



APT Narrative Report (Jan – Mar 2017)

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I. General Information

- Name of Organization: Afghans for Progressive Thinking, (APT)
- Website: www.apf.af
- Country: Afghanistan

II. Main Activities

A total number of 1,137 students (426 female, 711 male) participated in the following activities organized by the APT in the past quarter:

Debate: During the past quarter APT organized 23 Dari and English debate training and practice sessions, organized one English debate tournament in Balkh and one debate exhibition in Kabul, Herat, Mazar, Samangan and Badakhshan provinces.

APT was also organize a round of debate tournament on occasion of Black History Month on the topic in February 2017 at the US Embassy in Kabul. The topic for for the Students form different universities in Kabul peacefully engaged in discussions with each other and debated on a topic chosen by APT.

A total number of 684 beneficiaries (442 male, 242 female) participated in our debate program during the fourth quarter.

Some of the motions in Navroz debate tournament of the past quarter included the following:

- This House believes that economic empowerment of women makes Afghanistan a better place.
- This House believes that youth have the main role in bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan.
- This House believes that Afghan youth migration to Europe seek them a better future.
- This House believes that federalism would cause ethnic discord and partitioning of Afghanistan.
- This House support feminism movements in Afghanistan.
- This House believes that role of youth is effective in fighting against corruption.

The Navroz tournament paved the way for the university students to examine some of the most important social issues and apply deep and sophisticated reasoning in favor and against them. The participants debated three preliminary rounds and two knockout rounds during the day. The topics discussed during the five rounds of debate were as follows:

Women working outside their houses, considering youth to have the main role in the society, supporting a Federal state in Afghanistan, and supporting globalization are complicated topics to discuss in Afghanistan. Some of the youth are more likely pro traditional Afghani lifestyle in which women do the housework and men take care of financial issues. On the other hand, some

of the youth believe in equal rights for women to have a job and earn money. When these two groups confronted each other in a round of debate, the arguments provided by both sides were convincing and very well-articulated. The pro traditional Afghani lifestyle group supported the Afghani culture where they believe in maternal duties of women which will eventually result in kids with good morals and better skills. On the other hand, the more open and modern group argued the importance of female contribution to the economic development of the country and the overall quality of life. They gave examples of countries with the highest percentage of female entrepreneurs and more females in the work force.

Similarly, the discussions over the Afghan youth migration issue not only raised important questions about the lives of youth who migrate through deadly routes in Iran and Turkey, but also the human capital in Afghanistan, skip of minds, and international migration laws. The participants seemed to have a broad knowledge of international migration laws. The adjudicators were very impressed by the speeches of the debaters. They believed that debaters not only presented well-articulated speeches, but also ones that were very rich in terms of content and very persuasive. They believe that debate is a good way to foster international understanding and cooperation worldwide.

The role of youth in bringing peace and stability was another interesting topic which led to a great discussion. Some youth believe that Afghanistan is a traditional society and it's always the elders and community leaders who have the main role in bringing peace and stability. They argued that people only listen to their elders, and they respect them, and they obey their commands. On the other hand, some youth believed that it's the youth who are fighting in both sides of the war. Both Taliban and Afghan National Security Forces recruit youth because they have the energy and potential to fight. Therefore, the youth have the main role in bringing peace and stability in Afghanistan. In the meantime, globalization and its threats, and supporting a Federal state in Afghanistan led to two other great discussions among the participants of the Navroz debate tournament.

Program of this nature is rarely organized for the university students. Mostly, the university students are busy with their curriculum with a teacher-centered method. Debate as an extracurricular activity not only enhances their communication and critical thinking skills but also teaches them the principles of tolerance, non-violence, and respect for different points of view. Debate provides equal opportunities for all the university students regardless of their ethnicity, sex, language and sect, to engage in meaningful discussions about the most confrontational social, political and economical issues.

Enhanced communication and critical thinking skills are among the advantages of being a debater. The participants in the debate programs have reportedly acknowledged this fact. Tamana Farewar, a junior student in the Faculty of Economics in Balkh province states, "Debate has made me to be at ease in social and professional environments. I feel confident when I talk to my friends and express my view points. Also, I don't have any fear when I am giving a presentation in my class." Through our debate programs we teach skills that serve individuals

well in school, in the workplace, in political life and in fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens of democratic societies.

A total number of 684 (242 Female and 442 male) students participated in APT's debate activities.

