



Company
Name



Afghans for Progressive Thinking

Narrative Report

January 20, 2019



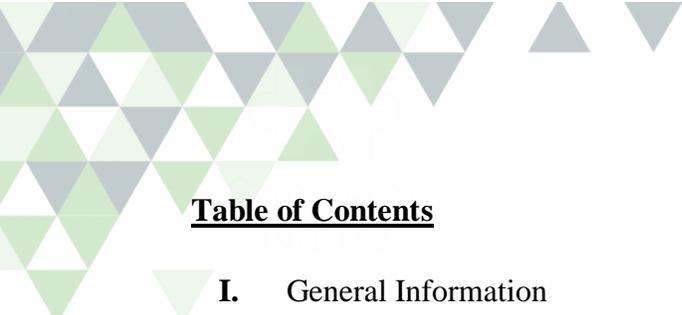


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I. General Information

Date: 15 January, 2019

Name of the Organization: Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT)

Website: www.apf.af

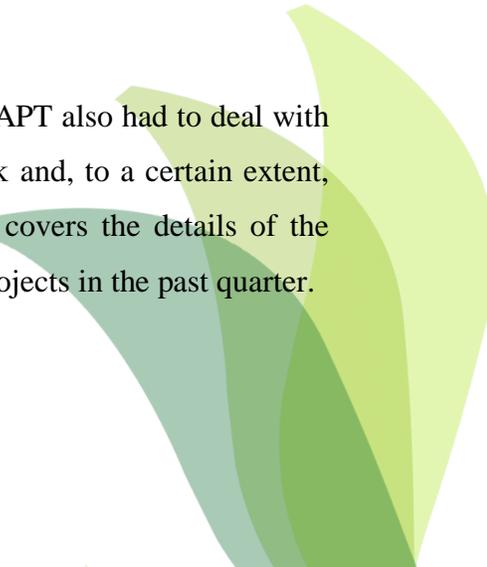
Country: Afghanistan

Reporting Period (Dates): 1 October, 2018 – 31 December, 2018

II. Executive Summary

From October to December 2018, Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) was able to organize all of its planned activities efficiently. APT successfully held a number of debate tournaments and trainings in Kabul and six other provinces. In addition to that, APT organized a debate round to mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence in the US Embassy in Kabul. APT also successfully graduated thirty university students from its fall leadership course after 40 hours of intensive lectures, the last two of which were held in the Australian and the Dutch Embassies. We successfully held four radio sessions as well and the main themes for this year's radio program were "Parenting Skills" and "Raising Awareness on the Issue of Violent Extremism." Additionally, APT successfully registered Mehrabanon School with the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan. With the help of United Network of Youth Peacebuilders organization, APT contributed to a research policy paper on young people's role in peacebuilding. The paper was published during the last quarter.

While accomplishing a great number of goals during this time period, APT also had to deal with some challenges that were laid out as an obstacle in front of our work and, to a certain extent, affected negatively the implementation of our activities. This report covers the details of the implemented activities and events, and presents the impact of APT's projects in the past quarter.





III. Main Activities

Debate:

During the past quarter, APT successfully held two tournaments in Kabul and a number of trainings in several provinces. APT was also able to recruit new students and organize and conduct a number of practice sessions. Overall, 452 individuals benefited from the debate tournaments, trainings, practice session and trainings of judges in Kabul, Mazar, Herat, Faizabad Samnagan, Nangarhar and Qandahar. Out of the total 452 individuals, 49% were females.

In addition to that, in order to improve the implementation of its projects and the quality of our work in general, APT organized a monthly networking event for the debate club leaders and judges' communities in all provinces. Last but not least, APT also organized adjudication trainings for twenty dedicated individuals in Balkh.

Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

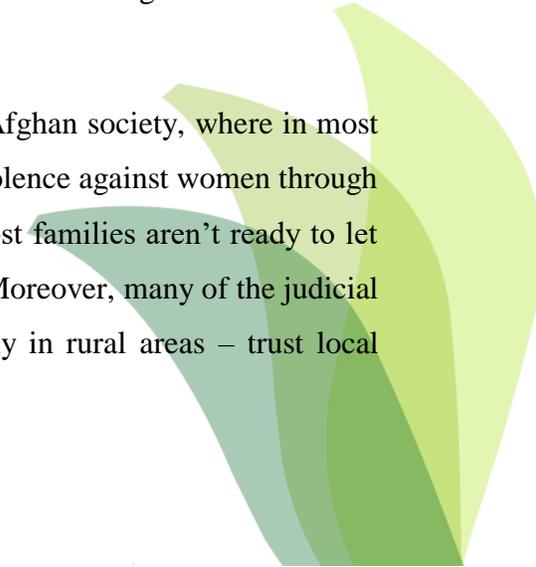
On 4th December 2018, APT organized a youth debate round on the topic “This house believes that solving cases of violence against women through mediation is better than referring the cases to the court” to mark the 16 days campaign on Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) in the U.S embassy. The debaters were students from Kardan University, Kabul University, AUAF and Avicenna University.

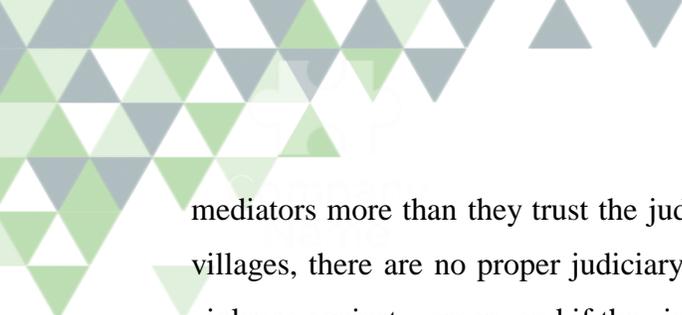
Over forty people including embassy staff, university students and debate club members joined the event.

Motion Analysis of debate round on EVAW

Topic: This house believes that solving cases of violence against women through mediation is better than referring to courts.

The proposition bench argued that considering the context of the Afghan society, where in most areas culture and tradition have the upper hand, solving cases of violence against women through mediation is more impactful than referring the cases to courts. Most families aren't ready to let their cases be referred to courts as they see it as a matter of honor. Moreover, many of the judicial institutions in Afghanistan are corrupt and the people – especially in rural areas – trust local





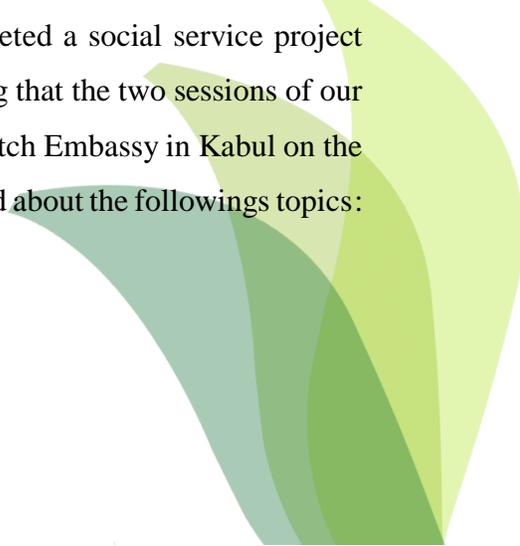
mediators more than they trust the judiciary system of Afghanistan. Furthermore, in many rural villages, there are no proper judiciary bodies that can adequately assess and solve the cases of violence against women, and if the victim wants to have her voice heard, she should travel miles away from her home. This is again problematic and unfeasible in those communities where women are not even allowed to travel alone. On the other hand, the opposition bench argued that mediation can never bring justice to women for several reasons. First, it was argued that the mediators usually do not have the proper knowledge of relevant legislation and therefore in almost all cases of violence against women, the victims don't receive justice. For instance, in several cases of rape, local mediators would often rule out that the rapist should marry the victim – without imprisoning the people who have clearly committed a crime. Instead of serving justice, women's rights are even further violated as they are forced to live with the people who have committed a crime against them.

