

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 known for its rich cultural history and remarkable religious harmony. Various religious and faith groups enjoy freedom to practice and coexist among majority Muslims and other minority groups such as Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and other smaller ethnic groups. On August 5th of 2024 a big political change occurred with the student-led revolution against the dictatorial rule of Awami league and eventual fall of Shaikh Hasina and her fleeing to neighboring India. That created a vacuum with the absence of law enforcement agencies, however the majority Muslims (e.g. Madrasa teachers/students) tried to protect the religious sites belonging to Hindu community from any miscreants. During that time Bangladesh also has seen growing misinformation and disinformation campaigns from Indian media about the minority persecution - many of these created social tensions and political divisions.

In response, this 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 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 Establish 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.

Through dialogue, collective action, and the formation of a national multi-faith organization, this initiative sets a new precedent for religious harmony and cooperation.

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.

