

Kerk in Actie

Shared Futures Impact Report 2024



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Pakistan

CSSP
REEDS

Egypt

CEOSS

Cameroon

PRICA

Kenya

ADSP
AYT
Cordaid
JAC
SSYA



Shared futures locations around the world

Introduction

The Shared Futures program, initiated by Kerk in Actie, is now in its 8th year after starting in 2018. In 2024 partners implemented Shared Futures programs in Egypt (CEOSS), Cameroon (PRICA), Kenya (ADSP, AYT, Cordaid, JAC, SSYA), and Pakistan (CSSP and REEDS). From the outset, Shared Futures aspired to be a program in which shared learning played a central role. As such, data gathered by partners was analyzed and the findings were written up in annual reports. These reports were helpful in facilitating reflection on the progress of Shared Futures in various contexts, aiding partners and Kerk in Actie to be learning organizations, continually reflecting on their practices by centering the voices of participants.

Unlike in previous years, in this report all Shared Futures programs in Egypt, Cameroon, Kenya, and Pakistan will be analyzed together. By incorporating all programs into one report, we hope to further facilitate shared learning across the Shared Futures programs in diverging contexts. We hope that through this report the various Shared Futures programs might be an inspiration to one another and might also challenge one another to continually improve their respective programs.

Partners in Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, and Pakistan each gathered data, mainly through the Most Significant Change methodology. Documents with this data were sent to Kerk in Actie to be analyzed. Over the course of 2024, a total of 117 documents were analyzed. These documents were analyzed internally by Kerk in Actie staff in the Utrecht office (by Mariska den Hartog, Iris Bruijn, and Dr. Marten van den Toren-Liefting). When data is mentioned or quoted directly in the report, all the names of individual participants will be anonymized. Names of partner organizations will be mentioned.

Central to the Shared Futures program, the analysis of data in Atlas.ti and the ensuing report is the Theory of Change (*henceforth* ToC). This ToC was revised by Kerk in Actie in 2024. The main desired change of the ToC remains the same, namely:

“From their religious drive, people of different faiths take joint responsibility for each other’s futures by working together in the activities that contribute to just and peaceful coexistence.”

The newly revised pathways which lead to the revised ToC are:

- Community: Communities of different faith have increased resilience and capacity to prevent religious extremism and contribute to justice and peace.
- Public duty bearers: Public support and policies for interfaith socio-economic cooperation contribute to justice and peace.
- National Advocacy: Through enriched narratives, the public has an increased exposure and understanding of the constructive power of interfaith socio-economic cooperation in creating just resilient, and peaceful coexistence.

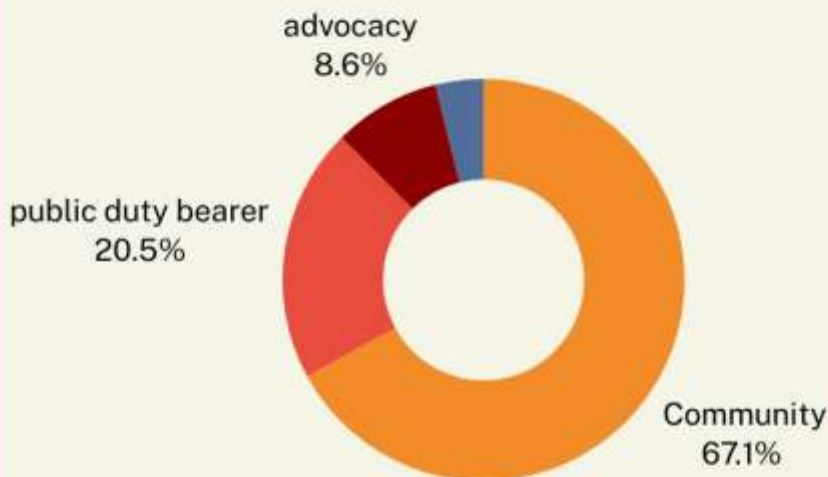
- International lobby and advocacy: (Inter)national (faith) actors recognise the constructive power of interfaith socio-economic cooperation for, and the distinctive value of faith actors in peacebuilding. *(Not discussed in this report)*

The analysis of the data presented in this report was structured around the revised ToC and its four pathways. This ToC, therefore, not only shaped the structure of this report, but it also shaped how the data was analyzed by forming the basis of the categories (or codes) used for the analysis.

