Vision 2020

Shared values and ideas for the future by young people in Jammu and Kashmir

CONCILIATION RESOURCES
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This Vision document is the result of interactions and dialogue with a wide range of young people across both sides of the Line of Control in Kashmir.

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Map of Jammu and Kashmir region
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Introduction

Vision 2020 seeks to reflect the socio-economic, educational and political vision of young people in Jammu and Kashmir across both sides of the Line of Control (LoC). What is their socio-political, economic and educational vision? What sort of society can they imagine for themselves? What are the transformations needed to emerge from the deeply unsatisfactory political, social and economic situation in which they find themselves? How might young people from the various regions of Jammu and Kashmir contribute towards building inclusive and participatory communities with transparent and accountable decision-making?

This Vision 2020 document is the outcome of a long-term initiative to build a dialogue with and between young people living in the disputed territory of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Through a series of engagements that began in 2010, this process sought to understand the needs and concerns of young people in the region and provide a space for them to explore and articulate ideas about how communities might work towards a better future.

More than 3,900 young people have been involved in some way in the initiative, responding to surveys and participating in structured interviews, focus group discussions and seminars. Research groups worked on both sides of the LoC, and the project obtained perspectives from all areas in the region:

the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh on the Indian-administered side, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan on the Pakistan-administered side.

This document therefore sets out to articulate a vision for the future. It arises directly out of a dialogue with young people of the region by locally-based researchers. In doing so, it addresses issues around the core values which guide the vision, including the topics of the economy, environment, education, governance and civil society. It suggests ways in which young people can seek to address some of the problems of the region and engage in building and reshaping their communities. It provides a broad conceptual and practical framework to create a more inclusive space in which to address issues. However, it is important to emphasise at the beginning of this report, what it does *not* attempt to do. First, it does not offer a blueprint for resolving the political conflict. Second, it does not attempt to gloss over the differences in perspective and political aspirations of young people, or present them as a homogenous group with a single set of demands. Indeed, those engaged in the process have diverse viewpoints on the political conflict and in their understanding and analysis of the overall context. The document includes some perspectives to provide insights into the views and perceptions from some young people

in the various regions. Furthermore, Vision 2020 does reflect a set of core values that are broadly shared and agreed by project participants and contributors.

Before setting out these core values, this introduction provides a brief geo-demographic context, presents the rationale for the focus on young people, and provides some detail on the process that helped to realise this vision.

Geo-demographic context

The territory involved in the Kashmir dispute comprises three main regions on the Indian-administered side: Ladakh, Jammu and the Kashmir Valley, and two on the Pakistan-administered side of the LoC: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The Kashmir Valley is one of three divisions of the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir. It is bounded by the Pir Panjal mountain range on the southwest and the Himalayas on the northeast. The LoC forms the northern and western de facto border. It has a population of 6.9 million (2011 census). The main ethnic group in the valley are Kashmiris, and most of the population are Muslim (97%). The main languages spoken are Kashmiri, Urdu, Gojri and Pahari. Since the start of the 1990s, the Kashmir Valley has been the epicentre of the violence associated with the territorial dispute. Although exact figures are contested, many estimate that the insurgency and counterinsurgency during this period have resulted in over 70,000 killings and over 8,000 enforced disappearances, in India-administered Jammu and Kashmir, predominantly in the Kashmir Valley, and mostly civilians. The heightened violence at the end of the 1980s triggered communal tensions and resulted in the 'exodus' of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley mainly to Hindu-dominated Jammu. The nature of their exodus and their status remain extremely controversial, and many still live in refugee camps in Jammu.

Jammu has a population of about 5.35 million (2011 census). It is a diverse region, consisting of many religious, ethnic and linguistic groups. Currently about 65 per cent of the population is Hindu, 30 per cent Muslim and about 3.5 per cent Sikh. Some of the languages spoken in Jammu are Dogri, Gojri, Pahari (with different dialects), Kashmiri, Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi. Although not experiencing the same levels of violence as in the Kashmir Valley, Jammu has experienced the brunt of violence resulting from skirmishes along the LoC, which has led to killings, migration and forced separation of families, as well as destruction of property. Because of its proximity to the Indian plains and year-round connectivity, Jammu has better transport infrastructure compared to the Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.

Ladakh is a thinly populated region and includes vast areas of high-altitude desert valleys. The region has a population of about 300,000, of which 94 per cent are Muslims and Buddhists, divided in almost equal proportions; the rest are Hindus. The Muslim population is Shia dominated. Historically Ladakh included Baltistan, which is now under Pakistani control, separated by the LoC. The major languages are Bhoti or Ladakhi (with different dialects), Balti, Shina and Kashmiri. Ladakh remains cut off from the rest of the world for almost six months a year: both its land routes, one via the Kashmir Valley and the other via the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, are closed throughout the winter.

AJK is a semi-autonomous region under Pakistani control. Pakistan considers AJK as the successor to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir and hence an entity outside of the Pakistani constitution. As such, AJK has its own institutions functioning under the AJK Interim Constitution Act of 1974. The current population is estimated to be around 4.6 million. The rural to urban ratio is 88:12. However, there is considerable movement between urban and rural areas in AJK and many youth travel from the villages to the cities to attend college or university.

Gilgit-Baltistan is neither a province of Pakistan nor a formal part of AJK. It has an ambiguous position within Pakistan's federal framework and, by implication, for the territorial dispute over Kashmir. It is a multilingual region with sociocultural and ethnic diversity. It is surrounded by three mountain ranges: the Himalayas, the Karakoram and the Hindu Kush. It is estimated to have a population of 1.39 million (2015). The resident population is Muslim and includes four denominations of Islam: Shiites constitute 39 per cent, Sunnis 27 per cent, Ismaili 18 per cent, and Noorbakshi 16 per cent. It has at least 24 ethnic and linguistic groups. Urdu is the official language of Gilgit-Baltistan and the lingua franca; and other major languages are Shina, Balti, Burushaski, Khowar and Wakhi.

Why the focus on young people

Youth comprises over 60 per cent of the total population in Jammu and Kashmir. Though young people in the different regions have varied and divergent political perspectives, they face many similar challenges which deeply affect their personal and overall development in many ways. These concern issues of identity, lack of freedom and empowerment, an inadequate education system, unemployment and poor governance. Previous studies in relation to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir show that the sustained conflict has led to increasing disillusionment, continued political

dispute, lack of spaces for dialogue, increasing poverty, and identity crises that widen the gaps between various communities in the region.

