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# Mainstreaming youth values to counter the extremist narrative

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## Pre-design study for a TV program - 2008

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A Project implemented by



With the support of



British  
High Commission  
Dhaka

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## BACKGROUND

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With technical inputs and financial support from the British High Commission, MRDI produced and aired the first phase of *Amar Bangladesh* in 2007. *Amar Bangladesh* (literal translation is My Bangladesh) is a youth-centered TV discussion programme that aimed to create a platform for dialogue about mainstream values for the mass audience.

Among general population in Bangladesh, issues relating to radicalization is still not a dominant topic of discussion and somewhat sensitive. *Amar Bangladesh* TV programme offered the younger people a chance to explore and express opinions about kind of Bangladesh they want to see in future. It can be expected that this exchange of views have deconstructed the mindset of mainstream youth and rejected extremist prejudices.

Research shows that Bangladeshi society is increasingly becoming polarized by education, religious identity, economic condition and residential (rural/urban) settings. In order to reduce the gap, it is therefore important that the commonalities of many mainstream values are brought into the light and become the public discourse.

Considering the above and the recommendations of the evaluation made in the first phase of the programme, *Amar Bangladesh* plans to bring changes in some of the key features such as duration, target audience and presentation format. More attention and focus will be given to the audience -- young participants in this case - and wider participation (both at the studio and outside) will be ensured.

## PROJECT PURPOSE

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To provide a well designed mass media platform that will generate dialogues on mainstream values in an entertaining way in order to contribute to developing a Bangladesh that counters the extremist narrative.

## THE ACTION

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Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) with the support of British High Commission has developed a research plan to ensure *Amar Bangladesh* is an evidence-based programme that reflects sentiments and views of present Bangladeshi youth. In more specific terms the research aimed at

- Identifying the attitude of the young people towards the country, its people and systems.
- Identifying issues for discussion in the TV programme *Amar Bangladesh*.
- Collecting views of the young people on design and structure of the TV programme.

With this purpose in mind a research was carried out that included the following two methodologies:

1. Rapid Assessment Survey (RAS)
2. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

#### RAPID ASSESSMENT SURVEY:

A Rapid Assessment Survey (RAS) was conducted using a set of questionnaire. A total of 211 young people of different social segments from different parts of the country were interviewed in the process of the survey. Among them 133 were males while 78 were females. (Questionnaire annexed)

Respondents between the age ranges of 16-25 years were randomly selected from students of different levels and disciplines, young employees, indigenous communities and marginalized / socially excluded youth.

The young people who took part in the survey were mostly **hopeful** about future of Bangladesh. The hopes were translated into various ideas to achieve the *desired state* of the country. Forty two percent of the total youth under Rapid Assessment Survey were optimistic about the future of Bangladesh. Those confused (32%) in fact pointed mostly to the **poor leadership** that runs Bangladesh. They deemed, lacking benevolent leaders, Bangladesh might never be able to reach a prosperous state -- *sonar Bangla*. A gross understanding of various approaches categorized as positive, negative, confused and self-oriented are presented below in table-1.

**Table 1: Approaches towards Bangladesh**

Positive	42%
Negative	12%
Confused	32%
Self-oriented	13%
No response	1%

Bangladesh - future of it, leadership, economy, entertainment (sports, culture, movies, fashion), subjects of study, social commitment (gender, poverty, equality) - are all topics of discussion among young people's everyday life. An overwhelming

number (189 out of 211) confirmed taking part in such discussion with peers, family members and others.

Please find below the types of topics and corresponding amount of time (roughly) spent on each topic presented in percentages in table 2. The similar findings are presented in a pie chart following the table (figure 2a).

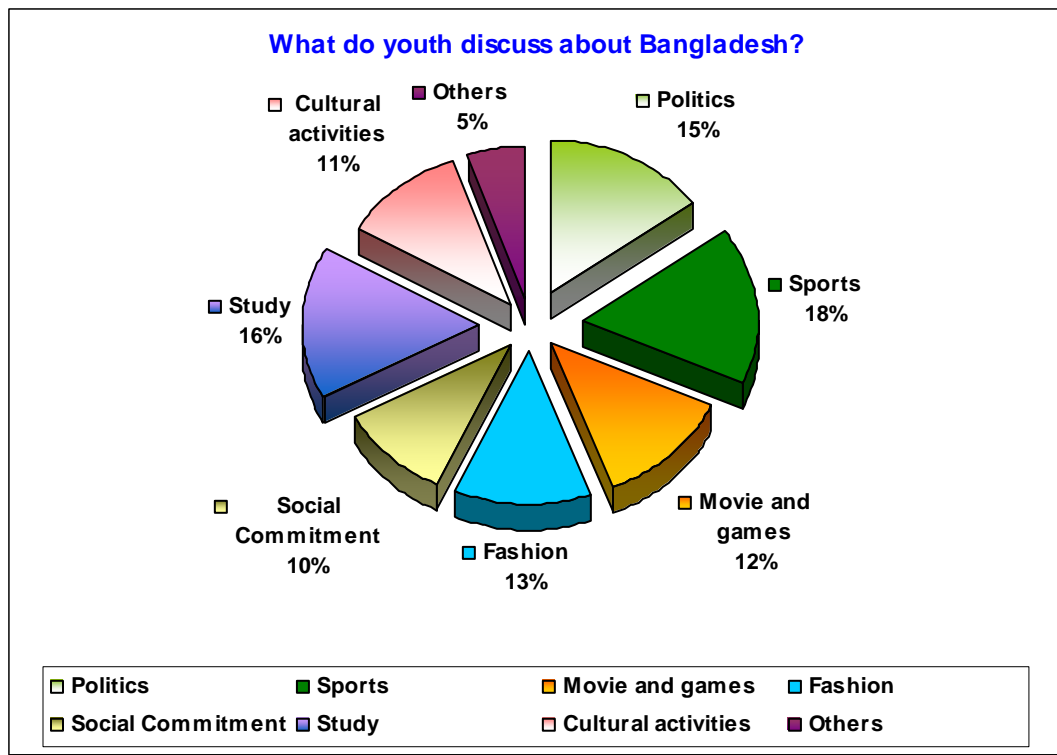
**Table 2: Topics of discussion among youth by importance**

	1	2	3	4	5	Total score	%
Politics	54	57	46	21	9	687	15%
Sports	96	39	34	13	4	768	18%
Movie and games	44	43	37	21	21	566	12%
Fashion	43	45	41	24	22	588	13%
Social Commitment	27	33	39	33	29	479	10%
Study	84	53	21	15	14	739	16%
Cultural activities	23	41	49	33	25	517	11%
Others	8	19	20	15	36	242	5%

**1 represents Most Important**

**Method of score calculation:** A certain method was followed in calculating score for measuring importance of topics of discussion given by the respondents of the survey. Column 1 representing highest importance carried the score value of 5. Number of respondents in this column has been multiplied by 5 to find its score value. Figures of the subsequent columns 2, 3, 4 and 5 have been multiplied by 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Results of all the five columns have been added to find the total score of one topic. Similar method was followed to find total score of other rows of the table. Percentage of importance was calculated by comparing total score of one row to the grand total of all the rows. Similar method was followed in calculating score value and percentage of tables 4, 7, 9 and 10 and corresponding figures 2, 3, 8 and 12 of this report.

Figure 1: Topics of Discussion among youth by importance



**Analysis of findings:** It appears from the table and the chart that sports is the most important topic of discussion among the young people closely followed by study and politics. This suggests that politics is one of the important topics for discussion among the young people. But if we go for a deeper analysis by clustering the topics of similar nature we get a different picture. Keeping politics and social commitment in one cluster, the total percentage stands at 25. If cultural activities, fashion, movie and games are put into another cluster, the total percentage of response comes to 35. If sports is added to it, which is more or less similar in nature, the percentage is much higher. So it may be concluded that young people in general tend to discuss much more on entertainment and related topics than political and social issues.

## 2. Media and Youth

To answer the question whether or not young people are represented adequately in media, 148 young people reported negatively. The majority of youth reported that media does represent youth *sometimes* however they wished to see more substantial youth issues with a well thought objective to address the issues are presented in media.

Please find below (table 3) the presentation of perceived frequency of media coverage on youth issues, as reported by youth who took part in RAS.

**Table 3:** perceived frequency of youth-related issues addressed in Media

Always	3%
Very often	13%
Sometimes	46%
Not enough	37%
Never	1%

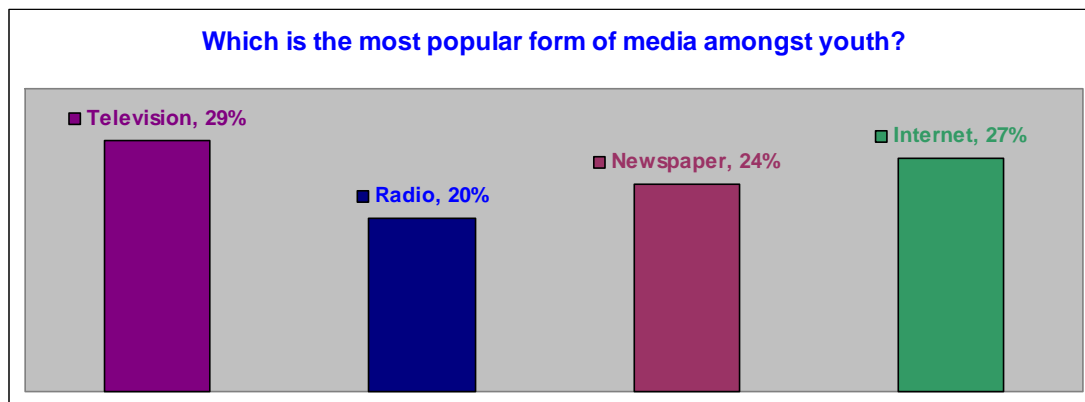
Following the report on perceived **frequency** of media coverage on youth issues, young people surveyed reported the most popular form of media. Twenty nine percent of the total youth reported to enjoy various **television channels**. Browsing **internet** appeared as the second most popular media (considered as media by youth) item. Table 4 presents the total results by categories (television, radio, newspaper and internet) and reported popularity by youth. A bar chart of the same results follows.