MSC of Shared Futures in numbers

PATHWAYS

Total quotations on the different pathways



The data presented gives some quantitative insight into the analysis done with Atlas.ti.

To analyse the data parts of the stories (quotations) get assigned a code. To come to the data on the left and below we counted these quotations.

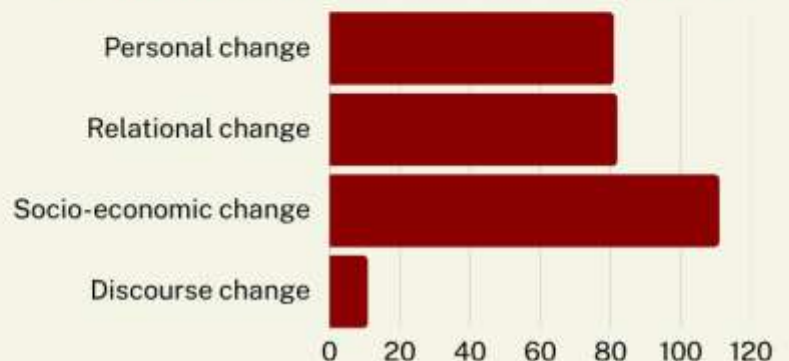
To the left we see that the community pathway still shows the biggest number of changes.

To the right we see that most of the change is in the dimension of socio-economic change, closely followed by personal and relational change.

Below the progress in Shared Futures locations is shown. In 2025 we welcome 2 new locations in Ghana and the Netherlands! In 2026 a Shared Futures project will also start in Bangladesh.

DIMENSIONS

Total quotations in the dimensions of change



COUNTRIES

Timeline of countries with shared futures projects



Community Pathway

As stated in the introduction, the revised ToC played a defining role in how we made sense of the data gathered by partners. Let us begin by taking into consideration the foreseen changes in the community pathway which states: *Communities of different faiths have increased resilience and capacity to prevent religious extremism and contribute to justice and peace.*

Within the community pathway, throughout all the Shared Futures programs, there are two main domains within which the program is effecting change. Firstly, within the socio-economic domain and secondly, within the interfaith domain. Both these domains are important in achieving the desired change at a community level.

Socio-Economic Change

To begin, we describe changes within the socio-economic domain. For there to be a potential change within this domain, it is clear that various conditions facilitate the likelihood of positive socio-economic change. Firstly, and maybe most obviously, there is a need for (starting) funds or grants. REEDS in Pakistan, for example, accounted how minority students were aided with financial assistance, receiving scholarships ranging between 7,200 and 60,000 Pakistani rupees (25 – 200 USD). As a result of such support: “It enables them (participants) to pursue their educational goals regardless of their socio-economic background or religious affiliation, thus contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and equitable society.” (Pakistan, REEDS) In a similar manner, PRICA in Cameroon accounted of how the distribution of concrete agricultural tools in combination with microcredits aided participants in “starting and developing their economic activities. Such resources could even result in the initiating of a local cooperatives assuring community cooperation”¹ (Cameroon, PRICA).

Aside from (financial) resources, training was often also cited as a requirement for facilitating positive socio-economic change within participating communities. A Shared Futures participant in Egypt shared:

“I attended another training with them about entrepreneurship. I learned how to start a business and manage it. I attended with them an accessories training and learned how to make accessories at home and I opened a small shop at home to sell hair clips and accessories. I expanded my business and opened a supermarket near me. Thank God. I thank them for so many things I learned with them in the symposiums. And if there are any other symposiums in Bayad, that would be good.” (Egypt, CEOSS)

¹ Original : « pour aider les bénéficiaires à démarrer ou à développer leurs activités économiques. Ce fonds pourrait être géré par les coopératives locales pour assurer une gestion communautaire. » (Cameroon, PRICA)

In a similar vein, a 27-year-old female participant in Pakistan accounted how:

“With the financial support, facilitation, guidance and training from CSSP, I honed my skills and launched my own beauty parlor within my area. My determination to overcome adversity and create a better life for me and my family drove me to pursue entrepreneurship.” (Pakistan, CSSP)

Through trainings participants learnt how to start their own businesses and make effective use of the (financial) resources received through Shared Futures programs. There was much evidence of the value of training for achieving socio-economic resilience also in Kenya, Cameroon, and Pakistan.