At present, young people have little opportunity to contribute to the policies and processes that directly impact their lives and shape their future. There is an increasing sense of alienation from social and political decision-making processes. Young people in Jammu and Kashmir feel entrapped by the conflict, and their energies and potential are not harnessed and are not given due importance. Yet during sustained engagement with youth by a group of committed young people, a consensus emerged on the necessity for a youth-led vision to support progress in the region. Many young people have clear ideals and aspirations, and a desire to engage in the process of translating these into realities and a prosperous future.

From the outset of the Vision 2020 process, it was accepted by those leading the process and those engaged in it that such a vision had to be developed through dialogue. People living in different regions of the disputed territory have distinctive local realities and issues that have to be understood in their particular context. However, there is a sense of alienation, as a result of different barriers – political, cultural and geographic among others. This has given birth to a generation that lives with the conflict through contrasting narratives. The result is that people are either ignorant or detached from the challenges of various communities living in other regions of the former state. Dialogue within as well as between communities of all the regions of Jammu and Kashmir is challenging and presents a barrier to widespread youth engagement with political processes. But some young people over time have become aware of the fact that conversations with fellow young people within and across the LoC are important in promoting understanding of different perspectives in order to reduce tensions and to contribute to any political resolution of the conflict. These conversations are important and can transform competing and popular narratives of their history, as well as on political, social and economic issues into narratives of shared concerns and coexistence.

The aim, therefore, is to support constructive engagement; to find new positive spheres of action for individuals and communities caught up in the conflict. Vision 2020 seeks to transcend the existing challenges in the region by building trust and reflecting young people's voices in a shared and structured way. It recognises that youth can be catalysts for positive change. The research indicates that young people across the divide have political conciseness and an inclination to articulate their vision and aspirations. Under transformed conditions and relationships they would have the capacity and agency to bring about positive change.

How Vision 2020 was shaped

Vision 2020 has been developed in several phases. First, separate youth needs assessment surveys were conducted in the Kashmir Valley, Jammu, Ladakh, AJK, and Gilgit-Baltistan through participatory action research (PAR). These surveys were supplemented with a series of dialogues, focus group discussions, conversations and informal interactions with about four thousand young people from all regions of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The outcomes from this process of surveys and consultations were published in a series of reports by Conciliation Resources.

This process conceived the idea of Vision 2020. Preparatory work for this document included a further extensive consultation process. This was led and guided by a diverse group of young people named the Youth Core Group, comprising motivated young people from all the regions of Jammu and Kashmir. The group built a team of members, who were able to reflect on their own experience and talk to other people to understand what is happening in their communities and what the aspirations of young people are. In total, 41 people have contributed to the core group's work over the course of the initiative.

A PAR framework was used to develop Vision 2020. Members of the Youth Core Group were trained in PAR techniques and the PAR framework was used by team members in their consultations and deliberations with young people in all regions. Over 100 day-long focus group discussions were conducted in all regions, involving different stakeholders from diverse socio-political backgrounds. In addition, almost 200 in-depth interviews were carried out with experts, political leaders, socially and politically excluded communities, migrants, gender-based organisations, youth groups, academics and media persons. These were used to get further socio-political and economic perspectives of Jammu and Kashmir. In total, 3,929 young people aged between 18–30 years were engaged in workshops, discussions, meetings and interviews to formulate the vision. In terms of gender balance, about 40 per cent representation of women was ensured during the process of consultation for the vision.

The team organised further small workshops, panel discussions and Skype interviews for various phases of writing Vision 2020. As preparatory work for the final document, the core group members contributed papers on specific areas.

Core values

The conflict over Jammu and Kashmir encompasses a complex amalgamation of political, nationalist and religious factors, which are profoundly rooted in history. There is a deep disconnect between territories and people, which has resulted in perception gaps and misunderstandings and generated localised popular narratives of the conflict.

It is relatively easy to set out what divides people, but the aim of Vision 2020 is to see if it is possible to generate shared narratives on socio-political and economic development. The challenge in a divided region is to articulate a shared vision of young people on the basis of commonalities that can help bring communities closer and foster ties, and which, along with this, also reflects the ideals and aspirations of youth. Care has to be taken to allow such ties to develop naturally and authentically.

Based on the consultations, the interactions and joint exercises detailed above, the team produced a set of shared core values for the vision of Jammu and Kashmir. These core values should not mask the very real differences that exist within the region, but they do form the basis for constructive ideas for developing local economies, protecting the environment, improving education systems, improving governance structures and building civil society. They also form an ethical and moral basis for social and political engagement. The core values could, and should, also inform wider politics and provide a set of guiding principles for any efforts towards a political resolution of the conflict.

The seven core values are:

- **Dignity and trust**
- **Equality and justice**
- **Freedom and responsibility**
- **Inclusivity and participation**
- **Individual, family and community wellbeing**
- **Relationships and collaborative learning**
- **Self-sufficiency and sustainability**

All these core value are interlinked. The sections that follow look at each core value in turn. Each section articulates a vision of society based on the core value and explains what the value means in the context of the region. Each section explores the gaps and challenges in achieving the vision. Interwoven in this material are sections on civil society, governance, education, the economy, the environment and gender, which draw on ideas that arise from several of the core values and reflect young people's perspectives and aspirations as reported in the discussions and surveys conducted by the research team.

Dignity and trust

The vision: A society based on dignity and trust, in which each individual and each community is treated in the best possible manner, and not less than anybody else's, and everyone's lives and interests are respected and protected.

At the core of this vision is a desire to live in a society where people feel secure and respected. When present, these values are easy to take for granted; but lack of dignity and trust is keenly felt and has a corrosive effect on individuals and communities.

Gaps and challenges

In the surveys of young people, concerns about lack of dignity were voiced most frequently by youth in the Kashmir Valley. The needs assessment survey in the Kashmir Valley found that young people feel deprived of their basic rights. They complain the Indian government has suspended their rights through its use of armed forces and the imposition of special powers. The rights that youth particularly highlighted as needing to be established and upheld were the right to self-determination, freedom of expression and the right to life with dignity.

Trust is a prerequisite for social and political progress, yet in Jammu and Kashmir there is widespread distrust operating at several levels. In group discussions in the Kashmir Valley, participants complained that there was an enormous trust deficit in Kashmir, because, they argue, of the tremendous fear created by the presence and overwhelming number of Indian armed forces. There is simply no trust that the Indian authorities will act in good faith. Some people also feel that the situation is further complicated

by non-state extremist groups, although to a much lesser extent than the presence of the Indian military.

In other regions affected by the dispute, there are also issues of trust that cause alienation and disengagement. On both sides of the LoC, young people express dissatisfaction with local political institutions, politicians and government administration. In Jammu, young people feel that they have been encouraged away from traditional sources of livelihood like agriculture, and they do not trust that the government will be able – or perhaps lacks the intention – to do anything about unemployment. Most young people surveyed are not satisfied with the current role of media and politicians: 49 per cent feel directly misrepresented.

