

YLF Newsletter

Study Visit to Germany & Afghanistan - Pakistan Youth Exchange



Dear Readers,

Let me congratulate all of you for the successful publication of the forth issue of Young Leaders Forum Newsletter. In this issue of YLF Newsletter a different aspects of YLF is being explored. This issue focuses mainly on the two thriving out going trip of YLF members to Germany and Pakistan. I would like to thanks all the members who contributed to this issue of newsletter. Your contributions encourage us

to work harder and raise the hope that "YES" we are all together, members of the one family "the young leaders forum."

Let me dedicate this issue of YLF Newsletter to the all young Afghans who need to hear that "never say never, YES you can make your dream true. Just believe on yourself that you can do it"

Thank you all

Bahram Rahman

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YLF IN PAKISTAN




YLF IN GERMANY

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Germany and Change in Me

Before my trip to Germany I knew little about this country. All my knowledge ended with the pages of my history book in school. This trip was my first trip to Europe. I was a member of the YLF delegation going in an exchange program to Germany by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. During our trip we were staying in Berlin. The excellent transportation system, clean air, green environment and active people give life to the body of this old city with its modern look. To see historic places of Berlin Wall, war memorials and seeing the active participation of all people in reconstruction of their country inspired me and raise the hope that if we work all together

Afghanistan can be build too.

Berlin is a multicultural city. You can see different peoples with different religions and languages but all celebrating a peaceful and understanding lifestyle.

During our visit to Humboldt university, we saw how the students practice democracy and politics at the university. I learned that to bring a change you have to take the first steps of it. A panel discussion on the current conditions in Afghanistan and the international and particularly German engagement in the country was one interesting part of the programs which I enjoyed it very much. It was good to see that all members of the group were

trying hard to draw the real picture of Afghanistan which is not only terrorism or Taliban. In the last days of our trip we had short walk to Poland. The German-

Polish border was one of the exciting places which hold me to think "borders can be peaceful too."

It was only 10 days but it will leave for years in my mind. This trip gave me the chance to think about my life, my dreams and my country, Afghanistan.

By Fatima Hussaini



What Did the YLF Outgoing Team Deliver to Germans?

A group of 9 eligible Young Leaders participated in a study visit titled "Young Leaders Enhancing Capacities in Political Participation" in Germany from 25.05 – 04.06.2008. The program of this study visit was particularly designed to provide the group with an insight from Germany, its political system and youth participation approaches as well as to let the group discuss on Afghanistan issues with engaged German politicians and provide them with their direct inputs on the subject. During numerous meetings and discussions with different groups

including representatives of youth organizations and engaged German politicians the YLF team managed to deliver a realistic insight of Afghanistan conditions, clarifying the reasons, logics and importance of international engagement in the country and warning of unlimited bad consequences of the international community's retreat from and reluctance in Afghanistan conflict now. This also included Germany's civil-military engagement in the country as one of the biggest and committed contributors on the ground.

To deal with the issue of Afghanistan

successfully the team also recommended to the German politicians, to consider more coordination among the international actors as well as with the Afghan government. They also pointed that very basic is to have a bigger view of the issue on a regional level!

Only in Afghanistan is not enough to fight terrorism! And although it is necessary but definitely not enough to fight terrorism mostly with military means inside the country and then expect that all problems of the country would get solved.

By Sulaiman Qeyamat



Youth Participation Resource Center



During our study visit trip in Germany we have participated in different workshops, discussion sessions and meetings. Each of them introduced me with new aspects of improvement and life in Germany. I saw many opportunities of young people for social and occupational integration and their career perspective. What impressed me most was that culture of “volunteerism” for their social welfare.

On 26 May we had a workshop on “Ways of organizing active participation of young people in Germany” in “Servicestelle Jugendbeteiligung - youth participation resource center.” In this resource center a team of young boys and girls were working to increase youth participation in politics and social affairs. They were working on different projects such as “Infoscout” the pool Network and “Schools’r’us.”

1. What is the “Infoscout” the pool Network?

Infoscouts are motivated young people who are acting as regional contacts and forming a network to provide and exchange of information.

Basically, they are from various organizations or individuals engaging in diverse areas on local, regional or national levels. This network is available to everyone who needs the services of competent young people. It’s a large think-tank of young people who can participate in various activities such as attending conferences, topical discussions with political decision-makers or taking part in newspaper interviews.

2. What is the Schools’r’us Project?

It is a German – Finland participation project. It gives students the chance to exchange experiences. Within the project the participants got in touch and share their own experiences in

different issues.