With financial support and training, there is evidence across the programs in Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, and Pakistan that a demonstrated socio-economic resilience can be and has been achieved. As an employee from PRICA in Cameroon witnessed: “such initiatives are important as they stimulate the local economy, create employment, and offer a future perspective for youth in the region.”² (Cameroon, PRICA) Moreover, it is apparent positive change within the socio-economic domain has far-reaching implications. This is exemplified in the account of a participant who came from a violent home situation in Pakistan and received a 60.000 Pakistani rupee grant (approx. 200 USD) from REEDS to start her own beauty parlour. Not only does she now earn a steady monthly income. She shared the following:

“This change means a lot to me. It's like a ray of hope in the dark. Now, I have sufficient money to support my family and my kids can dream bigger. Joining REEDS Pakistan's events made me feel stronger and more confident. Seeing my business grow during special times fills me with pride. And I'm not just making money, I'm investing in making my beauty parlour better, showing how much I care about my customers. I used to feel like a weight on my family, but now, I'm their pillar of support. It's not just about me anymore; it's about making our community stronger too.” (Pakistan REEDS)

Not only did one participant benefit from the financial support given by REEDS in Pakistan, but a family and an entire community could also reap the fruits of the positive (economic) change in this one participant's life.

Change in Interfaith Relations

Within the communities participating in Shared Futures programs, change was also observed in how diverse religious communities related to one another, within the interfaith domain. All partners in the Shared Futures program organized activities to

² Original : “Cette initiative est importante car elle stimule l'économie locale, crée des emplois et offre des perspectives d'avenir aux jeunes de la région.” (Cameroon, PRICA)

bring communities of diverse faiths together. In Cameroon, for example, Christian and Muslim women would regularly come together to learn to sew, which allowed one participant “to open up to others, flourish, and heal (...) trauma.” (Cameroon, PRICA) The effects of such activities are also demonstrated in the following account from a staff member from Kenya:

“During the interreligious dialogues, at first participants were sitting separately (people of the same faith together) but later they were mingling freely. This shows that at the start of the sessions people were not free talking with people from different faith but later their attitude changed, and they started sharing information without any form of discrimination. During plenary discussions participants listened well, avoided negative stereotypes in language and were considering other peoples’ perceptions. This has helped them to overcome prejudice and tension towards members of different faith groups.” (Kenya, ADSP)

Such (sustained) encounters across religious differences, facilitated by Shared Futures partners, have the potential to lead to an increase in social cohesion and a deradicalization within the participating communities. Most explicitly a participant in Cameroon testified: “By attending awareness sessions, I learned a lot about peace and peaceful coexistence, and thank God I refused to be recruited by Boko Haram a week ago.”³ (Cameroon, PRICA) Learning about peace, and living a peaceful coexistence with other faiths had the potential to halt this individual from joining radicalised and violent religious movements. Most accounts of deradicalization, however, are less more subtle. For example, one participant of Samba Sports in Kenya gave the following account:

“Before being engaged by Samba Sports, I used to be in the company of my favorite peers, and some were not of good values and behaviors. The company nearly made me join violent juvenile groups due to peer influence.” he said.

“Through football, I was able to meet officers from Samba Sports and they sensitized us on the importance of cohesion as young people. That was the turning point towards changing my behavior in shaping my life,” (Kenya, SSYA)

Linking Social-Economic Change and Interfaith Relations

Throughout much of the analyzed data in the community pathway, positive change related to economic resilience and interfaith cohesion appeared side by side. Sometimes these two domains simply coexisted and changed in a person’s life simultaneously. Other times, though less reported, there was an interaction between

³ Original : “A force d’assister aux séances de sensibiliser, j’ai beaucoup appris sur la paix et le vivre-ensemble et grâce à Dieu j’ai refusé d’être enrôler par Boko-Haram il y’a de cela une semaine. ” (Cameroon, PRICA)

the socio-economic changes and a person's view of interfaith. In Cameroon, it was observed: "In addition to the awareness-raising workshops, participants exhibited an open-minded attitude towards socio-economic resilience, which also created a space for dialogue and experience sharing between different communities."⁴ (Cameroon, PRICA) Activities within the Shared Futures program, which facilitated economic resilience, appeared to also create space for positive interfaith encounters. In Egypt a participant shared the following account:

