

January 20, 2026

High-Level Mission of Religions for Peace International and ACRP to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

In January 2026, Religions for Peace Bangladesh hosted a high-level mission to Cox's Bazar by Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General of Religions for Peace International, and Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP). The visit represented a strong expression of solidarity and collaboration among the international, regional, and national bodies of Religions for Peace, reaffirming their shared commitment to peacebuilding through interfaith dialogue, humanitarian action, and ethical leadership.

Cox's Bazar is a region of profound humanitarian and social importance, shaped by religious diversity, economic vulnerability, and the presence of displaced populations. Against a backdrop of escalating global conflicts and regional instability, the joint mission underscored the urgent need for peace initiatives grounded in compassion, inclusion, and cooperation across religious and cultural boundaries.

Ms. Deepika Singh highlighted the global implications of ongoing wars and violent conflicts, emphasizing their devastating impact on social harmony and on vulnerable groups, particularly children. She stressed the importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces where children and marginalized communities can experience care, creativity, and hope. Ms. Singh commended the initiatives of Religions for Peace Bangladesh as meaningful local expressions of the global mission and values of Religions for Peace.

Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara provided a regional perspective rooted in Asia's interfaith traditions, underscoring shared religious teachings that affirm compassion, non-violence, reconciliation, and respect for human dignity. He emphasized that in times of division and uncertainty, dialogue, trust, forgiveness, and concrete cooperation become moral imperatives. Rev. Dr. Shinohara reaffirmed ACRP's commitment to strengthening partnership with Religions for Peace Bangladesh and supporting peacebuilding efforts across the region.

During the mission, the delegation participated in interfaith dialogue sessions, humanitarian outreach for displaced and underserved communities, children-focused initiatives, and winter relief activities. These engagements demonstrated how global vision, regional cooperation, and local action can converge to address complex humanitarian and social challenges.

The mission reaffirmed Religions for Peace's conviction that peace must be actively practiced through justice, solidarity, and sustained engagement. The visit strengthened interfaith relationships at the local level, reinforced institutional collaboration, and laid a foundation for continued cooperation aimed at promoting peace, human dignity, and social harmony in Bangladesh and beyond.

During their visit, Ms. Singh and Dr. Shinohara actively participated in and inspired the following major initiatives:

Religions for Peace Bangladesh

1. “Art for Peace” Children’s Art Competition (14 January 2026) – an educational and creative initiative engaging over 100 children from Grades III to VI in expressing themes of peace, coexistence, and interreligious harmony.
2. Distribution of Educational Materials, Toys, and Food to Displaced Children (15 January 2026, Morning) – a humanitarian outreach for more than one hundred children displaced from Myanmar, providing school supplies, nutritional support, and toys to children living in vulnerable conditions.
3. Distribution of Blankets to Displaced People (15 January 2026, Morning) – winter relief for underprivileged and displaced communities from Myanmar, supplying warm blankets to mitigate the hardships of extreme cold.
4. Dialogue for Interfaith Harmony (15 January 2026, Evening) – the dialogue provided a platform for reflection on ethical, social, and constitutional dimensions of interfaith engagement, connecting regional experiences with global perspectives on peacebuilding.

“Art for Peace” Children’s Art Competition

Organized by Religions for Peace Bangladesh Chapter Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh | 14 January 2026

Religions for Peace (RfP) Bangladesh Chapter organized a children’s art competition titled “Art for Peace” in Cox’s Bazar as part of its continued commitment to promoting a culture of peace, interreligious harmony, and social cohesion through inclusive, educational, and creative initiatives.

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

The “Art for Peace” program was held on Wednesday, 14 January 2026, at Holy Child School, Cox’s Bazar. More than one hundred students from Grades III to VI participated enthusiastically, using art to express themes of peace, harmony, solidarity, love, coexistence, and mutual respect.

The inaugural session was presided over by Principal Kyaw Thein Aung, President of the Religions for Peace Cox’s Bazar Chapter. The session was moderated by Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General of Religions for Peace Bangladesh, who guided the proceedings and highlighted the importance of peace education from an early age.

Religions for Peace Bangladesh

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

Through vibrant colors and diverse creative expressions, the participating children conveyed strong messages of peace, interreligious harmony, friendship, and social solidarity. At a time of social uncertainty and global tension, the artworks reflected hope, empathy, and a vision of coexistence rooted in shared human values.

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

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

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

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

**Organized by Religions for Peace Bangladesh
Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh | 15 January 2026 (Morning)**

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

The distribution program was conducted on 15 January 2026 at two locations in Cox's Bazar District: the Rakhine Development Foundation (RDF) Center in Cox's Bazar town and a Buddhist temple in Chowfaldandi Union, Cox's Bazar Sadar Upazila. More than one hundred

Religions for Peace Bangladesh

displaced children benefited from the initiative, receiving school bags, notebooks, educational supplies, children's food, and toys.