There are more than hundred reasons why participation in school is important. There are complicated examples or simple ones but we should not forget that it depends on the students and they get responsibilities to change things, outside and inside school and school can be much more than sitting in a classroom and listening to a teacher! While in German schools we can find many participation models like school paper, student company and student council.

I asked myself “a student company?” It is a group of students which produces, sells or offers services or products to make profit – only on school organized by students. They have budget statutes, accounts and they need to be customer orientated and seeking for profit. Sometimes the students are supported by their teachers to set their company.

They practice different tools to encourage the young generation and to increase their participation for a successful socio-political infrastructure and I think we should learn from them.

By Mohammad Reza Sharifi



Fight for What You Believe, but Gracefully Accept Defeat

The Durand line:

"Barbed wire is a symbol of hatred not friendship and hence it cannot stop terrorism" President Hamid Karzai(Dawn daily newspaper, 18 February, 2008.)

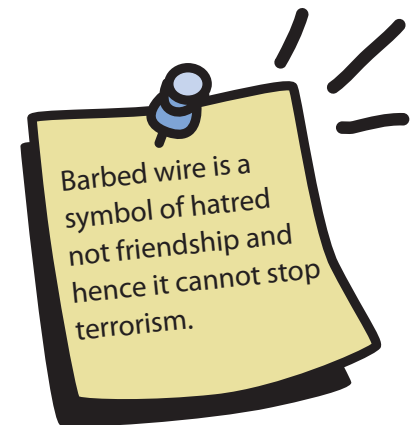
To bolster cross-border security, Pakistan has proposed to fence the 2,300-kilometer Durand Line. Since it's drawn in 1893, the Durand Line has been a tentative issue between Afghanistan and the British Empire and later with Islamic Republic of Pakistan. This line is dividing the Pashtuns in both countries.

"Pakistan supported Taliban only when they felt that they had potential. Taliban came up indigenously

and Pakistan felt that it was the only group which had potential to reunite Afghanistan." Asad Durani former director of ISI said during our meeting with him in the Afghanistan- Pakistan youth exchange program initiated by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. There are many common things between these two nations such as religion, boundary and historical background that can be helpful for developing relationships between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The solution of Durand line is an issue not only between Afghan-Pakistan governments but the people of both countries to negotiate. I believe it is not fences

that can strengthen the security of the border between this two countries, it is the full recognition of each other existence with respect.

By Saeed Akbari



The Trip to Lahore

It was a warm sunny day of June; our bus was rushing through the crowded roads of Lahore. After hours of journey from Islamabad, we had finally reached our destination, the city of Lahore. We were a delegation of eleven young Afghans in a youth exchange program by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Our first destination was the South Asian Study Center of Punjab University. We went to the campus of the university, where we were welcomed by academics, students, and alumni of the university. Professor our host was Mr. Salim, He spoke about the aim of our visit in fluent Farsi (one of the official languages of Afghanistan) to show both his goodwill and his understanding of Afghan culture. The youth delegation was full of hope for a bright future and good relations between the two nations. It inspired me



when I heard "I would prefer to forget the past and start a new history of love and peace with my Afghan brothers" from one of the students in the discussion we had. The young people who have broader visions, a better understanding of the world and who haven't been involved in any hostilities or acts of aggression against each other are committed to build a better future for their generation and for the generations to come through working together

for the same goals.

There are many examples in the history of countries, which fought for generations but have become prosperous when they left past in the past. Our visit to the South Asian Study Center in Punjab University taught me that we should try to maintain our unity and to start a new era of friendship and brotherhood.

By Enayat Safi

How YLF See the Afghanistan-Pakistan Youth Exchange Program...

The June 2008 exchange program between the Pakistan and Afghanistan was a good initiative to improve understanding between this two neighboring counties. I believe it is a major step for strengthening good relations between the general populations specially the youth

and governments of both counties Afghanistan and Pakistan. We observed that youth in Pakistan are friendlier than we thought and more open minded than the general population of Pakistan to work in improving the cultural and political relations. However, these activities

can be more helpful if youth from both countries set for a longer time and conduct more in-depth analysis of common problems both countries faces today. One of the good examples of such kind activities is Pak-Afghan Youth Council. PAYC is an association of Afghani and Pakistani Youth in Peshawar established by SPADO a Pakistan based NGO for helping to reduce mutual misunderstandings between the people and authorities of the two countries and to prevent discriminations against Afghan refugees in Pakistan. I believe that this kind of exchange program can help in building trust and common ground of understanding between two nations.

