot was a conspicuous example of inclusiveness, where all communities celebrated together. Ajay made it more effective with his "share and care" campaign, making it the theme for this year's Holi.

Ajay's blog on the first transgender church and madrasa of Pakistan contributes to raising awareness about marginalized communities and

promoting inclusivity, reflecting the project's objective of promoting the rights of all people and building bridges between different groups. His appearance as a guest on a talk show discussing the Role of media in promoting peace and interfaith harmony highlights the importance of media in shaping public perception and fostering dialogue, which supports the project's aim of utilizing effective messaging to enhance peaceful coexistence.

Ajay's dream of bringing communities together and spreading a message of "share and care" has been greatly influenced by his participation in the Youth for Humanity project. The project has equipped him with the necessary skills and knowledge to utilize digital media to promote tolerance and harmony. Inspired by the project's vision, Ajay continues to make a significant impact in Karachi, where he resides for his job, while ensuring that the spirit of "share and care" is upheld during his visits to Umerkot.

With unwavering dedication, Ajay continues to be a catalyst for positive change, spreading the message of peace and interfaith harmony within his community and beyond. Inspired by his learning from the Youth for Humanity project and equipped with the skills to use social media for amplified impact Ajay plans to continue sharing and caring.





## A Youth for Humanity Ambassador: Pareesa's Journey to Promote Peace and Harmony Through Media

*"Empathy and understanding are the building blocks of a harmonious society." - Pareesa Afreen*

Pareesa was always passionate about using media to promote peace, tolerance, and societal harmony. As a jurist's daughter, she grew up listening to discussions about human rights, equality, and harmony at her home. This upbringing instilled in her the passion to create a world where all religions, cultures, and communities could coexist peacefully.



Pareesa Afreen  
Karachi, 2023

Pareesa is a young student pursuing her bachelor's degree in media studies at a local university in Karachi, while also using her passion for journalism to advance her vision of peace and harmony. A friend of Pareesa introduced her to the project Youth for Humanity. Search for Common Ground managed the project in Pakistan, and a local production house, PRISM, is the implementing partner. One of the project's objectives is to enhance the youth's understanding of effective messaging for promoting peaceful coexistence. When Pareesa met with colleagues at PRISM, they offered her to join the forthcoming digital media training. Pareesa happily accepted that.



*"I am deeply committed to using the power of journalism to promote peace and harmony in our society. My goal is to showcase the beauty of coexistence and pluralism, and to amplify the voices of those who work towards a more peaceful world. I am indebted to Youth for Humanity project for showing me the direction and providing me with the skills and platform to make a difference." Pareesa Afreen*

Pareesa's training under the Youth for Humanity project was helpful in several ways. Firstly, the training provided her with practical skills not being taught at her university. For example, she learned how to develop a campaign and shoot pictures and videos, preparing her to change her hobby into a cause. Secondly, the training introduced her to using media for peacebuilding and interfaith harmony, which aligned with her passion.

Pareesa's PRISM mentor quickly identified her passion and offered her an internship after the training. The internship allowed her to gain hands-on experience in media and peacebuilding. While developing digital products for Youth for Humanity, Pareesa explored areas where different religious communities lived in peace and harmony. She discovered inspiring stories of coexistence, love, and mutual respect that are rarely highlighted in mainstream media. Pareesa's stories showed how Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, and Muslims could live together and share each other's happiness and grief.

In "Narayan Pura," she showcased how over 15,000 people of different faiths coexist and celebrate their festivals together. She highlighted a "School in a Temple," established by a Muslim lady inside a Hindu mandir, which provide fee education to children of all faiths.

In Meher Ghar (Home of Love), Pareesa portrayed how a terrorism-affected area like Liyari transformed into a peaceful and loving community. During the holy month of Ramadan, Pareesa highlighted how Christian communities arrange "Iftar" (breaking of fast) events for their Muslim brothers and sisters. Finally, in her story of "Wall of Peace," Pareesa explained how a mosque and church in Faisalabad share a wall, and both communities live in peace and perform their religious activities without any trouble.

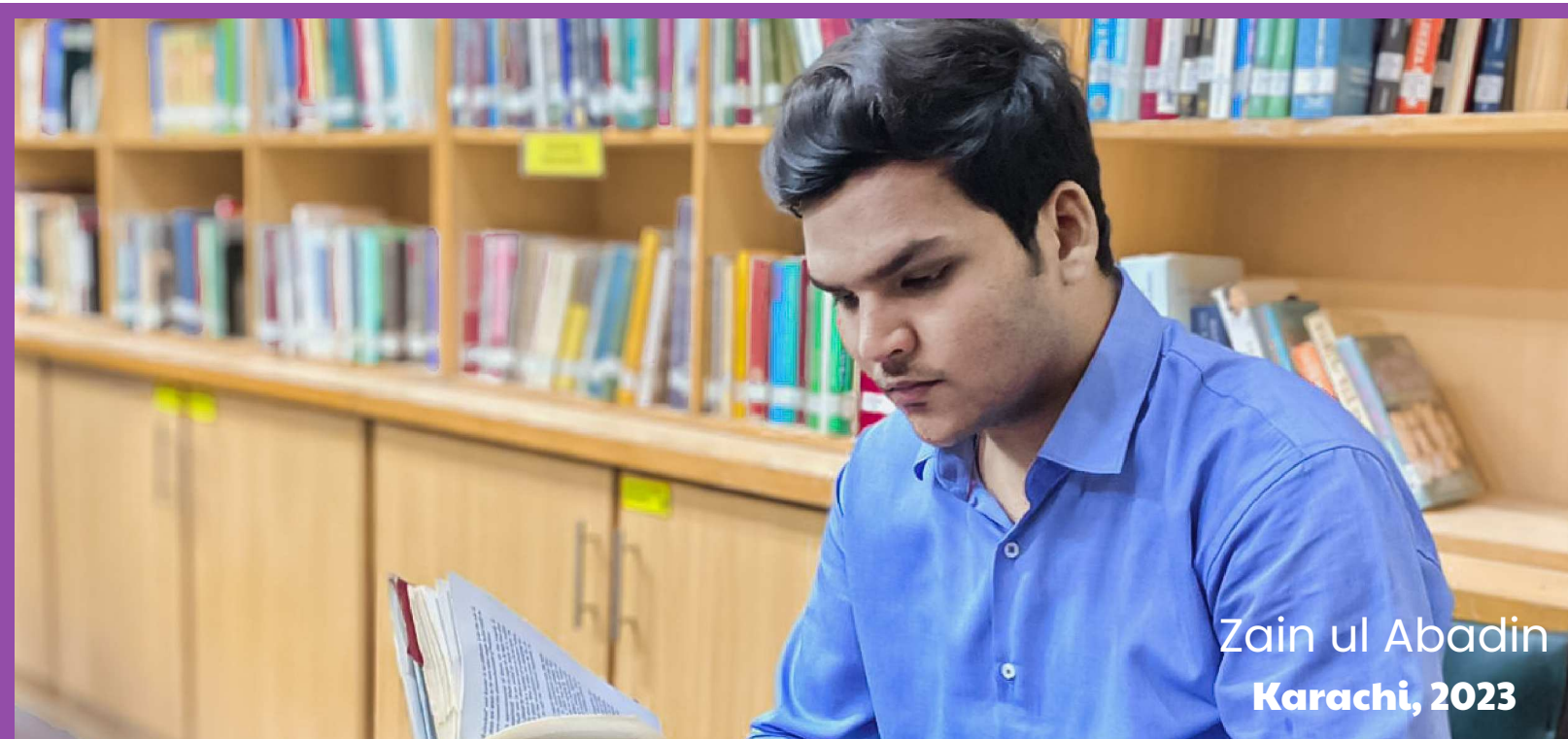
The success of the Youth for Humanity project can be witnessed through the impactful efforts of Pareesa, who has played a vital role in promoting interfaith harmony and tolerance. Through the project's activities, Pareesa has effectively highlighted the peaceful coexistence of different religious communities. Her stories have inspired a wave of inclusivity and acceptance among her university peers and the wider community, contributing to the project's goal of building a more peaceful and harmonious society. Pareesa's dedication and storytelling prowess have become instrumental in the success of the Youth for Humanity project, fostering understanding and unity among diverse individuals and nurturing a culture of respect and empathy.



