

Holistic Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh | January 14-15, 2026



Religions for Peace



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Introduction

In January 2026, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh, in collaboration with *Religions for Peace* International and the Asian Conference of *Religions for Peace* (ACRP) and international partners, launched a multi-sectoral initiative in Cox's Bazar to address the compounding challenges of displacement, social vulnerability, and regional tension.

Recognizing that sustainable peace requires more than just dialogue, the program integrated creative education, humanitarian relief, and high-level ethical discourse.

From nurturing the expressive potential of over 100 children through the "Art for Peace" competition to providing essential winter relief and educational supplies to displaced families from Myanmar, these initiatives translated interfaith values into tangible community support.

The mission culminated in a Dialogue for Interfaith Harmony, where religious and civil leaders reaffirmed their commitment to a "sacred stewardship" of peace—one grounded in constitutional justice and shared human dignity.

By strengthening local institutional capacity through the formal introduction of the *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar Committee, this series of programs established a scalable model for faith-based solidarity in one of the world's most sensitive humanitarian contexts.



Holistic Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

In January 2026, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh and its local chapters organized a series of programs aimed at advancing its mission of promoting peace, interfaith harmony, social cohesion, and humanitarian action in a region characterized by diversity, humanitarian challenges, and social vulnerability. The programs included the participation and support of *Religions for Peace* International, represented by Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General, and *Religions for Peace* Asia, represented by Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General. The activities took place in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, comprising three major initiatives:

1. "Art for Peace" Children's Art Competition (14 January 2026) – an educational and creative initiative engaging over 100 children from Grades III to VI in expressing themes of peace, coexistence, and interreligious harmony.
2. Distribution of Educational Materials, Toys, and Food to Displaced Children (15 January 2026) – a humanitarian outreach for more than one hundred children displaced from Myanmar, providing school supplies, nutritional support, and toys to children living in vulnerable conditions.
3. Distribution of Blankets to Displaced Elderly People (15 January 2026) – winter relief for underprivileged and displaced communities from Myanmar, supplying warm blankets to mitigate the hardships of extreme cold.

Ms. Singh also participated as Chief Guest in the "Dialogue for Interfaith Harmony" (15 January 2026), alongside Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Asia, and *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh and Cox's Bazar leaders. The dialogue provided a platform for reflection on ethical, social, and constitutional

dimensions of interfaith engagement, connecting national and regional experiences with global perspectives on peacebuilding.



Interfaith leaders and peace activists of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh and *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar in conversation with participating students and teachers during the program.

During these programs, Ms. Singh highlighted the critical importance of nurturing empathy, resilience, and ethical responsibility for children and communities, particularly those affected by displacement, marginalization, or social tension. She emphasized that interfaith dialogue, peace education, and practical humanitarian action are mutually reinforcing, and that initiatives such as those organized in Cox's Bazar exemplify *Religions for Peace*'s mission of translating interfaith values into concrete action.

Her participation inspired local participants, children, and communities, reinforcing the vital role of faith-based solidarity, cooperation, and ethical leadership in fostering sustainable peace, inclusion, and social harmony. By integrating educational, humanitarian, and dialogue-based initiatives, the programs in Cox's Bazar reflect a holistic approach to peacebuilding, grounded in compassion, justice, and shared human dignity.



“Art for Peace” Children’s Art Competition

Religions for Peace Bangladesh organized a children’s art competition titled “Art for Peace” in Cox’s Bazar as part of its continued commitment to promoting a culture of peace, interreligious harmony, and social cohesion through inclusive, educational, and creative initiatives. More than one hundred students from Grades III to VI at Holy Child School participated enthusiastically in the “Art for Peace” program, which was held on Wednesday, 14 January 2026. The event highlighted how art can empower children to express themes of peace, harmony, solidarity, love, coexistence, and mutual respect.

In her address at the event, *Religions for Peace* International Deputy Secretary General Ms. Singh reflected on the current global context, noting that many regions of the world are affected by war, violence, and conflict, leading to a growing crisis of peace, trust, and social harmony. She emphasized that children are not isolated from the social and psychological consequences of such instability. She underscored the importance of creating safe and constructive spaces where children can express themselves creatively, develop empathy, and build resilience. Ms. Singh observed that initiatives such as “Art for Peace” play a meaningful role in nurturing shared human values and align closely with the vision and mission of *Religions for Peace*.

Principal Kyaw Thein Aung, President of the *Religions for Peace* Cox’s Bazar presided over the inaugural session of the event. Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh, moderated the event, highlighting the importance of peace education from an early age.