By Jawaid H. Samadey



From the Land of Mountains to the Land of Hot Weather

"An Afghan-Pakistani youth exchange program?", "A group of Afghan youth is going to three cities of Pakistan, will meet the active youth there, social activists, professors in universities, politicians and visit some historical places. Is it worthy to go?" I was hard to decide. First it came to my mind, although Pakistan is one of Afghanistan neighbor countries, I do not have much information about this country. This program could make me more familiar with this country. Then we have some political and security problems with Pakistan too and the two governments went to many negotiation tables but never came with a positive result. Finally, I thought I should pass the message of my nation to the people of Pakistan. It was not easy to decide and it was a "YES" one.

The organizer of the program was Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, both in Kabul and Islamabad. Our group consisted of eleven young Afghan men and women. In the airport I was late as usual on the day we were leaving Kabul to Islamabad. It was the time that I had to say good bye to my country for some days. An hour later, the plane landed in Islamabad. We had to walk in one group and it made Rauf, the facilitator for our trip from FES office in Islamabad, a little worried since we were the last ones left the airport from the flight. From the first minutes of boarding into the bus we all got friend with Rauf as we met before. We checked in Margala Hotel. Later we had a short introduction of the program. The next few days we had to be prepared for five events. The program was to visit a civil society organization working with youth in a village, discussion on

the role of youth in the society and politics with two university professors and the most important one: discussion with General Asad Durani, former Head of Pakistan Military Inter-Service Intelligence. This last discussion was really interesting for all of us. We posed many questions about the relations of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He ignored some of our questions, but at least, we were satisfied that we have told him our opinions. The main topics were the role of Pakistan in supporting Taliban and the Durand Line. I asked him that "why Pakistan released the former defense minister of Taliban regime as a price for the release of its ambassador in Kabul." He said "For the faith of our citizens, we can even release the EVIL!" This was alarming.

For dinner we were invited by a German organization which invited eight Afghan senators to an exchange program. Only three of the senators greeted with us. Others even forgot the agenda of the event. The first program for the third day was to visit Qaed Azam University in Islamabad. We had a good discus-

sion about the culture and history of the two countries with two professors. Since it was the exams time and we couldn't communicate with the students, we didn't really enjoy it.

Later in the program we went to Lahore. Telling jokes and singing made the journey unforgettable for all. Lahore is a big city and a green one too, but very hot. The hot weather caused the Afghan team to call the city the "HELL". The interesting thing was that our trip coincided with the long march by lawyers who were asking for restoring of the former members of the Supreme Court. It was interesting to see how Pakistanis are practicing democracy.

After checking in Ambassador Hotel, we had a very nice discussion about Afghan-Pak relations with members of the Pakistan Youth Parliament. I could see the mis-perception about Afghanistan in the discussion. One of our Pakistani friends was saying that it was his first time to see educated Afghans. The other one was talking about the presence of NATO and ISAF in Afghanistan. He was trying to show that Afghans are



supporting Taliban in a large scale in both sides of Durand Line. We continued the discussion on the table of dinner despite suffering from the spicy food! One of the old journalists of Pakistan started to read us a Farsi poem from Khayam. His sweet Farsi speaking sweetened the taste of pepper!

The visit to Punjab University was the first target for the fourth day. The chair of the Center for South

United Nations in 1947." The other professor stated that "India has captured Afghanistan and by having its consulate offices in Kandahar and Jalalabad, they work against the interests of Pakistan." I reminded them of the diplomatic relations principles. It was surprising! We know that Pakistan and India do not have good relations but why should we destroy our relations with these two countries? We have the same

ment, which is formed by a coalition of Awami National party, a Pashtun party, and Peoples' Party intends to change the name of the province to Pakhtonkhah.

In Peshawar we visited the Pacha Khan Center. The center is named after Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan one of the Pashtun pro-independent leaders of Indian before division. He is buried in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. The plan was to meet Afraseyab Khatak, but he was busy with the US senators. Instead we met the Minister of Information of the NWFP. We talked mainly about the efforts their party did for the Pashtuns and the Peace agreement between Pakistan and the terrorists in the tribal areas. Since I am a lawyer and did a research about this line. I had to ask the opinion of Pakistani citizens as well as the officials. Now, it was the last and most important place to pose this question. I asked the opinion of the ruling party about the Durand Line. The reply was obvious. The minister told me that "they are governing in the frame of Pakistan and they promised to protect the national interests of Pakistan." He added that "they don't like to live in an imaginary world." This was the last time I posed the question because I have got my answer finally. The trip passed fast but it was an unforgettable experience for me. Now, I know more about Pakistan, its culture, politics, media and its people. I found many friends there. We exchanged contacts and I can see the names of some of my Pakistani friends in my facebook profile. All I learned was to communicate and talk. Now, I know that we have many political problems but I know that we can solve them. But who will talk first?