Leadership: In this quarter, APT announced its summer leadership 2017 program which will be conducted from April – May 2016. Our leadership program will equip men and women with leadership training that develops both character and competency to become transformed leaders who will transform the society. APT will recruit national and foreigners instructors to teach the course. Around 20 students will participate in this event.

Media: APT conducted 15 radio programs on De Rana Pa Latoon, a weekly live radio program that gets broadcast through the Killid Radio every Thursday from 11-11:55am. In the previous quarters the sessions were led by Ali Fayez, APT programs Coordinator, and Akmal Samsor APT's Honorary Member. As part of our media program, APT did social media campaign against violence. We organized a conference on "Philosophy Principles of Non-Violence for Creating a Peaceful and Violence Free Afghanistan" as a result of our three months talk on Non-Violence. Details of the conference is stated under the open events section in this report. APT's radio program for the next three month focus of the topic of violence in Family.

This quarter, an organization, International Assistance Mission (IAM), continued to assist APT with providing discussion materials for our radio program. Following the violence in Family topic, APT discussed the following topics in the past quarter.

- Nonviolence strategy for solving society issues
- Using a nonviolence philosophy for confronting the crisis in Afghanistan
- Youth's Role in Peacebuilding in Afghanistan
- Family planning
- Nonviolence conference recorded podcast
- Family planning – Leadership in family
- Family planning – management at family
- Education and Security debate show
- Family planning – management at family 2
- Family planning – father's and mother's role in family
- Family planning – a sound son/daughter

Open events:

Tea and Talk – “Developing the Leader Within You”

APT held a Tea and Talk session on January 3 at APT main office, briefing the book of John C. Maxwell “Developing the Leader Within You”. Kawsar Amman the former leadership intern of APT facilitated the session. Around 10 people attended the session.

“Philosophy Principles of Non-Violence for Creating a Peaceful and Violence Free Afghanistan”

APT in coordination with JS Consultancy, the Killid Group (TKG), and IAM (...) organized an event titled "Philosophy and Principles of Nonviolence Strategy for Creating a Peaceful and Violence-free Afghanistan" on Tuesday, January 31, 2017. 120 people (70 male, 50 female) including youth, government officials, religious leaders, and civil society attended the event. The conference briefed by Ali Fayez, programs manager of APT and followed by a panel discussion. The guest speakers for the panel were the following figures:

1. Mr. Kamal Saddat, the Acting Minister for Ministry of Culture and Information
2. Mr. Mawlavi Abdul Hakim Moneeb, Deputy Professional Minister at Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs
3. Mr. Mohammad Moheq, Islamic researcher theologian
4. Mr. Khan Wali Adel, nonviolence activist
5. Akmal Samsoor, social expert

The program concluded with recitation of a press release by APT, TKG and JSC. The press release included APT's demands from Afghan Government insisting making effective strategies or policies for countering violent extremism and nonviolent extremism in the country.

The event was part of our radio talk shows at Killid. APT's radio peacebuilding team were been talking on peace for the past six months. At the end of these talk shows APT initiated a social media campaign along with organizing the mentioned conference. The conference was covered by media

Celebrating International Day of Women - 8 March

APT celebrated the International Day of Women at APT office. Zahra Yagana the author of the book called Roshanai Khakistar (Light of Ashes) and Ms. Arefa Paikar the author of the book Dokhtran Chashm Badami (Girls with beautiful eyes) were the main speaker of the event. The program inaugurated with recitation of parts of the book of Light of Ashes by Mrs. Yagana. She narrated the story of her life as former child bride who is using her story to liberate Afghan women. Arefa Paikar is also a women activist whom shared her life story for the audience. The program went very friendly and the audience also had the chance to share their thought and stories too. Around 20 people mostly female young women attended this event.

III. Impact of Activities

Impact of APT: APT is emerging as the largest youth-led and youth-focused professional local organization in Afghanistan that is impacting major national discourses and challenging public regressive narratives. Over 1,137 students sat in at least one of APT's events during the past three months. Additionally, over one million people listened and viewed our media programs through different live radio and tv talk shows.

During this period, APT has had several initiatives. APT supported over 10 youth groups including debate clubs, student associations, and youth-led nonprofit organizations in the areas of leadership training and institutional development. We also designed two new projects: 1) *Reha* (Free), to promote women's public participation by training them in leadership skills and national and international human rights laws; and, 2) Youth Campaign against Corruption. These projects will be implemented in 2017 and continue over the next few years.