Distinguished participants included Professor Md. Jasim Uddin, Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Chittagong and Chief Coordinator of the competition; Poet Biswajit Barua, Treasurer of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh; Faruk Taher, Organizing Secretary and journalist; Professor Ujjal Kanti Dev, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* Cox’s Bazar District Committee; peace activists Joymala Barua, Theng Nyo, and Mong One Nine, along with teachers of Holy Child School, volunteers, and members of the local interfaith community.

Through vibrant colours and diverse creative expressions, the participating children conveyed strong messages of peace, interreligious harmony, friendship, and social solidarity. At a time of



Group photograph of participating children holding their artworks, reflecting messages of peace, friendship, interreligious harmony, and social solidarity.

social uncertainty and global tension, the artworks reflected hope, empathy, and a vision of coexistence rooted in shared human values.

Following the evaluation process, ten participants were awarded special prizes in recognition of their artistic creativity and thematic depth. In addition, all participating children received certificates of participation and gifts as encouragement and appreciation. The certificates and prizes were formally presented by Ms. Deepika Singh.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Singh emphasized that religious, cultural, ethnic, and social diversity should be understood not as a source of division, but as a foundation for unity, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. She commended the *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh Chapter for this initiative, congratulated the participating children, and expressed her appreciation to the school authorities for their cooperation and support.

Religions for Peace Bangladesh regards the “Art for Peace” program as a meaningful contribution to peace education and interfaith engagement at the grassroots level, particularly within the diverse and sensitive social context of Cox’s Bazar. The initiative reflects *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh’s ongoing commitment to translating interfaith dialogue and ethical principles into concrete actions that promote peace, inclusion, and social harmony among younger generations.

Distribution of Educational Materials, Toys, and Food for Displaced Children

Religions for Peace Bangladesh organized a humanitarian support program for displaced and underprivileged children from Myanmar currently residing in Bangladesh, distributing educational materials, toys, and food items as part of its continued commitment to child welfare, human dignity, and peacebuilding through compassionate action.

The distribution program was conducted on 15 January 2026 at two locations in Cox's Bazar District: the Rakhine Development Foundation (RDF) Center in Cox's Bazar town and a Buddhist temple in Chowfaldandi Union, Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila. More than one hundred displaced children benefited from the initiative, receiving school bags, notebooks, educational supplies, children's food, and toys.

Leadership and Support

The program was implemented with the patronage of *Religions for Peace* International and in close cooperation with the local non-governmental organization Rakhine Development Foundation (RDF). The support packages were formally handed over to the children by Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* International; Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General of the Asian Conference of *Religions for Peace* (ACRP); and Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh, along with other senior leaders.

Messages from Distinguished Guests

Addressing the children and their guardians, Ms. Deepika Singh emphasized that children represent the future of the world, and that a peaceful global society cannot be built unless children are nurtured with care, dignity, and opportunity. She underscored that standing beside underprivileged and displaced children is not merely an act of charity, but a moral responsibility rooted in shared human values.

In his remarks to the children, Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara encouraged them to pursue education, grow with confidence, and strive toward self-reliance. He assured them that they are not alone – reaffirming the solidarity of *Religions for Peace* and its partners with displaced communities.

Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh and Professor at the University of Chittagong, facilitated the distribution

program. In his remarks, Dr. Ahmed stressed that children do not belong only to a particular community or nation; rather, every child is a shared responsibility of humanity. He highlighted the urgent need for collective action to safeguard children's fundamental rights to food, education, and care.

Participation

Both distribution site events featured the participation of leaders and representatives of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh, RDF, and local interfaith communities, including Poet Biswajit Barua, Treasurer of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh; Faruk Taher, Organizing Secretary and journalist; Professor Md. Jasim Uddin, Executive Member of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh and Professor



Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* International (third from left) and Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Asia (second from left) presenting gifts to children, encouraging their education and personal development.

at the University of Chittagong; and Principal Kyaw Thein Aung, Chairman of RDF and former Principal of Cox's Bazar City College.

Also participating were Professor Ujjal Kanti Dev, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar Committee; peace activists Theng Nyo and Mong OneNine; Asang Ardesa Mahathero; Aung Then Line; Cheng Da; Neo; A Dite Sa; So Khyang; Yet Sanda Wir; Aung San; along with teachers, volunteers, parents, and community members.

Impact on Children

The children expressed visible joy and excitement upon receiving the educational materials, toys, and food items. The initiative provided not only immediate material support but also emotional encouragement, affirming care, recognition, and hope for children living in conditions of displacement and uncertainty.