In Ladakh, young people generally are of the view that politicians and public officials are generally dishonest and cannot be trusted. Not many participants in group discussions were comfortable with the idea of becoming politicians themselves. In Leh, in particular, there is a sense that most resources are divided between the Jammu and Kashmir divisions, and that Ladakh is neglected by politicians and bureaucrats. Young people in Ladakh tend to characterise the relationship between Ladakh and Kashmir as strained.

On the other side of the LoC in AJK, those involved in the research study spoke candidly of their distrust of AJK's political leaders. They described AJK as a politically unstable region, and one that in the past had been beset by frequent political wrangling. More than 90 per cent of young people displayed open distrust of their political leaders. As one politically active young person commented: "The strings of political parties of AJK are tied with a knot that lies in Islamabad."

There is also an issue of trust – and understanding – between the different regions covered by the dispute. In Gilgit-Baltistan, most participants feel that there is a huge trust deficit between the people in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK. Many young people in Gilgit-Baltistan feel that the AJK leadership remains a key obstacle when it comes to granting them political rights. There is mutual suspicion: this, many argue, is due to lack of any communication channels. One person from Skardu said: "We have been kept far and away deliberately and this hatred against each other is systematic and structured."

Positive steps

Attempts to improve communication channels between the people of the different regions and provide forums at which they can meet and discuss common issues can help to improve understanding and build trust. This, in time, can help to address some of the inter-regional tensions. This has been one of the goals of this project, but the work needs to continue.

The distrust of public institutions and politicians is deep rooted and harder to address. The public mistrust of government, coupled with a strong perception that public administrations are corrupt, means that any top-down initiative has a credibility problem. One positive move would be to create democratic spaces, free from fear and intimidation, which can help engage young people. This will not be easy to achieve because of the challenge for youth, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, to trust that such spaces can actually be genuinely free and open.

Equality and justice

The vision: Communities based on justice and equality without any discrimination – including discrimination on the basis of gender, socioeconomic difference (for example class, caste, ethnicity, region) and ideological or political orientation.

The aim is to substantiate the primary human right that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'.

Gaps and challenges

Equality and justice are subjective ideas. To some extent, they are specific to context. Different steps are required to achieve these goals based on specific circumstances and regional characteristics. For some people, these goals can be simply defined in terms of equal access to resources and equal treatment before the law and legal systems. For others, for people who feel that they lack the right to self-determination and lack political freedom, the demand for equality and justice has a different meaning, and is bound up in the demand for fundamental political change.

In the Kashmir Valley, the institutions and agencies responsible for deliverance of justice, such as Human Rights Commissions or courts, operate in the context of military control. The institutions are

perceived by young people as mere structures, devoid Rawalakot of any proper authority or credibility and only in place to strengthen the territorial control by the Indian State. Youth say no credible mechanisms exist for registering complaints of human rights violations, including the deliberate killing of civilians. People feel progress is unlikely without granting the right to dissent and protest without any violent repercussions, and the holding to account of those responsible for killings, torture, disappearances and sexual violence. There is a need for independent organisations, such as a truth, justice and reconciliation processes, that would buttress efforts toward justice for communities.

Outside the Kashmir Valley, demands for equality and justice are less likely to be framed solely within a wider political struggle. However, there are concerns about poor justice systems and, in the Pakistan-administered regions, about the inequalities that arise from the current constitutional arrangements. To give one example, young people in Gilgit-Baltistan want any exploitation of natural resources to be done on an equitable basis so that they receive a fair share of the revenue. They strongly feel that they are not treated on the same basis as other provinces, both in the distribution of those resources and in associated royalty payments.

More broadly, young people acknowledge that discrimination needs to be tackled in working towards an equal and just society. This will require conscientious efforts to raise awareness and acknowledge diversity and differences on the basis of ethnicity, religion, caste, gender, socioeconomic status, region, and other minority-majority dynamics. These could yield substantive results to ensure social justice.

Position of women

Results from the participatory research addressed the issue of discrimination against women. Only in Ladakh does gender discrimination not feature as a major concern for youth (perhaps attributable to the strong roles women have traditionally played in Ladakhi society). In the Kashmir Valley, 54 per cent of survey respondents identified gender-based discrimination as a problem and 51 per cent were willing to engage in addressing the problem.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, it was particularly noted that cultural and religious sensitivities in the region have traditionally severely limit women's autonomy. However, there is increased emphasis on girls' education, even in areas within the region that were previously noted for their resistance to it. Gradually, women are coming out of their homes and taking more active roles in the wider community.

In AJK, most young people believe gender empowerment and equality are neglected issues, with women's contributions toward AJK's development underutilised. Almost 80 per cent of the young women surveyed across AJK believe that they do not have equal opportunities to men, and this view was supported by almost 65 per cent of the men taking part in focus group discussions in Mirpur, and to a lesser extent by men taking part in the discussion in Rawalakot (45 per cent) and Muzaffarabad (40 per cent).

Work with women has helped to articulate a vision of a future for women based around the core values. The women interviewed had four main aspirations. First, they wanted greater involvement in decision-making, both in social and political life. They aspire for greater freedom of mobility, without any fear and prejudice, and safer access to public spaces. They want to create spaces for decision-making in society, including in political forums, peacemaking initiatives and other bodies that take community decisions.

Second, many women want to redefine and reinterpret traditional roles defined in a patriarchal society. They wish to redefine the gender hierarchies that currently allow men to hold power over women, both in and outside the household. They envision better access to education, and increasing respect for the rights of women, particularly their economic rights.

Third, women seek greater and more meaningful participation in the workforce. They dream of a world where all people are able to work regardless of gender, both outside the home and inside, and are treated with justice, equity and respect.

Fourth, but no less importantly, women believe that society should be responding to violence against women. They envision a society in which any victim of domestic violence is provided justice, supported, granted protection and that perpetrators are held accountable. In the context of the Kashmir Valley, many feel that more should be done to address conflict-related sexual and other forms of violence. Rape victims often feel they get no justice and many incidents go unreported because of the taboo associated with rape and the lack of any credible mechanism to register complaints.

Freedom and responsibility

The vision: A society where people can act of their own free will, individually as well as collectively, with responsibility towards other individuals and society at large.

At the core of this vision is the belief that people are bestowed with reason and conscience and they should behave towards one another in a spirit of comradeship.