"I never used to deal with Muslims, but after attending the symposiums and there were Muslims with us, I started dealing with them. I also applied for the make-up course and was accepted. I took the make-up course. Thank God, I am now very good at it. I started telling my neighbours and to make them know and make my friends know and they took my phone number and if anyone wanted to have anything done, I would go do it for them. Then I opened a small place at home and people got to know me and Muslims now come to me more than Christians and thank God my business grew and my income increased and my relationships with people improved." (CEOSS, Egypt)

A participant in Pakistan, similarly, recounted the following experience:

"Shared Futures has taught me the importance of working together with people from different backgrounds. One of the most impactful experiences has been my friendship with Bilal, a Muslim motorcycle mechanic. Though we initially avoided each other due to religious differences, we connected through Shared Futures and now support each other's businesses. This shift in mindset extended beyond us. For example, an ice shop owner who used to bring separate glasses for me, a Hindu, and Bilal, a Muslim, started serving us the same after seeing our friendship. Shared Futures has fostered unity, peace, and understanding in our community, with people from different faiths, including Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, celebrating together, especially during Diwali. The program has truly helped create a more cooperative and peaceful environment. (...) My friendship with Bilal, for example, shows how working together can reduce conflict and build trust. Shared Futures program has changed the way I think, and by sharing these ideas, I'm helping to create stronger connections and a more peaceful community. This will benefit future generations by encouraging more cooperation and less division." (Pakistan, REEDS)

This final account, in many regards, beautifully represents the aspired change within the community pathway of the Shared Futures program. The positive changes in

⁴ Original: "En plus des ateliers de sensibilisation, il y a eu une ouverture d'esprit des participants sur la résilience socio-économique qui a également créé un espace de dialogue et de partage d'expériences entre les différentes communautés. (Cameroon, PRICA)

economic resilience and interfaith cohesion appear to not only occur simultaneously but rather appear to mutually strengthen one another. Much of the analysed data related to the community pathway shows snippets of such dynamics and aspired change. However, this quote brings it all together, showing the full potential of Shared Futures within religiously diverse communities.

Symbols of Unity

"The event began with attendees contributing homemade dishes for the Iftar meal, symbolizing unity and sharing. This gesture highlighted the essence of interfaith harmony and mutual respect. Participants from diverse religious backgrounds came together to open the fast, followed by the cutting of the Easter cake, which exemplified inclusivity and togetherness. The festivities continued with the vibrant celebration of Holi, where attendees embraced the colourful tradition, symbolizing unity and joy across religious boundaries." (Pakistan, CSSP).

Religious holidays can be a marker of what is different between the religions, but as the quote above shows it can also be a marker of unity when celebrated together. One of the participants of the event comments the following:

"I experienced a profound change in my perspective when I attended a joint event celebrating the joint event of Iftar, Easter, and Holi organised by CSSP. The event dissolved religious distinctions in my heart, and I felt a deep sense of unity." (Pakistan, CSSP)

Inclusion is sometimes difficult to visualize, and it is easier to see when it is not there. But through symbols of unity, it becomes visible and a lived experience. By sharing a meal or cutting a cake unity becomes visible. This is not only true in combined religious celebrations. The data from Pakistan mentions the cutting of cake as a symbol of unity 7 times, with different groups such as participants, police or the interfaith harmony committee.

These symbols of unity can be different in every context. For example, in the Netherlands dressing up in orange for King's Day is a symbol of unity that is unique to its context. Other symbols such as sharing a meal or playing sport together can also go beyond the context and become wider symbols of unity. What symbols of unity do you see in your communities? And how can you use these to spread a message of unity?



Public Duty Bearers Pathway

In the Shared Futures contexts of Pakistan, Kenya and Cameroon, there is data to show that public duty bearers are involved in supporting socio-economic and interfaith cooperation. The outcome that this pathway works towards is “public support and policies for interfaith socio-economic cooperation contribute to justice and peace.”