**Table 4:** Most popular media, as perceived by youth

	1	2	3	4	Total score	%
Television	125	57	14	12	711	29%
Radio	19	61	82	42	465	20%
Newspaper	58	69	45	35	563	24%
Internet	109	35	34	26	635	27%

1 represents Most Important/popular

**Figure 2:** Most popular media, as perceived by youth



Highest percentage of young people taking part in the survey reported only 10-20% of the total content of youth-issues presented in media are educational while 30-50% are informative in nature. The table 5 below presents expressed views of information against education by percentage of young people reported.

**Table 5:** Percentage of information against education presented in media

Percentage of media coverage	10%-20%	30%-50%	60%-80%	90%
a. Information	18%	46%	31%	5%
b. Educational	39%	34%	23%	4%

In a more elaborate discussion on **influence of media**, especially satellite channels, on minds of young people and therefore forming their opinions, young people overwhelmingly (151 among 211) responded positively. Interestingly though, they tended to be divided between being very confirmed when asked whether or not open flow of information helped young people to acquire the **skills of independent choice**. While 98 young people believed it was helpful, 93 remained tentative about it.

### 3. Culture and Youth:

In response to the **determining or influencing factors in culture** those set the trend amongst the youth, highest 39% responded in favour of movies produced by Indian film industries. Cultural programmes produced locally ranked second while western media as the third.

**Table 6:** Culturally determining factors by percentage of youth

Western Media	28%
Indian Movies	39%
Local media and culture	27%
Fashion House	5%
No Response	1%

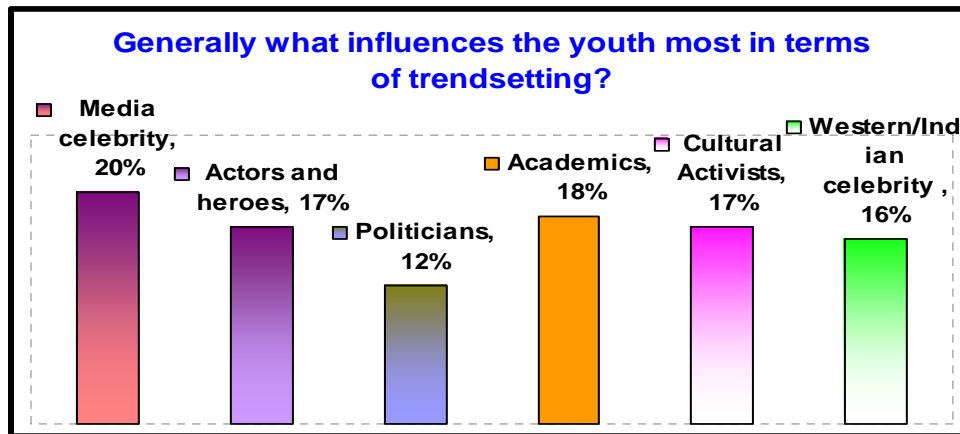


Young people reported on various general factors that help to set trends. According to 20% of all young people surveyed, most important factor in setting trend is **media celebrity**. Academics were ranked as second while actors and cultural activists were placed as third. Further details on this issue are presented in the table (7) below followed by a bar-chart (fig 7a).

**Table 7: Influencing factors in setting trend (1 represents most important)**

	1	2	3	4	5	Total score	%
Media celebrity	79	48	53	12	14	784	20%
Actors and heroes	54	59	35	27	31	696	17%
Politicians	15	28	44	37	75	468	12%
Academics	69	38	40	31	24	703	18%
Cultural Activists	37	69	49	36	12	692	17%
Western/Indian celebrity	46	54	39	36	21	656	16%

**Figure 3: Influencing factors in setting trend (1 represents most important)**

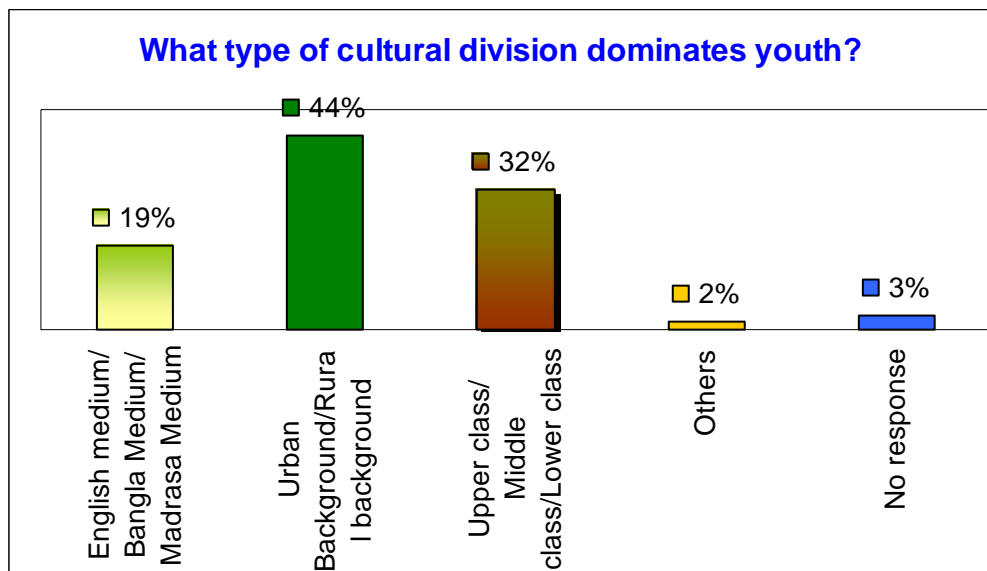


Majority of the young people reported on cultural divisions that existed in the country mostly between those lived in urban and rural areas. Some attributed other factors such as socio-economic class and types of education system for such differences. Table 8 and figure 8a present details of findings on various types contributing in cultural differences.

**Table 8:** Types of dominating cultural divisions

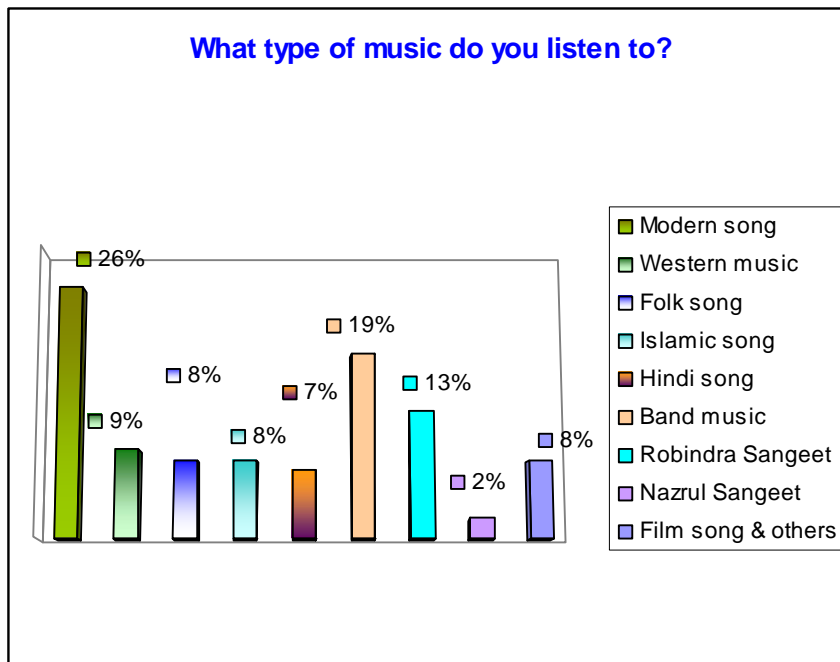
English Medium/ Bengali Medium/ Madrasa medium	19%
Urban Background/ Rural background	44%
Upper class/ Middle Class/ Lower Class	32%
Others	2%
No response	3%

**Figure 4:** Types of dominating cultural divisions



Since music plays as an important factor in determining one’s cultural heritage and choices, young people were inquired about their choice of music. Most young people expressed any modern music (anything recent as oppose to traditional) as their first choice followed by band and music of Tagore, as presented in figure 9.