Gaps and challenges

The issue of freedom – and the space in which to exercise responsibility – is linked to ideas of self expression and autonomy. This lies at the centre of the political antagonisms in the region, and the Kashmiri struggle for political determination. Of course, there are a broad range of divergent views and perspectives across the region about potential solutions to the political conflict, but the research that forms the basis of Vision 2020 does indicate one area of agreement: a widespread frustration with the various existing governance arrangements and a desire for an empowering and participatory political system.

The frustration is expressed in different ways throughout the region. In the Kashmir Valley, young people have little faith in the present setup of democratic governance. They feel the experience of the past is that people who tried to engage in politics or join the bureaucracy, thinking they could change things from within, have failed: the fundamental political conflict remains unresolved. Even the act of voting gets misrepresented: they express anger that they are told that elections will not be regarded as reflecting any stance on a final settlement of the political dispute, yet, invariably, every election gets reported as a mandate for Indian democracy and, by implication, the status quo.

In AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan there are concerns about a lack of democratic accountability and transparency. The respective legislative councils have local representatives as well as appointees from the Federal government, but with the latter having numerical supremacy. This lack of democratic control is unwelcome given the councils' administrative, financial and legislative powers. Both regions also function without local government bodies, which leads to an administration that is not directly accountable and answerable to the people, and is not responsive to their needs and preferences.

There is a further concern in Gilgit-Baltistan that many young people are increasingly uneasy with the identity that ties them with the broader Kashmir issue. Some of the youth want Pakistan to grant Gilgit-Baltistan special status, either as an autonomous region with full legislative powers or as a full-fledged province with representation in the Federal parliament. There is increasing concern with the lack of progress in resolving issues regarding determination of Gilgit-Baltistan's constitutional status and basic citizenship rights.

Ideas on freedom and responsibility: a perspective from the Kashmir Valley

Freedom occupies a critical space in the mind of Kashmiris – collective as well as individual – given the history of the struggle for *Azadi* and the demand for political self-determination. The political sphere is oppressive, and seemingly leaves little room for the practice of freedom. But this lack of freedom only increases the responsibility to try to enlarge the spheres of freedom by working intelligently to tease out possibilities of being free within the existing political structures. It is possible and necessary to put into practice a genuine politics of freedom at all levels of human interaction in Kashmir at present. While continuing the wider political engagement, Kashmiris need to seriously think about, expound and practise a politics of liberation at micro levels; that is, the politics and the power relations involved in relationships and interactions at more basic and diverse levels of societal organisation like families, villages and towns.

Aspirations for freedom at the national level must be simultaneously coupled with working for the liberation of the marginalised at all levels of society, including disadvantaged ethnicities, religious groups and genders. This work could range from strategies for bringing a constructive change in our attitude and behaviours toward these groups, to critical evaluation, development and implementation of policies that affect their lives. It means, for example, challenging the social and cultural institutions that sustain and reinforce oppressive practices of arbitrary categorisation and hierarchy of humans like the caste system.

The aspiration must be to make politics as free as possible and to keep striving toward more free and more open social systems. Despite the wider political situation, it should be possible to construct spaces of egalitarianism within homes and communities, regardless of centralised, political power structures, where people of different opinions and orientations are free to express themselves without any fear or coercion.

Some steps towards better governance in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan

Young people of AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan want to live in democratic, prosperous and empowered regions, with enhanced powers of legislation to their legislative assemblies and reinstatement of local governments to stabilise the link between citizens and the state. They envision stable institutional frameworks that promote active participation, inclusiveness and empower societies at the grassroots level to play active roles in resolving conflict.

There are several suggested steps that could help to achieve these goals. First, constitutional reforms: young people envision devolved and decentralised powers to make elected assemblies more empowered and autonomous in decision-making. Empowered legislators and representatives would have greater capacity to deliver better governance. Empowered legislatures and institutions would open a new era of social and political accountability and strengthen the trust of people in the political process.

Second, administrative reforms: most young people are dissatisfied with the performance of state institutions responsible for delivering basic services. Some young people want to see an increased focus on public private partnerships. Currently, government assumes the sole responsibility for providing basic services, including social services, transportation, agriculture, education and health, a role which it appears unable to fulfil effectively. State institutions have very limited capacity to provide services to the masses, as they lack infrastructure and suffer from resource scarcity.

Young people want the public sector to improve its efficiency and effectiveness. There needs to be mechanisms through which state institutions can be held accountable to society for service delivery. People need to be able to drive effective and efficient performance of public sector services through economic and political interactions between state and society.

Third, greater co-operation across the LoC: young people wish to build mechanisms and shared frameworks where agreement can be reached. This perhaps could be achieved in respect of disaster management structures, helping to provide early warnings for joint disaster risk reduction and improved institutional capacities for disaster management. This initiative also has the potential to connect and build relationships between divided communities and societies of both regions.

Inclusivity and participation

The vision: To work towards inclusive and participatory communities, to make citizens more conscientious, and build transparent and accountable communities and society.

This will require processes aimed at creating conditions that enable the full and active participation of every member of society in all aspects of life. It requires a recognition of the structures and processes by which certain communities or groups have not achieved political, social and economic inclusion, representation or power – in other words, it strives for 'democratic inclusion'.

Gaps and challenges

The challenge of delivering a vision of inclusivity and participation has political and social aspects. In political terms, it requires that all legal, regulatory and policy frameworks must be inclusive, and uphold just and inclusive processes in all areas of implementation. This is to ensure that access to basic public facilities and services are guaranteed,

and that diversity and cultural pluralism are accommodated and backed by law. It also requires looking at potential institutional discrimination and social exclusion. There is a systematic denial of some groups from rights, opportunities and resources that are normally available to other groups. For example, communities, castes and groups like Gujjars, Bakerwals, Dardi, Watals and others face social exclusion.

To ensure democratic participation of all groups in all spheres of life would require changes to the systems of education, employment, healthcare, and civic engagement. As a first step, it might be useful to create 'inclusivity groups', local committees tasked to monitor, evaluate and make recommendations concerning inclusivity, diversity and potential barriers to participation. Such forums could be actively engaged in activities and initiatives to dissolve barriers that separate one group of people from another.

But to achieve the vision of inclusive and participatory communities also requires social action. It requires asking some difficult questions. Is it possible to be open about the dissent and disagreement among individuals and communities? Are communities ready to challenge traditional positions, such as those held on gender, religion

and education? For example, should religious faith be a private affair and can it be open to critical examination, particularly in respect of the divides that can be caused by religion? There needs to be an understanding of the commonalities which link people of different religious faiths.

In the sphere of social action, there also needs to be reflection and understanding of the position of women and the family unit. Patriarchy is the major reason for discrimination against women in day-to-day life. The political conflict, and resulting militarisation and insecurity, has not only oppressed women directly but has also exacerbated patriarchal discrimination. Many youth feel that there needs to be a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of gender and its relationship with conflict, as well as more support for women's empowerment, especially from men.