Extended Program Coverage

Under the same program framework and with the patronage of *Religions for Peace* International, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh had conducted a similar distribution on 15 December 2025 in Thoei Para and Kyang Para of Sonaichhari Union, Naikhongchhari Upazila, Bandarban District. On that occasion, nearly two hundred displaced children from Myanmar received educational materials, food, and toys.

In addition, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh has initiated pre-primary educational support for approximately 150 displaced children under this program, demonstrating a longer-term commitment beyond one-time relief.

Context and Significance

More than 1.2 million people displaced from Myanmar are currently residing in Bangladesh. While many live in formal refugee camps, a

significant number—particularly displaced families from Rakhine State—remain outside official refugee support systems and continue to face acute vulnerability. Within this limited but urgent context, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh has sought to stand beside these children and families through targeted, compassionate interventions.

Conclusion

The distribution of educational materials, toys, and food for displaced children reflects *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh's commitment to translating interfaith values into practical humanitarian action. Grounded in cooperation with *Religions for Peace* International, ACRP, and local partners, the initiative highlights the essential role of faith-based solidarity in protecting children's rights, dignity, and future—especially in contexts of displacement and marginalization.

Distribution of Blankets to Displaced People

Religions for Peace Bangladesh organized a winter relief program distributing warm blankets to displaced and underprivileged people from Myanmar currently residing in Bangladesh. This initiative reflects *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh's commitment to human dignity, humanitarian action, and interfaith solidarity, particularly during periods of extreme weather and vulnerability.

Background and Rationale

During the severe winter (December–January), many homeless and displaced people in urban Bangladesh endure extreme cold without sufficient clothing or shelter. Sleep is disrupted, and basic survival becomes a daily struggle. Most cannot afford warm clothing, leaving them exposed to the biting cold. *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh undertook this program as a humanitarian and moral responsibility, emphasizing that standing beside vulnerable communities is an essential expression of compassion and peace.

Program Implementation

The distribution program was conducted on Thursday, 15 January 2026, at two locations in Cox's Bazar District: the Rakhine Development Foundation (RDF) Center, Cox's Bazar town, and a Buddhist temple in Chowfaldandi Union, Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila. Warm blankets were distributed directly to the most disadvantaged displaced people, providing immediate protection against the harsh winter.

The program was executed with the patronage of *Religions for Peace* International and supported through the leadership of *Religions for Peace*

Bangladesh, with active participation from local partners.

Blankets were distributed by:

- Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General, *Religions for Peace* International
- Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General, Asian Conference of *Religions for Peace* (ACRP)
- Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh

Other distinguished participants included Poet Biswajit Barua, Treasurer, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh; Faruk Taher, Organizing Secretary and journalist; Professor Md. Jasim Uddin, Executive Member and Professor of Fine Arts, University of Chittagong; and Principal Kyaw Thein Aung, Chairman, RDF.

The program also involved local volunteers and community members who assisted in the distribution, ensuring that materials reached the most vulnerable.

Impact and Significance

The initiative provided immediate relief to displaced people facing extreme cold, enhancing their well-being and dignity. The program demonstrated the humanitarian and peace-building role of faith-based organizations. By translating dialogue and ethical commitments into practical action, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh underscored the importance of solidarity, compassion, and social responsibility.

Dialogue for Interfaith Harmony

Religions for Peace Bangladesh, in partnership with *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar, convened a Dialogue for Interfaith Harmony on Thursday, 15 January 2026, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM, at a hotel conference hall in Cox's Bazar. The dialogue formed part of *Religions for Peace*'s ongoing efforts to strengthen interreligious understanding, social cohesion, and peacebuilding through inclusive and ethical engagement at both national and regional levels.



Interfaith leaders and participants engaging in dialogue and discussion on strengthening harmony, trust, and social cohesion.

Leadership and Participation

Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh chaired the dialogue. The event featured Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* International, as Chief Guest, and Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General of the Asian Conference of *Religions for Peace* (ACRP), as Special Guest.

The program commenced with a welcome address by Principal Kyaw Thein Aung, President of *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar, and was anchored by Mr. Ujjal Kanti Dev, Secretary General of the *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar Chapter. Professor Md. Jasim Uddin, Executive Member of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh, delivered the opening greetings on behalf of the host organization.

Participants included representatives from diverse religious communities, educators, peace activists, civil society leaders, and members of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh and *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar, reflecting the pluralistic social fabric of the region.