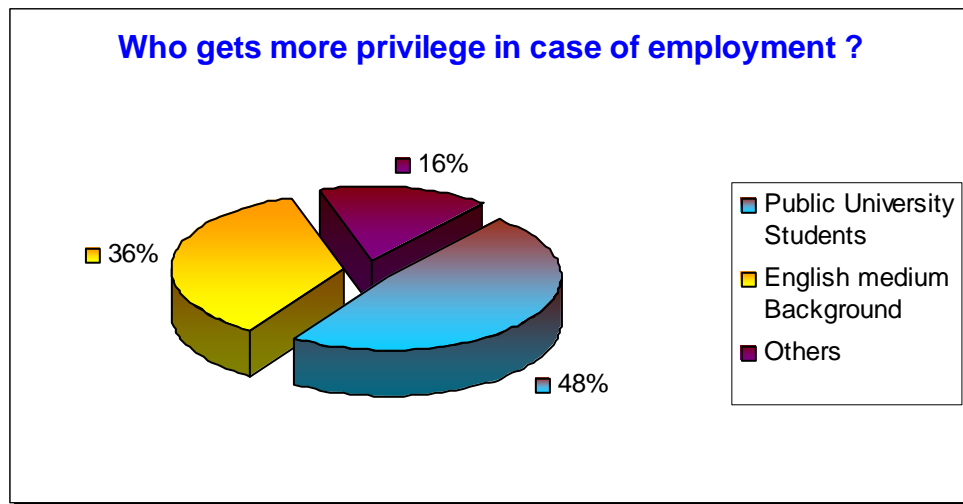
Figure 5: Types of music young people listen to (each respondent mentioned two)



#### 4. Employment, Education and Youth:

Employment and education were two most important topics young people discussed during FGDs. In Rapid Assessment Survey, 48% of the total young people took part in the study reported a positive connection between public universities and better employment opportunities. Figure 10 shows answers shared by the youth participants. As a result of this and other factors (such as family connections) overwhelming majority of young people (200 out of 211) pointed to the fact that **discrimination** of various kinds exist in the **workforce** in Bangladesh. Having said that, young people reported **unemployment** (often attributes to lack of preferred topics of study) as one of the problems youth face today.

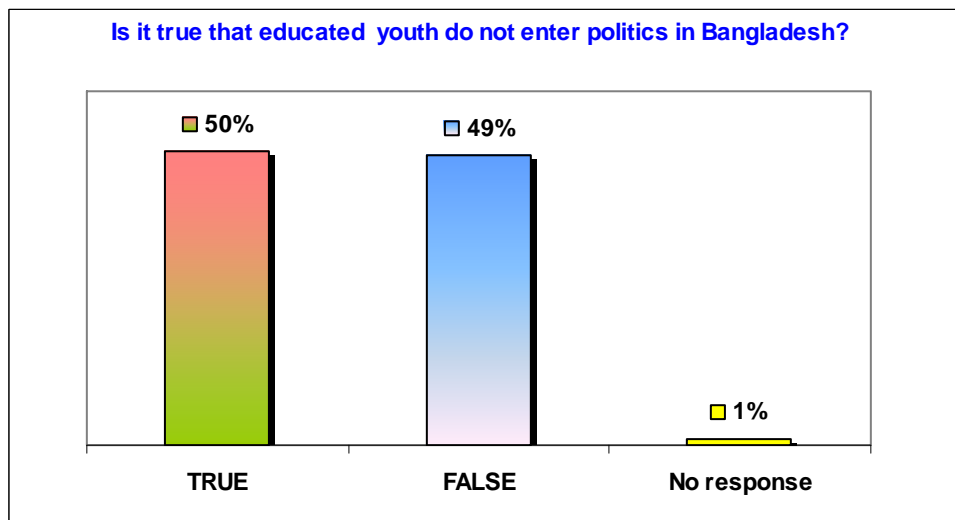
Figure 6: Educational background that opens more opportunities of employment



5. Extremism, Politics and Youth:

Young people were equally divided while responding to the question whether or not youth with educational background took part in politics (see figure - 7).

Figure 7: Educated youth take part in politics or not



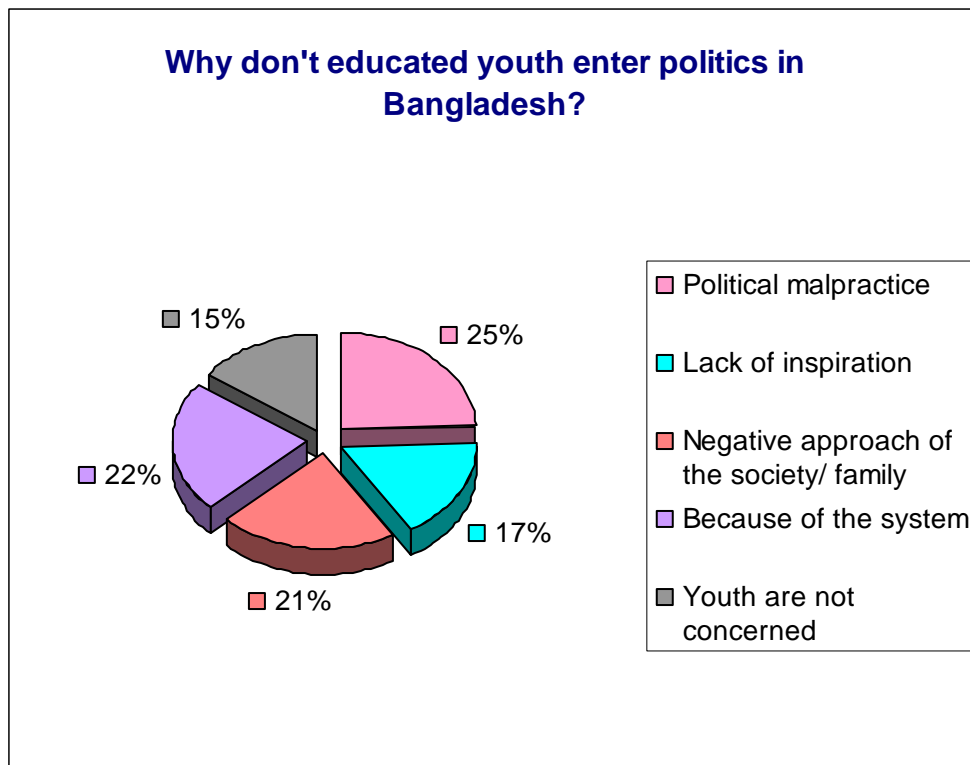
This question was further probed with those answered negatively to understand the underlying reasons behind some young people not being interested in politics. Political malpractice appeared as one of the most stated reasons followed by perceived negative views that society hold for those in politics and the present political culture. The other reasons, as mentioned by the young people surveyed are presented below

(table 9) according to importance. Same findings could be found in a pie chart, as followed (figure 8)

**Table 9:** Reasons of disinterest in politics (1 represents most)

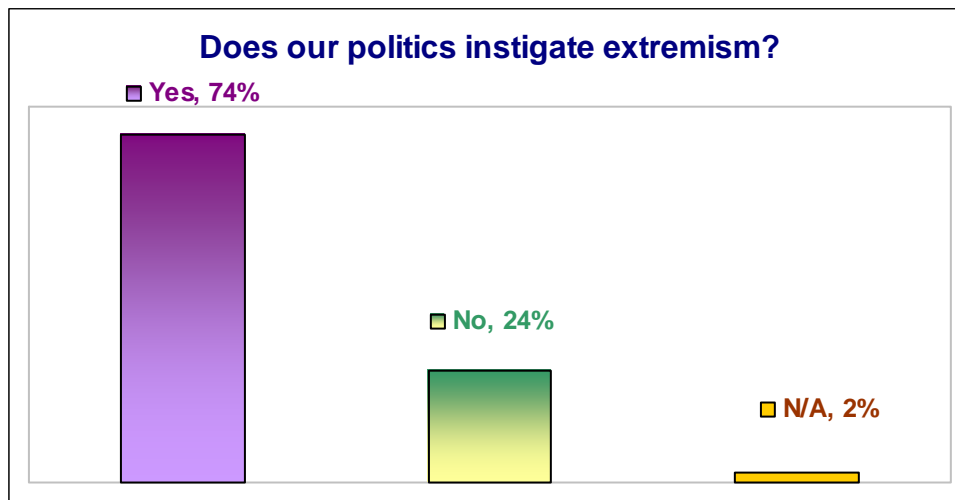
Scale	1	2	3	4	5	Total score	%
Political malpractice	63	21	8	4	2	433	25%
Lack of inspiration	16	25	21	22	12	299	17%
Negative approach of the society/ family	39	25	22	7	4	379	21%
Because of the system	46	27	14	6	4	396	22%
Youth are not concerned	15	16	20	19	28	265	15%

**Figure 8:** Reasons of disinterest in politics



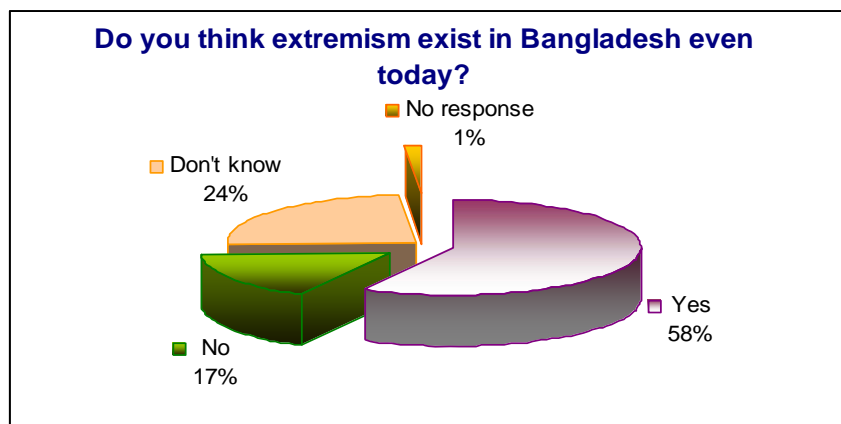
While describing various reasons of not joining political leadership, young people strongly viewed the idea of connection between politics and extremism. 74% of the total youth were fully convinced that politics instigate extremism (see figure 9).