Support of Leaders in Different Phases of the Project

The different Shared Futures projects are in different phases of implementation, which is represented in the data of the public duty bearer pathway. For example, PRICA organizes meetings between community leaders, political leaders, and NGO representatives, to establish common ideas and collaboration for common interest (PRICA, Cameroon). In Kenya, even though the program is in a later phase, the meetings with different stakeholders are still considered important to assure that the work of different partners is complementary (ADSP, Kenya). However, it is already visible that work with (government) stakeholders in earlier phases of the project has resulted in easier access to communities in the next phase, which can be considered a sign of recognition for the work, or of common interests when local leaders have mandate for peace-building (JAC and AYT, Kenya). It is promising to read that in Cameroon leaders have used communities they visited as inspirational examples of social cohesion (PRICA, Cameroon). This support from duty bearers is of vital importance to the project, which can also be seen when the support is not yet there. A participant from Egypt explains this:

"When I attended the organization activities related to CEOSS, I noticed that there were no young Christian people participating in the activities. This was because of the priest's intolerance and forbidding the youth from coming to the organization to protect the youth. (...) However, because of the project's interventions and going to the church and convincing them to allow the youth to participate in the activities related to decorating and planting trees on the streets, community integration took place." (CEOSS, Egypt)

Leaders hold power over the community, and with this they can greatly help or disturb the project implementation.

Connection Between Leaders and Youth

Community, religious and (local) government leaders show support to youth participants in different ways. Examples of support are mentorship sessions with youth bringing inspiration and offering visits and conversations to youth participants (JAC and SSYA, Kenya), and religious and traditional leaders' participation in the activities (PRICA, Cameroon; SSYA Kenya).

One example in Kenya shows a community elder directly engaging with youth in the form of offering land for farming activities. The youth group who got support from this community elder had also an effect on the wider community:

“(Youth group)’s efforts have had a significant positive impact on the local community. The availability of affordable agricultural products and poultry has improved food security and reduced costs for residents. The group’s activities have also fostered a sense of community pride and cooperation.” (AYT, Kenya)

In Cameroon, the engagement of local authorities showed that the project was relevant for the wider community (PRICA, Cameroon). Also in Pakistan, participants informed and mobilized the community in the general elections, which may have had a wider effect on the community (REEDS, Pakistan).

Use of and Access to Government Resources

Support from local government leaders is sought in different ways by Shared Futures staff and youth participants, by engaging with local policies or opportunities offered by (local) governments. In Cameroon, more participants got identity cards which gave them the possibility to participate in socio-economic activities. In Kenya, some Maskani youth have formalized their group to be able to apply for grant opportunities (SSYA, Kenya). In another example, one of AYT staff members facilitated a connection between government officials and one of the youth groups, so that they could access new resources (AYT Kenya). One of the participants from this group describes how this contact with the local government also lead to personal change:

“The fear that once held me back from visiting public offices and seeking help from organizations gradually faded, this was made possible by Africa Youth Trust. They linked us with resourceful networks, bridging the gap between us and the resources we needed. With Africa Youth Trust’s support, I became the point of contact for our group. I had the confidence to reach out to those in positions of authority, and soon I found myself building relationships with various public offices. Each successful interaction grew my confidence progressively which enabled me to lead our group toward new opportunities.” (AYT, Kenya)

In Pakistan, 281 students from minorities gained access to scholarship after REEDS staff members facilitated registration for them (REEDS, Pakistan). This also shows the effect of engaging with local governments, which goes further than access to resources in Pakistan. There, collaboration between participants and local governments not only led to access to grants for Christian minorities, but also to the implementation of safety measures (REEDS, Pakistan). Especially in the context of Pakistan, collaboration with both police and religious leaders emphasizes protection of minority rights as a shared priority, and grows confidence of minorities towards security

agencies (CSSP and REEDS, Pakistan). The following example shows the relevance of the involvement of religious leaders and the police:

“A dispute arose (...) between (...) a Christian resident and his Muslim neighbors regarding the height of his boundary walls. The Muslim neighbors were concerned that the low walls compromised their privacy, leading to tensions that escalated from verbal exchanges to physical altercations. Members of both communities took sides, threatening the neighborhood’s peace and harmony. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, Pastor (...) intervened and brought the matter to the Meesaq Center⁵ in (...). (...) Through open discussion, both sides acknowledged the importance of community harmony over personal grievances. A mutually agreeable solution was reached, and both parties committed to fostering respect and goodwill. The resolution not only diffused immediate tensions but also set a positive precedent for peaceful conflict resolution. This case highlights the power of interfaith mediation in promoting social cohesion and demonstrates how constructive dialogue can resolve conflicts, ensuring a more inclusive and harmonious society for all.” (REEDS, Pakistan)

In Kenya, data shows that participation of leaders from different religious backgrounds and leaders from different communities in meetings improves security in communities (AYT, Kenya). In both these contexts, we can thus see the interest of public duty bearers in creating peaceful societies and actively supporting such practices.

