

Youth Participation and Peace-building in Conflict and Post-conflict Environments: The Case of Tajikistan

A webinar hosted by YouthPower Learning

May 8, 2019

Advancing solutions to transform the lives of young people



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Advancing knowledge to transform the lives of young people

YouthPower Learning generates and disseminates knowledge about the implementation and impact of positive youth development (PYD) approaches in international development.



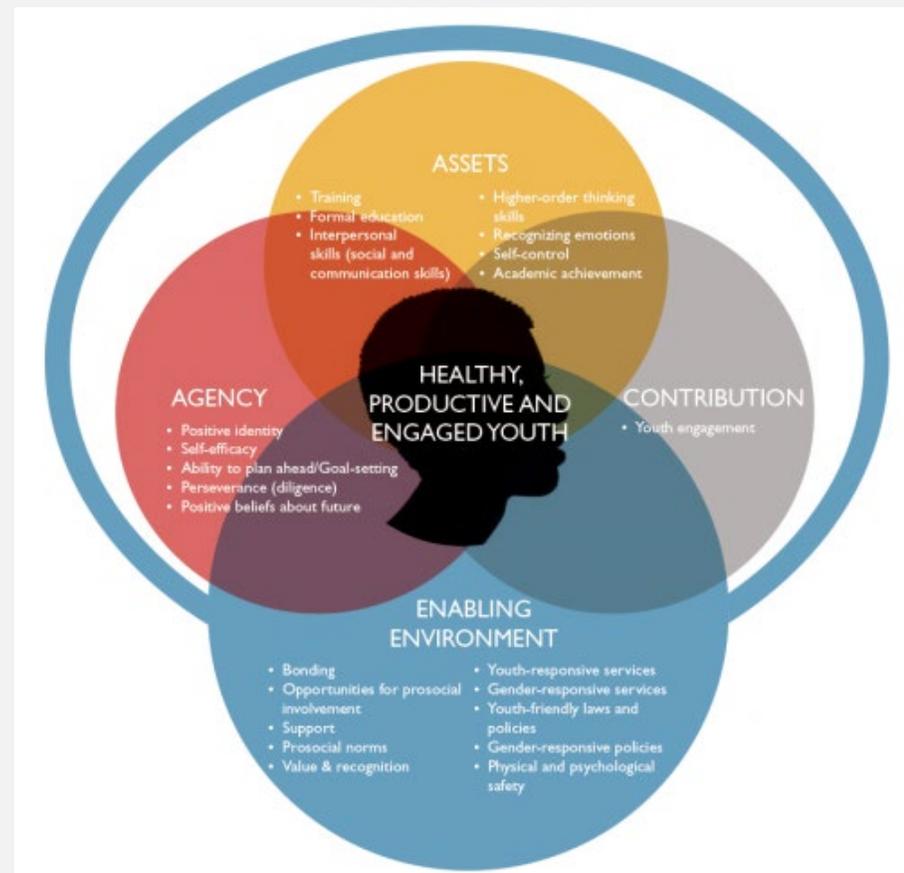
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What is Positive Youth Development (PYD)?

PYD programs recognize youth's inherent rights and result in youth who have **assets**, the ability to leverage those assets (**agency**), and the ability to **contribute** to positive change for themselves and their communities, surrounded by an **enabling environment** that supports them.

<http://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development>



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How can we partner together?

- Connecting with other YouthPower activities
- Sharing Resources, Events, Information, and What Works: Learning Hub [YouthPower.org](https://www.youthpower.org)
- Contributing to the [PYD Learning Agenda](#)
 - Identify [What Works](#)
 - [Measure PYD](#)
 - Send your youth-related resources to info@youthpower.org
- Engaging with [YouthLead.org](https://www.youthlead.org)
 - Under 35? – Join the platform
 - Support youth networks or content? – Become a sponsor
- Joining/Engaging with the [Communities of Practice](#):
 - Youth in Peace and Security
 - Gender and PYD
 - Youth Engagement
 - Cross-Sectoral Skills for Youth



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About this Grant

- The **Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia, Tajikistan** was one of 4 grantees awarded in 2017 under YouthPower Learning Grants under Contract:
 - Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia, Tajikistan
 - Association Malienne pour la Survie au Sahel (AMSS)
 - United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY)
 - Equal Access
- These grants were awarded to advance the evidence base for youth civic engagement in effective peacebuilding or in countering / prevention of violent extremism.