Leadership

On 22nd November 2018, APT successfully graduated thirty university students from its fall leadership course after 40 hours of intensive lectures. The courses started on 8th October 2018 and successfully finished on 22nd November 2018. The leadership course covered different topics such as:

- Conflict Transformation
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Goal Setting
- Creating Values

The lectures were delivered by APT's national and international expert instructors. The course ended with the award ceremony where participants who had completed a social service project received a certificate of successful completion. It is worth mentioning that the two sessions of our leadership course were hosted by the Australian Embassy and the Dutch Embassy in Kabul on the 14th and 15th of November 2018. In this session, students were briefed about the followings topics:

- Role of Leaders
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- Robert Greenleaf's theory of leadership

During the sessions, students directly engaged in dialogue with a number of embassy officials, including the ambassadors, deputies and secretaries.

APT leadership class students accomplished two social service projects before receiving their graduation certificate.

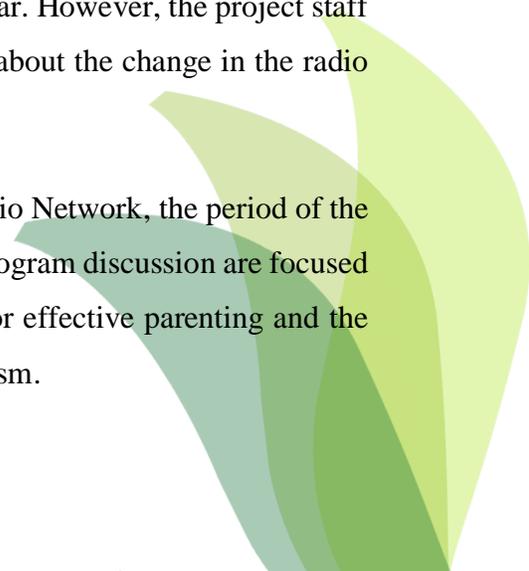
Group A distributed clothes for people in Kabul who have been displaced by the war. The clothes were donated to the APT leadership class by the Austrian Embassy in Kabul.

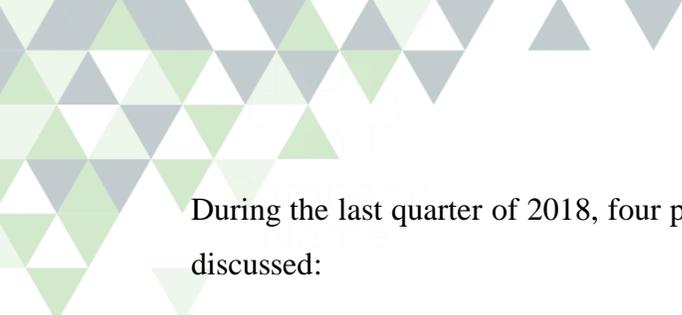
Group B donated books to Rahila Library in Dasht Barchi. Rahila, a 17 year-old girl, lost her life in an attack on an educational center in the eastern part of the country. Rahila dreamed of providing opportunities for all girls to get education in the future. To commemorate her memory, her family established a library with her name in the eastern part of the country. Group B also distributed flowers to the working kids on the streets of Kabul.

Media

This year, APT partnered with Ariana TV and Radio Network (ATN) to air the 36 episodes of the radio talk shows. This initiation ensured that Pashto speaking people across Afghanistan have the opportunity to listen to the program and engage in the discussions. ATN airs its programs live in all the 34 provinces of Afghanistan, while the previous network covered 9 provinces only, mostly in the eastern and southern regions. APT acknowledges that this shift can present a challenge in retaining all the listeners who tuned into the program over the last year. However, the project staff responded to this challenge by informing all of its regular listeners about the change in the radio network through phone calls.

According to the signed MoU between APT and Ariana TV and Radio Network, the period of the broadcasts is from 6th December 2018 until 30th August 2019. The program discussion are focused on two topics this year: one deals with teaching skills to mothers for effective parenting and the other is focused on raising awareness on the issue of violent extremism.