Understanding of the politics of democratic inclusion therefore requires close attention to the role of both institutions and social structures. It raises questions of equity – not only of equal opportunity or equal access, but also in terms of outcomes and the realisation of opportunities. The challenge is to search for measures that bring the notion of social inclusion from the realm of the ideal to that of everyday praxis in a 'society for all'.

Inclusivity and participation: a perspective from Jammu

The views from Jammu which have been explored through the youth interactions present a diverse range of perceptions and feelings. They, however, all stress the value and importance of inclusivity and participation. The changes that have taken place post-1947 have played a major role in shaping the present day strong political sentiment in Jammu and alienating it from Kashmiri politics. After the conditional accession of Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Union, the political centre shifted from Jammu to Kashmir, which gave way to a Valley-centric political orientation in the government structures. This presented issues with regards to governing Jammu, which is more heterogeneous than the Kashmir Valley in terms of ethnic and religious diversity. Over time the lack of trust, further exploited by vested interests, widened the gulf between the two regions.

Due to the complicated relations between the government in New Delhi and the state of Jammu & Kashmir, and New Delhi's preoccupation with managing relations with the Valley meant that that leaders and political parties from Jammu were not able to establish effective leadership. The Hindu-Muslim relations in the Jammu region became increasingly hostile since 1947 with the massacre of Muslims at the hands of the Dogra regime, giving rise to communal politics in the region. This situation was compounded with the migration of Kashmiri Pandits from the Valley to Jammu.

Some people in Jammu feel that their political aspirations continue to face marginalisation within the state of Jammu & Kashmir and that their leadership is unable to respond to their grievances. As such, feelings of disillusionment and resentment against a Kashmiri dominated state government structure persist.

Notwithstanding the above, when viewed from a wider perspective, the issues faced by the Jammu region cannot be seen in isolation and are part of the larger dynamics that affects every region. It is only by making progress to transform the overall conflict through an inclusive and participatory process that the other dimensions and issues, such as those outlined here, can be resolved.

The role of civil society

One way of working to build inclusivity and participatory communities is to strengthen civil society: the realm of interaction, institutions and social cohesion that sustains public life outside the spheres of the state and the economy. The term covers a wide range of associations, groups and movements that are independent of government and that come together to advance common interests through collective action. A vibrant civil society acts as a strong pressure group, and keeps an oversight on the activities of the government.

Before presenting a vision of how civil society can be strengthened, it is useful to present an analysis of the weaknesses of current practice. This analysis results from work conducted specifically in AJK, but it has potential relevance for civil society throughout the region. In AJK, there are approximately 600 local civil society organisations registered. In addition, there are also various Pakistan-based and international organisations. Most of these organisations – local, Pakistan-based and international – have been working on service delivery and development, and very few focus on the areas of advocacy, human rights, rule of law and good governance. Apart from formal organisations, there are informal religious and social organisations which also play a significant role in society, including students' associations, labour unions, bar associations and some informal and loose associations of people contributing to social development and doing advocacy on many important issues. Despite the number of organisations, overall the existing structure of civil society is not very strong, vibrant or dynamic. Formal organisations lack capacity, professionalism and vision; most informal organisations are politically, regionally, ethnically or religiously motivated, which instead of promoting collective well being, can create further distrust and disharmony in society.

Working with young people on this issue, one challenge to the development of civil society that is often cited is the disputed nature of AJK and its direct link with the larger conflict of Jammu and Kashmir. This crisis adversely affects the independence and the growth of civil society, given the stringent conditions and complex formalities for international organisations and intergovernmental bodies wishing to work in the region. Many respondents felt that the dispute had an impact on opportunities for collaboration. There is little opportunity to actively engage in meaningful cross LoC linkages, nor can civil society bodies freely or easily collaborate with leading organisations worldwide due to a range of barriers, including operational constraints. This thwarts any desire to be locally active but globally connected.

There are many other barriers and challenges that prevent the growth of civil society. These include the challenge of serving the vast rural population and the limited capacity of existing organisations, which tend to have few resources of their own and are too dependent on donors. In group discussions with civil society organisations, many had the view that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) operating in the region lacked professionalism.

Many respondents noted the lack of government support, which fails to acknowledge or appreciate volunteer efforts and the work of NGOs and civil society activists. Some participants in the research argued that it is imperative for government and the media to motivate and persuade people of the value of engaging in social and voluntary work. In particular, there are no programmes to encourage youth participation in civic engagement, student politics and voluntary activity. This risks marginalising young people and seeing their potential and energy diverted to less socially useful activities.

The vision of young people for civil society aims to address many of these perceived flaws. There is a clear desire to change perceptions and to promote volunteerism, including through awareness seminars and workshops, media campaigns, and by improved recognition for social work. Many respondents suggested awards and ceremonies to recognise and appreciate the efforts of social workers, civil society activists as well as civil society organisations. There should also be a focus on capacity building, through training, fellowships, leadership courses and workshops, and through effective government policies for NGOs.

Young people want to see a greater focus on advocacy, working in areas such as governance, human rights, accountability, peace, transparency and rule of law, and a strengthening of civil society in rural areas, with increasing rural representation and participation in civil society organisations and in rural community development programmes. More generally, civil organisations should be inclusive so that all the segments of society have opportunities to participate, irrespective of caste, region, ethnicity and sect.

Finally, young people want to see an open and collaborative civil society, with the capacity to engage in cross LoC work with all the regions of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. This would enable cross LoC initiatives to be developed and strengthened in areas such as education, trade, transport, media, tourism, culture and sport.

Individual, family and community wellbeing

The vision: To ensure individual, family and community wellbeing – creating a living environment where the physical, psychological and social needs of individuals and communities are fulfilled, and realising the creative potential for individual and collective contentment and prosperity.

This is a wide-reaching value, with social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. Strong individuals, families, and communities are vital to the development of any society. Individual, family and community wellbeing means giving value and importance to quality of life and concerns education, livelihood, healthcare, communication, leisure, travel and collaboration. This vision stresses the necessity of the elements that underpin wellbeing, such as protection, self esteem, consciousness and agency through the development of accountable public institutions dedicated to public safety and services. It also seeks to give attention to collaborative efforts of government and non-government agencies, and community members, to work together and collaborate to improve the wellbeing of diverse communities.

Gaps and challenges

Throughout Jammu and Kashmir, many young people find it difficult to earn a living, they lack skills needed to get jobs and many struggle to cope given unstable family situations. Many lack access to good-quality health and education services.

