Peacetech Exchange Pakistan

Final Report

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Technology for People Initiative is focused on leveraging technology to catalyze development in the public sector.

PTX PAKISTAN
PeaceTech Exchange

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Introduction

Technology for People Initiative

Technology for People Initiative (TPI) is an applied research and design center housed in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering and based at the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). TPI focuses on leveraging the use of low-cost easy-to-use technology to catalyze development in the public sector.

Working directly with public sector managers, or indirectly through development partners, TPI study problems of governance in the public sector and attempt to design solutions to address them using technology as an enabler. Our final output is usually a working prototype deployed in the field that demonstrates the proposed mechanism and allows the stakeholders to visualize the intended benefits. With a strong focus on achieving maximum impact, TPI frequently collaborates with international and local civil society organizations and various departments of the government to develop solutions for problems in healthcare, education, governance, accountability and conflict violence extremism. Moreover, TPI adopts an interdisciplinary approach to problem-solving in order to develop comprehensive solutions adapted to the specific needs of our environment.

Peacetech Exchange

PTX stands for Peacetech Exchange which are three to five-day workshops organized by the Peace Tech Lab. PeaceTech Lab was created by the United States Institute of Peace in 2014 to assist and promote the USIP's of reducing violent conflict around the world. The lab brings together technologists, data scientists and professionals from government agencies and various NGOs who collaborate on a single platform to design and develop innovative technological tools for conflict resolution and peace building.

PTX is one of the global peace building projects of the PeaceTech Lab. PTX are workshops which allow civil society organizations, social activists and peace builders to share their skills and ideas to promote low-cost easy-to-use technology for peace building in the conflict zones. These are highly interactive workshops where local civil society organizations and peace builders connect with technologists and learn about a vast array of tools which can help them in their work towards peace building.

The focus of the workshop is to bridge the gap between civil society actors and technologists, encouraging collaboration on peace building activities. It serves to increase awareness among Civil Society Organizations of easy-to-use, low-cost technologies in order to help them understand how they can leverage

technology in their day-to-day workings. The workshops enable the sharing of the expertise and experiences of civil society organizations and technologists alike, along with supporting projects that come out of workshops with follow-on funding. PTX workshop also assists the participants to define problems, develop solutions, incorporate technology in their work and design projects based on their learning during the workshop.

PTX Pakistan

The daily headlines of news channels and newspapers are a crucial reminder that extremism poses a persistent threat to Pakistan. Incidents like the Peshawar School Massacre and Gulshan Iqbal Park blast in Lahore highlight the need of urgent and innovative ways to combat violent extremism.

The Government of Pakistan is playing a role in providing security from violent extremism by beefing up security measures in vulnerable locations. Moreover, despite some grievous incidents in the recent years, the overall causalities from terrorist attacks in Pakistan have considerably declined since the start of the rigorous military operations in North Waziristan; fatalities in 2015 were at roughly half their total during the peak of TTP operations in 2009–10.[1]

However, the Government alone cannot tackle the on-going menace of violent extremism in Pakistan. The reasons being weak governance capacity, political constraints, civil-military divide and economic obstacles. These challenges constrict the Government's ability to counter violent extremism (CVE) effectively. As a result, the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are compelled to embark on peace building initiatives and introduce ways to counter the violent activities.[2]

The technology sector in Pakistan is rapidly growing and full of potential. The government of Pakistan has also started some initiatives to aid the young entrepreneurs and organizations. Even in some rural areas, people are quickly catching up on their adoption of technology especially smart mobile phones. More than 70% of Pakistan's population owns a mobile phone. However, the use of technology especially social media and mobile phones has also encouraged extremist organizations to spread their ideologies and target their audience using SMS, Facebook and Twitter.

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[1] South Asia Terrorism Portal, "Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003–2016," www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm.

[2] H. Mirahmadi et al. "Empowering Pakistan's Civil Society to Counter Global Violent Extremism" http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2015/01/us-islamic-world-forum-publications/empowering-pakistans-civil-society-to-counter-violent-extremism-english.pdf

Recognizing the active role of local civil society organizations and peace builders in countering violent extremism, the focus of PTX Pakistan is help peace builders gain a better understanding of enabling technologies and their potential in aiding their current efforts. It aims to bring together a diverse set of organizations, involved in activities ranging from promoting messages of peace and social harmony to directly countering radical narratives, and introducing them to simple low-cost technologies which could help bolster the impact of their current efforts.

A key feature of the workshop is to help the projects developed during the workshop get off the ground through a grant which is awarded to selected projects at the end of the event.

PeaceTech Lab collaborated with Technology for People Initiative to organize a series of PTX workshops in Pakistan. The series consisted of one workshop in three cities: Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. The first workshop was held in Lahore at the Lahore University of Management Sciences from 25th to 27th March 2016 followed by PTX Karachi from 10th to 12 June and then PTX Islamabad from 30th September to 2nd October.

The PTX Approach

TPI has always focused on developing an effective approach to create ripple effects, continuously improving through lessons and takeaways. In the same line, an effective approach was designed for PTX workshops based on three main pillars:

Wherever possible, make decisions based upon data

To ensure that TPI is forming the best connections and introducing people to the right tools, it works to make sure our decisions the backed up by facts. TPI conducts a series of surveys to gather information from participants before, immediately after, and several months following a workshop. TPI researches the tech environment, interviewing local experts and drawing research from consumer reports, and select technologies and technologists based on the outcomes of this research and the understanding of participants' needs. Our primary concern was to design our workshop agenda based on the needs and challenges faced by our participants. For this purpose, we carried out detailed surveys aimed at gathering feedback on what the CSOs consider the most important drivers of conflict in Pakistan their most significant challenges to peace building. We tried to gauge in what ways simple, enabling technologies may be leveraged to overcome these challenges and promote peace. Based on these results, we identified a diverse set of technologies, from GIS and ODK to social media and game development, which these CSOs could find beneficial in leveraging their peace building activities.