## Captivating the Hearts: Zain's Unyielding Passion for Peace and Harmony Through Media

*"I believe that storytelling has the power to transcend boundaries and touch the hearts of people from all walks of life." Zain ul Abadin*

In the bustling streets of Karachi, where diverse cultures intertwine and stories unfold, a young visionary yearns to capture the essence of unity and understanding. Zain-Ul-Abidin, a media studies student at a local university, possesses an unwavering passion for promoting peace and harmony through the power of media. His journey, fueled by a deep-rooted desire to bridge divides and foster empathy, is as remarkable as the stories he weaves.



Zain ul Abadin  
Karachi, 2023

From an early age, Zain was fascinated by the captivating allure of storytelling. This realization ignited a fire within him, urging him to pursue his studies in media and unlock his creative potential. "I believe that storytelling has the power to transcend boundaries and touch the hearts of people from all walks of life," Zain passionately declares, his eyes gleaming with determination.

Driven by this belief, Zain embarked on a journey to acquire practical skills that would complement his theoretical education. He yearned to learn the art of scriptwriting, production, and human rights activism. In January 2023, his search took him to a digital training program under Youth for Humanity Project.

The training proved to be a transformative experience, equipping him with the tools and expertise to harness the power of media for the greater good. His passion burned brighter than ever before, and he emerged from the training as an ambassador of peace, harmony, and coexistence.

*"Through my stories, I want to evoke emotions, challenge prejudices, and bridge divides. I want to remind people of our shared humanity." Zain ul Abadin*

Recognized for his talent and unyielding dedication, Zain was offered an internship to sharpen his skills further. Under the mentorship of seasoned professionals, Zain's creative spirit flourished. Through his writings, he painted vivid portraits of a society that embraced diversity, where religious and cultural differences were celebrated rather than feared. Putting his theoretical knowledge into practice, he now had the opportunity to breathe life into characters like Vishnu and Sajjad, whose friendship defied societal norms and kindled a beacon of hope for a more tolerant world.

"Through my stories, I want to evoke emotions, challenge prejudices, and bridge divides. I want to remind people of our shared humanity," Zain passionately explains.

In his blog post "How to Create Social Harmony," Zain emphasized the importance of understanding and respecting all religions, cultures, and social thoughts from an early age. He believes that parents should introduce their children to literature that promotes harmony and peace, and educational institutions should provide awareness about different religions and answer any questions that may arise in the minds of youth. Zain's work also highlights the stories of those who are often overlooked. For instance, the challenges faced by Hindu women vendors are covered in his story "Empress Market," and the valuable contributions of Christian doctors and nurses in the health sector can be seen in his blog post "Role of Pakistani Christians in Health Sector."

But Zain's journey was not without its challenges. In his unwavering pursuit of promoting peace and understanding, Zain encountered objections and challenges from his

own community. Some questioned the motives for emphasizing the stories and contributions of people from different religions. Yet, Zain remained steadfast in his belief that unity and acceptance should transcend religious boundaries. He engaged in open dialogues, patiently explaining the importance of embracing diversity and showcasing the inherent beauty in every culture and faith. His resilience and dedication to his cause ultimately earned him the respect and admiration of his community. "Love and understanding have the power to overcome even the most stubborn barriers," he discloses.

The catalyst that propelled Zain's passion to new heights was the Youth for Humanity project. Through this initiative, Zain discovered a community of like-minded individuals who shared his vision for a more inclusive and harmonious world. The project became a platform for him to connect with peers, learn from their experiences, and collaborate in spreading a message of love and acceptance.

"Surrounded by fellow changemakers, I felt a surge of energy and inspiration. Together, we will become an unstoppable force, determined to rewrite the narrative of our society," Zain recalls, a smile of gratitude gracing his face.

As Zain's journey unfolds, he remains resolute in his mission. He envisions establishing a production house that serves as a sanctuary for diverse voices, a place where stories of hope, resilience, and coexistence can find a platform.

"In my production house, I want to amplify the voices of those whose stories have long been overlooked. I want to create narratives that resonate with people, challenge preconceived notions, and inspire positive change," Zain envisions, his eyes ablaze with unwavering determination.





## From Walls to Hearts: Nazia Baloch's Artistic Journey towards Harmony and Coexistence

*"In a world of division and strife, I paint walls with love, transforming them into canvases of harmony and coexistence." Nazia Baloch*

"In a world of division and strife, I paint walls with love, transforming them into canvases of harmony and coexistence." Born and raised in the violence-stricken neighborhood of Lyari, Karachi, Nazia Baloch witnessed the destructive impact of hate and bloodshed firsthand. Her artistic journey is a testament to the power of creativity and resilience in the face of adversity. Determined to make a difference, she embraced her passion for art to spread love and peace in her community. "When I saw the violence and hatred in my community, I knew I had to do something. Art became my voice, my way of spreading a message of peace."



**Nazia Baloch**  
**Karachi, 2023**

Nazia's affinity for colors and the profound messages they convey was evident from a young age. She transformed her passion into an initiative called Fun-a-Mussawari (the art of painting), using it to promote unity and understanding. She adorned public walls with vibrant artwork to counteract hate speech and advocate for equality.

Recognized as a potential change agent, Nazia's journey took an even more transformative turn when she joined the Youth for Humanity project. She underwent training to enhance her skills as a social influencer. Implementing a Social Action Project at a local girls' school, Nazia was now able to foster awareness and engagement. Collaborating with the students, Nazia brought their ideas to life on the school walls, creating a powerful message of peace and harmony. A young student shared that "Through the interactive sessions, Nazia encouraged us to express ourselves through art. It made us realize that our voices matter, and we can contribute to a more harmonious society."

***"When I saw the violence and hatred in my community, I knew I had to do something. Art became my voice, my way of spreading a message of peace." Nazia Baloch***

The impact of Nazia's artwork radiated throughout the community. People marveled at the visual spectacle, discussing it in groups, and media outlets took notice, dedicating special programs to showcase her initiative. Summing up the impact of Nazia's work, a journalist who covered her story says, "Nazia's paintings serve as a powerful symbol of resilience and coexistence. Her art tells a story of hope, breaking down barriers and inspiring unity."

Other schools reached out to replicate the program, amplifying the project's influence beyond its initial scope. Nazia's paintings became symbols of hope, reminding everyone that humanity thrives when we coexist in respect and understanding, regardless of differences.