The conflict has affected the socioeconomic conditions of all communities given the scarce economic opportunities and unstable governance frameworks in the region. Recent statistics show alarming unemployment rates in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan – in AJK the unemployment rate ranges from 10–14 percent and is around twice that of the rest of Pakistan – and unemployment is also high in the Kashmir Valley, Jammu and Ladakh.

For young people in the Kashmir Valley, the vision of individual, family and community wellbeing is a distant prospect. Coupled with the challenges of modernity, the conflict has fundamentally changed the pattern of life and impacted on people's health and wellbeing. Youth feel that they live under constant threat; people are being killed, disappeared and tortured, and they believe there is no possibility of justice. There has been an increase in the prevalence of physical diseases and psychological disorders. The ongoing conflict has changed the social fabric, as many relationships are sown with doubt and suspicion. Furthermore, due to militarisation, many informal social and community spaces have shrunk or not been able to continue to exist. There is a strong sense among youth in the Valley that, because of the current condition of Kashmir's economy, society, culture and politics, the wellbeing of the individual, family and community is at stake.

The situation has been exacerbated by major socioeconomic changes. Some young people feel that modernity has been imposed on the region without any attempt to integrate modern economic systems with more traditional ways of living. From being a largely self-sufficient economy in the past, it is now estimated that over 90 per cent of what is consumed in the Kashmir Valley is now imported. The traditional utilitarian society, where people were never focused on making money but primarily concerned about sustainability, has largely disappeared. Some young people feel that modern lifestyles, which encourage individualistic aspirations and goals, further distance people from each other, adding to the sense of alienation.

Poor and non-participatory governance mechanisms and a lack of social accountability have resulted in a substantial lack of trust in public institutions. Yet there is a clear need for effective action to improve the wellbeing of people in the region. One of the key challenges for community wellbeing is the lack of strategies to integrate and enhance skills development to help low-income individuals enter and succeed in the workforce. Another significant challenge is poor service delivery by the public sector and weak social networks in the community that results in social isolation and other issues.

The divides both within and across the various communities in Jammu and Kashmir has resulted in a lack of shared social networks and experiences, but these are important to build cohesive communities and collective identities. The absence of shared access and connectivity has not only resulted in a lack of social cohesion and bonding but also deprived people of the means to jointly address issues of mutual concern. This directly affects people's wellbeing and prevents effective cross-regional action, which is particularly urgent during times of crisis, such as natural disasters or food shortages. For those living close to the LoC, the hard, militarised divide has reduced opportunities for informal employment and prevent traders from accessing nearby markets.

Education

One main barrier to achieving the vision for a society based around relationships and collaborative learning is the current education systems in the region. In surveys and focus group discussions, young people were critical of many aspects of the school and college systems. In some ways, this is a further reflection of the deep distrust of government and authority, and the antagonism generated by the conflict, but it also points to the legacy of the British colonial era education system, the model on which most schooling is based.

Many young people across Jammu and Kashmir tend to perceive education as authoritarian, with a rigid top-down approach that is little changed from the colonial era. Such a dynamic crushes the essence of relationships as mutual bonds of sharing and learning. Students are usually seen as passive receivers of knowledge through rote learning of the contents presented in books. The core curriculum mostly ignores the political and socioeconomic realities of the regions, alienating students from their surroundings. Evaluation is usually determined in terms of recalling facts which have been imparted through rote learning.

In a survey in AJK, most young people said that existing teaching and learning environment is unfriendly; most teachers behave in an authoritarian manner, which results in poor learning. Almost 80 per cent of respondents stated that the attitude of teachers towards students compels them to either remain silent in class or actively discourages them from asking questions. Most people surveyed in AJK also reported that public sector schools lack basic facilities such as adequate buildings with electricity, washrooms and drinking water. Many schools and colleges affected by the earthquake which hit the region in 2005 have still not been rebuilt, forcing young people to study outside in the biting winter cold and the scorching heat of summer.

Similarly surveys in the Kashmir Valley found that although 65 per cent of respondents said they are not prevented from attending school, most felt that the education system is stale and does not teach them much. Youth would welcome a system that places more value on collaboration and mutual learning; one which does away with colonial and hierarchical approaches. They want a more participatory and dynamic education; one that does not routinely disregard students' own ideas, needs and wishes, and one that has a curriculum that is much more reflective of, and relevant to, their local environment.

Young people want better teachers and call for fairer and more transparent teacher recruitment. For instance, in AJK teachers are often recruited on the basis of their political affiliations. In the past many appointments were made directly by political representatives, so they generally appointed applicants who voted for them or who belonged to their party, without considering applicants' qualifications or suitability. More generally, the existing education system in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan offers very limited opportunities for parents to hold teachers accountable or even to track the performance of their children. One of the suggestions in group discussions was to formalise school management committees in public sector schools, and use these as a vehicle to provide an enhanced role for parents and civil society. This could strengthen relationships between schools and local communities and help improve educational standards.

There is a general sense among many young people in the region that schools and colleges are not equipping students properly for life. They are not guided and counselled to find professions that suit their aptitudes and abilities. As a result, many fail to realise their talent in appropriate jobs. Youth feel they need skills in analysis and critical thinking, as well as relevant technical skills. Participants in group discussions stressed the need to have a skills-based education. In AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, for example, this means providing students with the technical capacities to exploit and benefit from such local opportunities as there are in industries such as horticulture, fruit processing, agriculture construction, stone cutting, grafting and polishing, hospitality and tourism.

In terms of higher and further education, young people identify issues around both supply (the number of colleges) and quality (the style and content of courses). There is local provision: AJK has six universities (four public and two private sector universities) offering higher education in various disciplines, and has four medical colleges, although Gilgit-Baltistan has only one public sector university and no medical or engineering colleges. In India-administered Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, there are two central universities, six state universities and several colleges. Many feel the important issue for young people is accountability and approach rather than a question of quantity. They feel that instead of increasing numbers of educational facilities, improving the quality of education and teaching within existing establishments is paramount. They feel the universities should adopt a bottom-up approach which enables greater participation and creativity and reduce the top-down model currently followed which is based on hierarchies and rote learning. As with schools, the demand is for local communities to be in charge of their own education.

Relationships and collaborative learning

The vision: To establish and build constructive connections through both formal and informal links that enhance mutual understanding, collaborative learning and sustainable progress amongst people of all regions of Jammu and Kashmir, and beyond.

The focus here is on relationships in the broadest sense of the term. Besides being sources of support, care, affection and sustenance, relationships also shape worldviews that essentially influence the paths people take in their lives. The origin, growth and dynamic of these relationships are determined by a spectrum of factors such as an individual's upbringing and socialisation within and outside the family circle, and the person's needs, interests, culture, religion, and socio-political environment.