Partner with the Local Partners

Selecting people who know the local context and language is extremely important. TPI believes the ideal trainer is someone from the city where the workshop is hosted who know the realities of the city well. TPI accomplished this by reaching out, through multiple networks, to CSOs and technologists currently active in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. This helped us establish the workshop in a spatial context which kept the unique challenges of the city at the helm. Aside from being in peace building and countering violent extremism, there was not a specific type of organization we aimed for though a large number of our eventual participants did tend to be younger organizations being led by young students and professionals. The CSOs focus of operations ranged from education, tolerance, and reclamation of space, and included organizations such as Hum Ahang, Next Generation Pakistan, FATE, Club Internet, MentHub, The Second Floor, Laajverd, UElect, Dastaan and a host of individual applicants who pitched their ideas developed during the workshops arranged on weekends in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad.

Workshops should be led by the participants

Nothing puts people to sleep more than having them sit passively listening to other people talk. PeaceTech Exchanges are "un-workshops" in the sense that participants get to select the topics for discussion and choose the technologies that they believe are the most applicable to their work. This creates an environment with high energy and a greater sense of ownership by the people and organizations that TPI is trying to help.

PTX Lahore

Civil society Organizations in Pakistan have been very active lately in peace building and CVE initiatives. Despite their numerous efforts, the CSOs often lack the technological skills which have now become essential to generate awareness among the wider public, to spread their message and generate counter-narratives.

Lahore is the capital of Punjab, the most populous province of Pakistan. Even though Lahore is considered a comparatively safer city, there has been some major terrorist attacks since 2004 the worst being the one at the Gulshan Iqbal Park on Easter where 72 people lost their lives mostly women and children. Apart from that, Lahore being the power house of the government is marked with frequent rallies, strikes, protests and demonstrations which result in a lot of life and property losses. Lahore has one of the most robust civil society organizations eager to work towards restoring peace in the city. Peacetech Exchange in Lahore enabled these organizations to share their concerns at the workshop, partner with similar organizations and learn from a diverse set of

technologists about the tools they could use to raise awareness and spread their message across the masses.

Workshop Highlights

There was a total of 30 participants including 5 organizations. The organizations worked on education, women empowerment, technology solutions, curriculum development and crowd funding.

The highlight of PTX Lahore were the two technology-oriented sessions termed *Speed Geeking* and *Technology Breakouts*. During the former, technologists gave the participants a quick overview of their technology, usually by demonstrating a case study where it was successful at solving a problem similar to ones the CSOs face in their peace building efforts. Technology Breakouts allowed for more detailed, organization-specific interaction with the technologists. They had individual discussions with interested participants and presented individual case studies and provided a step-by-step guide on how to use their technologies. This time also allowed them to review and guide the participants in developing their presentations.

These sessions were interspersed with "energizers" or short, fun activities conducted by the moderator to both, build familiarity among the participants, and to give them a welcome break in between sessions that had them engaging heavily with either technology or peace building challenges.

Using the data that we had collected from our participants, we were able to frame the conversations taking place at PTX Lahore in contexts which would help incubate the best possible solutions for them. As our participating CSOs were primarily engaged in countering violent extremism by promoting peace and tolerance through education or by using public space to foster peace building, we incorporated interactive roundtables on deradicalisation of space and ways in which best to educate young children.

Our first roundtable was on understanding violent extremism and the challenges to peace building with the discussions being led by *Mashal Imran (FATE), Ali Inam (TPI),* and *Derek Gildea (PeaceTech Lab)*. The purpose of the discussion with panelists was to highlight their vision, the gap that they recognized within the status quo, and their specific strategic approach. This discussion was followed by a question-answer session to engage the rest of the participants and to understand their approach and the reasons behind it. After the ideas of violent extremism had been framed and contextualized, our next roundtable, held the next day, focused on deradicalizing and reclaiming space. *Gauher Aftab (Cfx Comics/Creative Frontiers) and Muhammad Murtaza (TurrLahore)* led the discussion on it by exploring their experiences with digital and physical space. Finally, as it was a major focus of our participating CSOs, we had one roundtable on education and identity with *Zia Hussain (Ravvish)* and *Minahil Mehdi (Hum-Ahang)*. Our roundtables were appreciated by the participants in that they were not designed to be run by a moderator with external speakers only; they were quite heavily participant-driven, and most of our speakers were from the participating CSOs.

Technologies

Once the initial survey had been conducted, we explored technologies which could be best leveraged by the CSOs to come up with potential solutions. In the survey, the CSOs had identified reaching out to a mass audience as one their primary challenges. Most of these organizations had trouble with optimizing their social media outreach, and some were facing difficulties with presenting their message in the best possible way. The CSOs working in the education sector were seeking ways in which they could present, and if possible, scale up the traditional curriculum in a way which is both easy to disseminate and captures the attention of children.

Other organizations wanted to learn about online solutions they could use to raise funds locally and help sustain their projects which they were not able to promote through the usual avenues or which were not being supported by traditional donors. Finally, many CSOs were interested in tools which could assist them in both gathering data, especially mapping data, from their programs, and wanted to be able to use that or their existing data for analysis and then transform them into presentable reports.