⁵ A Meesaq Center is a Punjab police initiative in Pakistan that supports minority communities by offering accessible police services to minorities and promoting interfaith harmony.

Sustainability and Environmental Practices

In three of the Shared Futures contexts, there is data about youth engaging in sustainable practices as a form of social cooperation. In Pakistan, Shared Futures staff (REEDS) describes the impact of tree planting activities: "Planting trees not only contributes to environmental conservation but also fosters a sense of responsibility towards our planet among students and communities." Furthermore, they comment about a tree planting effort that "this initiative highlighted the ongoing work in the region to strengthen unity among different faith communities and value of joint action for the greater good." Both of these quotes suggest that shared values such as responsibility and action for the greater good, which may be part of different faiths, might lead to more unity and cohesion.

Moreover, in Cameroon, the promotion of sustainable farming techniques reinforced the link between these practices and a cultural aspect of respect for nature. One of the SF Cameroon staff writes: "these changes were significant because the usual tensions and conflicts over natural resources at the start of each rainy season were not observed this year" (Cameroon, Prica), which might indicate that sustainable practices and social cohesion are linked. In Kenya, there is also an example of a youth participant who started a CBO, through which she advocated for peaceful coexistence and climate change mitigation. She organized dialogue forums, interfaith meetings, and community clean-up drives, emphasizing the importance of unity and collaboration. Her initiatives brought together different youth groups, breaking down barriers and creating a sense of shared purpose among the youth. (JAC, Kenya)

Thus, all three of these initiatives can be argued to have unintended positive effects regarding sustainability and care for the environment. It would be interesting to explore more in depth the relation of sustainability to interfaith practices, peace and cohesion.

Do you think that sustainable or environmental practices lead to more social cohesion? Do you have more examples of interfaith cooperation and sustainability in your context?



Advocacy Pathway

The outcome that the third pathway works towards is that “through enriched narratives, the public has an increased exposure and understanding of the constructive power of interfaith socio-economic cooperation in creating just resilient, and peaceful coexistence.”

Different Forms of Advocacy

Going through the data, it becomes clear that advocacy includes a broad range of activities and is closely linked to the other pathways. The first trend is the academic side of advocacy. Here collaboration is sought with knowledge institutions to collectively share a message of peaceful collaboration. For example, in Pakistan REEDS took part in a national conference on social cohesion and resilience building. In Cameroon we see a similar collaboration with the local university where collaboration “mobilized multidisciplinary researchers in sociology, psychology and political science.” As a result “work has been presented in academic journals and at international conferences, helping to disseminate knowledge to a wide scientific and professional audience”⁶ (PRICA, Cameroon). This work with knowledge centers shows how practices in shared futures find a wider audience.

Apart from advocacy through academia, new narratives are also shared in different ways. In Kenya, (radio)podcast and shows are organized to offer a platform for participants to share their journeys and the benefits gained from the project. There were also plays to “promote public engagement with the local community and involve the community’s youth through activities/skits during magnet theatre outreaches” (Kenya, JAC). Using art to bring this message provides youth a place to show their talents and engages the wider community.

Linkages in Pathways

It is noteworthy in the data that this pathway is closely linked to the other pathways. The question arises when, for example, activities done in the community or public duty bearer pathways also link to advocacy. When a personal transformation makes a participant into an advocate for peace in their surroundings, this is a part of sharing stories of change. When a religious holiday is celebrated by a large number of diverse people, it helps the community to come together and has a likely effect on the wider public that is present. And when conversations with leaders lead to better understanding and support of interfaith socio-economic cooperation these leaders can become advocates for the new narrative. In this way, the advocacy pathway is where

⁶ Original : “Cette collaboration a mobilisé des chercheurs multidisciplinaires en sociologie, psychologie et sciences politiques. (...) Des travaux réguliers ont été présentés dans des journaux académiques et lors de colloques internationaux, favorisant la diffusion des connaissances à un large public scientifique et professionnel.” (PRICA, Cameroon)

the MSC stories and lived realities find a wider audience. These relations become visible in the data, but much is to be gained from more MSC data relating to the advocacy pathway in the future.

