



Multi-Faith Workshop Report

Organized by the Center for Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue (CIID), University of Dhaka & Multi-Faith Neighbors Network (MFNN), USA

Date: February 10 and February 11, 2025

Location: University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Multi-Faith Workshop successfully concluded as scheduled, bringing together faith leaders from diverse religious traditions to foster multi-faith engagement, collaboration, and action-oriented initiatives in Bangladesh.

Executive Summary

Organized by the Center for Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue (CIID) at the University of Dhaka and the Multi-Faith Neighbors Network (MFNN), USA, the two-day event provided an interactive platform for faith leaders to express their concerns, engage in open discussions, and commit to working together on various community-based initiatives.

A total of 145 religious leaders registered, with 120 actively participating throughout the event. Participants emphasized the need for practical engagement among faith groups rather than limiting interactions to interfaith dialogue.

The workshop led to several significant outcomes and promises, including:

- A collective commitment to multi-faith engagement beyond dialogue
- Recognition of the importance of inclusiveness for the majority faith in local initiatives
- Agreement to establish a new broad based multi-faith organization in Bangladesh
- Development of community-based projects in the fields of environmental, educational, and social services
- A signed declaration by all participants to uphold multi-faith harmony in Bangladesh
- A roadmap for continued collaboration and follow-up conferences

We extend our appreciation to Bangladesh Institute of Islamic Thought (BIIT) for their support and contributions to this important initiative.

Introduction

Background

Bangladesh is renowned for its deep-rooted cultural heritage and extraordinary religious harmony. Diverse religious and faith communities, including the majority Muslim population, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, and other smaller ethnic groups, have coexisted for generations while freely practicing their beliefs.

On August 2024, a significant political shift occurred when a student-led revolution overthrew an oppressive regime. This event forced the fascist leader, along with their leadership and followers, to flee to another country. This transition created a temporary law enforcement vacuum, during which Bangladesh witnessed increased misinformation and disinformation campaigns from external media sources. Many of these campaigns exaggerated or fabricated issues surrounding minority persecution, contributing to heightened social tensions and deepened political polarization. Such narratives attempted to undermine the country's social fabric by exploiting sensitive issues of interfaith harmony and community trust. In reality, the majority Muslim community, including madrasa teachers and students, played a commendable role in safeguarding religious sites belonging to the Hindu, Christian, and other communities against potential acts of vandalism. Thus, peaceful and harmonious conditions for people of all religions will continue.

Additionally, In response to this, the workshop aimed to build lasting relationships among faith leaders, dismantle divisive narratives, and promote long-term cooperation.

Through structured dialogues and collaborative planning, faith leaders explored how multi-faith engagement can drive positive changes.

Workshop Goals

- Create a space for open discussions on faith-based concerns.
- Encourage collaborative problem-solving through group exercises.
- Develop multi-faith projects that address pressing social and community challenges.
- Establish a framework for an inclusive, national-level multi-faith organization.

Workshop Overview

Participants

The workshop brought together faith leaders from Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and other faith communities across many cities in Bangladesh.

Faith Representation	Participants
Muslim Leaders	45
Hindu Leaders	30
Buddhist Leaders	20
Christian Leaders	20
Other Faiths	5
Total Registered	145
Total Attended	120

Workshop Format

The event was structured into:

- Panel Discussions & Lectures – Expert-led sessions on multi-faith collaboration.
- Group Exercises & Brainstorming – Hands-on activities to develop action plans.
- Interactive Sessions – Addressing common concerns, fostering understanding.
- Project Development Workshops – Teams designed community service initiatives.



Key Themes & Observations

- 1 Moving Beyond Interfaith Dialogue**

Participants emphasized that multi-faith engagement should go beyond discussions and involve joint initiatives that build mutual trust through action.
- 2 Inclusivity in Multi-Faith Collaboration**

A unanimous agreement emerged that multi-faith harmony cannot be achieved without including the majority faith in any given region.
- 3 Political Interference and Its Impact on Multi-Faith Harmony**

Participants openly expressed serious concerns about political interference that could disrupt Bangladesh's inherent multi-faith harmony. There was strong agreement that religious cooperation must remain independent of political agendas from both domestic and neighboring countries to ensure long-term unity and stability.
- 4 Establishing a Multi-Faith Organization**

The need for a formal national organization in Bangladesh to coordinate multi-faith collaboration and policy engagement was viewed essential by the unanimous consensus of the faith leaders.

Community Initiatives Proposed by Participants

At the conclusion of the two-day workshop, guests from the Multi-Faith Neighbors Network (MFNN) were interviewed by Centrist Nation TV.

When asked if about the observation and experience of religious harmony, Nadine Maenza, President of the International Religious Freedom Secretariat, responded: *“Absolutely, I was inspired actually by the history hereof how Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus really lived together peacefully, worked together, and even stand up for each other’s right. So, it’s been wonderful to see how they can further work together and continue this environment of multifaith harmony”*. Full video can be found [here](#).

When asked about intolerance, Dr. Bob Roberts Jr., founder of GlocalNet and co-founder of MFNN, shared *“You’re one of the most densely populated countries in the world. You’re growing, you have a platform, you have influence. I think ground zero for tolerance is this part of the world, and I’m excited about the possibilities of Bangladesh...I’m sure you have your challenges as a country. My country has challenges. Some of us have to have the courage to say we won’t be manipulated by politicians or by people who hate. We will stand up for respect, love, tolerance, and friendship”*. The Full video can be found [here](#).

Furthermore, participants formed teams and developed project proposals focused on social, environmental, and humanitarian initiatives.

After the workshop, participants formed teams and **developed project proposals** focused on **social, environmental, and humanitarian initiatives**.

Project Theme	Proposed Initiatives
Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tree plantation & urban gardening- Plastic reduction & recycling awareness- Pollution control measures
Education & Youth Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Career consultation for students- Special education programs for street children- Youth awareness programs on social media dangers
Healthcare & Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Medical camps for women & children- Healthcare access for street children- Hygiene awareness & reproductive health education
Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Multi-faith collaboration on street cleaning- Safe spaces for persecuted individuals- Hunger relief & cultural exchange programs
Advocacy & Religious Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Religious diversity awareness campaigns- Ethics education programs integrating faith teachings- Sermon-based advocacy on social responsibility

Workshop Outcomes & Next Steps

Key Outcomes:

- Consensus on Expanding Multi-Faith Engagement Beyond Dialogue
- Recognition of the Majority Faith's Role in Religious Harmony
- Commitment to Establishing a Multi-Faith Organization in Bangladesh
- Participants Signed a Declaration to Uphold Multi-Faith Harmony
- Development of Community-Based Multi-Faith Projects

Next Steps:



Conclusion & Acknowledgments

The Multi-Faith Workshop was a resounding success, highlighting the potential for faith-driven collaboration in Bangladesh.

This initiative sets a new precedent for religious harmony and cooperation through **initiative sets a new precedent for religious harmony and cooperation through dialogue,**

We extend our deepest gratitude to:

- Faith Leaders & Participants for their dedication.
- CIID & MFNN for their vision and leadership.
- BIIT for their support and contributions.
- University of Dhaka for hosting the workshop.

Together, we move forward in our shared commitment to peace, unity, and positive social change.