Nazia's journey has been challenging. She faced opposition from extremist elements, yet her resolve remained unshakable. Her passion for promoting peace and harmony has inspired the community, and her artwork continues to touch hearts and minds. Nazia Baloch is a beacon of hope, demonstrating that one person's determination and creativity can reshape society.

Looking ahead, Nazia remains steadfast in her commitment to using art as a tool for change. Currently Working for a Women's Rights Organization, she channels her artistic talent to paint the struggles and rights of women on walls, contributing to the broader women's rights movement. Through her unwavering dedication, Nazia aims to leave an indelible mark, fostering a more inclusive and equitable world.





## Hitting Boundaries: Naeem's Journey from Religious Traditions to Interfaith Harmony through Cricket

*"Religion taught me to love and serve others, but it was the Youth for Humanity project that showed me how to bridge the gaps between different faiths."*

In the heartland of rural south Punjab, Naeem was raised in a traditional religious society that valued piety and devotion. As he grew older, his dedication to his faith deepened, and he became a respected prayer leader at a local mosque. But beneath his unwavering devotion, a flame of curiosity burned within Naeem—a desire to explore the intersection of faiths. "Religion taught me to love and serve others, but it was the Youth for Humanity project that showed me how to bridge the gaps between different faiths."



Muhammad Naeem  
Lahore, 2023

Leaving his rural roots behind, Naeem embarked on a new chapter of his life in Lahore, pursuing a degree in Urdu literature at a prestigious university. It was during this transformative period that Naeem's quest for answers began. During his academic pursuits, he stumbled upon a religious community engaged in interfaith dialogue and cooperation— an exposure that ignited his passion for unity and acceptance. "Can a Muslim intermingle with other religions? Can he offer prayers in a mosque of another sect or allow others to offer prayers in his mosque?" These questions stirred up a storm in his mind, and he began a quest to find answers.



*"The Youth for Humanity project illuminated the path of understanding and compassion for me. It provided me with the tools to build bridges of harmony between faiths, and I am committed to spreading its message of unity far and wide." Muhammad Naeem*

Amid his search for harmony, Naeem's path intertwined with the Youth for Humanity project. Naeem was selected for the program and immersed himself in a world of diversity and shared values. Over the course of the program's workshops and interactions, he discovered the missing piece: the practical tools and understanding to foster interfaith harmony.

The Youth for Humanity project provided Naeem with a space to engage in intergenerational dialogues and learn about the common ground approach. Here, he learned to listen, empathize, and embrace different perspectives, transcending the boundaries of religion and ethnicity. It was through these eye-opening encounters that Naeem's passion for peace and interfaith unity flourished.

Empowered by newfound knowledge and inspired by the project's vision, Naeem set out to translate his aspirations into tangible actions within his community. He was able to use something everyone loved, despite their differences- cricket. He organized a groundbreaking cricket tournament, where players from diverse religions and sects

converged on the field, united by the spirit of sportsmanship, and acceptance. The tournament faced opposition from the religious community, but Naeem's unwavering commitment to fostering understanding prevailed.

The merging of players from different faiths in one team mirrored the harmony Naeem envisioned for society - a mosaic where diversity thrived, and prejudices crumbled. As the cricket tournament unfolded, friendships blossomed. Naeem's vision became a reality, with the ripples of unity echoing far beyond the boundaries of the cricket field.

Inspired by the Youth for Humanity project, Naeem envisions organizing more inclusive events that transcend religious divides, fostering dialogue and understanding among people of different faiths and sects.

Reflecting on his journey, Naeem shares, "The Youth for Humanity project illuminated the path of understanding and compassion for me. It provided me with the tools to build bridges of harmony between faiths, and I am committed to spreading its message of unity far and wide."





## Embracing Peace Amidst Hardship: Balbir Singh's Unwavering Journey of Harmony and Resilience

*"When I was introduced to Youth for Humanity project, I first felt we were made for each other. It touched my heart and soul, and I knew this platform could provide me the steppingstone for bringing the communities closer." Balbir Singh*

Balbir Singh's vibrant personality and passion for adventure have led him to his present love for the stage and film. A student from the Sikh community in Sahiwal, Balbir's deep-rooted connection to his home, reminiscing about the iconic Sardar ki Mithai and the Neel Cows, has instilled a strong sense of community and nostalgia.



Balbir Singh's unique ability to bridge different communities and his enthusiasm for exploring various regions and sects set him apart. Driven by his questing nature, Balbir has been part of many youth-led initiatives for peace and harmony even before the inauguration of the Youth for Humanity project. Here he got the opportunity to interact and connect with individuals from diverse beliefs. This experience laid the foundation for his journey toward promoting peace and understanding. Balbir's unique ability to reach out to communities and bridge them and his enthusiasm for exploring various religions and sects have made him an ambassador for acceptance and harmony.



***"Peace is life, and abandoning life is inconceivable. It is in my nature, and one cannot go against nature." Balbir Singh***

Balbir's path intersected with the Youth for Humanity project, which provided him with the ideal platform to implement his vision of promoting peace and unity. "When I was introduced to Youth for Humanity project, I first felt we were made for each other. It touched my heart and soul, and I knew this platform could provide me the steppingstone for bringing the communities closer." The project activities and training programs immersed him in the understanding of different religions and fostering connections between university and madrasa students.

When we met Balbir for this story, he passed through a hard life patch. Despite facing personal challenges and uncertainties in his academic pursuits, Balbir remains resolute in his commitment to fostering peace and harmony. His unwavering spirit is evident in his dedication to launching activities that promote love and unity. Balbir understands that certain tasks, such as spreading love and uniting people, are essential regardless of one's available resources. His indomitable nature and belief in the power of youth to create positive change continue to drive him forward.

Through the Youth for Humanity project, Balbir had the opportunity to implement a pilot program, and he conceptualized the "Diversity Tour." This innovative initiative aimed to bridge the gaps between different religions by taking his peers to mosques, temples, gurdwaras, churches, and Bahai Community Centers. The tour proved instrumental in fostering understanding, breaking down barriers, and promoting harmony among diverse communities.



Balbir passionately expressed, "Peace is life, and abandoning life is inconceivable. It is in my nature, and one cannot go against nature." His unwavering belief in the significance of peace and harmony as essential aspects of life drive his future endeavors.

Balbir's peers and the community resonated with his efforts, acknowledging his impactful contributions toward fostering peace and unity. They praised his dedication and commitment to promoting understanding and harmony among religious and cultural groups. Balbir Singh's journey is inspiring. It shows how the power of an individual can make a difference. Despite personal hardships, his passion, resilience, and unwavering spirit shine through as he continues to pave the way for peace and harmony. Balbir's commitment to bridging divides and his ability to unite communities through understanding and acceptance make him a true beacon of hope in creating a more inclusive and harmonious society.



*"When I saw the opportunity to join the Youth for Humanity project, I knew it was my chance to make a difference." Arjun Baghri*

Arjun Baghri is defying the odds and breaking barriers as the first lawyer from his oppressed community in Mitari. Coming from the Baghri community in rural Sindh, he was born into a "low-caste Hindu clan" that has experienced centuries of oppression. This exclusion fueled his passion for peace, as he knows firsthand that peace is intricately linked to the rights and empowerment of marginalized communities.



Arjun Baghri  
**Karachi, 2023**

"When I saw the opportunity to join the Youth for Humanity project, I knew it was my chance to make a difference," Arjun shares. Selected for the program, he was captivated by the diverse group of individuals who sat together, sharing a meal without hesitation. In panel discussions, Arjun fearlessly addressed the social issues that fuel hate and division. He emphasized that both sides need to acknowledge their biases and work towards breaking down barriers.