By Shoaib Timory



Asians Studies was speaking Farsi too. However, we changed the language of the meeting from Farsi to English in order to make our Pakistani friends understand the topic. After talking about the similar cultures in the two countries, it was the turn of hot political issues. One of the Pakistani lecturers told us that "Afghanistan has always created problems for Pakistan and Pakistan is innocent." He said that "Afghanistan didn't want to be a friend of Pakistan from the first days of formation of Pakistan as an independent country. To prove this, Afghanistan was the only state that did not recognize Pakistan as a member of the

situation with Iran and USA. They are enemies to each other but they are friends of Afghanistan. I believe, we can do the same with Pakistan and India and it should be acceptable to Pakistanis.

Another highlight of our trip was the journey to Peshawar. The North West Frontier Province (NWFP) was not developed same as the other parts of Pakistan. The capital of the province Peshawar, is a big and crowded city with a majority of Pashto speaking population. However, I could not find even one sentence written in Pashto. It was all Urdu or English. Nevertheless, there are some hopes. The new govern-

Democracy

Despite the fact that the word democracy is used frequently, there is always confusion with the real meaning of this word. According to the ancient Greek textbooks the word democracy is derived from the Greek word *Dimokratia* "popular government" which was coined from *demos* "people" and *kratos* "rule" which by definition it means "the government by people." It is a system which ensures the rights of its citizens and enables them to have their influence on whatever affects their lives. These rights can be either practiced directly or through representatives.

Democracy as a system of government consists of four basic elements:

1. A political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections.
2. The active participation of the people as citizens in political and civic affairs.
3. Protection of the human and citizens' right.
4. The rule of law in which the law and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

These elements are so interrelated that in the absence of even one of them the objective "democracy" cannot be achieved.

These elements have two main pillars; the government and the people. Those nations who enjoy democracy in their countries today, it is mainly because of their awareness, and their government's commitments towards the issue. The process of Democratization can be strengthened by practicing democracy and its elements.

The governments should not only foresee the elements of democracy in the law. They should also ensure systems in which democracy can be implemented and practiced. Besides that people's awareness and participation is vital. Once they reach a certain level of rights and political awareness they can ensure real democracy by practicing it and will hold their governments accountable for their activities and commitments. During the outgoing trip to Germany, our group had the opportunity to see how German citizens were practicing their rights and how they could make best use of opportunities and possibilities provided by the government. We noticed that the civil society as a pillar of state in ensuring democracy in the country. In Berlin, during our meetings and visits to various organizations we witnessed active participations of citizens particularly youth on different levels and different forms. One interesting example of participation was a student parliament in universities. It is a structure which helps

the students to get actively involved in the society and enables them to be involved in discussions and decision making processes in university. It plays a major role in students' life by raising their voice, listening to their problems, sharing their concerns, suggestions and recommendations with authorities, convening social and cultural events.

The student parliament is elected through a fair election in which they elect the chairperson, deputies, finance and counseling members. The university is quite supportive towards the student parliament by providing them with premises and equipments. There are many examples that show youth can also do very good if they are given the chance and opportunities. I think that we, the young Afghans despite of having limited resources and opportunities work hard in bringing change toward building a responsible young generation in Afghanistan.

By Najla Sabri



The Beats of Radio, New Approaches in Peace Building

Over the past century mankind has achieved much success in different aspects of life which had never been achieved before. Information and communication technology is one of the brightest examples. The dormant damage media can cause in conflict zones is well known, but could media also play a positive role in peace building and spreading the message of peace?

And if the answer is yes, which type of media serves that role best? Is that a single radio or TV, internet, or print based media?

The world trembled when it realized for the first time that Media could be used as a medium of spreading hatred in conflict zones like Afghanistan, Rwanda and Yugoslavia in early 1990s and now in Iraq and Palestine. As an example in Afghanistan, radio and television were used as propaganda machines in the civil war; and during the Taliban, the single Radio of Afghanistan was used as the main medium for terrorists in spreading fundamentalist ideology, hatred and Islamic extremism.

The destructive potential of media is quite clear, but what about a constructive role?

