Friday Sermons - Now for Peacebuilding

Abdul Qayyum demonstrated that using Mosque for social amity, peacebuilding is a viable communication instrument in a society

Abdul Qayyum is a teacher in Jamia Anwaarul Quran and in addition assists the administrative office and also teaches at the Islamic University for Women in Karachi. This is not it: Abdul is also a prayers’ leader at his local mosque and regularly leads the Friday prayers also that is a regular and community level occurrence on weekly basis.

Before attending the Local Leaders for Peace training in Karachi, Abdul Qayyum was not aware of the power, access and impact that an unusual but a regular practice wields over society: Friday sermon!

“I have to admit that I did not know and understand the power, access and impact that my regular services to my community could have on the people I meet every day. For me, leading a prayer, addressing a large gathering on Friday and engaging in various kinds of religious questions and answers was all that a Mosque, and my engagement at the facility, was. And now in all honesty, I have to say that my perspective and my approach toward my services to my community have been entirely changed only and only because of the Leadership training that I received.”

During the training, Abdul learnt, most importantly, the dynamic and flow of the Common Ground Approach. For him, it was an interesting experience but not without the resistance from within the community. “Although, it is nothing big but people take many things for granted in our communities and when I shared that I am going to attend the training program, people could not believe their ears,” Abdul smiles and recalls the process. “Many told me that why would you need such a training as you already know so much and usually have the answers to all our questions and problems?” This was the standard response in addition to the smiles considering a prayer leader going the “NGO way!”

After the training, Abdul found that there is much more to the dynamics of any and all kinds of social conflicts and at times, merely a social position in a small community is not enough to resolve personal, group and/or community disputes. “I had no idea about the complexities of the word ‘conflict’ as I handled many such situations as they arose without considering that these situations could have a scientific definition and explanation also,” Abdul adds. Now the Friday sermons in his community are just not routine and standard talk as he laces the talk with deliberate efforts to talk to the community by keeping the “Common Ground Approach” in mind. He terms this approach “apt, conscious and appropriately cut out to address social conflicts via a peacebuilding approach.”

Abdul now sees his Friday sermons routine as an opportunity to engage with his community much more meaningfully and thanks the SFCG Pakistan for the opportunity.

“Do not stop and engage thousands others like me. It will help us all,” he says.