*"Diversity is not a weakness; it is a strength that should be celebrated" Arjun Baghri*



During the Common Ground Approach training, Arjun experienced a transformative moment as his thoughts and beliefs found a powerful voice. The training provided a platform for Arjun to express his ideas and engage in meaningful discussions about peace. Through this process, his understanding of peace deepened, and he gained clarity on how to translate his ideas into action.

The training equipped him with practical tools and strategies to promote peace and resolve conflicts in his community. Arjun emerged from the training with a renewed sense of purpose and the confidence to actively pursue his vision of a peaceful and harmonious society. "The Common Ground Approach training gave me the clarity and direction I needed to actively pursue peace and make a positive difference in my community."

To implement his social action project, Arjun discovered the unifying power of cricket and decided to organize a cricket tournament. Teams were formed with players from different universities and religious backgrounds promoting

the message of unity and equality. Arjun made it clear that cricket was merely a means to gather people, while the true objective was to instill values of peace, respect, and tolerance in practical life and their communities. The tournament became a catalyst for breaking stereotypes and fostering meaningful connections among participants.

Looking to the future, Arjun is determined to spread the message that diversity is beauty. He plans to leverage social media to keep his project's players united and reach out to more youth. He intends to organize diversity seminars across Sindh, collaborating with playwrights and social media influencers to amplify the message of peace and acceptance. Arjun also advocates for reforms in the educational syllabus, aiming to eliminate hate speech and promote inclusive teachings. Additionally, he offers his legal services as a volunteer, ready to contribute to peace-related issues when required.



*"The strokes of my brush have the power to heal hearts, bridge divides, and ignite hope for a harmonious future." Tuba Rafi*

"The strokes of my brush have the power to heal hearts, bridge divides, and ignite hope for a harmonious future." This is how Tuba described the Rang-e-Aman (colors of peace) Competition. Tuba, who can be described as a mix of artistic passion and social consciousness, is the brain behind this competition. She has embarked on a remarkable journey to spread peace and harmony through her art.



**Tuba Rafi**  
**Karachi, 2023**

Growing up under the influence of her artist father, she developed a profound connection to the transformative power of creativity. However, it was her studies in Social Work that exposed her to the pressing social issues.

In her pursuit of finding solutions to the challenges she witnessed, Tuba discovered the Youth for Humanity project. Within the project's peace dialogues and Common Ground Approach (CGA) training, Tuba found the answers she had long sought. Stereotypes that had clouded her perspective, particularly regarding other religious communities, began to dissipate. She embraced the importance of seeking common ground and defying disharmony by recognizing the fluidity of identities.



*Tooba has received requests from educational institutions across the nation, eager to host the event on their premises.*



Inspired by her newfound clarity, Tuba conceived the idea of "Rang-e-Aman" (Colors of Peace), a painting competition to foster interfaith dialogue, inclusion, and harmony. Engaging over 50 artists from diverse backgrounds, Tuba personally connected with each participant, passionately discussing the competition's concept and its potential impact.

The impact of Rang-e-Aman was immediate and profound. Artists realized the transformative power of art as a vehicle for propagating peace and countering the prevailing trend of dark art in Karachi. The competition not only provided a platform for expression but also ignited a collective realization that art can inspire and initiate positive change within society. Its popularity soared, with over 400 applications flooding in when Tuba announced the second round.

Tuba's Rang-e-Aman initiative has reverberated throughout society, invigorating a shift towards peace-oriented art and nurturing a broader understanding of the importance of colors in portraying peace. Amidst the societal challenges

of limited freedom of expression, Tuba remains resolute in her mission. She firmly believes that art can transcend boundaries, enabling the free expression of ideas and serving as a catalyst for peace and harmony.

Looking ahead, Tuba is committed to expanding the canvas of Rang-e-Aman. She has received requests from educational institutions across the nation, eager to host the event on their premises. Enthusiastic about the concept's popularity, she envisions taking Rang-e-Aman to multiple cities with the support of potential sponsors.

Tuba's initiative represents the project's core objectives, emphasizing the importance of effective messaging for promoting peaceful coexistence. Her unwavering dedication contributes to a growing wave of youth-led and youth-designed local public messages, advocating for peaceful coexistence and the rights of all individuals. Through her artistic endeavors, Tuba leaves an indelible mark on society, touching the hearts of countless individuals and inspiring a future brimming with harmonious possibilities.



## The Art of Harmony: Moor Journey to Unite the Communities

*"In the realm of diversity, I am the catalyst for change, intertwining hearts and shaping a harmonious future." Moor Qadir*

Moor's story begins in Jacobabad, a district in the heart of interior Sindh. As a young boy, he found himself in a society where conversations between people of different religions were rare, where intermingling was discouraged, and where scornful names were used to address those from different faiths. Strangely, despite Jacobabad's 10% Hindu population, Moor found himself without a single Hindu classmate. .



The plight of the Hindu community remained a silent void, leaving Moor with countless unanswered questions. Growing up, the only message he received was that he was a non-Muslim, and friendly relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims were discouraged. This confusion made Moor wonder why people of different religions didn't even shake hands.

When Moor gained admission to a university in Karachi, he seized the opportunity to find the answers that had eluded him for so long. The first Ramadan he spent in the university's hostel became a turning point in his life. There, he formed deep friendships with both Hindu and Muslim students. In their circle, it was decided that non-fasting Hindus would cook meals during Ramazan. This arrangement initially perplexed Moor, but upon discussing it with Muslim classmates who voiced no objections, he also accepted the arrangement.



***"The panel discussion unveiled a bouquet of shared values, dispelling the misconceptions that had plagued my mind for so long." Moor Qadir***

The successful hostel experience gave him new courage to engage himself on social cohesion related issues. He voluntarily engaged with organizations and programs that championed equality, harmony, and diversity. It was during this time that his path intersected with the Youth for Humanity project. It was a long-awaited missing piece that he felt was tailor-made to address his needs and confusion.

Reflecting on his transformative journey, Moor highlighted a pivotal panel discussion that brought together eminent scholars from various religious backgrounds. "The panel discussion," Moor recalled, "unveiled a bouquet of shared values, dispelling the misconceptions that had plagued my mind for so long."

As Moor continued his journey, he forged deep connections with like-minded individuals, amassing a network of over 2000 youth dedicated to fostering peace and harmony. These individuals, inspired by Moor's passion, joined him in his pursuit, each playing a vital role in the movement for change.

As part of the Youth for Humanity project, Moor and his fellow participants are implementing Social Action Projects. Moor's personal project stands out - he has set out to create an ebook titled "Journey for Harmony." In this book, he collects the stories of local heroes, regardless of religion or caste, who have contributed to peace and harmony at the grassroots level. According to Moor, these unsung contributors are the true heroes and the beacon of hope for a peaceful society and a brighter future.

Moor acknowledges that the journey toward harmony is long and fraught with challenges, but his eyes sparkle with hope and determination for the nation's future. He has already garnered support from his family, who now wholeheartedly embraces and encourages his efforts. Moor has also enlightened his classmates from various regions of Sindh, instilling an understanding of the meaning and significance of diversity and inclusion. Looking ahead, he envisions transforming his nursing field into a hub of inclusion and diversity.