Our choices of technologies to showcase kept these requirements of the CSOs in consideration. We had nine technologies in attendance at PTX Lahore. For data collection and analysis, we had *ODK (Ameer Haider), GIS (Maria Zubair)*, and a suite of data analysis tools (ITU Data Analytics Lab). ODK, or Open Data Kit, is a platform for data collection used to make apps or a form for data collection on multiple devices. GIS included a host of tools, from QGIS to Google Maps, which can help construct and visualize spatial data for further analysis. For data analysis of larger datasets, the team from ITU Data Analytics Lab had tools built on Python and R. Social media usage and promotion was introduced to our participants by *Anam Toseef,* a social media public relations and marketing consultant, and *Muneeb Furrukh* from TPI. They exhibited easy-to-use tools for blogging such as Wordpress and explained to the participants how best to leverage the social networks to engage mass audiences. Similarly, *Saad Omer* displayed his technology, SMS Plug, which helps at mass communication using SMS and allows to make automated messaging and has features such as text-based geo-fencing.

Umar Iqbal from TPI presented simple game development design and tools as an innovative way to communicate complex ideas to audiences, e.g. children, which are more receptive to "gamified" experiences and interactive methods of learning. Finally, Derek Gildea from PeaceTech Lab gave a primer on crowd funding and explained how the internet can be used to tap into local sources of funding which may be non-traditional and unexplored at the moment.

Outcome and Impact

PTX Lahore offered three grants of *$2,500* each to the participants who were best able to integrate their learning during the workshop with a technology solution to a peace building challenge. The project proposals were judged on a set of diverse criteria ranging from the originality of the idea to its sustainability.

Three organizations were able to qualify for the grants at the end of the workshop: **Ravvish, FATE,** and **Club Internet**. Ravvish, an organization which has conducted workshops in 5 cities and impacted more than 700 students through its rigorous curriculum, which focuses on tolerance, empathy and conflict resolution, emphasizes on targeting middle school students through a 40-hour curriculum delivered over a period of 6 to 12 weeks. Young students, according to Ravvish, are the most vulnerable to extremist ideology while, at the same time, being very receptive to new ideas. RAvvish used its grant to develop a game/interactive survey that can be used to give a tolerance score for adults and make a video to spread their message with greater visibility.

FATE, a student-run initiative which aims at countering violent extremism in Pakistan by promoting the prevalent apathy in the society. They identified their challenge as being the inherent level of discrimination present within the young students of the low-cost private schools. This mindset is an antithesis to a more open-minded, tolerant, peaceful approach to viewing the world. However, as traditional methods of interacting with students only went so far, they have decided to use technology to create a gaming platform, innovative and entertaining learning tool, to be used as learning aids in classrooms. This game inspired by SimCity and allows students to create a virtual world where they allocate resources to people with implied religions. They used to teach the students about the possibility of a peaceful co-existence. Finally, Club Internet, a not-for-profit which believes in technology being the ultimate enabler for the underprivileged, flagged the problem of "un-connectedness" and digital isolation as their problems of interest. They are a digital literacy platform that aims to turn non-internet users into engaged, digitally literate users who can functionally use the internet. They used their grant to utilize www.damadam.pk, their social network for feature phones, to promote empathy and tolerance. They used their existing platform to address religious/social/political prejudice through discussions/surveys/games/polls on a weekly basis.

The PTX team followed up with the winners for their grant period during which each organization shared their progress updated the PTX team about their projects. After a thorough evaluation at then of the grant period, the PTX team decided to choose FATE as the recipient for the extension grant of $2500.

The outcome of using the first grant was that FATE was able to engage students in discussions about discrimination and understand how notions of racial intolerance are created in the first place. They conducted focus groups to test

and evaluate the initial response and feedback from the game. They were able to assess whether the target population was able to comprehend the game and if they were able to understand the message of interfaith harmony and peace through the gameplay at the end of the session. As expected, the children were fascinated by this exposure to technology and responded much better than they did to previous empathy sessions they had conducted in schools. With the second grant, FATE wants to expand their target audience and conduct sessions in schools in Lahore and Karachi. These sessions will be a part of a much larger research project that measures several factors, most importantly the change in the perspectives of students before playing the game and after.

Bringing together CSOs and technologists to work on problems of countering violent extremism provided a tremendous opportunity for cross-sector learning. While our focus was to help CSOs become aware of the potential ways they can leverage the use of technology to help with their peace building activities, PTX Lahore was also able to introduce local technologists to the social sector as it exists in their city and how they went about countering violent extremism in the field. The workshops allowed the socially-minded technologists to have direct access to potential projects that they may be interested in being part of but were previously unaware of the type of work being done around them. PTX Lahore proved to be beneficial and valuable to the participants as outlined by the Close of Workshop survey done after the workshop.

The conference helped us to see the value of technology in the peace building process. As educationists we have hardly seen our startup as one with a potential for becoming more technologically integrated.

It was an interesting experience for me as i got to meet and work with people who have been working on various social issues.

New ideas and innovations

Networking, learning about available technologies

It was good as it was my first conference of such type. And I came to know about various people who are so eager to change the world by their efforts. And various activities carries out were all good and interesting.

It really opened my eyes to the various technologies out there that I was not even aware of and even those that I did not about, it provided me greater insight into how these could be harnessed in order to further our message of empathy.

PTX Karachi

Karachi is considered the seventh most populous urban city in the world. It is the largest, most populated and considered a financial hub for Pakistan. However, over the last few decades Karachi, the city of lights has been marked with numerous incidents of target killings, ethnic and sectarian violence, terror acts and political unrests. The chaotic law and order situation in Karachi has led it to be considered one of the dangerous cities of the world (Huffington Post).