Opening Reflections and Tribute

The dialogue opened with interfaith readings from sacred texts of different religious traditions, symbolizing shared ethical values and spiritual wisdom. At the outset, participants paid tribute to the late Rev. Dr. Nobuhiro Nemoto, former Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* Asia (ACRP), honoring his lifelong contributions to interfaith cooperation and peacebuilding in the Asia-Pacific region.

Overview of the Dialogue Theme and Objectives

Presenting the Overview of the Dialogue Theme and Objectives, Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed framed dialogue as an ethical and philosophical practice rooted in mutual recognition, respect, and shared inquiry. Drawing on philosophical traditions and the constitutional vision of Bangladesh, he emphasized that dialogue is not merely an exchange of views, but an encounter grounded in equality, dignity, and moral responsibility.

He highlighted that in plural societies such as Bangladesh—particularly in the diverse and sensitive context of Cox's Bazar, shaped by humanitarian engagement, economic pressures, and social vulnerability—interfaith dialogue is not a luxury but a practical necessity. He further underscored that interfaith harmony cannot be sustained by tolerance alone, but must be anchored in social and constitutional justice, ensuring inclusion, fairness, and equal respect for all faith identities.

The dialogue identified three key objectives:

1. To reflect collectively on the ethical and social significance of dialogue in national, regional, and global contexts;
2. To share lived experiences from Bangladesh and Cox's Bazar regarding the challenges and opportunities of interfaith harmony;
3. To explore pathways for translating dialogue into practical cooperation for peace, justice, and social cohesion.

Regional Insights and Interfaith Cooperation in Asia

In his address, Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara offered deep reflections on the current global and regional context marked by widespread division, violence, and polarization. He emphasized the urgent need to reaffirm a shared conviction that human well-being is fundamentally interconnected, and that all people exist as part of a shared moral community.

Drawing on teachings from multiple religious traditions—including the Qur'an, the New Testament, and the Dhammapada—he highlighted that compassion, non-violence, and care for others are universal religious values passed down through centuries. Rev. Dr. Shinohara stressed that in the face of global crises, messages and actions rooted in trust, dialogue, cooperation, reconciliation, and forgiveness are more necessary than ever.

He emphasized that many people around the world are longing for peace, and that religious leaders have a moral responsibility to offer encouragement, solidarity, and concrete action. He noted that without action, meaningful change is not possible. Concluding his remarks, he expressed his strong commitment to strengthening solidarity between the people of Bangladesh and *Religions for Peace*, and to continuing collaborative efforts toward peace in Asia and beyond.

Global Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding

Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* International, situated the dialogue within a broader global context. She observed that ongoing wars and conflicts across the world have led to a serious erosion of trust, harmony, and peaceful coexistence among communities. She emphasized that interfaith dialogue is a vital global instrument for rebuilding trust, addressing fear and misunderstanding, and fostering inclusive peace.

Ms. Singh highlighted the importance of connecting global peacebuilding frameworks with

local realities, and commended *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh for grounding interfaith dialogue in lived social contexts. She noted that initiatives such as this dialogue demonstrate how global values of peace and solidarity can be meaningfully translated into local action.

Dialogue Contributions and Reflections

The dialogue featured thoughtful contributions from representatives of diverse religious communities and civil society, including veteran freedom fighter Fazlul Kader Chowdhury, Professor Akhtar Alam, Engineer Badiul Alam, Principal Rahmat Salam, Principal Ajit Das, Dr. Alok Chakraborty, Poet Biswajit Barua (Treasurer, *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh), Professor Sharmin Siddika Lima, Professor Shahnur Akhtar, Nilotpal



Barua, Rabindra Barua, Advocate Pratibha Das, Pastor Sushanta Nath, among others.

Speakers reflected on how misinterpretations of religion, along with economic and political factors, contribute to interfaith tensions. They reaffirmed that genuine religious commitment never seeks harm to others but instead calls for compassion, justice, and the protection of human dignity.

Institutional Strengthening

During the same program, the newly constituted *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar Committee was formally introduced, marking an important step in strengthening local interfaith leadership and institutional capacity for sustained peacebuilding efforts.



Conclusion

The Dialogue for Interfaith Harmony reaffirmed the shared commitment of *Religions for Peace* Bangladesh, *Religions for Peace* Cox's Bazar, ACRP, and *Religions for Peace* International to advancing peace through dialogue, ethical reflection, and cooperative action. In the diverse and globally significant context of Cox's Bazar, the dialogue underscored that interfaith engagement—grounded in justice, compassion, and solidarity—is essential for fostering lasting social harmony and peaceful coexistence.