Gender in Shared Futures

Gender appears to play a significant role in the Shared Futures programs. In the first instance, the analyzed data makes it evident that women often face particular challenges in participating in Shared Futures programs. Women are often faced with various barriers which hinder their (full) participation. A woman from Egypt shares:

"I have finished school, but I don't work, and I don't go out because my father and brothers are very strict. In our household girls cannot go out. I was bored of staying at home and I used to argue with them a lot. One day, I met the project coordinator. She told me about the life skills training and convinced me to attend it. (...) It took me some time to convince them at home, but finally they agreed. (...) The life skills training was very useful. It changed my personality and increased my efficiency to become qualified to work as a trainer in the symposiums of one of the CBOs. I was able to convince them to work. At first, they screamed at me a lot and were strict. Gradually, I started going out. Now, thank God, I have a job to do at the symposiums. (...) Now, I really don't like staying at home at all. I love working very much. (CEOSS, Egypt)

The Shared Futures programs thus also offer alternatives for the flourishing of (young) women, which may have an effect on the wider community. A female participant in Pakistan stated that 'my business success not only transformed and change the thinking of my father but also changed my own life and encouraged other young women in my community to start their entrepreneurial journey.' (Pakistan, CSSP) Shared Futures appears to offer avenues for gender equality, particularly for women. However, gender also implicates men. In Kenya there is also an example of activities focused on men regarding gender equality.

"During the [various] sessions, (youth participant) learned about critical societal issues such as peaceful coexistence, community resilience, and youth mentorship. He quickly realized the unique struggles faced by the boy child in his community. While programs addressing women and girls were essential and often emphasized, (youth participant) saw a gap when it came to addressing the challenges boys faced—ranging from peer pressure and unemployment to susceptibility to crime and radicalization. He believed that if boys could be mentored and supported with equal dedication, they would not only stay away from negative influences but also become catalysts for positive change. Fuelled by this vision, he took a bold step and founded a youth-focused organization: Boy Child Empowerment and Environmental Solutions CBO." (Kenya, JAC)

Considering this story, how might Shared Futures also encourage men to have an attitude more conducive to the flourishing of women and themselves?

Challenges

When you work on change, challenges will come up. To analyze these challenges we categorized them based on the scale. Some challenges are individual, these are often challenges of a specific participant that they had to overcome. Other challenges relate to a bigger group of participants or are challenges that the project team faced in executing the work. Finally, there are challenges that are present in society and influence the people and the project in different ways. In this next part we will look at some of these challenges, both in their specific contexts and challenges that are faced across the different project locations.

Individual Challenges

Each individual has their own story and challenges, but trends are also visible between the stories of change. A major challenge is unemployment and poverty, which leads youth to engage with the program. At this point the people who surround the participants are often mentioned. One young man from Kenya explains that “the majority of my peers were engaging in criminal activities, and I feared being influenced by them always if I stayed close to them” (AYT, Kenya). Others also mention how parents, or the wider community, did not have faith they would be able to start a business. Often, they mention a specific reason why they could not change such as being the breadwinner at an early age, coming from a poor family or being a woman. These things then come together, like in the life of this Pakistani woman.

“After my father passed away, life became incredibly difficult and challenging. Supporting my family became a struggle, and I used to teach at a school but the salary wasn’t enough to meet our needs. In a society where girls face many restrictions and biases, I always dreamed of becoming independent and supporting my family on my own terms.” (CSSP, Pakistan)

Having her father pass away at a young age, in combination with being a woman in a society where women face restrictions, were challenges she had to overcome as an individual. Like this woman, all the participants have their own challenges that are unique to the person. At the same time these challenges are similar in the ways they prevent the individual to change. These challenges also show that the Shared Futures projects in all contexts work with participants in vulnerable situations, who have to overcome big challenges. For these young people the moment of change comes when someone comes into their life offering an alternative, and they decide they want something different.