Karachi used to be a peaceful cosmopolitan city, taking in a lot of Muslim migrants from India. It was characterized as the liveliest city for the youth of Pakistan. However, today the lawlessness in various areas of the city has turned it into dangerous place to roam around the city in the late hours. Violent extremism has become generally common in areas such as Lyari and Malir. The Government and the Military has been putting in a lot of efforts to restore peace in the city, however the government alone cannot tackle this menace.

There are numerous civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations operating in Karachi with the fields ranging from education, poverty, art and engagement, reclaiming space, mentoring etc. Organizations such as I am Karachi and HIVE are already working towards countering violent extremism in the city. There is a need to encourage similar organizations to rise up and work diligently in promoting peace in the country. Peacetech Exchange Karachi is a step towards enhancing their capacity to counter violent extremism using easy-to-use low-cost technology.

Workshop Highlights

The workshop consisted of around 28 participants including 14 organizations which worked on a range of issues like reclaiming space, human rights, countering violent extremism and using art to promote harmony.

The workshop commenced with a panel discussion "Understanding Violent Extremism & Challenges to Peacebuilding" with the panelists; civil activist *Jibran*

Nasir, Ahsan Zafar from PeaceNiche/T2F, *Erum Khatri* from Kiran Foundation and *Sehar Tariq* from United States Institute of Peace (USIP). They discussed what Violent Extremism means to them and how they are contributing to peacebuilding in the city with their efforts. The second panel discussion had Ali Gul Pir, a musician and Faiza Saleem, a social media comedian as panelists. They talked about how they use their talents to voice the issues in the society and how they can be tackled. The discussions were followed by a questions and answers session.

Two new sessions were introduced in the agenda: Landscaping and Design Sprint. The Landscaping session was introduced to better acquaint the organizations with each other and the technologists. During this session, each organization and each technologist was given a working sheet along with other material to develop a pictorial personal statement defining their mission, vision, drive, purpose, areas of focus and technology for the technologist, purpose, case studies and areas of interest with respect to peacebuilding. After an hour of developing their sheets, they mapped their sheets on a wall with predefined themes and presented themselves and their work to the other participants. This enabled them to explore the objectives and goals of other organizations and to interact with similar organization. Also, it made it easier to connect with the technologists who had the expertise of their preferred technology.

The Design Sprint session was art and craft based where participants were divided into groups and were give art and crafts material. The driving question in this session was, 'What does violence look like?'. The group had to design a model using the material provided to show what violence looks like to them. It enabled them to provoke their creative mind and each group came up with an innovative idea of a model about what violence looks like to them. The session was also used as an ice-breaking activity among the participants to

make help them interact with one another. The same session was conducted on the second day with a different question, 'What does peace look like?'. The participants came up with interesting definitions of peace and presented to the audience. These sessions were important because they were a stepping stone in defining the current issues in the city and how they perceive peace in the society. The discussions were moderated by the moderator, *Natasha Noorani.*

The activity-based sessions turned out to beneficial for the participants as they were comprehensively enjoyed by the participants. They were more participant based than moderator based as most of the discussions were driven by the participants themselves. Such sessions and discussions opened their minds and enabled them to think more clearly about what they want to achieve from this workshop.

Technologies

According to the pre-workshop survey, the participants were interested in social media tools, game and web development and other data softwares. The organizations were already using some sort of technologies but everyone was particularly interested in new technologies that have been introduced in the previous PTX as well. However, most of these organizations were having difficulty in reaching out to the masses by using the right technologies.

Keep in consideration the preferences and requirements of the participants at the PTX Karachi, we had a total of seven technologists each having a different technology to work with. For Social Media and Blogging we invited *Faria Zafar* who has a blog called Parhlo.com where writers express their views about current societal and social issues. *Kamal Faridi*, who has his social technology and branding organization called '22 Four International', was called for Digital Campaigning. To fulfill, the game development requirement of the CSOs we invited *Jahanzaib Haque*, who is a Chief Digital Strategist and Editor at Dawn. He brought some interesting technologies like Twine, which is an open source digital story telling platform. Tableau, a business intelligence software used for statistical visualization of data was also brought to the workshop and was presented by *Muneeb Farrukh*, project coordinator at TPI. Moreover, *Malte* Ahrens who is currently an undergraduate at MIT and works at Peacetech Lab was invited to introduce the GIS technology to the organizations. For Social Media for mass mobilization, we invited *Yusra Askrai*, a journalist.

Finally, we had *Ameer Haider* from World Bank for ODK (Open Data Kit). The CSOs were given time each day during the Technology Breakout sessions to connect with all the technologists and learn about their technologies. The organizations adopted one of these technologies in their project plans which were presented on the last day of the workshop. Some of the technologists are still working with the winning organizations as mentors in assisting them in using the technology, since most of the participants were not tech savvy.

Outcome and Impact

A total of ten organizations pitched their idea at PTX Karachi. A panel of judges which included, *Ali Inam* Director TPI, *Sehar Tariq* from USIP, *Tim Receveur* from Peacetech Lab, *Gulraiz Khan* an instructor at Habib University and *Jehan Ara* President at P@SHA judge and evaluated the entries according to defined evaluation criteria; Originality of the idea, Scalability, Criticality and Sustainability. The three organizations who fully met the criteria and impressed the judges the most with their innovative ideas were: **Ment Hub, Peace Niche/T2F and Karachi Biennale**.