Media Coverage



শিশুদের মাঝে সম্প্রীতিবোধ জাগাতে
সুকুমার বৃক্ষির ঢাঁচ জরুরি

କଞ୍ଚକାରୀରେ ଆରାଫାମର ଆଟ ଫର ପିସ



কর্মসূচীজোড়ে আরএফপি বাংলাদেশ চ্যান্টার আয়োজিত শিশুদের চিঠাকল
প্রতিযোগিতা



কঞ্চাবাজারে আরএফপি'র অনুষ্ঠানে প্রতিযোগীদের সাথে অতিথিবন্দন
কঞ্চাবাজারে আরএফপি'র অনুষ্ঠানে দীপিকা সিং
শিশুদের সম্প্রীতি ও মানসিক দৃত্তা

ବନ୍ଦିତେ ମନ୍ଦିରାବ ବନ୍ଦି ଚାରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ

কক্ষবাজারে রিলিজিয়নস ফর পিস (আরএফপি) বাংলাদেশ চ্যানেলটি প্রযোজন করে আসছে।

ଆয়োজিত শিশুদের চিত্রাঙ্কন প্রতিযোগিতা আর্ট ফর পিস অনুষ্ঠানে আরও ইন্ট’রন্যাশনালের ডেপুটি সেক্রেটারি জেনারেল দীপিকা সিং বলেছেন, বিশ

বিভিন্ন দেশ আজ যুদ্ধ-বিগ্রহে লিপ্ত, যার কারণে মানুষের মানুষে শার্দুল সম্প্রতির সংকটে দেখা দিয়েছে। শিশুরাও এর প্রেক্ষে দুরে নয়। তাটে তা

ମଧ୍ୟେ ପାରମ୍ପରିକ ମମତାବୋଧ ଓ ଦୃଢ଼ତା ସୁଟିର ଅନୁପ୍ରେରଣା ହିସେବେ କାଜ ବୁଝି ଆମରା ଶିଖିବୁ କିମ୍ବା ମରମାର ବରତି ଚାରି ପ୍ରବିବରଶ ତୈବି କରେ ଦିଲେ ହେଲାମାରି

আম আশীর্বাদ প্রতিকর্ষ আঁকড়ে কুমার হৃত চৰো পারিবে প্রতোর কৰে পাতে
আরএফপি বাংলাদেশ চ্যাপ্টার মূলত সেই উদ্যোগটাই গ্রহণ করেছে।

গতকল ব্যবসার সকালে কর্মবাজার হাল চাইতে শুলে অনুষ্ঠিত প্রাত়িযোগিতার প্রায় শতাধিক শিক্ষার্থী অংশগ্রহণ করে।

আরএফাপ কল্পবাজার শাখার সভাপাত্র ক্য থঁ ৰ অং এৰ সভাপাত্ৰত্বে
বাংলাদেশ চ্যাপ্টারেৰ জেনারেল সেক্রেটাৰি চবি শিক্ষক ড. মাঝুম আহমে

সন্ধানলায় অনুষ্ঠানে উপস্থিত ছিলেন চিত্রাক্ষ প্রাতিযোগিতার প্রধান সম্পর্ক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের চারুকলা বিভাগের অধ্যাপক জসিম উদ্দিন, আরও

বাংলাদেশের অর্থসম্পদক কবি বিশ্বজিৎ বড়ুয়া, সাংগঠনিক সম্পাদক আবুজিত ও সাংবাদিক ফারুক তাহের, আরএফপি কম্বোবাজার জেলা কমিটির সেক্রেটেরি

জেনারেল অধ্যাপক উজ্জ্বল দেব, আরএফপি বাংলাদেশের কোষাধ্যক্ষ বিশ্বজিৎ বড়োয়া শাস্ত্রিকূমা জয়মালা বড়োয়া থেঁ এন্ড মং প্রয়ান নাইনসেন্ট স্কুল

শিক্ষকবৃন্দ। এক ঘণ্টার এই চিত্রাঙ্কন প্রতিযোগিতায় অংশগ্রহণকারীদের অবিস্ময়ে রাজাটি করে পথাম ১০ জনকে বিশেষভাবে পুরস্কৃত করা হয়। বিশে

କାନ୍ତିକାଳେ କାନ୍ତିକାଳେ କାନ୍ତିକାଳେ କାନ୍ତିକାଳେ କାନ୍ତିକାଳେ କାନ୍ତିକାଳେ