Challenges at the Project Level

As Shared Futures partners, the aim is to help these individuals change and work towards a better future for the communities. But as an organization there are challenges as well. One of these challenges is that you can offer participants an

alternative, but it is up to the communities to change. As a staff member of PRICA writes:

“Certain cultural practices and norms in the region have led to reluctance toward the introduction of new techniques, especially in the areas of sustainable agriculture and modern economic practices.” (PRICA, Cameroon)⁷

This challenge is also seen in Kenya, where for example a youth group dropped out and needed to be replaced delaying the project (SSYA, Kenya), and some youth going back to their usual ways after the project (JAC, Kenya). These challenges can be discouraging, but also form opportunities to learn and move forward.

Another challenge that all partners face is that resources are limited, while there is a great need for interventions. The limitation of resources means that choices need to be made about priorities, which is difficult when one sees great need.

Challenges in Society

Finally, there are changes in society that bring difficulties as well. The global economy is changing, resulting in economic challenges such as high inflation in a number of countries. This brings challenges to the project budget, but also the participants who are trying to start a business. Economic challenges also cause other problems, as stated in the narrative report from Kenya:

“Increased inflation and economic challenges have led to significant job losses and a reduction of opportunities within the country. This has led to a direct increase in the crime rate. Some areas within the implementation have reported insecurity cases. ‘ (Kenya, narrative report)

This shows again the link between negative economic changes and insecurity, while the Shared Futures projects aims to bring security and peace by social-economic cooperation. However, these societal changes influence the impact that can be made.

This is also seen in the area of social cohesion and peace. A staff member of REEDS writes:

“The recent incident of blasphemy in Sargodha has significantly heightened tensions and feelings of insecurity, particularly among religious minorities like the Christian community. This kind of event often exacerbates existing fears and vulnerabilities within minority groups, making them feel unsafe in their own communities.” (REEDS, Pakistan)

⁷ Original : “Certaines pratiques et normes culturelles de la région ont suscité une réticence vis-à-vis des nouvelles techniques introduites, surtout en matière d’agriculture durable et de pratiques économiques modernes.” (PRICA, Cameroon)

This effect is also seen in Cameroon, where rumors of attacks in Nigeria brought a growing sense of insecurity. This type of insecurity is outside of the project but does have an influence in the ability to work on trust between different (religious) groups.

DIFFERENT CONTEXTS, DIFFERENT STRENGTHS

Pakistan

Advocacy

"Throughout the year, the SF team successfully conducted five sessions on Social Cohesion (...) to raise awareness among students, teachers, and faculty members about the importance of social cohesion, with a focus on fostering a peaceful society."



Agriculture

"By integrating traditional agricultural practices with new sustainable techniques, the project promotes local knowledge. This has strengthened communities' confidence in their own knowledge and know-how, while paving the way for cultural innovation."

Cameroon

Egypt

Citizenship

"She never went out nor dealt with any of her Muslim neighbors. After the citizenship training, she began attending and started to get to know people and learned how to deal with them."



Sports & creativity

"Through football, I was able to meet officers from SambaSports and they sensitized us on the importance of cohesion as young people. That was the turning point towards changing my behavior in shaping my life,"

Kenya

Conclusion

In this report, we have presented the analysis of the data from the four Shared Futures projects running in 2024. We have presented each pathway in a different section, although the pathways are connected.

We started with an analysis of the community pathway. In this pathway we see change on both a socio-economic and interfaith level. On both socio-economic change and the interfaith level we found many stories of change, and we can see a clear impact of the Shared Futures projects. It is clear from the data that socio-economic and interfaith change are interrelated, sometimes side by side and other times they can reinforce each other.

On the public duty bearers pathway, the data shows how leaders in the different contexts interact with the program, further contributing to change in socio-economic and interfaith domains. This support from leaders is of vital importance to the program.

The advocacy pathway links closely with the other pathways. Taking stories of change, activities and personal change to a wider audience. Through advocacy, the hope is that this will bring change to the wider context to spread the message of peace further.

In closing, we hope that through this rapport different contexts learn from each other and inspire each other. Even though all projects are part of the Shared Futures program, all of the contexts have their strengths, different activities, and ways of bringing youth together. For the future, we are excited about a new Shared Futures project in Ghana that has started in 2025, a Shared Futures project in the Netherlands that will start in the second half of 2025 and finally a Shared Futures project in Bangladesh starting in 2026. We look forward to sharing the future of this program with even more partners!