The organization Ment Hub is an online platform that connects mentors and mentees and empowers the mentees to grow personally and professionally. The project that they pitched at PTX Karachi is to reach out to the youth (13 to 16 years of age) in the vulnerable communities through their online mentoring platform menthub.com and connect them to socially conscious individuals who would mentor them and who would like to give back through their time and knowledge. They plan to collaborate with underprivileged schools in these communities and pilot this web application platform in those schools.

Peace Niche/The Second Floor provides a physical community space for open dialogue and a platform for social change through rich cultural activities, public discourse, and activism using the new media. They are planning to recruit civil society actors from the T2F's database and converting them into digital users initiating a digital communication portal for all the users. They will use the GIS technology to locate the civil society actors in the city and facilitate them to connect with each other using a mobile application. The users can invite members with similar interests to use the T2F's space.

Karachi Biennale which consisted of artists aims to bring art into public space to highlight diversity in the city. Their project involves developing a web platform that will incorporate Google Maps to map the locations of 100 art installations in the city and show a bird's eye view of the city-wide project. They plan to do so by inviting local artists to create art pieces representing diversity and installing them on 100 different locations across the city with cable reels. The web platform will contain the artists' biographies along with community histories.

For the second grant, the PTX team chose MentHub, since among other winners they were following their objectives closely and their project was well in line with countering violent extremism and peacebuilding. They developed an online platform where mentors and mentees can register themselves.

MentHub is an online community and an e-platform for mentors and mentees. They connected youth (13 - 16 years) from at risk communities in Karachi through their online platform to socially conscious individual (mentors) who would like to give back through their time and knowledge. They started out their activities in Liyari which is one of the most affected areas in Karachi by violence and the students in Liyari have very limited opportunities. MentHub engaged those students and mentors which impacted them positively by giving them a chance to explore their potential and increase their exposure. Mentors are experienced professionals who work with the mentees on their personal and professional grooming.

For the second phase, MentHub is planning to expand their project to other areas in Karachi and revamping their platform. Their aim is to develop a web platform where mentees and mentors can create their profiles and collaborate with each other without any external intervention. The platform would have an inbuilt feedback mechanism which will monitor the mentorship relationships and provide with constant feedback to both mentors and mentees on their progress.

The transfer of critical technological knowledge from industry professionals to CSOs helps feed into the ecosystem dedicated to peace building and countering violent extremism. By allowing a space and opportunity for learning and networking, PTX Karachi contributed to building the capacity for future independent collaborations among the CSOs and the academia. At the end of the workshop, many participants were interested in keeping in touch with each other, hoping to build upon the knowledge and partnerships they had garnered during the workshops.

Furthermore, PTX Karachi allowed CSOs, who previously had little idea about the range of possibilities available through technology, were introduced to this

novel way of approaching their routine problems faced by them in their peace building operations. They claimed in the close of workshop survey that their entire solution set had expanded. It now allowed them to re-think about potential roadblocks in their plans and perhaps, use them as opportunities to scale their activities using technology solutions.

PTX Islamabad

The capital city of Pakistan, Islamabad is known by many as the most green and peaceful city in the county. The political seat of Pakistan has an elaborate surveillance system with more than 1500 CCTV cameras contributing towards the lowest crime rates as compared to Lahore and Karachi. Nonetheless, Islamabad was not spared from terrorist attacks in the past years. There have been some major terrorist attacks in the city with numerous casualties.

The Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations network in the city is comparatively strong. The CSO sector in Islamabad encompasses a broad array of NGOs, faith based organizations, community based organizations and volunteer organizations. CSOs organize anti-terror campaigns, programs and workshops to mobilize the populations against violent extremism. Organizations such as Jinnah Institute and SPADO (Sustainable Peace and Development Organization) are actively involved in addressing the issues of peace and co-existence at national and international levels by conducting research and public awareness campaigns for the marginalized communities. Another such organization called PEAD (Peace Education and Development) Foundation which provides training to youth, teachers, religious leaders on promoting peace. However, these CSOs face numerous challenges and limitations in the form of financial resources and skills. It is difficult to mobilize large and diverse communities without the use of proper tools.

Peacetech Exchange Islamabad will enable these CSOs to interact with technologists and incorporate technologies in their work to promote peacebuilding in the city.

Workshop Highlights

The PTX Islamabad Agenda was similar to the previous PTX in the most part, however, it was designed in phases this time. 32 participants representing 11 organizations participated in the workshop.

It was divided into three phases: Inspiration, Ideation and Presentation. Day 1 was the *Inspiration* phase where technologists and organizations were made to introduce themselves in the 'Landscaping Session'. They were worksheets to write about their organizations and their motivation and technologies in case of the technologists and all the worksheets were displayed on the board.

On Day 1, the organizations pondered over what they believe to be the most important drivers of conflict in Pakistan and the most significant challenges to peace building. The participants explained their vision for peace and defined what motivates them to address the violent conflict in their communities. To facilitate their thought process, participants were asked to use worksheets to post their narratives in the form of personas and storyboarding. This activity helped them to think about the issues the organizations face and how these can be tackled using the technologies present in the room. Design Sprint was also a part of Day 1, where participants broke the ice and showed their creative side in developing models representing peace in the country.

Day two was the *Ideation* phase. After getting acquainted with other organizations and technologists in the room, the participants began outlining their project ideas. To begin the day, a design sprint was conducted using mechanical dinosaurs. Teams competed to modify a walking dinosaur team to push other dinosaurs out of a ring on the floor in a form of dinosaur sumo.

After the initial round, teams identified their flaws and successes and modified their designs accordingly for the next round. The moderator, Gulraiz pointed out how this is linked to their project ideas and experiences.