During the last quarter of 2018, four program sessions were held and the following themes were discussed:

- What is Violent Extremism?
- What is Moderation?
- Violent Extremism in Afghanistan
- Moderation in Afghan culture
- Violent Extremism Factors
- Socio-Economic Factors
- Educational Factors

APT's Elementary School – Mehrabonon

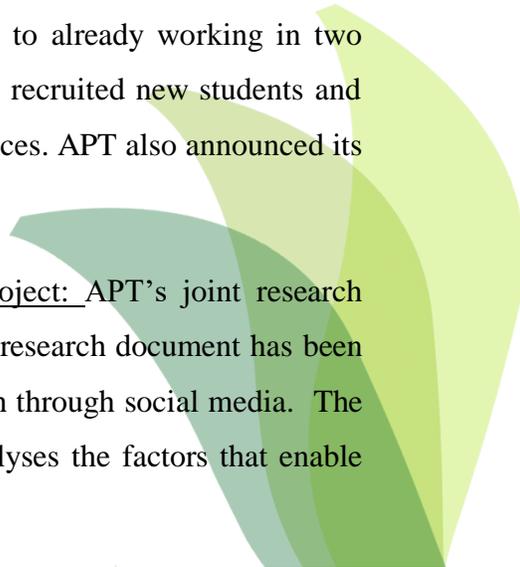
During the past quarter, our school was able to conduct the mid-term and final exams for the preparatory classes of students. After the exams, the students went on a winter break and will resume classes in February 2019.

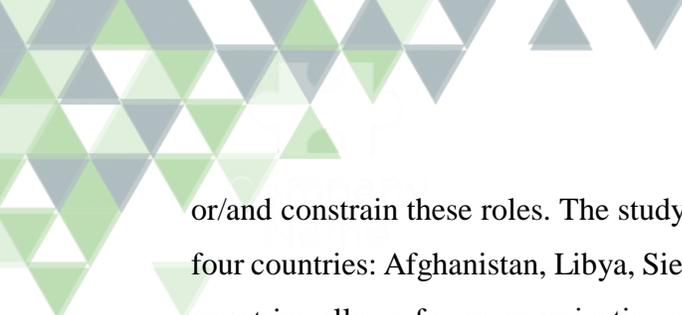
Additionally, APT registered the Mehrabonon School with the Ministry of Education after a lengthy process. Now, Mehrabonon School can operate as an officially registered educational institution in Mazar.

Research and Dialogue

Promoting Tolerance Project: APT expanded its research and dialogue project activities to four new provinces: Herat, Mazar, Qandahar and Faizabad, in addition to already working in two provinces, Kabul and Nangarhar in 2018. In the past quarter, APT recruited new students and signed MoUs with 14 universities in the above-mentioned six provinces. APT also announced its call for applications and started the initial training of the project.

Understanding Youth-led Civic Engagement in Peacebuilding Project: APT's joint research project came to an end and, as a result of a collective effort, a final research document has been generated and shared with decision makers, policy makers and youth through social media. The document examines young people's roles in peacebuilding and analyses the factors that enable





or/and constrain these roles. The study represents a youth-led participatory action research led in four countries: Afghanistan, Libya, Sierra Leone and Colombia. A comparative study in these four countries allows for an examination of young people's roles in civic engagement initiatives in different cultural, historical and geographical contexts, where factors like gender and age may shape the roles of youth in peacebuilding in different ways. On the country level, APT will publish Afghanistan's policy paper in two languages: Dari and English.

New Staff

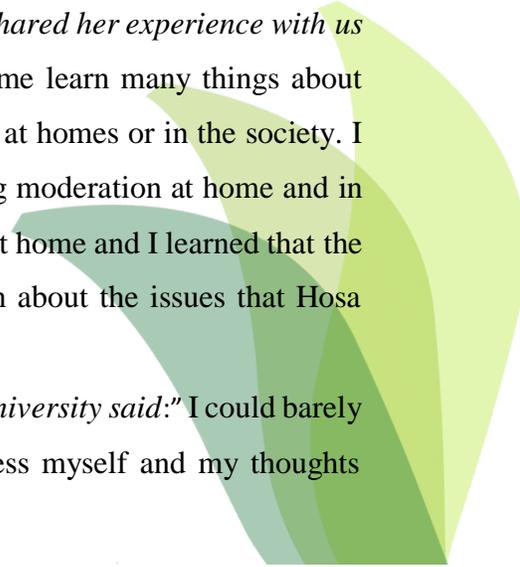
APT hired 6 new staff in Herat, Balkh, Badakhshan and Kandahar. The number of APT employees in Kabul and province is 28, 50% of whom are females.