After the fall of the Taliban and the establishment of a new government in Afghanistan, which brought a pluralized media system to the country, the same mediums which previously were tools for fighting, turned into some of the strongest elements of Afghanistan's reconstruction.

It is a priority now how to pass non alliance message in a way to encourage people to peace, humanity and tolerance, which in Afghanistan has been achieved in some ways with different programs of radio and television produced delicately.

Any types of ICT can be effective with



proper use, but the main question is the access and the cost to people in need, and how to reach to each micro and macro communities within the society. ICT can help if the level of access becomes increased in developing countries and when effected communities feel more connected when they get information in their lives.

Today, ICT Centers have turned to modern mosques for the young generation of Afghans. With modern ways of communication technologies, we can certainly reach a limited percentage of people, while countries like Afghanistan which have one of the highest percentage of illiteracy, poverty and lack of access to power, how can Afghans have the most benefit and access to information?

To reach even to more remote areas, and communities in any part of the country, Radio is the best tool. A single radio can be very attractive and easy to have access to more than any other type of modern or classic ICT. The ease of access even for the poor and illiterate combined with the compactness and cost make radio a unique instrument of grassroots communication. People now understand that radio can play multi faceted roles with huge potential as educator, entertainer, mediator, consultant, and companion, and in all as root medium of peace and information.

What digital technology can do inside

the society is to decentralize the force that is the most important element of the conflict, which at the end it helps in decision-making and gives more choice and power to the people.

Promoting tolerance and restraint, dispelling rumors, humanizing the other side, providing a forum for finding solutions to the conflict, are all roles the media can play as peace-builders.

But ICT needs the cooperation of other institutions active in society: a proper contribution of positive forces of the community, like civil society; local talents; international help with define objective of peace; and above all, the people being affected by war. Mankind today has reached to shape minds of people, with the help of ICT. Though war always is an element of human nature, we should have a way to turn this element to a positive force, which I believe that only with help of ICT it is possible.

Communication which makes democracy and in the countries which passed war, they have the right to govern themselves, and choose what is appropriate for themselves. They get the knowledge only with access to balanced information, through ICT. With this in mind, I offer thanks to ICT and Super Highway Communication which changed our globe to a village.

By Bahram Rahman

Eighty Percent of Afghans Are Dependent on Agriculture, yet Agriculture Sector is Heavily under Resourced

Agriculture sector in Afghanistan has been severely damaged in consequence of more than two decades of civil war and years of severe drought. Afghanistan is an agricultural country, which 80% of the population income relies on agriculture products and natural resources bases. The main products are wheat, corn, barley, rice, vegetables and fruits (dried and fresh). However, in recent years the main product in Afghanistan has become the illicit cultivation of poppy mostly in the areas where the government does not have control. Apart from the conflict, agriculture degradation has been an important force driving people to find a better future to other countries. The lack of water resources has led to the collapse of many livelihoods and most of the country is subject to an alarming degree of land degradation joined by poverty and the over population growth. The country has also been robbed of its precious forest resources by Afghan and non-Afghan timber mafia and smugglers. The net result of the degradation is widespread desertification and erosion, and increased vulnerability to food security for 80% of the population.

Since, the establishment of the new government in Afghanistan few international organizations have worked in agriculture sector, the investments was very poor, as fund allocation has been declined in Agriculture and Rural Development sector over the past years, which is a crucial sector for the development of Afghanistan.

Environmental protection is one of the other important issues, which has also affected agriculture sector in Afghanistan. Environmental protection has been neglected during different gov-

ernment periods in Afghanistan. There wasn't any particular entity working for environmental protection as well as there was lack of a national policy or law for environmental protection. By the international intervention and establishment of new government in Afghanistan in 2002 National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) was established with an aim to make policies and mainstream environmental protection issue in all government endowers as stated in Afghanistan compact signed in London donor conference for Afghanistan reconstruction. Government of Afghanistan has committed itself that by the year 2007 environmental protection issue will be mainstreamed in all government endeavors" which is not practiced yet even in 2008.

The consequences of degraded environment have caused many natural disasters in recent years (flood, avalanches and heavy storms), which have affected displacement of thousands of rural peoples from one place to another place and thousands hectares

of arable lands were destroyed and caused a great loss in agriculture sector in Afghanistan.

Now it is the time to take stock of the current conditions develop the system for the sustainable use of resources and look for ways to rehabilitate and improve the agriculture sector in Afghanistan, which is one of the crucial sector for development and poverty reduction in this country.

By Alias Hasany



Afghan German Youths