Figure 9: Percentage of young people believed politics instigate extremism or not



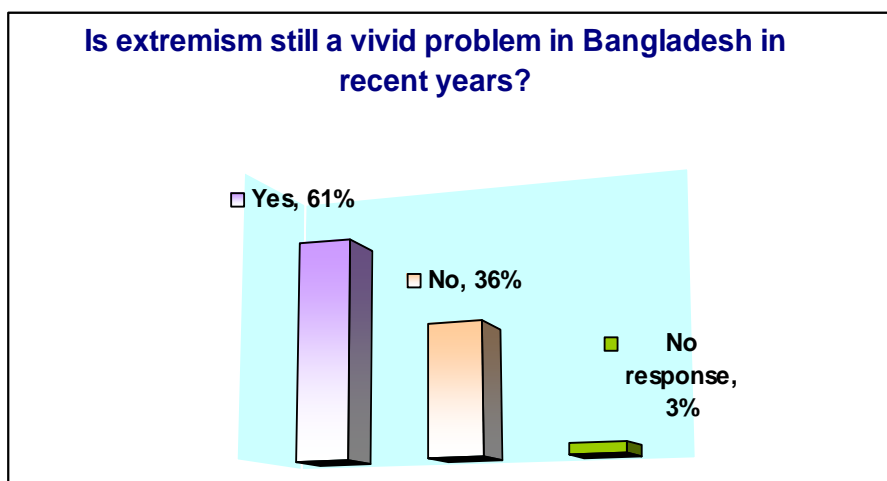
Following which, maximum young people reported existence of extremism in Bangladesh, while only 17% thought otherwise (see figure 10).

Figure 10: Percentage of young people believed extremism exists in Bangladesh today or not



With various incidents of Islamic extremism took place in Bangladesh in last 10 years, 61% of all young people took part in the study, agreed that it is still a vivid problem in Bangladesh in recent years (see figure 11).

Figure 11: Percentage of young people on their views about extremism as a problem.

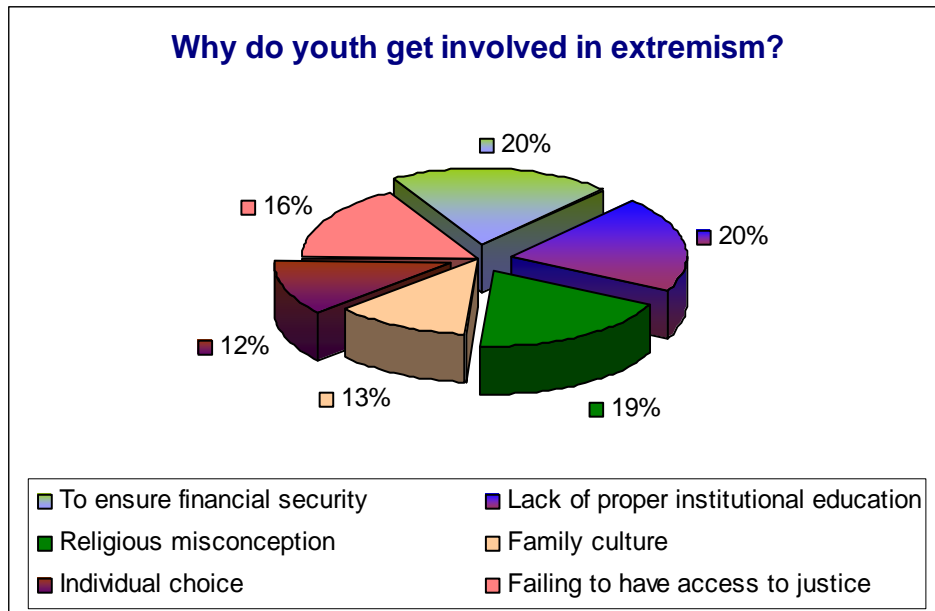


Probing further, it became clearer that there were motivating reasons (see table 16 and figure 16a) for people to get involved in such extremism. Those took part in the study believed that incidents of extremism were planned outside Bangladesh and made successful with financial support; taking advantage of poor interpretation of religion (Islam in this case) and “improper” institutional education. It was interesting to note that 16% of the total youth participants reported failure in creating access to justice might force poorer section of the population to join extremism as a solace.

Table 10: Reasons behind youth getting involved in extremism (1 represents most important)

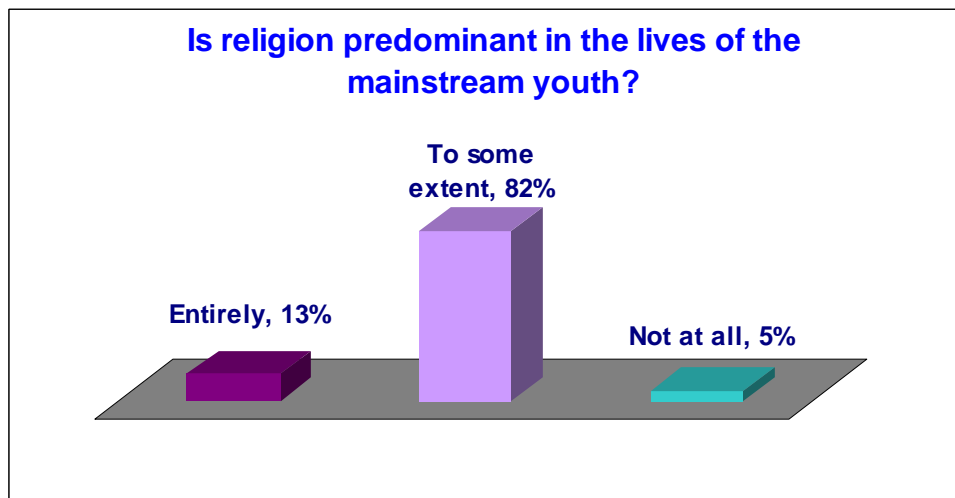
	1	2	3	4	5	Total score	%
To ensure financial security	103	44	33	12	12	828	20%
Lack of proper institutional education	75	74	39	14	5	821	20%
Religious misconception	81	44	33	28	15	751	19%
Family culture	18	36	43	51	50	515	13%
Individual choice	19	24	35	57	63	473	12%
Failing to have access to justice	48	56	39	23	31	658	16%

Figure 12: Reasons behind youth getting involved in extremism



It was not surprising to find that among majority mainstream young people (82%) religion is found only somewhat dominant in their daily lives (see figure 13 below).

Figure 13: Influence of religion in daily life



#### 6. Society, Family and Youth:

Youth took part in the study expressed their doubts about strong social commitment held by Bangladeshis. With a sound understanding of Bangladeshi society and cultural



heritage, half of the young people reported that religious issues, due to their misinterpretation, conflict social harmony.

Table 11: Religious issues

Conflict harmony	50%
Foster harmony	45%
No response	5%

Young people took part in the study were extremely positive while discussing about relationships with family. Majority reported to have a good understanding with their parents who immensely influence their lives (see pie charts below).

