



Afghans for Progressive Thinking

Narrative Reports to

Partners

April 20, 2018

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I. General Information

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II. Executive Summary

From January to March 2018, Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) was able to organize all of its planned activities, impact 842 students (546 male and 296 female) directly, and reach approximately 1 million people via its radio program. APT also managed to develop new partnerships, start implementing a field research project, and open an elementary school for needy children in Mazar, a city in the Balkh province. The students who participated in APT's activities during this quarter demonstrated increased critical thinking and communication skills, improved leadership skills, and acquired a broadened vision to promote APT's values in Afghanistan. This report covers the details of the implemented events and impact of APT's activities in the past quarter.

III. Main Activities

Debate

During the past quarter, APT recruited 272 new students, established one new debate, recruited 3 new judges to APT's Judge's Community, conducted 40 debate practice sessions, organized 10 training of trainers (ToT) workshops, and finally organized one quarterly networking event in each provinces, Kabul, Herat, Faizabad, Mazar and Samnagan. During the networking event, all the members of APT's Judges Community gathered to discuss and exchange their ideas for improving the quality of judgement in the debate competitions in the above-mentioned provinces. A total of 672 students comprising of 262 women and 410 men participated in APT's debate events during this quarter.

Additionally, on January 26 and March 8, 2018, APT's debate team organized an exhibitivite round of debate on 'Pre-allocating Quota Seats to Women in Afghan Parliament' at the Netherlands' Embassy and a debate round on the occasion of the International Women's Day at the US Embassy in Kabul.

Leadership

On March 15, 2018, APT announced a call for applications to its spring leadership program. The program started on April 8, 2018 and will continue till May 22, 2018. The detailed report of this course will be shared in the next quarterly report.

Research and Dialogue

First Round of Dialogue at Kabul and Nangarhar University

On February 19, 2018, APT organized the first round of Research and Dialogue at Kabul University. Similarly, on February 12, 2018, APT organized the first round of dialogue at Nangarhar University. The topics for these rounds were the following:

- Non-Violence: a cultural and social need in Afghanistan;
- Critical Thinking: a way to logical perceiving of the world;
- The importance of Dialogue for Conflict Transformation;
- Discrimination and Tolerance.

Media:

In the past quarter, APT built upon the series of discussions on Countering Violent Extremism that were aired live through The Killid Radio in Kabul every Thursday morning for one full hour..

New Initiatives and Partnerships

1) *Research Project:* APT, with the support of the United Network of Young Peacebuilders - a global network of youth organizations, started conducting a research project (field research) in Kabul, Mazar, Faizabad and Herat in 2018. The project will document and examine young people's roles in peacebuilding, and especially study the factors that enable or/and constrain these roles.²⁾

2) *APT's Elementary School – Mehrabonon (Kind People)*

APT, in partnership with *Love Does*, a California based organization,¹ is opening an elementary school in Mazar, a city in the Balkh province, in 2018. The school will welcome children in need, particularly those who have been displaced due to the conflict in the neighboring provinces of Balkh. The school will offer preparatory courses in 2018 and will begin its official classes in March 2019.

IV. Qualitative Impact

APT's activities are massively impacting individuals' personal and professional lives. Students have reported to us that they have built up their confidence in public speaking, changed their attitude toward those with whom they did not use to agree, built friendships after attending workshops and debate practice sessions, and finally improved their knowledge on contemporary issues by doing desk research.

Shamsia Saadat, a senior student of the Law Department at Kateb University, said, "I could barely speak in front of a crowd before becoming a debater. But now I can express myself and my thoughts without any fear, with unshakable confidence. I am not afraid of sharing my ideas and beliefs anymore." Similarly, Hasina Nasri, a junior student of the Law Department at Kardan University, wrote to us: "As a woman it was very difficult for me to oppose the motion based on my position in the debate round. To be honest, I learned that being placed in a position which you have to oppose an idea that in the real world you actually agree with pushes your mind to see the other side of the coin, and that is what happened to me."

¹ <http://lovedoes.org/>

Homa Wahaj, a senior student at the Literature faculty of Kabul University, wrote to tell us how she had been empowered by the research: “When I was preparing myself for debate, I went through a bunch of articles and researched about topics with similar themes. For instance, I read an article about conflict and conflict resolution in traditional societies. In that article, I learned that to manage conflicts in traditional societies where they have well-organized regulatory machinery, women play a major part. Under such a system a woman is recognized as having an advisory role, behind the scenes, mainly where her husband is concerned. The woman plays an active part in strengthening solidarity and social harmony. Now after the debate, I can confidently enter discussions and comment on women and peace topics. I didn’t know many important and underlying causes of war and conflict. I have now informed opinions that make me feel powerful and able for taking action and provoking the people of my surrounding to believe in women’s power to bring about peace in our community”.

There is very little tolerance for women’s public appearances in the Nangarhar province, where APT started its activities recently. However, as a result of our activities we learned that women do want to participate in public life and improve their skills. Atifa Ahmadi’s participated in APT’s activities and spoke in front 100 men. Her story was an attempt on behalf of the project’s side to push both for tolerance toward acceptance of women’s public participation in Nangarhar and encourage women to take part in civic engagement events.

Overall, in a country where suicide attacks and insecurity make up 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 in the world. APT will continue to organize events with even more passion than before and to work tirelessly for the flourishing of the Afghan society.