## Cultivating Confidence: Ubaid Journey of Promoting Peace and Unity

*"I have come to realize that my purpose in life is not just about myself but about positively impacting others and the society we live in. Social work has chosen me, and I am committed to dedicating my efforts towards creating a world where compassion and kindness thrive because that is where true fulfillment lies." Ubaid Ali*

After facing hardships in early life, Ubaid took on the multiple responsibilities of being the breadwinner for his family. Driven by a deep passion for making a difference, Ubaid found solace and guidance in the Youth for Humanity project.



Ubaid Ali  
Lahore, 2023

The project catalyzed Ubaid's personal development and constructive work in society. He gained a deeper understanding of different perspectives through his active participation in various project activities, such as Peace Dialogues and Networking Meetings. He learned how to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering tolerance and interfaith harmony. The project's transformative impact was evident as Ubaid, once a shy and introverted person, blossomed into a confident individual who fearlessly expressed his inner self during the Common Ground Approach training.



***The project's transformative impact was evident as Ubaid, once a shy and introverted person, blossomed into a confident individual who fearlessly expressed his inner self during the Common Ground Approach training.***

Youth for Humanity instilled a newfound confidence in Ubaid, enabling him to network with others and share his experiences and wisdom. He embraced the role of a mentor, guiding teenagers in his neighborhood and imparting the valuable lessons of peaceful living that he learned through the project.

As part of his Social Action Project an event where more than 30 girls from different religious and educational backgrounds spent a day together, freely interacting and learning about each other's cultures. By concealing their religious and ethnic identities initially and later revealing them, Ubaid demonstrated that the nature of individuals mattered more than their backgrounds. During the event, he facilitated a meaningful connection between the girls and local heroes, allowing them to gain valuable insights and learn from life experiences.

Ubaid's vision for the next five years is dedicated to uncovering the hidden gems within his community. These local unsung heroes have played significant roles in fostering unity and harmony. With a heartfelt mission to highlight their inspiring stories, Ubaid aims to connect the youth with these unsung heroes, allowing them to witness firsthand the transformative power of small acts of kindness and compassion. By amplifying these stories of community-driven change, Ubaid envisions empowering a new generation to follow in the footsteps of these heroes, igniting a ripple effect of positive social impact and building a stronger, more cohesive society.

But the tremendous success of the Youth for Humanity project, according to Ubaid, is its positive impact on his own family. His younger sister is a shining example of how the project's teachings and values have spread within his home, fostering greater tolerance and harmony among his siblings.





# 12

## Bridging Divides, Spreading Love: Sadaf's Journey with Youth for Humanity

*"Every relationship begins with a single encounter, and I am dedicated to nurturing and cultivating these relationships to withstand the challenges that lie ahead." Sadaf Masood*

According to Sadaf, "Girls should break free from their limited circles of thought and dare to think big. Each of us is sent into this world with a purpose, and it is our responsibility to discover that purpose. Let me assure you, there is no greater objective than spreading love and fostering unity among people. This objective can etch our names in the hearts of others for eternity."



Sadaf Masood  
Lahore, 2023

Sadaf's journey with the Youth for Humanity Project shaped her growth and ignited her passion for social change. Despite her academic background in Mass Communication and her current job in a software house, Sadaf realized that effective communication is the common thread that unites her varied interests. Armed with the knowledge she gained from the project, Sadaf became a powerful change agent within her community.

Sadaf said, "Participating in the Youth for Humanity Project has been a life-altering experience. It has opened my eyes to embracing diversity and fostering unity. Through meaningful interactions and dialogues, I have learned the power of empathy and how it can bridge the divides that exist in our society."

One of Sadaf's peers, Chaman Lal, shares his perspective on her transformation: "Sadaf's growth throughout this journey has been remarkable. She has become a true ambassador for interfaith harmony and inclusivity. Her ability to listen, understand, and empathize with different viewpoints is inspiring."

Participation in peace dialogues taught Sadaf the importance of accommodating individuals of other religions. She learned the value of active listening, objective thinking, and respectful responses. Sadaf recognized that even in opposing arguments, a kernel of validity often exists that can serve as a foundation for productive interactions.

"Engaging in peace dialogues has taught me the art of effective communication. It is not about winning arguments but fostering understanding and finding common ground. Through dialogue, we can bridge divides and build a more inclusive and harmonious society."

The Common Ground Approach training further solidified Sadaf's belief in the power of shared human experiences. She learned that despite religious or cultural differences, we all possess commonalities as human beings. These shared behaviors, habits, and lifestyles can build bonds within a diverse society, fostering respect and understanding among its members.

Embracing her role as a youth leader, Sadaf organized a one-day sports gala that brought together girls from various educational and religious backgrounds. The event facilitated interactions, cultural exchanges, and the formation of connections among the girls. When asked about the utility of this one-off encounter, Sadaf replied, "Every relationship begins with a single encounter, and I am dedicated to nurturing and cultivating these relationships to withstand the challenges that lie ahead."

Sadaf's agenda for the next five years revolves around promoting respect for minority religions in Pakistan. She is deeply troubled when events in neighboring countries result in the destruction of places of worship within her own country. Sadaf firmly believes that "granting respect to religious minorities and their places of worship, a positive impact can extend across borders." She recognizes that "human societies learn and draw inspiration from one another, and positive behavior in my country will be reciprocated by societies across the border."

In her workplace, Sadaf has harnessed the power of social media. She aims to develop expertise in utilizing these platforms to bring people together and harness their potential to create positive societal change. With her determination and passion, Sadaf is poised to make a significant impact on fostering respect, harmony, and inclusivity within Pakistan and beyond.







## Naimat: A Successful Youth Leader Determined to Overachieve Youth for Humanity Objectives

*“My plans involve working tirelessly to promote peace, harmony, and interfaith understanding. I envision conducting workshops and awareness campaigns to address societal issues, empower marginalized communities, and inspire others to embark on peace.” Naimat-ur-Raheem*

Naimat embodies the fusion of traditional religious education and modern university learning. Having completed her religious education at a prestigious institute in Lahore and nearing the completion of her degree in Applied Psychology, Naimat's journey took a transformative turn when she became involved with the Youth for Humanity project.



Her initial encounter with interfaith activities came through a debating contest on a YouTube channel. Naimat's eloquence and thought-provoking arguments caught the attention of the project organizers, who saw her potential as a youth leader. When the project officially launched a few months later, Naimat eagerly joined as a youth leader.

It was during the network meetings that Naimat experienced a profound shift in her perspective. She learned about interfaith and intrafaith harmony, distinguishing between debate and dialogue. As someone accustomed to asserting herself, Naimat realized the value of genuine dialogue—listening to others' opinions, allowing space for diverse viewpoints, and cultivating tolerance for opposing arguments. This realization transformed her attitude.



***“Some participants were surprised to learn about forced conversions and the abduction of individuals from minority faiths. We were unaware of this aspect of minorities’ problems. These dialogues served as eye-opening experiences.” Naimat-ur-Raheem***

Stepping out of the training, Naimat emerged a different person, shedding her fear of interacting with non-Muslims and forming meaningful connections during project activities, such as sharing a room with a Christian girl while traveling. “The network meetings became the foundation upon which I built meaningful connections and dreamed of a society where unity and respect prevail.”