EURASIA FOUNDATION



A group of young people, including men and women, are seated around a table in what appears to be a meeting or workshop. They are looking towards the camera or each other, suggesting an interactive session. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the participants.

MAPPING IMPACT: YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PEACEBUILDING – Tajikistan Case Study

Parviz Mullojonov, Ph.D



Tajikistan
map

Country Background
Map of
Tajikistan

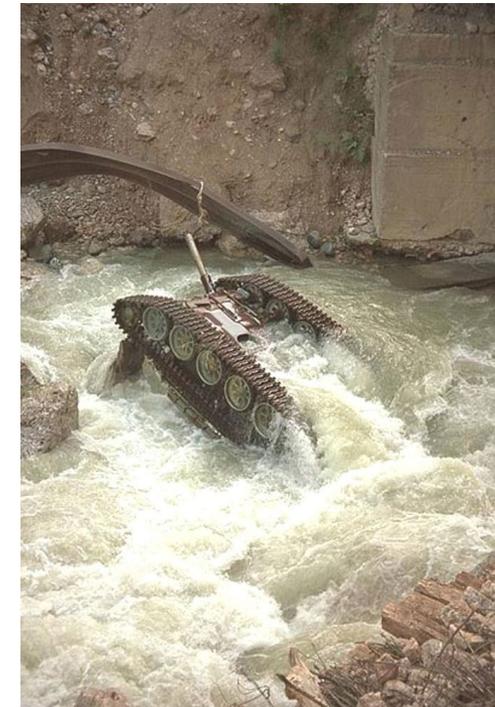


BRIEF BACKGROUND DATA ABOUT TAJIKISTAN

- Republic of Tajikistan
- Population: 8,388,000
- Capital: Dushanbe
- Largest city: Dushanbe
- Area: 143,100 sq. km
- Major languages: Tajik -Farsi (official), Russian widely used in government and business, Uzbek
- Human Development Index rank: 0.673 (medium) (122nd)
- Literacy rate: 99.5% over the age of 15
- Major religion(s): Sunni Muslim 85%, Shi'a (Ismaili) Muslim 5%, other 10% (2003)

CIVIL WAR (1992 – 1997)

- Tajikistan is one of a few post-Soviet republics that passed through a violent and protracted civil war right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The war between the Government (pro-Communist forces) and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) continued for more than five years (1992-1997) and was stopped mainly due to the active mediation of third parties and changed geopolitical situation in the Central Asian region.
- In this regard, Tajikistan is still considered as one of several success stories of peaceful intervention under the UN umbrella..



Research Task and Goals

To measure the real impact of local and international efforts in the field of youth civic engagement and peacebuilding in the Republic of Tajikistan.

First, the boosters and barriers that influence young people's decision to invest themselves in civic youth engagement and peacebuilding projects;

Second, if and how youth participation in such projects contributes to peacebuilding and in countering/preventing violent extremism;

Third, the research explores the contextual factors, local, programmatic, approach, etc., that affect the impact of such projects, and what factors can be scaled-up or transferred to other contexts.

Research Main Findings

**Classification of
Conflict Resolution
and PVE Initiatives
in Tajikistan**

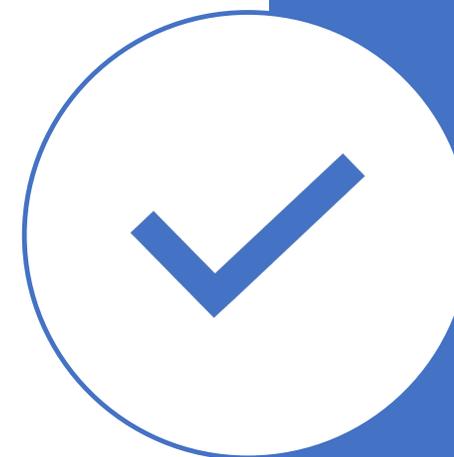
**Drivers of youth
radicalization and
violent extremism**

Classification of Conflict Resolution and PVE Initiatives in Tajikistan

- I. ***Dialogue Projects:*** The first group consists of programs intended to promote dialogue and interaction between conflicting groups, state and civil society, political parties, secular and religious parts of society.

- I. ***The second group consists of youth and social/economic empowering projects*** – with indirect link to conflict/violent prevention;

- I. ***The third group consists of research projects intended to explore religious radicalization problems and issues in Tajikistan.*** Most of these projects and initiatives are implemented by international agencies have internal character and not subject for wider circulation and dissemination.