On a national level, APT represents youth in national Working Groups on "Countering Violent Extremism," and "Women, Peace, and Security." Numerous local and international organizations including the Afghan civil society, government, and UN agencies are members of these groups.

While gross human rights violations exist in the country, APT has spread awareness about human rights particularly the rights of women and youth among Afghans in order to reduce these violations. APT strives to create a society where all people thrive irrespective of their religion, ethnicity, race, gender, or nationality. APT's activities promote inclusion of all people and appreciation for all beliefs in the Afghan society. APT works to reduce prejudices against other religions and foster friendship between people of different faiths so that they exchange ideas about each other's beliefs and learn from one another.

Additionally, at a time of political and security instabilities, APT trained youth in leadership development and helped them form visions for the future of an open and free Afghanistan. Finally, APT taught critical thinking and strategic (and nonviolent) communication to several hundred students across Afghan campuses.

On regional and international levels, APT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Yuvsatta (Youth for Peace), an Indian based youth-focused organization that organizes events for youth from South and Central Asia, to represent Afghan youth in its regional level events. This will create an opportunity for APT to influence and shape regional discourses on issues of peace and justice. APT also played a leading role in advocating for the UN Security Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security, which recognizes the active role and rights of young people in bringing change in their societies, and represented Afghan youth at the first anniversary of this resolution in New York City in December 2016.

In conclusion, as a result of its successful activities, APT is emerging as the largest professional youth-focused organization that will lead and direct national discourses on important matters of life in Afghanistan. APT's goal is to have a presence and impact youth, with

a focus on university students, on all the major campuses in the 34 provinces of Afghanistan by 2030.

IV. Institutional Developments

Leadership Changes: APT's leadership structure has remained the same that includes a Board of Directors; an Executive Body with three departments: Administration and Communication, Finance, and Programs; and an International Board of Advisory. There have been a few changes as members are concerned in these bodies. For example, the Board of Directors recruited Mohammad Daoud Naebzada, a Kabul University graduate and lawyer, as a member.

Theories of Change: APT has continued to use its two theories of change to design and implement its activities: contact theory of change and critical thinking theory of change.

New Staff: APT hired three newly debate staff and four newly interns who work with the organization in Herat, Mazar, Faizabad and Kabul.

Training Materials: In addition to publishing a 50-page guideline for debate judges in English and Dari, APT is in the process of developing a debate training manual which will be finalized by the end of the first quarter of 2017.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs): APT signed an MOU with Ghaussy Family Diagnostic Clinic (GFDC) based on this MOU, APT staff and members can benefit from health services of GFDC with a tremendous amount of discount along with free health consultancy.

Furthermore, APT Signed two Memorandum of Understanding with Eshraq Institute of Higher Education in Herat and Dunya University in Kabu on March 4, 2017. The MoU will ensure a long lasting relationship between APT and Eshraq Institute of Higher and Dunya Education through engaging students in APT activities and students taking the message of promoting a culture of tolerance, openness and respect in their respected university

Debate Clubs: APT established three debate clubs at three universities in Herat; one debate club in Kabul; two debate clubs at two different universities in Balkh; and two debate clubs at two universities in Faizabad.

Staff Development: APT organized four training sessions a month for staff led by Aref Dostyar in the past quarter. These sessions facilitated discussions on leadership and strategic communication skills.

V. Challenges and Future Plans

Afghanistan's Public Universities are not very supportive of our work unless the ministry of higher education officially recognize our organization. For that reason, APT reached to ministry of Higher Education through its personal connection to sign the memorandum of Understanding. It has been more than three month that we are negotiating the the ministry but

we have not been successful. The minister of the HE has been so appreciative for what we are doing but they are the rest people who postpone our work. This is caused us to

Security Situation is still remain a challenge for us, although there is no direct threaten to our work but we has been conscious on announcing the exact place, timing and fther details of ite evet on social media .

VI. Success Stories of APT Programs

Debate:

Abdul Wares Fahim, studying Medical in Aira University, Balkh shares his debating experience with us:

“APT is one of the nonprofit organization that works for building a bridge between the university students for exchanging ideas and solutions for different motions. Fortunately, I have been engaged with APT’s program since 2012. Hopefully, there is a big team that works hard to accomplish and personify the academic and social visions and they are a group of young and fresh-minded personalities.