Naimat's Social Action project under the Youth for Humanity initiative involved organizing and conducting peace dialogues with youth from different religious backgrounds. Notably, the guidance and teachings of university professors who emphasized unity through Punjabi Sufi poetry profoundly impacted her. Additionally, the support and insights of a church leader further enriched her understanding of interfaith harmony. From a Hindu professor, she discovered that embracing and celebrating our differences is not a threat to our faith but rather a pathway to greater unity, compassion, and collective growth. These experiences and her innate leadership qualities instilled a strong drive within Naimat to promote peace in her society. Through the peace dialogues, Naimat raised awareness in her community about the challenges

and discrimination faced by religious minorities in the country. “Some participants were surprised to learn about forced conversions and the abduction of individuals from minority faiths. We were unaware of this aspect of minorities’ problems. These dialogues served as eye-opening experiences.”

One of Naimat's most notable achievements was introducing interfaith debates within her Madrasa. With an open-minded administration's support, she was allowed to discuss interfaith and peace-related issues in the classroom. The Madrasa administration also facilitated girls' participation in project activities, contributing to a more inclusive environment.

Naimat's commitment to peace extends beyond project boundaries, as she has started implementing peace dialogues within her own home and neighborhood, leading to a visible decrease in conflicts. “My plans involve working tirelessly to promote peace, harmony, and interfaith understanding. I envision conducting workshops and awareness campaigns to address societal issues, empower marginalized communities, and inspire others to embark on peace.”





## Baat Karain Gy Tu Baat Agay Bharay Gi (If we communicate, things will move forward.)

Chaman Lal, is a computer scientist turned social activist. Dedicating himself to championing the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan, he set out on a remarkable path of advocacy and empowerment. The change started after shifting to Lahore for higher education. He got an opportunity to attend a conference on Freedom of Religion and Belief. After attending the conference, he realized that even educated people like himself lack awareness of minority rights. This revelation ignited a passion within him to dedicate his future to social work and the struggle for minority rights.



Chaman Lal  
Lahore, 2023

For four years, Chaman Lal actively worked with various NGOs, volunteering his time to raise awareness about the rights of minorities. However, he felt a need for a more focused and impactful approach. His dedication led him to be selected as a youth leader in the Youth for Humanity project, which aligned perfectly with his aspirations for interfaith harmony, acceptance, and humanity. The project provided Chaman Lal with the direction, training, guidance, and mentorship he had been seeking. He was particularly intrigued by the opportunity to interact with students from Madrasas (school for Islamic religious education), which broadened his perspective on religious diversity and strengthened his belief in the power of dialogue. The networking meetings organized by the project played a crucial role in expanding his connections and building his capacity for collaboration.



***"If we embrace the power of communication, open our hearts and engage in meaningful dialogue, truly listen and understand, then we hold the key to moving forward and creating a brighter tomorrow. Through communication, bridges are built, barriers are broken, and progress becomes attainable. If we communicate, things will undoubtedly move forward."***

Chaman Lal found immense joy in witnessing the formation of strong bonds between individuals from different religious backgrounds through the Youth for Humanity project. He firmly believes that these relationships would extend far beyond the project's duration, creating a lasting impact on fostering understanding and acceptance. During peace dialogues, he seized the opportunity to raise awareness among fellow youth leaders about the challenges faced by the Hindu community, emphasizing issues such as forced conversions and marriages.

Through his Social Action Project (SAP) executed under Youth for Humanity Project, Chaman Lal aimed to raise awareness among youth leaders about the plight of minorities. He organized visits to Gurudwaras, Madrasas, Mandirs, and Churches, where open and frank discussions about minority-related issues took place. He viewed this as the first step in the journey towards bringing these concerns to the attention of state institutions and working towards concrete solutions.

***"I envision a society where diversity is celebrated, and all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their religious beliefs." Chaman Lal***

Looking ahead, Chaman Lal is determined to continue his advocacy for minority rights. His future plans involve collaborating with like-minded individuals, organizations, and state institutions to address the systemic challenges faced by religious minorities. He envisions a society where diversity is celebrated and all individuals are treated with respect and dignity, regardless of their religious beliefs.

"If we embrace the power of communication, open our hearts and engage in meaningful dialogue, truly listen and understand, then we hold the key to moving forward and creating a brighter tomorrow. Through communication, bridges are built, barriers are broken, and progress becomes attainable. If we communicate, things will undoubtedly move forward."





## Breaking Barriers, Illuminating Paths: Samra's Journey of Resilience and Empowerment

In a world where tradition and progress often clash, we meet Samra. A young woman from a conservative religious family, she broke free from societal norms and embarked on a unique path, pursuing her degree in social work alongside her traditional Madrasa education.

As an advocate for social change, Samra found harmony between her religious beliefs and her commitment to community service. "I don't feel any conflict between religion and social work. Rather religion pushes you to fight for the rights of your community. The more excluded you are, the more rights you have in Islam. If a community is excluded, the Muslims are under moral and religious pressure to work for their well-being and inclusion."



Samra Tariq  
Lahore, 2023

While Samra had prior experience working with civil society organizations, her involvement in the Youth for Humanity project transformed her understanding of the development sector. She vividly recalls the life-changing discussions and the impact of the Common Ground Approach training. "This training fundamentally altered my perspective, equipping me with the ability to embrace differing opinions and navigate challenges with resilience."

Samra's profound commitment lies in bridging the cultural divide between Madrasa and university students. Drawing from her unique blend of education, she aspires to build the capacity of Madrasa students by imparting modern techniques and fostering opportunities for interaction with civil society and university counterparts. Recognizing the Youth for Humanity project's role in bringing these two student groups closer, she now heads the Sarajia Intellectual Forum at her Alma Mater, seeking to provide maximum exposure and growth opportunities for girls in Madrasas.

***"The Common Ground Approach training provided me with the strength and perspective to navigate through the challenges. It taught me the importance of finding commonalities and understanding differing opinions. This strength will be with me until I am successful in building my school." Samra Tariq***

In her impactful social action project, Samra organized a calligraphy contest that brought together youth from Madrasas and universities. Beyond the display of beautiful calligraphy, the event served as a platform for meaningful interaction and understanding between these distinct student communities.

Recognizing the limitations of the current educational system in meeting modern needs, Samra's ultimate dream is to establish a skill-based school where children from all religions and ethnic groups can get an education. "Even though my dream project of a skill-based school faced unexpected hurdles and could not come to fruition, I refuse to let go of my vision," Samra states with unwavering determination.

"The Common Ground Approach training provided me with the strength and perspective to navigate through the challenges. It taught me the importance of finding commonalities and understanding differing opinions. This strength will be with me until I am successful in building my school."

Until she musters all the resources to pursue her dream project again, she plans to run short skill-based courses in different schools to keep his hope alight. "These courses will keep my dream fresh and my passion to pursue it young while also adding to my experience."

***"This (CGA) training fundamentally altered my perspective, equipping me with the ability to embrace differing opinions and navigate challenges with resilience."***







## Bridging Divides: Dr. Komal's Journey of Healing and Harmony

Meet Dr. Komal, whose goal is to bring together her profession and passion. A young and confident lady from the Hindu community, Dr. Komal is committed to bridging the gaps between religious identities and creating a more inclusive society.

Growing up in Tharparkar, a district known for its peaceful coexistence among different religious communities, Komal's upbringing instilled in her a deep respect for diversity. However, during her time in Karachi, she experienced the harsh division between different religious groups, which motivated her to work towards finding shared values and unity among people from diverse backgrounds.