IV. Qualitative Impact

APT staffs have been working tirelessly and we are able to see the impact of all of the activities we have implemented so far. Our program participants pointed out to us that the debate programs have enabled them to think differently, accept diversity and express their ideas freely, and also accept others' opinions respectfully. In addition to that, they also shared with us how APT's programs have increased their confidence and improved their public speaking skills. They have also shared their stories of making new friends from different backgrounds and ethnicities during the programs. Moreover, our radio program listeners have shared how the radio program has positively affected their lives. They are telling us about seeing things from a different perspective and about how they have increased their awareness on family relationships and behavior inside the family structure.

Zarmina, a mother of 1 son and 1 daughter from Baghlan province, shared her experience with us after listening to our Radio program: "The radio program helped me learn many things about taking care of our children and the importance of not using violence at homes or in the society. I also learned about paying attention to children's education and using moderation at home and in the society. I learned that ignorance and poverty can breed violence at home and I learned that the best way to struggle for a brighter future is to educate our children about the issues that Hosa Zhuwand's Radio program presents."

Muhammad Iqbal Bakht, a senior student of Law faculty at Kardan University said: "I could barely speak in a crowd before becoming a debater. But now I can express myself and my thoughts

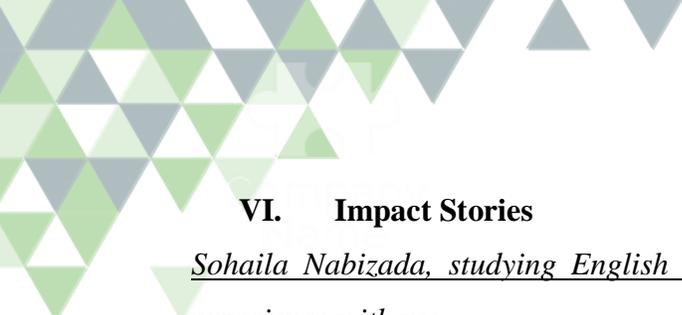


without any fear, with unshakable confidence. I am not afraid of sharing my ideas and believe anymore. Before joining debate programs of APT, I was very shy which I couldn't talk clearly even with my family members. After attending debate programs, I have developed so much confidence in a very short time. I can now easily give seven minutes long speech without feeling afraid of standing behind the tribune”.

Samir Ahmadzai, Students of BBA at Jahan Institute of Higher Education: "The Leadership class have created useful effects on my personal and academic life, it taught me the manners of setting goals, gave me courage to analyze my great ambitions, explore the opportunities that I have them ahead, clear the path and removing something that is obstacles along the way that keep me from moving forward, taught me to continue to move forward in spite of setbacks and learn from them, showed me the real ways of accessing my purposes and finally I must realize who I am? And what I want”.

V. Challenges and Lessons Learned:

Lack of Cooperation from Universities: During the past quarter, there were delays in signing some of the MoUs with a number of the private and public universities we wanted to start working with. First, the universities were somewhat unresponsive to our requests for meetings and after many attempts, they finally agreed to meet with us. After the meetings, the universities required lots of data about our activities and requested re-assurance about the impact of our work, which caused us to delay some of our activities until we finally reached an agreement. To speed up the processes, most of the time we had to use our personal connections in order to get the help of people who could facilitate the process. Moreover, when it came to renewing some of the MoUs, some of the universities requested extra paper work and other documents, which caused additional delays.



