



Afghans for Progressive Thinking
Narrative Reports (October to December 2017)

January 18, 2018

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I. General Information

- Name of Organization: Afghans for Progressive Thinking, (APT)
- Website: www.apf.af
- Country: Afghanistan
- Reporting Period (dates): 1 October 2017-30 December 2017

II. Executive Summary

During October to December 2017, Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) was able to organize all of its planned activities, impact 1,237 students (865 male and 372 female), develop new partnerships, and strengthen its activities in six provinces where APT operates. Students who participated at APT's activities during this quarter demonstrated increased critical thinking and communication skills, improved leadership skills, and a broadened vision to promote APT's values in Afghanistan. This report covers the details of events and impacts of APT's activities from October to December 2017.

III. Main Activities

This part of the document reports solely the facts while the following section explains the impact of the events and why they matter in the context of Afghanistan.

Debate:

During the past quarter, APT organized two Dari debate tournaments in Kabul and Balkh provinces. Similarly, APT held 68 debate training sessions (8 in Dari and 60 in English) in Kabul, Balkh, Badakhshan, Herat and Samangan provinces. A total of 1,138 students comprising 350 women and 788 men participated in the APT's debate events this quarter. Some of the motions that were debated in the past quarter include the following:

- This house would treat all human beings equally in Afghanistan;
- This house believes that street harassment should be criminalized in Afghanistan;
- This house would appoint youth to key decision making positions in Afghan government;
- This house believes that Islamic teachings affirm democracy.

Leadership:

APT organized a Fall Leadership Development program for 24 Students (5 women, and 19 men) who came from Kabul, Kabul Education, Bakhtar and Estiqlal universities in Kabul. The program started on October 16, 2017 and ended on December 4, 2017. All the sessions were taught by APT staff who have taken these courses before or by volunteers from other organizations such as the United States Institute of Peace, Morning Star, and Silk Road Development. Some of the topics this course covered included: listening skills, decision making skills, nonviolent communication, respect and leadership, courage and leadership, servant leadership, conflict management and leadership, and the role of trust in leadership among other topics.

Toward the end of the course, students divided in two groups and each group chose a specific area to conduct ten hours of community service. One group of students visited a dormitory and orphanage to spend time with orphans, listen to their stories, and show loving care for them. The group also played games with orphan children and distributed stationery to them using a \$50-fund they had received from APT for their project.

The second group used their project's \$50-fund, raised another \$50 from among APT staff and their classmates and bought winter clothes for 5 poor families and 30 street children in [Puli Sourkh and Karti Sakhi area of Kabul].

Research and Dialogue:

In July 2017, APT began a new project called "Promoting Tolerance through Debate" which focuses mainly on doing research before appearing in a dialogue session. Under this program, APT recruited and trained 75 male and female students, of which 35 were from Kabul University and 40 were from Nangarhar University, in research methodology and debate ethics. This program expanded APT's activities to Nangarhar where the organization did not have a presence in the past. Nangarhar's districts are known for harboring violent extremist people where such groups recruit people from. In this context, APT's presence and the endeavor to promote values of tolerance and respect are very important.

Media:

In November 2017, utilizing some of its existing leadership materials, APT started a series of discussions on Countering Violent Extremism that were aired live through The Killid Radio in Kabul every Thursday morning for one full hour. Although the program was aired in Kabul, people could listen to it across the country through their radios as well as online via www.tkg.af. The program which was designed by APT will continue for the next nine months and build upon the discussions of the past quarter. The discussions are divided into 40 shows in three distinct and interrelated seasons.

IV. Qualitative Impact

APT is the first of its kind among the Afghan organizations that conducts activities with the objective of changing lives and attitudes, not just perceptions and behaviors. The former is of a deeper nature while the latter is more superficial. Over \$1 trillion were spend on superficial projects aiming to curb corruption, increase security, or build legal systems in the past 17 years in Afghanistan. While we acknowledge that those efforts are important, in the end the change has to come from within. It is with this understanding that APT's activities are designed and implemented. Although a value-based leadership and promoting such a culture is hard, long-term, and difficult to measure on a societal scale within the life of a one-year project, APT's activities are making massive impact on individuals and the number of these individuals is increasing every day.

Students who participated in our leadership programs enrolled with a narrow and "self-centered" vision and graduated equipped with values and wide visions for Afghanistan and the world. Every

single student's feedback about the overall impact of the program was positive. They said that the leadership program "opened their eyes" about true leadership, and taught them "life skills." Kazim Haidari, one of the leadership development course participants who led a community service project as part of his course work, said that he "discovered himself as someone who could help others" during his service project.

Similarly, students who debate keep hearing from us that APT does not organize debates just for the sake of debates. On the contrary, debate is about creating a culture of inclusion, embrace, and appreciation for diversity. Even though students get very competitive during the tournaments, the end result in them is increased tolerance, openness, and respect toward differences. They admit this fact, and tournament ballots and instructor reports verify it.

Overall in a country whose suicide attacks and insecurity makes the breaking news and international headlines, APT brings hope and unfolds the true identity of Afghans as people with just the same nature as any other human being on earth – with capacity and potential to do enormous good. When students hear this view, contemplate on it, and accept it, they become change makers in this country and the world. APT will continue to organize events with more passion than before and works tirelessly for the flourishing of Afghans and all who are in contact with us.

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