

APT quarterly Narrative Report (1 July 2017- 30 September 2017)

I. Main Activities

A total number of 1,232 students (492 females, 740 males) participated in the following activities organized by APT in the past quarter:

Debate:

During the past quarter APT organized 24 Dari and English debate training workshops and two debate exhibitions in Kabul and Samangan. APT also organized four English and one Dari Debate tournaments in Kabul, Herat, Faizabad Balkh and Samangan provinces, in which a total of 520 students (211 females and 309 males) participated. Additionally, APT organized its 4th annual national debate tournament from September 27 to 30 in Kabul in which a total of 120 debaters, 20 judges and 50 guests from Kabul, Herat, Mazar, Samangan and Faizabad participated. At the closing ceremony, APT had the privilege of hosting Fawzia Kofi, a member of Parliament, Dr. Hamidullah Farooqi, Dean of Kabul University and Special Advisor to the President, as well as several university chancellors and civil society members.

Media:

APT conducted 8 radio programs on De Rana Pa Latoon, a weekly live radio program that broadcasts through the Killid Radio every Thursday from 11-11:55am over the topic “Nation building”.

International:

APT selected a team of 6 students (4 females, 2 males) from Kabul, Badakhshan, Mazar and Herat provinces from among 80 applicants across Afghanistan based on their qualifications and commitment to APT's vision to participate in the Global Youth Peace Fest from September 28 to October 4, 2017 which took place in Chandigarh, SAS Nagar, and Amritsar. The team also had the opportunity to travel to Agra City, India for team building purposes.

Open Events

International Youth and Peace Day

APT celebrated the International Youth and Peace Day on August 12 at Kabul University with a panel discussion where the panelists inspired the audience of students by sharing stories through which they have affected the lives of thousands of young people, the challenges they faced, and how they overcame various challenges.

II. Context and Impact of Activities

Broader Context:

The security and political situation remains highly volatile and unpredictable. A Number of high-profile security incidents including suicide attacks on Shia mosques promoted fear of rising sectarian tension and further intensified public criticism of the government for not being able to provide security. Civilians continued to suffer from the conflict with continuing high level of displacement. Furthermore, unemployment rates are still high that force young Afghans to immigrate in the hopes of a better life elsewhere. In the face of security, political, and economic difficulties, it remains hard to convince people that there is still hope.

Despite the above challenges, government has made new plans with promises for change. For example, government has created a list of commitments to bring reform, fight corruption, and provide better opportunities for business and trade. Government has also made some attempts to reach out to the Taliban through regional and global mediators such as Pakistan, Russia, China, and the United States. Additionally, the international community has remained committed to having a presence and helping the Afghan government through 2020.

Civil society has remained resilient, and the government has at least verbally acknowledged our efforts. However, civil society is also fragile. One main difficulty with the Afghan civil society is that they are based on projects (as opposed to long-term visions) that are mostly designed by internationals who may or may not understand the Afghan context well. Nevertheless, these civil society organizations and media platforms are playing an important role in keeping hope alive, and moving the society forward.

In this context, APT remains the only Afghan professional youth-led organization that works full-time with university students to promote a culture of coexistence among different Afghan groups and internationals, and encourage young people to strive for a better future. As it is detailed above, APT's programs have created excitement among dozens of thousands of university students in six provinces and 35 public and private universities of Afghanistan.

Impact of APT:

APT works with individuals but it impacts both those individuals and the broader society of Afghanistan. At a time when there is at least one bombing every week somewhere in one of the major cities of Afghanistan including its capital Kabul that leaves dozens dead and injured and thousands traumatized, and political leadership has left little room for optimism among youth, APT organized one-on-one, small group, and big group events to help students see the future through these challenges. In these events, young Afghans got together to learn from each other, challenge one another, and think creatively about ways forward for their future. In APT debates, students were taught critical thinking. In international trips, they interacted with people who

were not just from another part of their country or believed slightly differently but people who came from completely different backgrounds. APT's events helped students believe in themselves, their worth, and their capabilities. Through debates, they realized that they can think about solutions, and through international trips they learned that coexistence with people from other ethnic or backgrounds is both possible and positive. Women are seen as second-class citizens in many settings. This narrative has installed a low self-confidence in women. This is a sad reality. APT's programs challenged this thinking, too.

For most of the people who participated in APT's Indian exposure trip, it was their first time to travel abroad, fly in an airplane, and experience being together with a group of Afghans outside of Afghanistan. They were excited, amazed, awed, challenged, and enjoyed their trip. In addition to that, through our exposure trip, we were able to change or at least challenge the perspectives of other people about Afghanistan. Furthermore, the team took part in culture night with their Afghan traditional cloths and performed a dance. Through this activity our message was that Afghanistan is not all about war and violence but we have a culture that has remained invisible. Afghans have the potential to live side by side with others and not only accept but celebrate differences.

APT works directly with individuals. However, the impact of its activities reach far beyond its direct participants. Students who were impacted by our events in the past quarter report that they have impacted their families with their more open thinking. For instance, families of APT's program participants allow their daughters to participate in our programs not only inside the country but also travel abroad with us. This is the result of the impact of our programs on students and their impact on their families. This change is not only true in some of the more progressive cities such as Kabul but also in remote provinces like Badakhshan and Herat that are traditionally known as more conservative places. For the first time, we had more female participation from Badakhshan and Herat at our national tournament in Kabul.

It is rewarding for us at APT to promote hope among Afghans at a time when despair prevails everywhere. Although we have made exciting progress, we believe there is still much undone. For this reason, we will continue to work hard and make change happen! Our long-term goal is to implement our vision in all the 34 provinces of Afghanistan by 2030. We are making progress toward this goal and paving the way for it by impacting individuals, families, and the overall society.