VI. Impact Stories

Sohaila Nabizada, studying English literature in Samangan University, shared her debating experience with us:

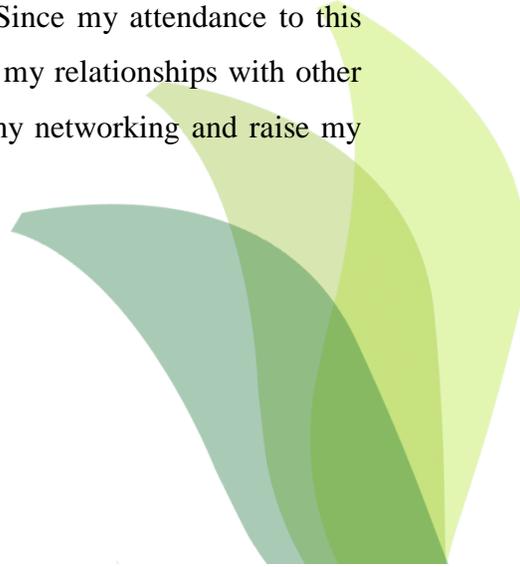
I am Sohaila Nabizada, an ordinary girl with many dreams, who is in favor of girls' rights and enjoys talking in public. As far as I can recall, my childhood life has been full of challenges, and as a kid, I have gone through a variety of hardships and I had always told myself that my dream of talking in public would never come true.

Because of being an active girl in my community and a senior student of English Literature in the Language department, I was called by Mirhussain Walizada, APT's Samangan Regional Coordinator, who was coaching the debating club in Samangan province, to participate in the debate championship in 2018.

Even though I was not familiar with debate, I took part in the debating competition. Since then, I have become a member of the debate club in my city. Through being a part of APT in my society, I have learned to present myself with confidence and I have significantly improved my critical thinking.

Learning about APT and becoming a part of APT's family has opened up a new page of confidence, opportunities and hopes in my life. Thanks to APT, the biggest dream of my life received wings to fly, and I now know how to deliver my speeches among the people. I have also improved my English language skills, and I have become a charismatic and influential girl among my family and friends. I also managed to enlighten some of my friends' thoughts toward thinking and made them more aware of certain important issues in our society.

Additionally, before engaging with APT, I was not capable of thinking globally and I mostly dealt with issues which we face only in the rural parts of the country. Since my attendance to this program, I have engaged with a new environment and maintaining my relationships with other APT representatives has helped to boost my leadership, promote my networking and raise my voice in favor of the underprivileged girls in my society.





Zohra Stanikzai

Zohra Stanukzia, studying Political Science in the American University of Afghanistan, shared her Leadership course experience with us:

When I joined APT's fall 2018 leadership program, I found myself as a different person who is passionate to have a positive impact on my people through education. The leadership Program allowed me to focus on my abilities as a future leader, take part in different events to make me more courageous and improve my speaking skills. It also helped me to find my strengths and weaknesses which lay hidden in me. Attending this program allowed me to get to know a group of university students with different ideas, vision and goals for their future, which helped me to set my own goals and achieve them step by step. Furthermore, it taught me how to engage with other people and exchange my own ideas in a group of activists and learn how to conclude discussions with a clear vision for the solution ahead. Finally, the leadership program also taught me that it is important to possess different skills as a leader, such as listening and speaking skills, and to learn about and apply the values of honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, and fidelity, in order to be a great leader in my society.

I thank APT (Afghan for Progressive Thinking) so much for providing a friendly environment for youth to join and share their thoughts. Through its social programs, APT has supported its students to get to know and become active in their environment, and it has allowed them to achieve their passion and improve their courage by taking part in different group discussions and social activities.”

Nazo Khiali a mother of 3 sons, from Khost, living in Kabul shared her impact story with us after listening to this Radio program:

“It was a big challenge for me to raise my neighbors’ awareness about violent extremism issues, but after hearing the Radio program of APT, I learnt how to talk about such issues. Besides that, the Radio program taught me so many lessons such as what moderation is, what violent extremism is, who violent extremist groups are and how I could give lessons to my children about the consequence of violent actions