Figure 14: Understanding with parents

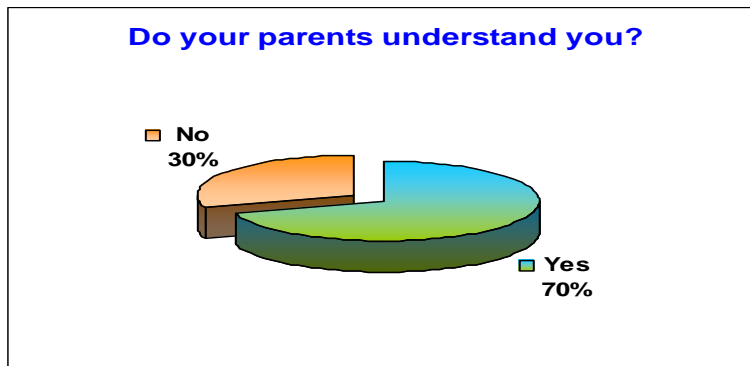
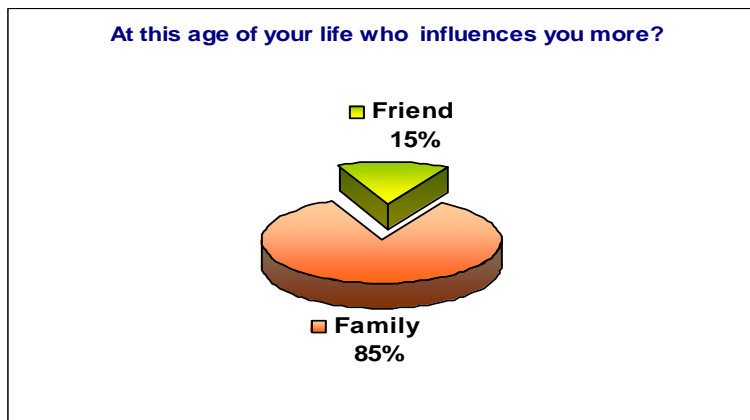
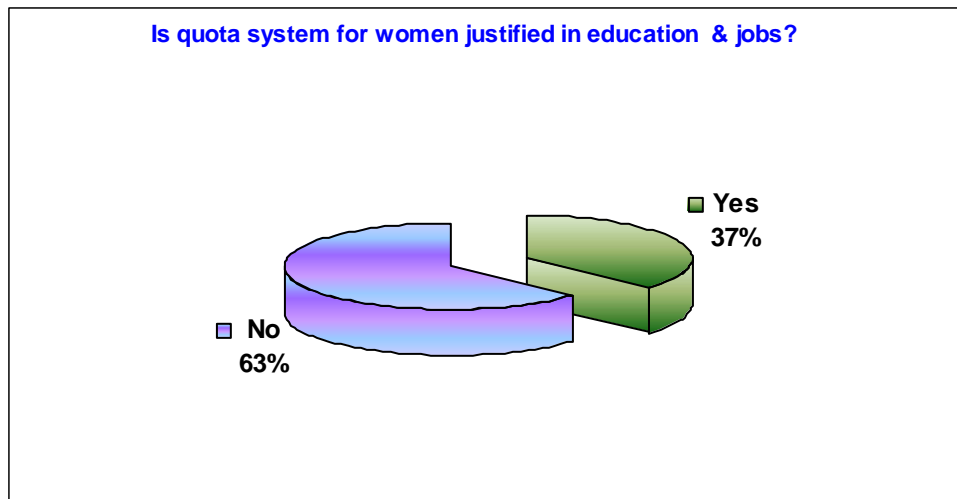


Figure 15: Influence of family and friends



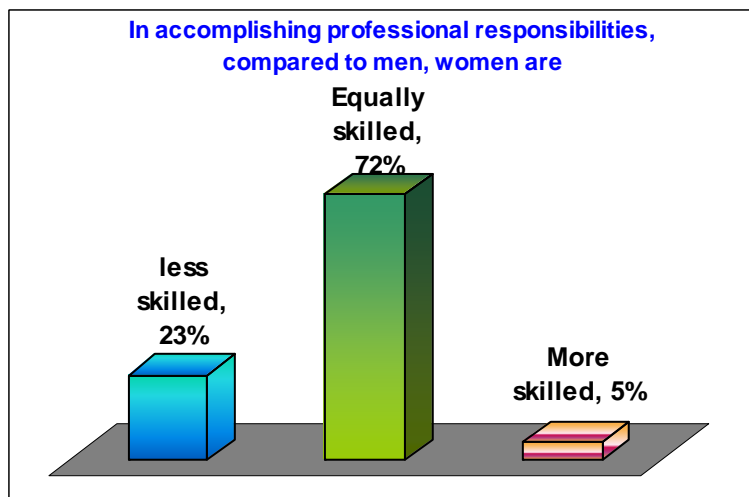
Gender Issues emerged as one of the topics during FGDs and included later in the questionnaire to be discussed. Young people (little over 60%) reported that women in Bangladesh did not require to be specially treated (see pie chart below).

Figure 16: Quota system



As such, it was not surprising to find that a good chunk of young people (72%) believed that in professional arenas young women and men were equally skilled.

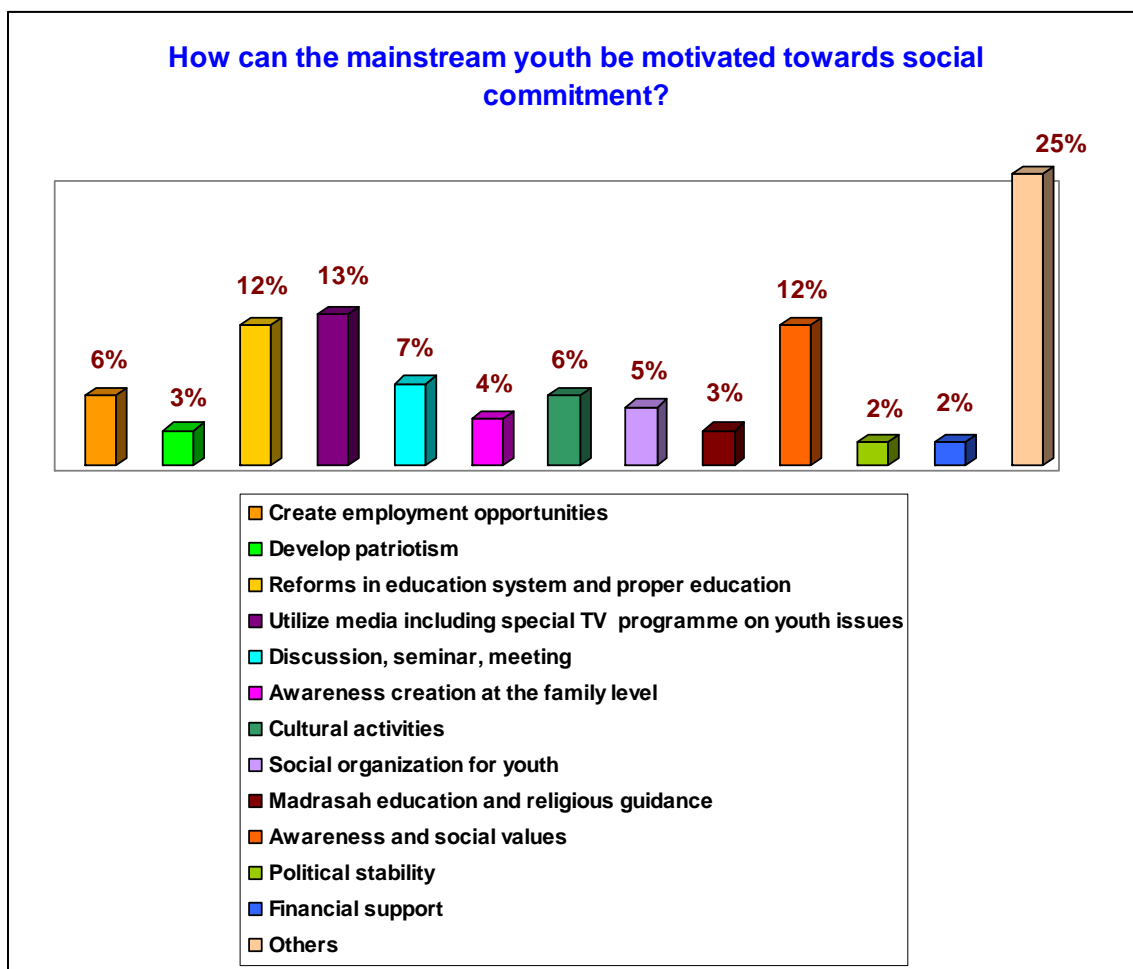
Figure 17: Skill of men and women



Young people provided various recommendations to increase the social commitment among Bangladeshi youth. Majority of the youth in the study indicated in bringing in

good changes in the education system along with creating more employment opportunities in order to have a *Sonar Bangla*. However, with this, a social and cultural movement was deemed important. Young people suggested launching a multi-pronged communication campaign (counseling, peer interaction, proper guidance, team work, sports, and dissemination of the accurate history of liberation war) that would trigger a sense of responsibility and prevent youth from addiction and other ill-doings (as presented in figure 18).

Figure 18: Motivating young people for social commitment



### Diaspora Community and Youth in Bangladesh

In response to the question regarding diaspora community, young people were found confused about the term “diaspora”. In many cases confusion arose due to lacking

proper understanding of the word diaspora (used as diaspora throughout the study, lacking a good literal translation in bangla). However, the concept diaspora population was very clear to them, once explained.

Young people reported in favour of cultural exchange and various ways of communication when asked how to develop common understanding and bondage (see figure 19).