The vision seeks the creation of social networks and infrastructure for shared community experiences (across divides, including the LoC, and within communities). This could help to create a sense of collective identity and can have long-term benefits both in times of natural calamities and in terms of collaborative learning for sustainable socio-economic progress.

Gaps and challenges

The challenges to realising the vision arise from a combination of social factors and global trends as well as the immediate political context. There are issues at various levels: families and neighbourhood, the broader community, inter-community and inter-regional relationships, and government and state.

Families are the first space where relationships are built and experienced. Families and the immediate neighbourhood shape children's interests, choices and notions of right and wrong. For many individuals, this strongly influences choices in their personal and professional lives. However, family and neighbourhood dynamics are changing, partly through a shift away from traditional to modern lifestyles, partly in the move to nuclear rather than extended family units, and partly through materialism and reliance on modern technology. Some of these changes are positive, but they can also potentially reduce the space for mutual learning and the transfer of wisdom, knowledge and skills from one generation to the next. This is felt all the more profoundly in a conflict region like Jammu and Kashmir.

At a community level, education is a fundamental influence given that young people spend at least twelve years in school for their basic education. Many young people see the teaching environment, including pedagogy, the curriculum, teacher-student communication and the evaluation system, as largely authoritarian. The educational system does not foster mutual bonds of sharing and learning.

In the wider community, traditional socio-religious practices of sharing are perhaps less evident; practices that symbolised care, trust, sustenance, reliance and a sense of belonging. However, these values have not been forgotten as witnessed by the collective responses in times of crisis, such as during the floods of 2014, which caused large scale destruction in the Kashmir Valley. Youth feel that such humanitarian responses that emphasise the common good need to be further supported and this could be achieved in part by reinvigorating a traditional ethos of community wellbeing.

Indeed, inter-community relations are a substantial challenge. There are divisions based on religion, ethnicity, language and region. In some areas inter-community divisions have widened and become increasingly polarised along religious lines. Religious pluralism – the practice of accepting the religion of other communities – has declined to a large extent.

There are many causes, but a lack of interaction between communities is a contributing factor. The lack of a meaningful interface between the different peoples of the regions has led to many false generalisations and stereotypes, and led to misunderstanding and prejudice. Many youth feel that dialogue has to be initiated between communities to deconstruct such attitudes and reinforce universal values and shared interests.

To meet these challenges will require work to build relationships, both at the micro level (individual, family and local community) and the macro level (inter-community, inter-regional, international), which are based on dignity and trust. To begin with, people must suspend judgement and respect other people's ideas and aspirations; and attempts should be made to understand the reasons and motivations behind other people's behaviours and positions.

Self-sufficiency and sustainability

The vision: A society that enables all communities to rely on their own potential and resources to meet their needs, and that ensures economic, social and ecological sustainability.

This requires addressing how the people of Jammu and Kashmir can create and live in an environment in which they feel empowered and can be self-reliant. The aim is to seek ways of integrating indigenous resources with modern knowledge, also through building relationships and collaborative learning with neighbouring communities, to achieve self-sufficiency while also preserving local heritage and environments.

Gaps and challenges

Self-sufficiency means the fulfilment of needs using local resources and minimising the dependence on external sources. This dependence, though unavoidable in a globalised world, can be detrimental when it signifies commercial dominance by one region over another. Although self-sufficiency and sustainability are easy concepts to support theoretically, the challenge is to realise them practically.

In Jammu and Kashmir, the agrarian economy can play a key role in developing a sustainable and self-sufficient future. Agriculture has the potential to provide livelihoods for the growing population and can help to ameliorate unemployment. This could also help counter the perception that 'government jobs' are the only avenues to financial security.

The challenge is to adopt agricultural practices that complement local environmental conditions. This means blending modernity with traditional farming practices in a manner that does no harm to the environment. It requires alterations in current agricultural practices and rethinking the model of development: for example, challenging projects that are pursued for purely short-term monetary gain, such as the conversion of paddy fields into commercial crop fields, or using agricultural land for housing colonies, market places and other construction projects, particularly in ecologically sensitive locations.

Similar environmental concerns must be considered in broader economic development terms. In the process of economic development, the influence of economic activities on the environment has to be considered. If economic development hampers the sustainability and renewability of the environment, it poses an existential threat. This requires guarding against the overzealous exploitation of natural resources. It also argues for a blend of the modern and the traditional. For example, many new residential developments are being built with no regard to environmental considerations; they turn cold in winters and hot in summers, and they are energy inefficient. Drawing on the traditional art of house making – practices that are still alive in many rural settings in the region, especially in Ladakh – and integrating these techniques with modern knowledge could produce more environmentally sensitive developments which respond to a growing population in sustainable ways.

In terms of wider environmental challenges, such as climate change and global warming, it is important to recognise that local people can use their indigenous knowledge and practices to interpret and react to these challenges in creative ways, drawing on traditional knowledge and modern technologies, to help wider society.

A further challenge to building a sustainable future concerns social capital and cultural identity. Culture keeps on evolving and adapting but something is lost if traditional elements are completely jettisoned. It is important that people can preserve their identity, and celebrate their heritage and distinctiveness with due respect to others.

Agriculture: reviving the agrarian economy

Many people in Jammu and Kashmir are associated with agriculture, horticulture and their allied occupations, and most farmers and fruit-growers cultivate their own land. Agriculture is important for self-sufficiency and sustainability – a dynamic agricultural sector can provide food security. In terms of sustainability, those working on the land are well placed to monitor and protect the environment. Agriculture also has the potential to provide some employment for a growing population.

A revival of the agrarian economy requires alterations in current agricultural practices. Some young people question economic policies that encourage imports, leaving local products and services undervalued: for example apples are both imported and exported from the Kashmir Valley, a process that seemingly wastes a lot of resources and occurs because of ineffective and inefficient economic policies.

Some young people want to see a revision to agricultural practices that are more in harmony

with local environmental conditions. This could be done without sacrificing the perks of modernisation. Despite these challenges, there is not a blanket pessimism with regards to change and development, Youth would rather desire to see localised sustainable development which integrates tradition and modernity.

But without land reform, in some areas, agriculture will not sustain population growth. In AJK, nearly 83 per cent of people have some land. But these holdings get distributed among family members over time, and as the property gets subdivided, people end up holding insufficient cultivable land to support a household. Land reforms are needed to address this problem and meet the needs of a growing population. Ideas suggested in the research and discussions conducted for this report include laws to ensure a fixed minimum (and maximum) holding for each family, with redistributions taking place every 10 years. Some participants feel that incentives and regulations could be used so that uncultivated land is fully utilised.

