Waging Peace in Multicultural Banaras

You are part of a research team sent to India by United States Institute of Peace (USIP - https://www.usip.org/) in late 2010-early 2011. You have been sent to Banaras, Uttar Pradesh following the December 7, 2010 bomb blast at the Dashashwamedh Ghat during Ganga Aarti celebrations. Your job is to learn about the response and reaction to the blasts by visiting and interviewing various civil society organizations around the city. Today you are visiting Banaras Hindu University (BHU). This visit is aimed at collecting data for possible future de-escalation activities funded by USIP. First you must gauge reaction to the shocking events that recently happened. Your team’s goal is to ensure that this event does not lead to further religious/cultural/communal tension and violence. Read the brief description of the organization you are to contact (below) and prepare a 1-page strategic plan for your visit with the organization’s leadership (a few questions listed immediately after this paragraph, may help guide you in developing your strategic meeting plan). In doing this you will need to reflect on what you know about the organization from the brief description below/course readings and what you DO NOT know. You may use the internet to learn what more you can... Prepare a strategic plan for the meeting with BHU in simple step-by-step format. Bullet points are acceptable for this assignment. Try to anticipate questions from the organization’s leadership about what a potential USIP peacebuilding initiative brings to the table to stop the possibility of further violence. Why can an outside organization be helpful to the tense situation? How will you persuade leadership at BHU of this? What expertise do you think your contact organization might be able to provide in achieving your organizations’ long-term goals?

Sample Guiding Questions:

- How do you think recent events have transformed the structure or functions of the organization you are visiting?
- What social identity concerns might the organization have after these bombings?
- What questions will you need to ask the leadership at BHU, and which questions might require cultural sensitivity?
- How can you elicit from BHU leaders information that will be useful for possible conflict transformation?

Contact Organization:

**Banaras Hindu University (BHU)**

BHU ranks tops in the country for research and academic output. Founded by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviyain 1916 with the help of Dr. Annie Besant, BHU prides itself as delivering India’s best open and public education – it is what in India is called a Central University (which means that it receives much of its funding from the Federal government in New Delhi – India’s capital). Believing that institutions of higher learning are instrumental in providing equality of opportunity, BHU prides itself on being innovative and inclusive keeping in mind the highest standards. Only a few kilometers from Vishwanath Temple, BHU is also concerned about security following the December 7, 2010 bomb blast at the Dashashwamedh Ghat. For more on BHU, see their web-site - http://www.bhu.ac.in/