

took offense because they thought the Salam Institute team assumed they were teaching violence in the name of Islam.¹⁷

Although the Salam Institute team was a diverse group from different Arab and Muslim countries, nevertheless, in the initial few meetings, the suspicion was high, and the leaders of the schools posed difficult questions to the team to clearly test their loyalties. For example, “are you here to change our Islamic personal laws?” teachers from Niger asked Salam's team? “Are you here to change our Sharia laws ?” “Do you follow Sharia in your life?”

The primary strategy followed by Salam's approach was to build personal relationships and spend more informal time with the teachers and their religious leaders and share personal experiences and stories about their work for peace in the Muslim world. They repeatedly emphasize that Salam Institute’s approach does not interfere with the content of the religious curriculum. Salam Institute’s intervention is exclusively educational and has no political agenda or negative implications for the schools or the community. Salam Institute’s approach will target their ways of teaching instead of the content of the Quran or Hadith.

The Salam Institute team often repeated various assuring statements to build trust with the teachers and their leaders. Some of these statement included:

“You (Quranic teachers) are the experts in what you are teaching. We -the Salam team- are here to try and work with you based on your teachings, emphasizing how to be effective as educators.”

“We have no intention of changing the curriculum. You have been working for centuries – over thirteen hundred years teaching Islam this way and that there had not been any extremism.”

“If you wish to proceed, we were there only to make their teaching more effective.”

Another influential factor in gaining the trust of the Quranic schools in Chad, Niger, and Cameroon was related to the Salam Institute team's decision to work through local trainers who had experience working with the Quranic schools before. These Imams themselves have received training of trainers (ToT) seminars from Salam and other organizations. These local team members became the focal points for the intervention of Salam Institute in these communities. They supported the process of designing specialized manuals to guide the teachers and monitor its implementation process.

We can only teach in our local language and dialect

After building a certain level of trust, the Salam Institute team began its training and capacity building in how to teach the core values, such as: diversity, nonviolence, problem solving, equality, dialogue, etc., through Quranic and hadith sources, and local traditional cultural songs.

¹⁷ Such assumption was fully accurate if applied to majority of international western donors who work with Islamic Quranic schools. (see Riaz and Gavriel, “Faithful Education: Madrassahs in South Asia”; Abu-Nimer, Nasser, and Ouboulahcen, “Introducing Values of Peace Education in Quranic Schools in Western Africa.”; and other literature and public image of these schools in media)

- Daud, Darni M., Asna Husin, and Karim Douglas Crow, eds. *Peace Education Curriculum: Programa Pendidikn Damai*. New York: UNICEF, 2002.
- Delavande, Adeline, and Basit Zafar. "Stereotypes and Madrassas: Experimental Evidence from Pakistan." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011.
http://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WR859.
- Homeland Security News Wire. "Pakistan Grappling with the Problem of Hate-Breeding, Violence-Legitimizing Madrassas." *Home Land Security News Wire*, February 19, 2015.
<http://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20150219-pakistan-grappling-with-the-problem-of-hatebreeding-violencelegitimizing-madrassas>.
- Jafari, Sheherazade. "Islamic Peace Education: A Conversation on Promising Practices." New York: Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, 2013.
https://tanenbaum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Islamic_Peace_Education_Report.pdf.
- Koylu, Mustafa. "Peace Education: An Islamic Approach." *Journal of Peace Education* 1, no. 1 (2004): 59–76.
- Looney, Robert. "Reforming Pakistan's Educational System: The Challenge of the Madrassas." *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 28, no. 3 (2003): 257–74.
- Malik, Jamal, ed. *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?* London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Moeller, Susan. "Think Again: Bush's War on Terror." Center for American Progress, 2004.
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2004/03/18/615/think-again-bushs-war-on-terror/>.
- Philpott, Daniel. *Just and Unjust Peace: An Ethic of Political Reconciliation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Riaz, Ali and Gavriel. "Faithful Education: Madrassahs in South Asia." In *Peace Education: The Concept, Principles, and Practices Around the World*, edited by Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. Salomon, 2008.

Said, Abdul Aziz, Meena Sharify-Funk, and Mohammed Abu-Nimer. *Contemporary Islam: Dynamic, Not Static, Co-Edited with New*. York: Routledge Publication, 2006.

Salifu, Uyo, and Martin Ewi. "Boko Haram and Violent Extremism-Perspectives from Peacebuilders." Policy Brief. Institute for Security Studies (ISS), February 2017.
<https://www.africaportal.org/publications/boko-haram-and-violent-extremism-perspectives-from-peacebuilders/>.

Salomon, Gavriel. "The Nature of Peace Education: Not All Programs Are Created Equal." In *Peace Education: The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World*, 3–13. Mahwah, NJ, US: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2002.

Satha-Anand, Chaiwat. "The Nonviolent Crescent: Eight Theses on Muslim Nonviolent Actions." In *Islam and Nonviolence*, edited by Chaiwat Satha-Anand, Glenn D. Paige, and Sarah Gilliatt, 7–26. Honolulu: Center for Global Nonviolence Planning Project, Matsunaga Institute for Peace, University of Hawai'i, 1993.