Internal Causes and factors

- **Internal Causes and Factors**

ranging from unemployment, shortages of social (vertical) mobility, social injustice, lack of education, poverty, religion discrimination, family background, and political and economic marginalization, among others.

- **Youth Vulnerable groups:**

1. disconnected youth, those ages 16 to 24 who are not in school and are not employed
2. representatives of small business sector (bazaar retailers and traders), as well as middle-size entrepreneurs engaged in import operations.
3. two age-groups of Tajik young people (16-24-year-old and 29-35-year-old) appear to be most socially vulnerable and potentially exposed to the risk of radicalisation.

External Drivers

- **Ideological propaganda** of radical religious and extremist groups conducted via Internet, social networks and online media.
- **ISIS (as well as other major Jihadist organizations) “Soft Power”** and propaganda machine, which turned into one of the most effective instruments of recruiting.
- **Geopolitical Impact** – Rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia makes a considerable impact on political movements and radicalization in Muslim communities across the glob



Radicalization Process and Phases

- 1) **Pre-radicalization**, also defined in some models as **social marginalization**, when individuals or social groups – under the influence of various social and economic factors such as social exclusion, injustice, and economic crisis – assume a critical attitude towards the surrounding reality, political system, ruling regime, social order, etc.
- 2) **Self-Identification**, defined also as the conversion to and identification with radical Islam; during which individuals begin to explore and embrace the Salafi Ideology
- 3) **Indoctrination** is the phase in which an individual progressively intensifies his/her beliefs, wholly adopts a Jihadi-Salafi ideology; this is the time of immersions into a terrorist/social group and is a stage of getting ready for action;





Lessons Learned – Radicalization Factors

The Tajik experience proved especial importance of pre-radicalization (social marginalization) period:

- Social injustice
- inequal access to resources
- Lack of vertical mobility (social lifts)

Second, rising impact of religious propaganda – new phenomenon

Lessons Learned – PVE Programs

The importance of social partnership between

- Government
- International Agencies
- Local NGOs

As the main precondition for successful PVE activities



Lessons Learned – Main Actors

The experience of Tajikistan shows:

- The long -term sustainability of any PVE/peace building effort depends on the level of development of local civil society
- In particular, the existence of an effective and wider stratum of professional, modern-type NGO's is the key factor in ensuring sustainability of peaceful efforts
- The decay of Tajik network of professional NGO's led to the radical reduction of PVE programs in the country – both in terms of number, quality and size

Lessons Learned – Main Actors

- In post-conflict, hybrid/authoritarian countries the Government are the decisive factor in defining prospects for PVE projects;
- In Tajikistan, the Government pressure on civil society, NGO sector, banning political parties has considerably reduced opportunities for designing and implementation of PVE projects;



Lesson Learned – Main Tools and Better Approaches

The most effective tools in post-conflict and hybrid/authoritarian societies:

- Dialogue projects
- Training/ education projects
- Youth Empowering projects

Recommendations – to International Agencies

- First, there is still shortage of research and studies on the youth and youth radicalization problems. Therefore, there is a need to promote and support further exploration, research and analyses of the youth issues, youth radicalization, youth problems, online propaganda of radical organizations, social and economic factors and causes of radicalization, etc.;
- To promote further revision of the current strategies with regard to the local civil society actors; today, the major attention should be given to the promotion of institutional capacity and long-term sustainability of local NGO sector;
- To promote the formation of local think tank groups promoting local experts' capacity in countering radicalization and violent extremism;
- To initiate projects and programs intended to establish a wider Dialogue platform to promote Dialogues and exchange ideas between the State and civic society, religious and secular parts of society;
- To initiate the capacity building programs for law enforcement agencies responsible for the implementation of the national anti-radicalization strategy and youth policy;

Discussant

Gilbert Mwenedata, Conflict and Youth Expert,
Youth in Peace and Security CoP Co-Champion



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PEPFAR
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Q&A



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What can you do next?

- Contribute to the Twitter stream and spread the message of #PositiveYouthDevelopment.
- Join a YouthPower Community of Practice.
- Visit the YouthPower Learning Hub at www.YouthPower.org and use the resources, best practices, and knowledge shared.
- Send materials that advance the evidence base to info@youthpower.org.



www.YouthPower.org

Thank you!

Thank you for participating in this YouthPower Learning event.

The recording of today's event will be shared with all registrants.

Please visit www.YouthPower.org for more.



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