Figure 19: Understanding between Diaspora and mainstream youth

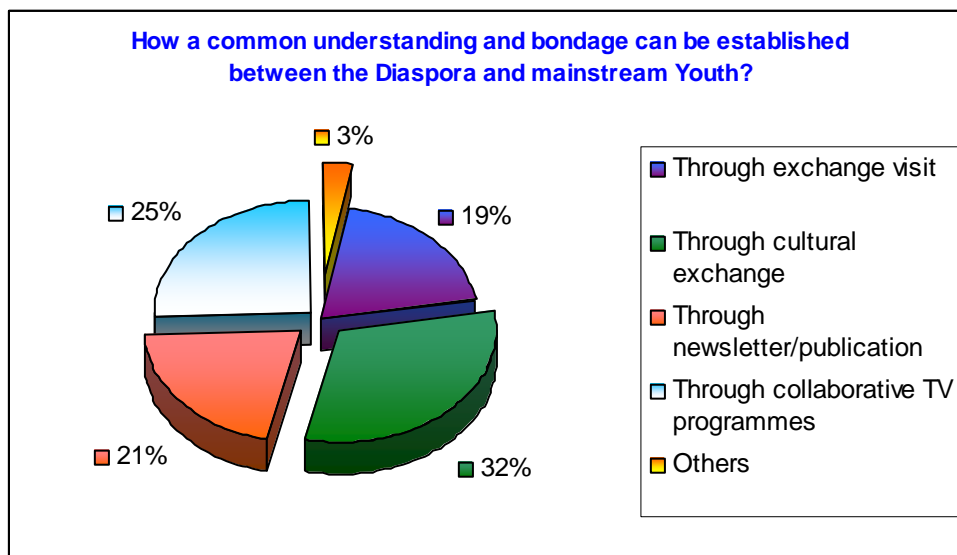


Figure 17: Percentage of young people reporting on ways to develop relationships with Diaspora communities

## FINDINGS OF RAS

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The following major findings surfaced from the Rapid Assessment Survey that was conducted before designing the youth TV discussion show Amar Bangladesh. These, added to the views of the participants of FGD sessions helped in identifying the issues for discussion and designing the structure of the programme.

1. Despite many negative factors that hinder the progress of Bangladesh, a large portion of young people are optimistic about the future of the country.
2. Confusion about future possibilities of Bangladesh prevails at large among young generation mainly due to poor leadership and lack of commitment of the leaders.
3. Young people in general tend to discuss much more on entertainment and related topics than political and social issues.
4. While television is the most popular media for information and entertainment, internet browsing has been found relatively very popular among the young people.
5. Indian movies have a great cultural influence on our youth. Influence of local media is comparatively low.
6. Media celebrity, actors and cultural activists influence young people most in setting their trend of behaviour. Academics have also some influence, whereas politicians have the least influence on the behaviour of youngsters.
7. Urban - rural setting is the most vital reason for cultural division among youth. Economic condition is also an important reason.
8. Political malpractice, political system and negative attitude of society and family towards politics are the important factors responsible for not getting involved in politics by educated youth.
9. A vast majority of our youth think that politics in Bangladesh instigate extremism.
10. Majority of young people think that in spite of execution of capital punishment of some vital extremist leaders, extremism still exists in Bangladesh. A certain portion of the youth are not aware of it.
11. Ensuring financial security, lack of proper institutional education and religious misconception are major reasons for getting a segment of young people involved in extremist activities. Failing to have access to justice has been identified as another important reason.
12. Huge majority of young people opined to have a good understanding with their parents who immensely influence their lives.
13. A vast majority termed women as equally skilled with men in performing professional works. Some respondents however consider women as less skilled and very few of them think women are more skilled.
14. Regarding special quota for women in jobs and education, majority of the participating youth opposed the system arguing that equal opportunities will

- ensure equal rights. Some of them however were in favour of this positive discrimination.
15. Respondents made various recommendations for creating social commitment among young people. These included creating more job opportunities, awareness creation, cultural activities, increasing the spirit of liberation war, political stability, social organization for youth and others.
  16. Production of collaborative TV programmes, cultural exchange, publication of newsletter and exchange visits were suggested as measures for establishing common understanding between Diaspora and mainstream Bangladeshi youth.

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

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The other methodology applied for this research was conducting Focus Group Discussion involving young people of different social segments. A total of 15 FGD sessions were organized at different locations of the country.

### Purpose of FGD

The FGD aimed at:

- Understanding the perception and mindset of young people on democracy, development, secularism, extremism and related issues.
- Knowing the concept of the young people about format of the TV programme.
- Identifying specific issues for discussion over the programme.
- Identifying some potential participants of the indoor and outdoor portions of the show.
- Forming local “Amar Bangladesh” youth groups.

### Participants

Participants taking part in the FGD sessions were between the age range of 15 and 25 years. They represented a good mix of geographical locations and social background to ensure national representation of youth. Each FGD session included around twelve participants of a particular category for e.g. working, public universities etc, private universities, Madrasa schools, English medium schools, ethnic communities, and those currently out of school. While FGDs maintained youth of one particular category a five were arranged with assorted youth of various backgrounds. Keeping a gender balance was a priority, however, not always possible to maintain at the sessions.

A team of three members conducted the FGD sessions. Audio recorders were used along with written notes. A set of semi-structured questionnaires and discussion points were used to conduct the sessions. The participants were encouraged and prompted time to time to express their opinion freely.

### Number of sessions and location

A total of 15 FGD sessions were organized in Dhaka and 9 other districts (Bogra, Khulna, Barisal, Narsinghdi, Tangail, Chittagong, Rangamati, Moulvi Bazar and Sylhet) in Bangladesh. Locations and category of participants are mentioned in the following table.

FGD location	Category of participants	Number of sessions
Dhaka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public university students</li><li>• Private university students</li><li>• English medium students</li></ul>	5

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young executives</li> <li>• Youth who have the experience of substance abuse</li> </ul>	
Five divisions outside Dhaka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One mixed youth group in each division</li> </ul>	5
Rangamati, Moulvibazar and Tangail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One group of ethnic youth in each location</li> </ul>	3
Bogra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alia Madrasa students</li> </ul>	1
Narsingdi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kowmi Madrasa students</li> </ul>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 sessions</b>	

### FGD profile (Annexed)

FGD: guiding questions/discussion points (Annexed)

### Session plan

The sessions were conducted in a way which creates a congenial environment for the participants to discuss freely on the issues. Approximate breakdown of time allocation was as follows:

Self introduction	10 minutes
Introduction / purpose of the session	10 minutes
Discussion / interaction / Q&A	30-40 minutes
Recapitulation / conclusion	10 minutes
<b>Total duration of the session</b>	<b>60-70 minutes</b>

### Major Findings of FGD:

The FGD sessions aimed at understanding the attitudes and mindset of young people regarding media and coverage of youth issues in the media namely newspaper, television channels, radio; role of media in awareness building - political, social and rights awareness; benefits and harms of open flow of information including satellite channels; cultural difference among youth segments - urban/rural, mainstream/madrasa students, well off/disadvantaged youth; diaspora community (definition of diaspora) and their role in Bangladesh, present change-agents/trend settlers for youth in Bangladesh, role of diaspora in upholding country's image; perception about democracy, link between democracy and economic growth (employment, business, and foreign investment) and social elements (equity, rights and equal opportunities); reality of extremism in the country, reasons of involvement of youth in extremist activities, ways to combat extremism; impact of extremist activities on democracy; role of youth in maintaining democracy, social harmony and peace; connection of secular views with democratic values; attitudes of youth towards politics; women's role and relation of these issues with Islamic values and thoughts; role of youth in community development and perception of future Bangladesh.



## **FINDINGS:**

Most FGD sessions had vibrant debates and discussion with participants that could be characterized as enthusiastic and frank. Youth attending FGDs even raised questions to one another about topics of interest. Following the topic guide the findings are presented below highlighting the dominant views, opinions and ideas.

### **Youth Issues and Media**

Youth and media in Bangladesh is the first topic young people discussed in the FGD sessions. Young people reported that some good coverage of issues by private satellite channels and print media in Bangladesh including academic studies, job opportunities, anti-drug campaign and teenage reproductive health are mostly published periodically in newspapers. Some of the enjoyable programmes (enter-educate) for young people in the television are debate competitions, quiz contests, anti-drug and anti-smoking campaigns and other cultural formats. For last 5 years, private radio stations (FM) are emerging. These FM channels are recently attracting a good portion of young people by airing Bangla fusion music. Presence of young people in media has much increased in last few years. Young people are dominant in radio channels being recruited as RJs. Young people added internet as one of the learning tools while discussing about media.

Young people of private universities reported, however, that youth issues were present in a sporadic manner without a well-thought plan to address major youth issues in the country. At the same time, quality of the content for youth issues was not ensured in spite of the fact that a number of private channels currently operating. Youth issues are more discussed in the televisions than any other media channels in Bangladesh. Young people commented that radio could play a vital role in undertaking various programs for the young people. It was also reported during FGDs that very little attention is given to youth issues in the national and local newspapers and other print media. Young people felt that discussion on employment opportunities, which is most important topic to them, is often not much highlighted in media. Madrasa students, however, disagreed to the quality programme issues. They reported that due to the competition created by numerous satellite channels few good programmes are being aired.

Young people believed that the role of media in awareness building is phenomenal, especially in the context of political, economic, health and social aspects. However, media often fails to include majority of the population such as those living in the rural areas. Role of public service in television and Radio is limited.

Young people stressed on the importance of open flow of information. And issues surrounding rights of young people should be highlighted in order to bring positive changes to the society.

### **Benefits and harms of satellite channels:**

Young people were divided in discussing benefits and harms of foreign channels. While they agreed that programmes presented in Bangladeshi satellite channels lack in

quality and creativity; fear that viewing of too many foreign channels may distort Bengali culture. Some reported that satellite channels need to be selectively viewed.

### **Cultural hegemony, trends and education**

Family bondage is identified as a significant factor in Bangladeshi culture. The myth among young people was that family values in Bangladesh were stronger than western countries. However, some young people took part in the FGD sessions highlighted on the fact that parents and guardians of western countries pay more attention to individual rights and views of their children. Young people could not stress more on the fact that parents, siblings and friends hold enormous power in forming and shaping their world views.