Leadership and Support

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

Messages from Distinguished Guests

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

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

The distribution program was facilitated by Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General of RfP Bangladesh and Professor at the University of Chittagong. In his remarks, he stressed that children do not belong only to a particular community or nation; rather, every child is a shared responsibility of humanity. He highlighted the urgent need for collective action to safeguard children's fundamental rights to food, education, and care.

Participation

At both distribution sites, the program was attended by leaders and representatives of Religions for Peace Bangladesh, RDF, and local interfaith communities, including Poet Biswajit Barua, Treasurer of RfP Bangladesh; Faruk Taher, Organizing Secretary and journalist; Professor Md. Jasim Uddin, Executive Member of RfP Bangladesh and Professor at the University of Chittagong; and Principal Kyaw Thein Aung, Chairman of RDF and former Principal of Cox's Bazar City College.

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

Impact on Children

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

Extended Program Coverage

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

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

Context and Significance

An estimated more than 1.2 million people displaced from Myanmar are currently residing in Bangladesh. While many live in formal refugee camps, a significant number—particularly displaced families from Rakhine State—remain outside official refugee support systems and continue to face acute vulnerability. Within this limited but urgent context, Religions for Peace Bangladesh has sought to stand beside these children and families through targeted, compassionate interventions.

Conclusion

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

Distribution of Blankets to Displaced People

**Organized by Religions for Peace Bangladesh
Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh | 15 January 2026**

Religions for Peace (RfP) Bangladesh organized a winter relief program distributing warm blankets to displaced and underprivileged people from Myanmar currently residing in Bangladesh. This initiative reflects RfP Bangladesh's commitment to human dignity,

humanitarian action, and interfaith solidarity, particularly during periods of extreme weather and vulnerability.

Background and Rationale

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

Program Implementation

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

The program was executed with the patronage of Religions for Peace International and supported through the leadership of RfP Bangladesh, with active participation from local partners.

Blankets were distributed by:

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

Other distinguished participants included:

- Poet Biswajit Barua, Treasurer, RfP Bangladesh
- Faruk Taher, Organizing Secretary and journalist
- Professor Md. Jasim Uddin, Executive Member and Professor of Fine Arts, University of Chittagong
- Principal Kyaw Thein Aung, Chairman, RDF

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

Impact and Significance

The initiative provided immediate relief to displaced people facing extreme cold, enhancing their well-being and dignity. While the program covered only a small fraction of the urgent needs, it demonstrated the humanitarian and peace-building role of faith-based organizations. By

translating dialogue and ethical commitments into practical action, RfP Bangladesh underscored the importance of solidarity, compassion, and social responsibility.

Dialogue for Interfaith Harmony

Organized by Religions for Peace Bangladesh and Religions for Peace Cox's Bazar Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh | 15 January 2026

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

Leadership and Participation

The dialogue was chaired by Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed, Secretary General of Religions for Peace Bangladesh. The program was honored by the presence of Ms. Deepika Singh, Deputy Secretary General of Religions for Peace International and Rev. Dr. Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP).

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

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

Opening Reflections and Tribute

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

Overview of the Dialogue Theme and Objectives

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

Religions for Peace Bangladesh

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

The dialogue identified three key objectives:

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

Regional Insights and Interfaith Cooperation in Asia

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

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

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

Global Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding

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

Ms. Singh highlighted the importance of connecting global peacebuilding frameworks with local realities, and commended RfP Bangladesh for grounding interfaith dialogue in lived social

Religions for Peace Bangladesh

contexts. She noted that initiatives such as this dialogue demonstrate how global values of peace and solidarity can be meaningfully translated into local action.

Dialogue Contributions and Reflections

The dialogue featured thoughtful contributions from representatives of diverse religious communities and civil society, including veteran freedom fighter Fazlul Kader Chowdhury, Professor Akhtar Alam, Engineer Badiul Alam, Principal Rahmat Salam, Principal Ajit Das, Dr. Alok Chakraborty, Poet Biswajit Barua (Treasurer, RFP Bangladesh), Professor Sharmin Siddika Lima, Professor Shahnur Akhtar, Nilotpal Barua, Rabindra Barua, Advocate Pratibha Das, Pastor Sushanta Nath, among others.

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

Institutional Strengthening

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

Conclusion

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

- *This report is respectfully submitted to the Religions for Peace Asia Secretariat for record and publicity.*



Professor Dr. Masum Ahmed
Secretary General
Religions for Peace Bangladesh