The rest of the day was divided into Task Analysis and Prototyping. In Task Analysis, the teams had to identify three tasks/issues which they would like to address as an organization using a technology. After making out the tasks, the teams identified one platform for a specific task in Prototyping I and they tested out a different platform for a different or the same task in Prototyping II with the help of the technologists. This activity enabled them to test out different technologies for the same task and identify the best possible platform most suitable to address their problem.

Day three was the *Presentation* phase. The first half of the day was spent developing the project pitches and the teams presented their ideas in front of a panel of judges including Gulraiz Khan, Saher Tariq, Fahd Arif - Director TPI, Tim Receuver and Nancy Payne - Vice President Peacetech Labs.

Technologies

The initial survey was conducted and the CSOs identified various tools and technologies which could be used to leverage in solving the issues they are facing. This time too, the CSOs in Islamabad identified tools that could be used to reach out to the mass audience especially those who do not have regular access to the internet.

Apart from the conventional technologies like social media and wordpress, some CSOs identified project management and team collaboration tools as well as data visualization tools.

We kept the needs for the technological tools of the CSOs in consideration when contacting the best technologists in the city. We had a total of seven technologists for PTX Islamabad. For social media, we invited *Syed Muzamil Hasan Zaidi* from House of Lolz. He has his own venture called 'House of Lolz' where his team works to make digital content to empower and incite hope into the young blood of today's world to create a more tolerant and peaceful world. He was a great asset for the organizations who were willing to use social media only to spread their message to the masses.

Saad Hamid, a community lead at Invest2Innovate was invited to showcase wordpress as a means of spreading stories and messages to a larger audience. Some of the organizations wanted to learn about a crowd funding source, and for that we had *Aneeq Cheema*, co-founder of Rabtt a non-governmental initiative which promotes independent and critical thinking through educational camps. He brought Generosity, a crowd funding tool which is geared towards nonprofits and charitable causes.

For project management and team collaboration tools, we had *Rahat Khan* who works at the U.S. Embassy who taught the participants about Slack, a team chat tool. *Saad Omer* who works at World Bank, was invited for Open Data Kit as some organizations wanted to learn about data collection. For data visualization, we had Tableau Public which was presented by *Muneeb Farrukh* who works as a Project Coordinator at TPI. Finally, *Derek Gildea* from Peacetech Lab presented EngageSpark, the most popular technology at the PTX Islamabad. EngageSpark is a web based tool that allow users to send SMS, alerts, reminders etc. on feature phones.

To know more about the technologies, visit: [Peacetech Wiki](#)
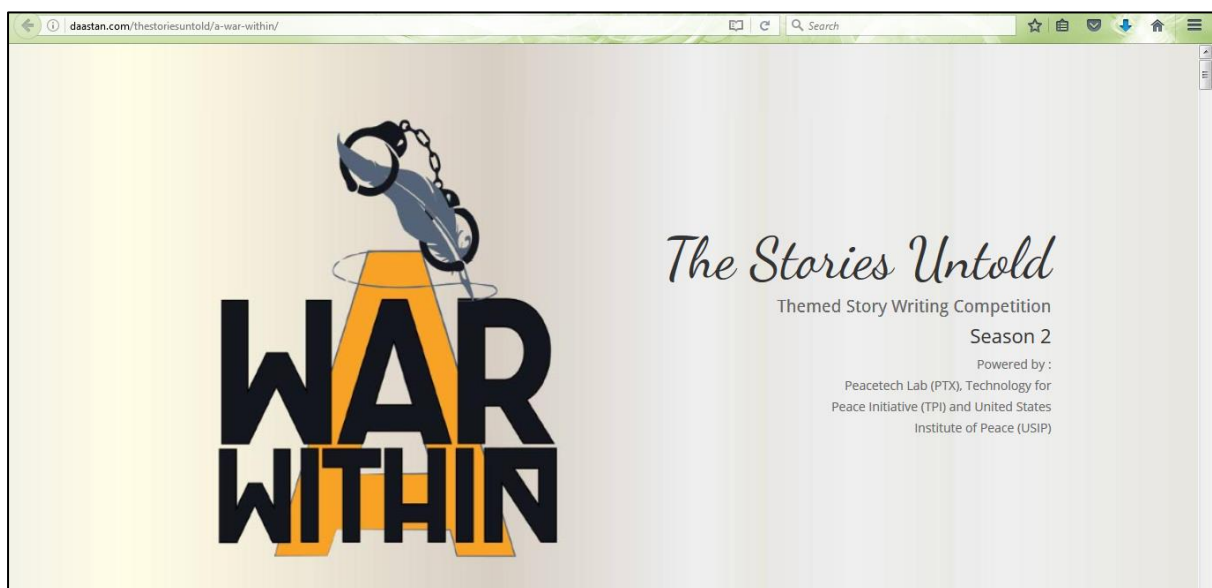
Outcome and Impact

A total of eleven organizations pitched their ideas at PTX Islamabad. The organizations ranged from big to small to start up organizations with various fields including tourism, child abuse, women empowerment, storytelling, robotics etc. The organizations were evaluated on the originality, scalability, criticality and sustainability of their idea. The three organizations whose ideas impressed the judges were by Laajverd, UElect and Daastan.

Laajverd is an initiative that focuses on the intersection of cultures, art and architecture. Laajverd aims to stir, sustain and channel exchange and awareness across social, geographic and creative boundaries. The idea that they pitched at the PTX Islamabad is called 'Altour'. They discussed how they want to curate tourism to bridge cultural gaps in Pakistan. They want to promote new activities in existing tourist destinations to engage the local cultures which will in turn reduce polarization. Altour is a mobile application which will help the tourists to locate cultural activities, shops, crafts, restaurants etc in nearby places. Recently, they have signed an MOU with (Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan) STFP as partner in the project to collect and categorize data on Naran and Kaghan Valley for their android app. They are also finalizing the tech people who will be heloing them in the development of the mobile application.