Culture and trend among young people are clearly divided according to the education system one belongs to. A big gap was observed in terms of perception, views and understanding regarding various topics between two streams of education namely public school system vs. private institutions. A visible gap was also noticed between rural and urban, Bengali Medium and English Medium and more prominently between Madrasa and mainstream education system.

Students from English Medium tend to take part little about local culture and heritage. Due to a different syllabus than what is available for mainstream education, these students appeared to be much different in their ideas and views. Students of private universities reported to restore true essence of studentship while public universities, being caught into political activities, and facing delays in completing the education.

Young people expressed their frustrations regarding quality of education, especially those studying in Bengali Medium. Young people proposed that all students should go through the same education system up to a certain level so that such big gap can be reduced.

Young people believed that they still hold strong nationalistic and cultural beliefs, as a symbol they pointed it to preferred clothing such as sarees, clay ornaments, punjabees and other traditional dresses on most occasions. However, in terms of preferred cultural performance strong influence of India and west was reported. One of the reasons for this was not having one role model to follow.

### **Democracy and politics - perspective of young voters**

Young people discussed in-depth about present model of governance in Bangladesh. In this connection, a clear tone of disappointment was visible when democracy as a system was discussed, as people's representatives failed to achieve what were promised. While democratic process to select a leader was followed in the country, though in most cases through violence and intolerance, young people expressed doubt in quality of leadership. To them, Bangladesh still lacks benevolence or charismatic leader. Some of the characteristics such as a sense of dignity, political experience and education on rights and power are deemed lacking in political leaders. The political leaders are often not reachable by general population. Young people drew the conclusion that government failed to achieve a positive change. Two major indicators

for this conclusion are curtailing right to information and wide practice of nepotism and favoritism for family members within political system. As a result, young generation lost interest in getting actively involved in politics.

In the face of no faith in political leadership, young people concluded that igniting a sense of patriotism was more important in the country than to work towards democracy. Students in private universities suggested for a country wide campaign for developing a good leadership with help of media and a separated judicial system could be introduced, in response to the above. Students of other institutes (madrassa, public) talked about decentralization of power.

### **Involvement of young people in extremism**

The topic extremism was not one of the issues came easily talking to young people. When raised during FGD sessions, young people, irrespective of their education background (private university or madrassa) connected it with religion - Islam in this regard. Those coming from mainstream education took part in the FGD sessions held students of *Kawami madrassa* responsible for extremist activities in the country. The education system at *kawami madrasas* is described as far from modern system. These young people believed that this particular madrassa system took advantage of economic dependency of students attending these institutes and influenced to be otherwise. Students of other Madrassa systems (*Alia*) resonated the same view, adding the fact that a section of political groups wrongly interpreted the holy *Quran* and thus involved young people for their own selfish interest. Various suggestions were made by young people to reduce the entry of young people in extremist activities including; revision of Madrassa system curriculum, proper interpretation of religious verses, appointment of faculty members in a structured manner, a regular monitoring system for overall activities; and deployment of a peer support group (discussion against extremism should be organized for the Madrassa students). Last but not least, though, influence of support from family and community was deemed most essential to fight extremist activities in the country.

### **Young people and Drug Abuse**

Though originally not planned, but this particular topic emerged as an important issues amidst the discussion young people engaged in during FGD sessions. Young people reported that drug use is alarmingly on the rise among their peers. Use of drugs cut across social class and centered on various factors such as peer pressure, frustration etc. They reported that in most cases first dose of drug is taken out of curiosity that unfortunately was only the beginning of a habit.

Young people viewed role of gatekeepers (parents, teachers and community members) as most important as they are they reside closest to the problem. However, the discussion pointed much to government for taking strict measures to stop the supply of drugs. As the same time, a country wide motivational campaign against drugs through rally, discussion meeting and film/video show could be arranged.

### **Gender and Disparity**

Social norms and expectations regarding roles of young men and women are not equal. Traditionally it is expected that men would carry over the family trait while women would join another family. Sending females to school is increasingly favoured though despite the concern that seclusion is breached. In many cases, especially in rural areas, providing education to daughters is strongly tied to an expectation of good marriage. As marriage is considered the pillar of a good society based on which the family expands, young women are strictly required to observe the boundaries of social expectations and roles. Young men and women took part in the FGD sessions raised their voice against disparities. However, young men are more reluctant to bring any change to this effect. A very good programme including all sectors should be introduced to address these issues.

#### **Role of Diaspora in upholding country's image:**

Young people found Bangladeshi diaspora community as a good ambassador for the country who can uphold the image of the country abroad. In doing so, diaspora community could also ensure that Bangladesh is actively included in the sectors such as business, tourism and others for their fair share of development agenda. It was suggested that regular exchange of views took place to help build a close relation between mainstream and diaspora youth. Suggested ideas were development of internet networking, formation of a forum of the diaspora Bangladeshi community, participation of select diaspora community members in Bangladesh media and other platforms, exchange of visits of the mainstream Bangladeshi and Diaspora young people.

#### **Young people's role in future development:**

Young people envisioned their role in various sectors as a change agent in developing the future of Bangladesh starting from policy making, fighting corruption to educating youth at risk (poorer) about the negative aspects of fundamentalism.

#### **How do you see future Bangladesh in the year 2015?**

One of the topics of FGD discussions also attempted to identify what young people would like to see in Bangladesh in the year 2015.

- Political, social and economic stability.
- Terrorism free Bangladesh
- A country of educated / enlightened young people.
- Corruption free Bangladesh
- Poverty free Bangladesh
- Healthy politics, strong economy, free from fundamentalism and educated Bangladesh
- Democratic country in the truest sense where young people will be involved.
- Effective implementation of democracy
- Want to see "Ideal father"
- Technologically advanced
- Self sufficient in food grains

- Good governance
- Computer based education system
- Free from religious extremism
- Healthy democratic atmosphere
- Scientific advancement
- Fundamentalism and extremism free
- Secular state
- Full of trees and less pollution
- Honest, intelligent, progressive and able leadership

### Themes

The discussions also attempted to identify what role young people could play in improving the image of the country and carrying forward its development and what would be the format of the program. Another purpose of the exercise was to find out some potential girls and boys who would participate in the TV program.

From the above **eight themes** have emerged as overriding areas of discussion among current youth in Bangladesh, find below:

1. **Democracy and politics - perspective of young voters**
2. **Family and friends**
3. **Culture, fashion and trends**
4. **Values of mainstream and Diaspora Bangladeshi youth**
5. **Unemployment problem and career of the youth**
6. **Youth and extremism**
7. **Gender disparity - youth outlook**
8. **Journey towards 2015**

### A brief account of the episodes of the show

1. **Family and friends:** Family and friend circle are two vital institutes which influence behaviour and lifestyle of young people. Family is the basic institute for learning manners and developing personality. Children find their ideal in their parents. Neighbours and friends also have a great influence on the young mind. These are not less important than the formal education. But do the family and friends always provide the right education to the young people? Who are the best friends? Who is an ideal father? How far democracy is practiced in family decision making process? Young people will discuss about their aspirations, doubts, confusions and expectations in this regard.
2. **Gender disparity - youth outlook:** Unequal treatment to boys and girls is clearly visible in the family and the society. Rights of girls are violated, potentials of girls are ignored. But a nation cannot progress ignoring half of its population. In academic and professional fields girls have proved that in no respect they are inferior to boys. Ignoring their potentials is wastage of human resources and depriving them of their due opportunities is violation of human rights. Young people are aware of these issues. They will express their views.

3. **Unemployment problem and career of the youth:** Unemployment and underemployment are two major problems faced by the young people of Bangladesh. Very often it happens to those who are employed that the job has least relevance with the field of education. Non-resident Bangladeshis (NRB) and Diaspora youth settled in UK and other countries can perhaps be helpful if an effective linkage is established between them and the mainstream Bangladeshi youth. How far the young people are free to choose their career? How many of them are happy about their probable future? What opportunities do they have? How and to what extent NRB/Diaspora can help them? Participants will discuss the issues.
4. **Democracy and politics - perspective of young voters:** National elections are ahead. A large number of young voters will apply their vote for the first time. This is a significant event in their life. But unfortunately these young voters are confused and maintain pessimistic views about the future of democracy in our country. They have hardly any confidence on the political leaders. Educated young people are least interested in politics. But it is also true that democracy cannot shape up as an institute without fair political practice and fairly elected people's government. So, what is the way out? Young participants of the show will express their views
5. **Values of mainstream and Diaspora Bangladeshi youth:** It is often told that degeneration of values is misguiding the young generation. Is it always true? What do the young people think? New values are replacing old values. How good or bad are these values? NRB/Diaspora youth are facing crisis in values at the family and the community levels. They are accepting new values, sometimes giving up their own. How can they overcome the crisis? What help or guidance do they need?
6. **Culture, fashion and trends:** Young people find gaps not only with the older generation, but also among different segments of their own generation. This happens due to different streams of education, socio-economic condition, geographical location and some other factors. But they want to come closer. Added to the mainstream culture, different ethnic traditions are also there. A huge cultural gap exists between mainstream and NRB/Diaspora youth. Young people tend to follow the fashion and lifestyle of the people of their liking. Who are these idols and icons? How the cultural gaps can be reduced? How the mainstream and ethnic youth will know each other and respect each other's culture? How best Bangladeshi youth can interact with the NRB/Diaspora youth? Participants will suggest the ways.
7. **Youth and extremism:** Extremism, terrorism and political intolerance are big hurdles towards the emancipation of democracy. Unfortunately a small section of young people are involved in these extremist acts. Most of these young men are ignorant. Some political forces use them for their own purposes. Who are these young people and who are the people behind? Why do they get involved in these acts? How to combat this undesired situation? Young people have their own thoughts. They will discuss and debate.
8. **Journey towards 2015:** Some vital issues have surfaced from the discussion of 7 episodes of Amar Bangladesh. Discussion and debate have taken place on problems, challenges and potentials of Bangladesh. During the pre-design

assessment we wanted to know from young respondents about their desired Bangladesh in 2015. More than 200 youngsters gave their views. Keeping the discussions of 7 episodes and the aspirations of young people in view, we will design the last episode of the programme.