Economy

Economic development is a core component of improving individual, family and community wellbeing. However, young people throughout the region strongly believe that the conflict is hampering economic growth and, moreover, are often critical of the economic policies that are being pursued by the respective governments.

In the Kashmir Valley, 93 per cent of respondents to surveys identified a lack of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities as a major problem and 90 per cent said people within their communities experience difficulty finding jobs. But many youth reject the narrative that unemployment is fuelling the conflict and contributing to militancy. Instead, they argue that the existing political economy and its structures are the prime cause of the lack of economic opportunities, and that current policies are undermining the local economic structures in order to make Kashmiris increasingly dependent on government jobs, schemes and aid. Many in the Valley take the view that any economic transformation is impossible without a political solution to the overall conflict.

Similarly in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, most young people surveyed believe that economic progress cannot be made due to the conflict. The undecided future of both regions and the existing constitutional arrangements make it difficult to attract meaningful investment from international and local investors. The economy is constrained by the regions' remoteness and isolation from major markets, poor infrastructure and dislocation of normal civic life along the LoC. Many people are forced to move away to seek jobs.

In looking for economic progress to help achieve the vision of community wellbeing, youth are clear that they want local control of economic development. Many argue that the region is not ready for an unsupported market economy, and much more emphasis should be placed on economic development initiatives. They want the natural resources of the region, such as forestry and hydropower resources, to be used to benefit the region. A common complaint is that resources are being misused. Local populations neither get a fair share of the resources nor the economic proceeds from the exploitation of those resources.

In the Kashmir Valley, for example, a government of India owned company, the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation, generates hydropower, but about 90 per cent of the power is distributed outside of the region. In AJK, electricity generated in the region is supplied directly to the Water and Power Development Authority of Pakistan. So although AJK produces enough electricity to establish a medium-scale industrial base that could provide economic development and employment, in practice it does even not receive sufficient electricity to meet local requirements. Nor, young people argue, does it receive fair compensation: the royalty rate paid to the AJK government is lower than that paid to other provincial governments in Pakistan for similar schemes.

Young people make similar arguments about local control when it comes to developing the transport infrastructure that could support economic development. In Gilgit-Baltistan, the expansion and extension of Karakoram Highway (KKH) and the proposed railway track has the potential to make the region a hub of multilateral trade, connecting Pakistan with China and having the potential to link the Central Asian region to South Asia in the future. But people want to see the local region sharing in the potential economic gains. They want Gilgit-Baltistan representatives on key decision-making bodies concerning

trade with China via the Karakoram Highway and they want to see royalties paid to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan on projects being constructed in the constituencies.

Developments in transport and other infrastructure should meet the needs of the people and benefit the community. Over recent years in the Kashmir Valley, many roads have been built and expanded, together with railway lines and other infrastructure. But young people question whether they are contributing to people's wellbeing and whether they are incurring more costs than benefits. They raise environmental concerns citing, for example, the construction of the Central University on a wetland that is being reclaimed using soil that is being extracted from the mountain and then transported many kilometres to the site.

These broad concerns –distrust of local, state and national governments, a lack of local accountability and control, and worries that unsuitable economic models are being forced on the region – apply to all economic initiatives. They are expressed most strongly by young people in the Kashmir Valley. For example, concerns are expressed in relation to tourism: the focus on the economic potential of tourism is viewed with scepticism. Some young people argue that in its present form tourism is exploitative, not just of the Kashmiri people and their situation, but of the environment as well. It becomes part of the problem rather than any solution, and would only have potential if it is much more integrated with the local environment and aligned to the needs of local people.

In comparison, young people in the Pakistani-administered regions are rather more positive, seeing potential for leisure tourism in Poonch and Muzaffarabad divisions, and for adventure tourism in Neelum Valley and in Gilgit-Baltistan. Tourism in these regions is seen in more positive light; with the potential to boost the economy, and provide a multiplier effect for income and employment.

Similarly, there are different perspectives on the value of cross-LoC trade initiatives while the political conflict is unresolved. Although youth in the Kashmir Valley recognise that initiatives for making the LoC more porous and which allow travel across it are very important, particularly for the people who want to trade and for divided families or communities, they do not see that a focus on cross-LoC confidence building measures alone will resolve the core conflict. For young people in AJK and parts of Gilgit-Baltistan (particularly in the Skardu division), cross LoC trade can help create economic interdependence between the two parts of the divided region and could create networks that could improve people's wellbeing. They would like to see more movement, the opening up of new routes, such as Kargil-Skardu, Mirpur-Naushera, Tithwal-Chilhan, Gurez-Astore-Gilgit, Chumb-Pallanwalla, Kotli-Rajori. They would also like to see the development of free trade based on financial transactions rather than the current barter system based on the reciprocal exchange of goods, and the lifting of the tax levied on traders entering Pakistan. Many youth wish for a space for more cross LoC projects such as sports festivals for young people and a network for disaster management.

Although perspectives differ on the importance of cross-LoC initiatives, one uniting factor is that, as in other areas of economic development, young people want to see much more local control and participation.

Conclusion

The Vision articulated here is based on shared values which emerged through a participatory and inclusive process. These values – dignity and trust, equality and justice, freedom and responsibility, inclusivity and participation, individual, family and community wellbeing, relationships and collaborative learning, and self-sufficiency and sustainability – form an ethical basis upon which to build a better future. As such, this Vision has relevance for and resonance with wider communities in Jammu and Kashmir and beyond. These values, and the dynamic process through which they were conceived, have the potential to be catalyst for transformation of the region and for the creation of the peaceful future that people want to see.

Published reports

Unheard voices: engaging youth of Gilgit-Baltistan
Syed Waqas Ali and Taki Akhunzada, published January 2015

In a deep dilemma: a needs assessment of youth in India-administered Jammu and Ladakh
Fayaz Ahmad Dar with contributions from Chozang Namgial (Ladakh) and Chetan Ghai (Jammu), published December 2014

Living in pressure cooker situation: a needs assessment of youth in Indian-administered Kashmir
Fayaz Ahmad Dar, published August 2011

The Impact of Conflict on Young People in Azad Jammu and Kashmir
Waqas Ali, Centre for Peace, Development and Reforms, published Dec 2012

Opening spaces for youth in Jammu & Kashmir
Fayaz Ahmad Dar, published August 2014

Numbers of youth from Jammu and Kashmir engaged

Region	Number of focus groups	Total participants and meetings
AJK	34	675
Islamabad	10	200
Gilgit-Baltistan	10	200
Kashmir	33	2133
Jammu	10	362
Ladakh	9	359
Total	**106**	**3,929**

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