The other organization was Daastan which is an online literary forum that works to revamp writing industry in Pakistan. Daastan reaches out to the literary organizations, professionals and businesses to groom and connect writers with the right opportunities. Their idea at PTX Islamabad was to engage the Pakistani youth in conversations by conducting an online theme based story writing competition. The proposed theme is 'A War Within'. Stories talked about the influence of external pressures on the radicalization of young minds. The stories highlighted the issues of LGBT community and their fears, radicalization of youth, social issues and personal life stories. Dastaan has also announced their results for English and Urdu stories. To read the stories published by them, visit their page:
https://www.facebook.com/mydaastan
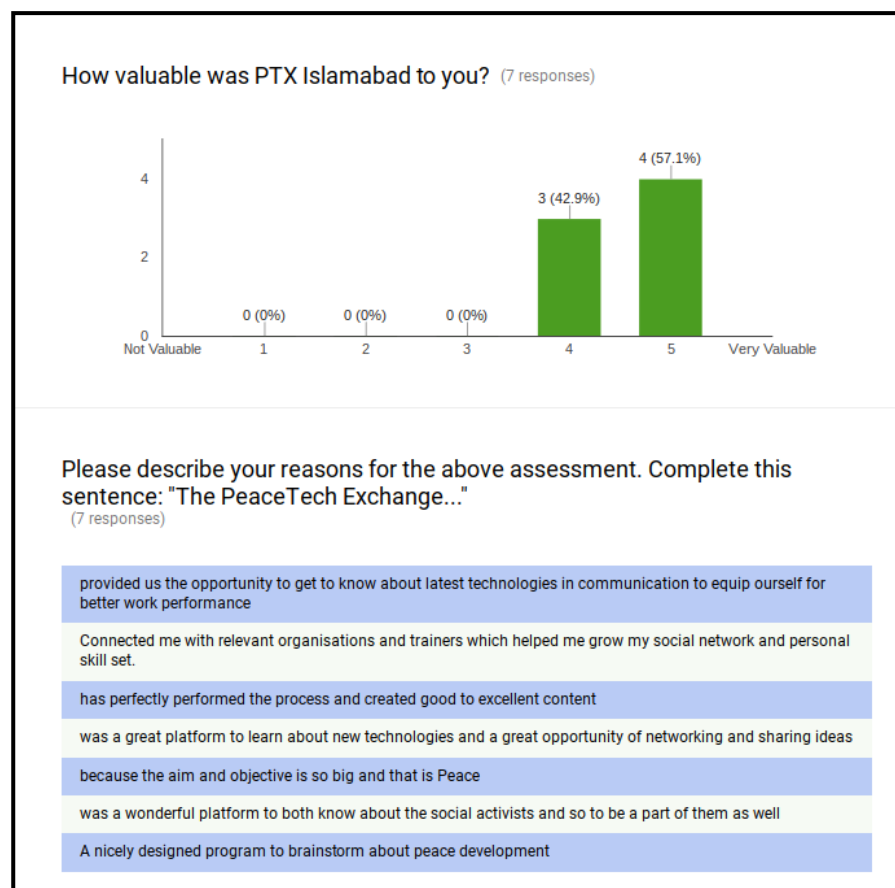and their website: daastan.com

Daastan also conducted a survey regarding peacebuilding in the society and got positive responses. Almost 90% of them mentioned that they loved the story writing experience and will continue to work for the peace building in the society.

Majority mentioned that they found it very helpful in providing them with a platform where they could share their thoughts. They stated that Daastan not only polished their writing skills but also gave them a purpose i.e. to continue peacebuilding in society.

Here is what one participant had to say "War within provided me an opportunity to write my real-life story. It was destined. I would recommend others too to participate so that they could share their views, their stories with others."

The third organization was UElect, which is an organization that promotes transparent polling in the general election process in Pakistan. It is an online mechanism which provides a professional support to the electoral democracy through its web based application. Their presented the idea of hosting a TEDx like event in Gilgit Baltistan since there is a lot of sectarian violence in the area. They will be inviting peace heroes and activists who will share their stories and experiences with the masses in turn inspiring the youth of Gilgit Baltistan. They will use Ushahidi, Social Media and EngageSpark to spread their message across Pakistan. Currently, they are meeting and identifying peace heroes in Gilgit Baltistan and working on the development of the web platform.

PTX Islamabad provided a platform for the CSOs either big or small to interact with other similar organizations and latest technologies. It was a unique platform as it provided an opportunity for the CSOs to learn about new technologies and previous successful projects that have received funding.