**Dr. Komal**  
**Karachi, 2023**

Despite facing skepticism and questions about her focus on social work alongside her medical profession, Dr. Komal remains steadfast and believes that "both fields can not only be integrated, rather their integration is crucial for the betterment of society." Driven by her aspiration to effect change, Komal eagerly joined the Youth for Humanity project. The project provided her with the platform she had been seeking to deepen her understanding of peace and harmony. Engaging in project activities like peace dialogues, networking meetings, and the Common Ground Approach training provided Dr. Komal with invaluable opportunities to expand her understanding, hone her skills, and prepare for impactful action.

***"As a doctor and a believer in the transformative power of compassion, I am dedicated to healing not only physical ailments but also the divisions that plague our society. I strive to harmonize hearts and minds, bridging the gaps that separate us, and fostering a world where empathy and understanding are the cornerstones of our interactions."Dr. Komal***

These activities fostered her ability to engage in constructive conversations, build connections with diverse individuals and communities, and develop an approach to finding common ground amidst differences. The diversity tour organized as part of Komal's Social Action Project took participants to various places of worship, including mosques, temples, gurdwaras, and churches, where they explored commonalities and sought to dispel myths and misunderstandings. Through open discussions and addressing lingering questions, Komal and her peers began sowing the seeds of understanding and unity among different faiths and communities.

Confident in the changes she has sparked, Komal draws inspiration from Nelson Mandela's words that "even a single individual has the power to drive transformation." She has already witnessed the positive impact of her efforts within her own family, and she is determined to continue her journey toward harmony and peace, amplifying her impact and inspiring others to join the cause.

By integrating her expertise in healthcare with her passion for fostering unity and harmony, she is determined to serve the community through this novel combination. Her vision extends beyond physical healing, recognizing the importance of addressing social issues and contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society. "As a doctor and a believer in the transformative power of compassion, I am dedicated to healing not only physical ailments but also the divisions that plague our society. I strive to harmonize hearts and minds, bridging the gaps that separate us, and fostering a world where empathy and understanding are the cornerstones of our interactions."

***Komal draws inspiration from Nelson Mandela's words that "Even a single individual has the power to drive transformation."***







## Amplifying Voices: Sameer's Cinematic Quest for Inclusion

*"I recognized that fostering unity required finding common ground instead of engaging in divisive arguments. I learned the art of balanced representation, understanding that addressing both minority and majority community issues was essential for promoting harmony effectively." Sameer Ali*

On a scorching May afternoon, Sameer felt the pangs of fasting. Accompanied by his Hindu friend Satish, who was not fasting, they embarked on a day filled with errands across Karachi. During the day, Sameer noticed Satish's commitment to refrain from eating or drinking because Sameer was fasting. This act of respect and solidarity shown by Satish became a profound turning point in Sameer's life.



The experience left a lasting impact on Sameer, who saw the potential for harmony "if all of us could embody Satish's considerate nature." This pivotal moment set the stage for Sameer's journey and the birth of "Collective Pakistan" which is a social media platform which showcases unsung heroes who exemplify the spirit of unity.

Until the Youth for Humanity project co-opted him, Sameer's knowledge and understanding of peace and harmony came from his experience. By joining the project, Sameer learned about the impact of social media and the importance of dialogue over debate. "I recognized that fostering unity required finding common ground instead of engaging in divisive arguments. I learned the art of balanced representation, understanding that addressing both minority and majority community issues was essential for promoting harmony effectively."

*With the Youth for Humanity project serving as a catalyst, Sameer's determination to create impactful films that shed light on the challenges faced by excluded communities has grown stronger.*

This newfound knowledge shaped his social action project, where he compiled an ebook featuring the untold stories of peace activists, amplifying their voices and inspiring others.

Through networking events and exposure within the Youth for Humanity project, Sameer discovered the struggles faced by the transgender community. Moved by their plight, he recognized the need for candid discussions and increased networking to break societal stereotypes and advocate for their rights. This realization further fueled his determination to create a website that portrays the positive image of excluded communities, shedding light on their experiences and fostering unity.

Sameer's vision for peace and harmony is rooted in the belief that everyone, regardless of religion, sect, or ethnicity, deserves the right to live, receive education, and maintain their identity. By championing these rights and working towards their realization, Sameer envisions a society where hope is restored to minorities, paving the way for progress and prosperity.

By championing these rights and working towards their realization, Sameer envisions a society where hope is restored to minorities, paving the way for progress and prosperity.

Sameer is clear about his future plan of action for peace and harmony. As Sameer pursued his degree in Media Studies, specializing in video production, he has discovered a powerful tool to shed light on the struggles of excluded communities. Armed with his camera and a passion for storytelling, Sameer embarked on a mission to highlight their plight through compelling documentaries. With the Youth for Humanity project serving as a catalyst, Sameer's determination to create impactful films that shed light on the challenges faced by excluded communities has grown stronger. He has realized that through his documentaries, he could challenge stereotypes, dismantle prejudices, and foster a deeper understanding of the issues faced by these communities.







## Embracing Diversity: Masooma's Journey of Transgender Advocacy and Interfaith Understanding

Having grown up in the transgender community from a young age, Masooma had a limited understanding of religions, perceiving them as suppressive. Yet today, she immersed herself in learning about different religions, dispelling long-held biases and misconceptions. Here's what triggered her newfound interest in exploring religion.

In a society where transgender individuals are often marginalized and misunderstood, Masooma stands as a resilient and vocal advocate. With a passion for truth and justice, she has become a well-known figure in Karachi whose mission is to promote transgender rights. Masooma's advocacy efforts encompass two important aspects. Firstly, she dedicates herself to raising awareness about transgender rights and working towards their realization. Secondly, she actively works to dispel the misconceptions and misunderstandings between the transgender community and different religions.



Masooma Rasool  
Karachi, 2023

Contrary to the widely held belief that religions are hostile towards transgender individuals, Masooma aims to foster understanding and promote acceptance by showcasing the friendly and welcoming attitudes of various religious groups towards the transgender community. Despite the passage of the transgender rights bill in 2018, societal confusion and misconceptions persisted. Searching for a platform to learn about and advocate for transgender rights, Masooma found solace in the Youth for Humanity project.

Engaging in the project's activities, Masooma gained invaluable knowledge and confidence. Previously, about religion was shattered through networking and peace dialogues, and her understanding of religions transformed.

*In a society where transgender individuals are often marginalized and misunderstood, Masooma stands as a resilient and vocal advocate.*



The Common Ground Approach training played a pivotal role in challenging and breaking myths. Distinguished guest speakers shared their insights during these workshops, further enriching Masooma's perspective. Armed with practical knowledge and newfound understanding, Masooma embarked on her social action project, taking the transgender community to various places of worship- Imambargahs, mandirs, churches, and gurudwaras-to initiate the dialogue and dismantle stereotypes and misconceptions.

These visits not only fostered acceptance but also demonstrated that religions held no hostility towards the transgender community. The warm welcome and kind gestures extended by each religious institution left a lasting impact, erasing ill feelings and fostering peace between religions and transgender people.

Among her peers, Masooma is a symbol of resilience and determination. Masooma's activism began when she personally experienced harassment in 2019, igniting a fire within her to prevent others from enduring similar suffering.

“For me, the struggle for rights is not project dependent. It is rather a way of life, a lifelong mission.” Even after completing her education, she plans to continue her advocacy, striving to empower more community members to join the movement.