It is my honor and privilege to have the membership of this organization since 2012. I have participated in many debate tournaments in different provinces and hopefully awarded as a best speaker, finalist, and champion. Nowadays, I am studying medical faculty in Aria University. Being the coach of Aria University Debate Club is one of the achievement that I acquired it.

I got experience through debating, like Best academic Speaking, finding new ways of promotion, being in touch with many other organizations, competence and performance are the countable achievements that APT presented me.

In conclusion, after being a member of APT, my academic live was witness of big and outstanding changes. For the first time, I could represent myself as an academic figure between all the universities in Mazar-e-Sharif. Finding ability to argue and to have dialogue with different minds and characters, being in touch with academic figures, leadership intelligence, and many other sub assists are the big achievements that give another shape to my academic career.”

Open event:

Reza Akbari, studying Psychology in Kabul University shares about the impact of our open event on occasion of International Day of Peace:

“First of all, I would like to thank and appreciate APT for hosting such events on account of celebrating the international day of peace. It was really unforgettable and memorable day for me. Through the international day of peace with facilitating of Mr. Naderi I learnt many things especially about the differences of 3 decades ago and comparing those differences with now. Mr. Naderi revitalized those poor days. He said whatever the situation may be, there is always something nice to be thankful for even during your worst days there is something positive that happens during that day so appreciate those nice moments and enjoy the life. Through the speeches of Mr. Naderi I learnt many things like appreciating some small things that have encouraged me to get a promising step for changing myself. In our social life there are always negative and positive things but how beautiful it will be if we

divert our focus into those small positive things and appreciate them. I think concentrating into those positive things can cause us to remain positive under duress. Finding solutions are part of the test and must be respected in our career.”

Radio program:

A driver who listens to our radio programs met with Ali Fayez’ uncle spoke about our radio program impact:

“A month ago I was going somewhere by taxi, and the driver was listening to APT’s program, I heard the voice of Ali through the radio of the taxi and asked the driver if he is listening to this program regularly. The driver replies, “Yes, I always listen to this talk show, they always discuss very important issue and share it with public.”

Leadership program:

Shabana Shukury, studying Literature at Kabul University shares her experience with us:

“To be honest attending to this class brought a big change to my life. Before join this class, I thought that the concept of leadership only belongs to politician and politics but now I know that knowing the skills of leadership is important for everyone. If you want to have a successful personal you must know leadership skills. Most of the time we fail in our life because we do not know how lead our goals and our life. An interesting point about this organization is that we really saw how the members of APT implement leadership skill among their selves, also most of our lessons were practical not theories. We also learnt some of leadership skills through their behavior.

Another important thing that we learned from this class was listen and respect. After his lesson we realized that one of the biggest problem that exist among Afghan people is lake of listening. We really do not listen and we do not respect that’s why most of us suffer. In fact by listening to each other we can solve our big problems in life.

VISION was one of the best lessons and this lesson really helped us a lot .Through this lesson we drew our life goals although we had our goals, but it was not clear, so we learned how important it is to have a vision.”

International program:

Elnaz Azemi studying Law and Political Science at Ghalib University from Herat province shares her experience with us:

“Attending the Youth Peace Fest in India was a wonderful opportunity I have ever experienced in my life. Through this opportunity, I could meet the people from all over the world. I had the chance to interact with them, laugh with them and learn from them. I came to know that it does not matter where we are from, the only thing that matters is humanity and I discovered that this trait is available in all the good people around the globe.

This travel taught me to be brave. Braver than before and work hard for community development. I saw that young girls and boys with various ethnicities and nationalities have almost the same dreams,

the same goals and the same fears and ensured me that I am not alone! There are thousands like me in the world with the same ambitions and anxieties.

One thing that I deeply felt during this visit to India and Chandigarh was “PEACE”. Something that Afghans are looking forward to have it one day! I noticed that Afghanistan is also full of human and natural resources that can be positively used if there is peace in the country. I became more and more determined to work harder for Afghanistan’s peace and prosperity. I am sure young Afghans can make this dream come true if they study and be volunteer to bring changes. Once the old thoughts are eliminated from the social infrastructures, then the country will go toward a true development.

I observed that young Afghans are those who have reached to success stages after passing many social, economic, and cultural difficulties. It is very hard to find a young Afghan girl and boy who have easily achieved something! This realization made me certain that we are strong and nothing can hinder our success.”