## ANNEX – 1

### RAPID ASSESSMENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE FOR

#### 'AMAR BANGLADESH' TELEVISION TALK SHOW

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*This questionnaire is targeted to underline the issues and comprehend the diverse thoughts of mainstream youths of Bangladesh. The answers of the questionnaire would be assessed as a background in developing the television talk show. All information regarding the identities of the individuals would remain confidential.*

SL. No. -----

Name of the Interviewee:

(Optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Put a tick mark in the appropriate Box

#### 1. Youth and Present Bangladesh

How is the approach of the mainstream youth towards Bangladesh?

- Positive
- Negative
- Confused
- Self-oriented

Do the youth discuss about Bangladesh amongst themselves?

- Yes
- No



1.2.1 If Yes, then what do they discuss? (Rate according to importance 1 most important; 5 least important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Politics					
Sports					
Movie and games					
Fashion					
Social Commitment					
Study					
Cultural activities					
Others					

## 2. Media and Youth

2.1 Are the youth represented adequately in media?

- Yes  
 No

2.2 Does media address youth related issues?

- Always  
 Very often  
 Sometimes  
 Not enough  
 Never

2.3 Which is the most popular form of media amongst youth? (tick 1 for most important and 4 for least important)

	1	2	3	4
Television				
Radio				
Newspaper				
Internet				

2.4 What is the percentage of information against education presented in media?

- a. Information :  10%-20%  30%-50%  60%-80%  90%
- b. Educational :  10%-20%  30%-50%  60%-80%  90%

2.5 Does satellite television play an effective role in formulating the mindsets of the youth?

- Yes
- No

2.6 Will the open flow of information help the youth in the long run?

- Yes
- May be
- No

**3. Culture and Youth:**

3.1 What determines the trend amongst the youth?

- Western Media
- Indian Movies
- Local media and culture
- Fashion House

3.2 Generally what influences the youth most in terms of trendsetting? (Tick 1 as the highest and 5 lowest)

	1	2	3	4	5
Media celebrity					
Actors and heroes					
Politicians					
Academics					
Cultural Activists					
Western/Indian celebrity					

3.3 Are there any existing cultural divisions within the young generation?

- Yes
- No

3.3.1 If Yes then what type of cultural division dominates?

- English Medium/ Bengali Medium/ Madrasa medium
- Urban Background/ Rural background
- Upper class/ Middle Class/ Lower Class

Other: -----

3.4 What type of music do you listen to? (Mention two i.e. folk, band etc.)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Employment, Education and Youth:**

4.1 Who gets more privilege in case of employment?

- Public University Students
- Private University Students
- English medium Background
- Bengali Medium background
- Madrasa Background

4.2 Is there any discrimination existing in the employment field?

- Yes
- No

4.3 Is unemployment the number one problem amongst the youth?

- Yes
- No

4.4 Do the youth have freedom of choosing their fields of study?

- Yes
- No

**5. Extremism, Politics and Youth:**

5.1 Is it true that educated youth do not enter politics in Bangladesh?

- True
- False

If false, skip to 5.3

5.2 If True then why not? (mark 1 as the prime reason and 5 for least)

	1	2	3	4	5
Political malpractice					
Lack of inspiration					
Negative approach of the society/ family					
Because of the system					
Youth are not concerned					

5.3 Does our politics instigate extremism?

- Yes  
 No

5.4 Do you think extremism exists in Bangladesh even today?

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

5.5 Is extremism still a vivid problem in Bangladesh in recent years?

- Yes  
 No

5.6 Why do youth get involved in extremism? (1 for the major reason and 5 for the least)

	1	2	3	4	5
To ensure financial security					
Lack of proper institutional education					
Religious misconception					
Family culture					
Individual choice					
Failing to have access to justice					

6. Society, Diaspora and Youth:

6.1 Do the youth of Bangladesh share strong social commitment?

- Yes  
 Not often

No

6.2 Are you aware of Diaspora communities?

- Yes
- No

If No, skip to 6.4

6.3 If yes, how a common understanding and bondage can be established between the Diaspora and mainstream youth? (You can tick more than one)

- Through exchange visit
- Through cultural exchange
- Through newsletter/publication
- Through collaborative TV programmes
- Others (Specify) .....

6.4 Do religious issues conflict/ foster social harmony?

- Conflict
- Foster

6.5 Is religion predominant in the lives of the mainstream youth?

- Entirely
- To some extent
- Not at all

6.6 How can the mainstream youth be motivated towards social commitment?

(Mention 2 options)

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_

7. About the television program:

7.1 Please mention three names you wish to see as discussants of the TV programme.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

7.2 What type of entertainment segments should be included in the talk show? (name any two)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

7.3 What time would you prefer for the television show to be aired? (mention only 2)

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank You!**

**Interviewed by:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## ANNEX – 2

### PROFILE OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) SESSIONS

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#### Category of participants

- Public University students
- Private University students
- Working Youth
- Alia Madrasah students
- Kowmi Madrasha Students
- English medium students
- Frustrated Youth Group
- Ethnic Youth Group
- Mixed Young People

#### Locations

- Dhaka
- Bogra
- Barisal
- Khulna
- Raipura, Narsinghdi
- Modhupur, Tangail
- Chittagong
- Rangamati
- Komolganj, Moulavi Bazar
- Sylhet

### The FGD Session Chart

Sl. #	Focused group	Date and venue	No. of participants			Remarks
			M	F	Total	
01.	Public University students	21 June 2008 MRDI office	9	2	11	
02.	Private University students	21 June 2008 MRDI office	7	4	11	
03.	Working Youth	24 June 2008 MRDI office	6	3	9	
04.	Alia Madrasah students	28 June 2008 Hotel Red Chillies, Bogra	7	3	10	
05.	Mixed Young People	28 June 2008 Hotel Red Chillies, Bogra	4	7	11	
06.	Mixed Young People	1 July, 2008 Royal Hotel, Khulna	6	6	12	
07.	Mixed Young People	2 July, 2008 Hotel Athena, Barisal	7	4	11	
08.	Kowmi Madrasha Students	4 July, 2008 Durbar Samaj Kallyan Shangstha, Raipura, Narsingdi	10	0	10	
09.	Frustrated Youth Group	7 July, 2008 CREA-Modhumita Center, Lalbagh, Dhaka	7	3	10	
10.	English medium students	7 July, 2008 MRDI office	7	2	9	
11.	Ethnic Youth Group	9 July, 2008 Shantiniketan, Jalchhatra, Madhupur, Tangail	7	4	11	
12.	Mixed Young People	12 July, 2008 Theater Institute, Chittagong	5	3	8	
13.	Ethnic Youth Group	13 July, 2008 Green Hill Training Center, Rangamati	5	5	10	
14.	Ethnic Youth Group	19 July, 2008 Kamolganj, Moulavi Bazar	6	4	10	
15.	Mixed Young People	19 July, 2008 Hotel Fortune Garden, Sylhet	5	5	10	
<b>Total number of participants</b>			<b>98</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>153</b>	



## ANNEX 3

### FGD TOPIC GUIDE

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#### *Conceptual discussion*

- Coverage of youth issues in media - newspaper, TV, radio
- Educational and entertaining programmes over media - proportionate or not.
- Role of media in awareness building - political, social and rights awareness.
- Open flow of information - how it helps?
- Benefits and harms of satellite channels
- Cultural difference among youth segments - urban/rural, mainstream/madras students, well off/disadvantaged youth.
- Who are the trend setters/role models?
- How do the trends influence individuals?
- How do you perceive democracy? How does democracy help economic growth? Employment, business, foreign investment
- How is democracy related with social equity, rights and equal opportunities?
- Why does a section of young people get involved in extremism?
- How to combat extremism?
- How do extremist activities hinder democracy?
- Democracy, social harmony and peace - role of youth.
- Role of diasporas in upholding country's image
- Educated young people are less interested in politics. Why?
- Secular views and democratic values.
- Role of youth in community development.
- How do you see Bangladesh in the year 2015? (Write on the VIPP card)

#### *About the TV programme*

- Issues for discussion
- Format of the TV programme
- Who should be the panelists?
- What time, which channel?
- What type of entertainment should be included?