



Our March 2023 talk, *Radical Compassion: Overcoming Hate and Building Understanding*, with (from left) scholar-activist Loretta Ross, BRAVE Schools co-trainers Tony McAleer and Robert Örell, and Karuna director Polly Byers.

To access recordings of the project's public events, visit karunacenter.org/brave-schools.

From our programs worldwide (from top to bottom): Participants after a successful dialogue in Nahuche community, Nigeria; community dialogue in Myanmar; and a digital security training in Myanmar.



Peacebuilding in the U.S: *Partnering with Schools to Prevent Violence and Hate*

Schools are at the center of conflicts that affect the safety and wellbeing of youth, families, and communities across the United States. As the nation becomes more politically polarized, and the youth mental health crisis continues, young people are at greater risk of being targeted and harmed—and many are also vulnerable to becoming involved in hateful or violent ideologies or groups themselves. Hate crimes are on the rise, and so are mass shootings—increasingly perpetrated by older teens and young adults. How can schools work effectively to *prevent* violence within their walls and beyond, and help safeguard their communities?



Educators are in a unique position to identify, and constructively engage, youth who are at risk of becoming involved in violence and hate. School communities can also play a powerful role in establishing new norms for dealing with conflict and difference in these challenging times.

BRAVE Schools is one of 43 projects nationwide funded by the Department of Homeland Security's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships, opportunity number DHS-22-TTP-132-00-01.

BRAVE Schools (*Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism in Schools*) is a new Karuna Center project that partners with middle and high schools in the U.S., beginning with a pilot of eight schools in our home office community of Western Massachusetts. The project works to build youth resilience to violence and hate, strengthen restorative approaches to discipline, and foster a safer, more fully inclusive school community.

BRAVE Schools held its first workshops in March and April of 2023, focusing on developing and supporting Care Teams who lead the project's implementation within each school—building on their existing strengths and expertise.

The Alliance for Peacebuilding—a network of 165+ organizations working in 181 countries, of which Karuna Center is a member—is leading BRAVE Schools' monitoring and evaluation processes, as part of their work to research strategies for local peacebuilding in the U.S.

Dialogue for Action on Climate Pollution

Over the past two years, **Transforming the Conversation on Carbon Pricing** dialogues have brought together carbon pricing advocates (*who seek a tax, or some kind of price, on carbon pollution*) and environmental justice leaders (*who represent communities directly impacted by pollution—which are disproportionately people of color and low-income*). The process has successfully built trust and deepened understanding among ideologically diverse participants, and has even

brought about collaboration on national climate change legislation.

This winter, in partnership with **Pattern Change Lab** and with an expanded group of participants, we launched Phase 2 of this project in which we will co-develop concrete policy recommendations for carbon pricing mechanisms that avoid negative impacts and protect all communities' right to a healthy environment.



Community dialogue facilitators from six communities in Benue state, Nigeria

“We have really seen this dialogue works during our [February 2023] election. Religious bias, or some things that used to happen during the election, conflict or differences between parties—during this election it was minimized, because of the understanding and knowledge people have been acquiring through the dialogue.”



—Gift Jerry, POCl community dialogue facilitator in Kawuwan Magani, Nigeria

Equipping Nigerian Communities with Tools to Build Peace

Participants in the **Protecting Our Communities Initiative (POCI)** are facing complex, evolving conflict dynamics that make locally-rooted peacebuilding a necessity. In partnership with the Nigeria-based Neem Foundation, we have worked over the past three years to establish peacebuilding systems within 18 communities, across three Nigerian states—with a focus on supporting the leadership of women and youth.

POCI's community-based early warning-early response committees and community-led dialogues have **resolved more 460 local incidents** since 2020 that could have escalated to broader violence. More importantly, the project has rebuilt trust and cooperation among community members and with security forces.

Through call-in radio programs, mental health workshops, community drama performances, and social media, POCl further supports community members to participate in peacebuilding, and engages the broader public.

The project's dialogues have fostered new alliances between statewide associations of farmers and of herders—as land use conflicts are exacerbated by climate change. The associations' leadership have found common ground, developed a shared advocacy platform, and are now actively working together to address the root causes of farmer-herder conflicts. In one state, forty women from the two organizations also met for dialogue—reunited for the first time since farmer-herder conflicts began reaching crisis levels about 20 years ago.

Supporting Peace Work Under Military Rule in Myanmar

Our **Watering the Banyan Tree** project has officially drawn to a close, after two years of supporting Myanmar peace workers who are living under harsh conditions of military rule. The project team was able to create a safer space for activists to build their skills and networks, and share skills to foster a strong, inclusive civil society.

More than 75 new dialogue facilitators received in-depth training through the project, then facilitated more than 30 dialogues among hundreds of diverse participants. They then led a series of community-based activities based on the needs identified in dialogues, ranging from workshops about psychological trauma to creating a small children's library. Participating organizations also designed and led nine in-depth “creative influencing” campaigns to advocate for rights and inclusion, using strategies that present less risk to activists.

“I used to have difficulty trusting others after a conflict. But after the dialogue training, I have seen that all people are not the same. Among the different groups of the same religion, we shouldn't only talk but understand that we should listen to them as well.”

—Watering the Banyan Tree Participant



A community dialogue in Myanmar

The project has developed a range of ongoing resources and supports for carrying the work on—including a Peace Practitioners' Handbook and digital learning platform, ongoing Sangha Talk dialogues among monks and nuns, and a Digital Peace Club for youth leaders.

Honoring Paula Green's Legacy

The Paula Green Legacy Fund

was established in 2022 by an anonymous lead donor and other generous supporters, to honor the life and work of Karuna's founder. The first grants support three of our longstanding partners, who do vital work in their communities:



Center for Peacebuilding rebuilds trust and fosters reconciliation across ethnic and religious divides in Bosnia and Herzegovina, using dialogue, youth peace camps, and skill-building in conflict resolution. www.unvocim.net



Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities works in Rwanda to create community-based psychosocial support for people to heal their traumatic conflicts and rebuild their peaceful lives. healingandrebuiltourcommunities.org



Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena Sansadaya, in Sri Lanka, will use this grant to prevent youth recruitment into violent extremism and build interfaith cooperation. www.sarvodaya.org/shanthi-sena.net