Nevertheless, Masooma's journey is not without its challenges. She recognizes the need to transform societal attitudes and behaviors. Even as she faces bullying in her prestigious university, Masooma remains resolute in her commitment to effect lasting change and sensitization within education and health departments to secure the rights of transgender individuals. She understands that this transformation cannot occur overnight, but she embraces the challenge, determined to mainstream her community, and create a more inclusive society.

***“For me, the struggle for rights is not project dependent. It is rather a way of life, a lifelong mission.” Masooma Rasool***





## Applying the Principles of Sufism in Modern Society to Achieve Peace and Unity

In the turbulent streets of Karachi, a young man named Rohab employs the timeless wisdom of Sufi philosophy to spread love and peace. Born in Hyderabad, located 160 km northeast of Karachi, he witnessed the strife and discord between rival ethnic factions from an early age. Determined to break the cycle of violence and division, Rohab embarked on a mission to bring the healing power of love and unity to his community. Guided by the teachings of Sufism, he “set out to create a harmonious society where people of all backgrounds could coexist with compassion and understanding.”



After completing his education at Hyderabad, his search for livelihood took him to Karachi. It was precisely when the Youth for Humanity project was being inaugurated. Intrigued by its mission to foster intercommunal harmony, Rohab's heart resonated with the project's core values. Recognizing the opportunity to channel his passion for peace through the lens of Sufi philosophy, he eagerly joined the project, ready to embark on a transformative journey of healing and understanding. “I joined Youth for Humanity to promote unity, peace, and understanding through the transformative power of Sufism. I sensed that both concepts were superimposed.”

*“By instilling these values at an early stage, I envision nurturing a generation that embodies peace, empathy, and understanding. This will pave the way for a brighter and more harmonious future.” Rohab Faisal*



Joining the Peace for Humanity project provided Rohab with valuable insights and skills. One significant lesson he learned was to not judge people based on their religion but to embrace their common humanity and love them as fellow human beings. This message aligns with the teachings of Sufism. Additionally, the project equipped him with conflict management techniques, allowing him to understand the root causes of conflicts and seek win-win solutions for all parties involved. Rohab successfully applied these techniques within his community.

The missing piece that the project provided to Rohab was a platform and support system to amplify his efforts in promoting peace through Sufism. It gave him a structured framework, resources, and a network of like-minded individuals who shared his vision. The project empowered Rohab to expand his reach and impact by connecting him with different communities. “Rohab's dedication to the Youth for Humanity project is truly inspiring. His unwavering commitment to spreading the message of peace and his profound understanding of Sufism has made a significant impact on our collective efforts.” Said one of his peers in the project.

Rohab's immediate vision revolves around conducting impactful workshops on peace in schools and colleges. Drawing inspiration from the profound teachings of Sufism, he aims to share the essence of peace and harmony with the younger generation. Through these workshops, he seeks to expose the youth to the time-tested principles derived from Sufism, enabling them to embrace a compassionate and inclusive worldview. “By instilling these values at an early stage, I envision nurturing a generation that embodies peace, empathy, and understanding. This will pave the way for a brighter and more harmonious future.”

In five years, Rohab envisions a platform based on the principles of Sufism that extends throughout Sindh. His approach encompasses storytelling, poetry, speeches, music, and dance—the five essential elements of Sufism. He collaborates with poets, encouraging them to reshape their verses to reflect the essence of Sufism. He believes that through love, understanding, and inclusivity, Sufism can become a driving force for peace in the hearts and minds of people across Sindh.





## Pawan Kumar: A young journalist from Hyderabad highlighting stories of religious harmony through his journalism.

Born and raised in Umerkot, after completing his education, Pawan ventured into the field of journalism. During the last decade, he has worked with different local and national-level media houses in Hyderabad. Despite the allure of impactful beats like politics or sports, Pawan focused on interfaith harmony, driven by his desire to spread awareness among the youth.

Selected for media training as part of the Youth for Humanity project, Pawan's storytelling skills flourished. "The training sharpened my interviewing skills, honed my ability to select captivating colors, and enhanced my photography techniques. These newfound skills have enabled me to capture powerful narratives and visually convey the essence of interfaith harmony in a compelling way."



Pawan Kumar  
**Karachi, 2023**

After completing his training, Pawan embarked on a journey of storytelling, to showcase the spirit of harmony and peace. He penned a remarkable story on Veroo Kohli, a hero of Sindh who freed over 45,000 prisoners from bonded labor, irrespective of their religious background.

Pawan's stories took him to different communities, showcasing remarkable instances of coexistence. In Udero Lal, he highlighted the harmonious coexistence of a Hindu temple and a Mosque, where prayers and worship took place one after another, and an annual celebration that brought Hindus and Muslims together in joyous unity.

***"I am determined to inspire the next generation and ensure the continuity of interfaith work. By fostering understanding and acceptance among youth, we can cultivate a society where peace prevails." Pawan Kumar***

His exploration continued to Tando Adam, where Christians warmly invited their Muslim friends to break their fast inside the church during Ramadan, fostering a spirit of inclusivity and togetherness. Through his storytelling, Pawan captured the profound impact of these acts of shared celebration and mutual respect, amplifying the message of unity and acceptance.

In Hyderabad, Pawan delved into the vibrant Bhagri community, who observed Mahram with great love and devotion to Imam Hussain, mirroring the traditions of Shia Muslims. Their centuries-old practice served as a testament to the deep connections that can transcend religious boundaries. "The harmony displayed by the Bhagri community during the Mahram event left a lasting impression on me. Seeing the Hindu community find peace and solace through their participation was truly inspiring. It reinforced my belief in the power of interfaith harmony to unite diverse communities and transcend religious boundaries."

Pawan's dedication to promoting interfaith harmony has not gone unnoticed by his peers. His colleagues have been inspired by his work and have also begun exploring the topic in their own stories. Pawan's vision extends to the next generation, ensuring that the flame continues to burn brightly. "I am determined to inspire the next generation and ensure the continuity of interfaith work. By fostering understanding and acceptance among youth, we can cultivate a society where peace prevails."

Pawan's story stands as a powerful reminder of the importance of promoting understanding, acceptance, and unity among diverse communities. Through his work, he is inspiring others to join him on the path of interfaith harmony and creating a future where people of all faiths can coexist in peace and harmony.



Veroo Kohli, a hero of Sindh who freed over 45,000 prisoners from bonded labor



## Our Mission

End violent conflict. It's our purpose — our call to action. Instead of tearing down an existing world, we focus on constructing a new one. We do this through a type of peacebuilding called conflict transformation. Meaning: we look to change the everyday interactions between groups of people in conflict, so they can work together to build up their community, choosing joint problem-solving over violence.

Our mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict, away from adversarial approaches, toward cooperative solutions.

## Our Vision

Our ability to deal with conflict affects how we handle every issue humanity is facing. Whether global in nature, such as poverty, hunger or the environment, or closer to home, such as family or community relations, we face daily challenges to our abilities to deal with conflict constructively.

So, our vision is of a world where:

Differences stimulate social progress, rather than precipitate violence.

Respect for and cooperation with those we disagree with is considered the norm for individuals, communities, organizations, and nations.

## What we Do

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND is the largest dedicated peacebuilding organization. Since 1982, we have worked to end violent conflict and to build healthy, safe, and just societies all over the world. Currently, we work in 31 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North America.



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