How valuable was PTX Islamabad to you? (7 responses)

Please describe your reasons for the above assessment. Complete this sentence: "The PeaceTech Exchange..." (7 responses)

- provided us the opportunity to get to know about latest technologies in communication to equip ourself for better work performance
- Connected me with relevant organisations and trainers which helped me grow my social network and personal skill set.
- has perfectly performed the process and created good to excellent content
- was a great platform to learn about new technologies and a great opportunity of networking and sharing ideas
- because the aim and objective is so big and that is Peace
- was a wonderful platform to both know about the social activists and so to be a part of them as well
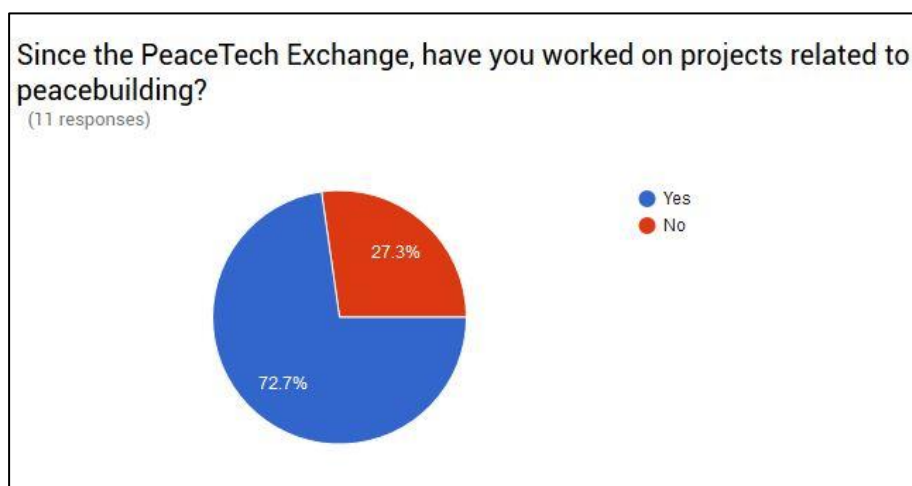- A nicely designed program to brainstorm about peace development

A lot of these CSOs loved the idea of connecting peace with technology and most of them wanted to stay in touch for future collaborations and events. PTX enabled the CSOs to think about the problem statements and issues the city as well as their organizations face in terms of peace and how technology can be used to solve the matter. They were thinking about the technologies that could solve some of these problems in the context of their organizations. Even the organizations who didn't receive the grant were eager to use some of the technologies they have learnt about at the workshop to implement in their organizations.
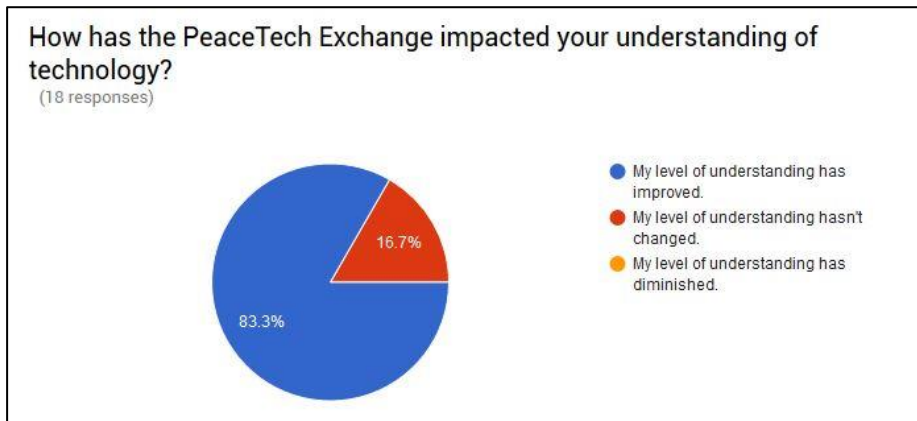
Conclusion

Peacetech exchange is a great global initiative by the Peacetech Lab. It tackles a variety of issues like governance and accountability, women and youth's empowerment, poverty and education, violent extremism, social inclusion and harmony, conflict management and many more. PTX works to enhance the capacity of the CSOs by connecting them with different technologists and allowing them to address their issues and design and develop solutions to tackle them.

As PTX Lahore had reached out to universities, there was a significant student participation as both, CSOs, and individuals. More than fifty percent of the participants who answered the close of workshop survey identified as students. This is indicative of a successful outreach to educational institutions and, as the survey results were mostly positive, also showed that the workshop was well-received by them too.

PTX Pakistan proved to be valuable for the participants as it opened various tech avenues for them for example many of them applied for the USIP's Innovation Fund and Daastan applied for the Peacetech Lab's Scalator Program. A post-workshop was conducted after three months of each conference to gauge the importance of attending a PTX workshop.

How has the PeaceTech Exchange impacted your understanding of technology?
(18 responses)

- My level of understanding has improved. — 83.3%
- My level of understanding hasn't changed. — 16.7%
- My level of understanding has diminished.

It exposed me to new technologies and novel ideas while compelling me to think about peacebuilding in different dimensions.

PTX was very relevant to the work we are already doing. Therefore it was a great platform where technologists and social activists came together in an effort to promote peace.

The conference helped us to see the value of technology in the peace building process. As educationists we have hardly seen our startup as one with a potential for becoming more technologically integrated.

It was an interesting experience for me as i got to meet and work with people who have been working on various social issues.

New ideas and innovations

Networking, learning about available technologies

It was good as it was my first conference of such type. And I came to know about various people who are so eager to change the world by their efforts. And various activities carries out were all good and interesting.

It really opened my eyes to the various technologies out there that I was not even aware of and even those that I did not about, it provided me greater insight into how these could be harnessed in order to further our message of empathy.

The survey results indicated that the PTX workshops were an eye-opener experience for a lot of organizations who were unaware about a lot of simple technologies they could make use of. After attending the workshop, most of these organizations adopted the technologies presented at the conference and enhanced their organization's capacities in working towards peacebuilding.

Initiatives like Peacetech Exchanges should be promoted and rolled out in other areas of Pakistan like Multan, Faisalabad and other neighboring cities. These areas have potential CSOs working towards peacebuilding but do not have the necessary tools to intensify their impact. These workshops are one of its kind which provide peace lovers the freedom to come up with innovative ideas and apply the learnings in their future projects, supporting them financially and mentoring them through their ideas and proposals.