

Davis 100 Projects for Peace Final Report - Summer 2007

Title: Youth Summer Camp for Peace
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Youth Leadership for Peace, an organization founded to conduct various social and educational activities in developing countries, implemented The First Youth Summer Camp in Kabul and Dar-Eskar, Baghla as its first project. This project was funded by KWD 100 Projects for Peace. The Youth Summer Camp for Peace took place from July 24th, 2007 to August 1st, 2007 in Sar-e-bed, Dar-e-eskar, Doshi, Baghlan, Afghanistan. Dan-e-Lali is a small village located in Doshi district, Baghlan province, Afghanistan. In this village people lead a unique agricultural life style. They use animals as their transportation, food, agricultural devices, and household accessories. There were 40 students aging between 11 and 15 years old participating in this project. Twenty of these students were from three Bait-ul-ilm schools in Kabul and the rest of the participants were from Sultan Mohammad Shah Secondary School. This project was executed in cooperation with the His Highness Prince Aga Khan National Council of Afghanistan. This project focuses on how to enhance the practice of pluralism and diversity in Afghanistan among the youths and the younger generations of Afghanistan.

Objectives and Goals:

1. To replace social isolation and marginalization with positive encounters and opportunities
2. To increase awareness about the existence of the different ethnic backgrounds on a national level and to further promote as well as provide awareness and teach the practice of international understanding within the global community
3. To increase youth leadership, confidence and participation in a bigger community
4. To provide an opportunity for youth to discover and realize their potentials, and set short- and long-term goals for themselves
5. To increase the level of respect for individuals from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds within Afghanistan and worldwide
7. To establish long-term role models for educational institutions and parents to adapt extracurricular activities as ways of training individuals' responsibility and peace

During the initial stage I encountered some difficulties setting up the project; such as designing activities, application forms, selection process and presenting these new ideas to parents. However, I only spent one month with the six members of the His Highness Price Aga Khan National Council of Afghanistan gathering information and planning the project. The most difficult work was the selection process. In a corrupted country like Afghanistan, most employees and students for a program are selected based on acquaintance. I had students' parents begging me to choose their children to participate in this camp. As much I would like to accept them however it was not the way the selection should be conducted. After days and weeks of hard work, my team and I managed to design an application form, placement tests and interview for those with highest exam scores. I utilized these instruments both in Bait-ul-ilm schools of Kabul and the Sultan Mohammad Shah Secondary School. Our selection process was very successful in selecting the forty most interested, talented and deserving students. I have witnessed great moments during the project; the excitement, smiles, dedication and passion before the summer camp started. Students from different ethnic group and lifestyle

roomed, ate, worked and prayed together reminding me of UWC where people of different colors come together and live like a family. The participants of the Youth Summer Camp for Peace took part in activities such as community services, cultural days, village tours, career planning, story reading and telling, and activities that allow those participants to socialize.

The Youth Summer Camp had multiple advantages. The His Highness Prince Aga Khan National Council of Afghanistan has enabled youths to coordinate and organize such activities in Dubai; however, they never had the chance and budget to do so in Afghanistan. Therefore, this program provided an opportunity for them to practice their leadership skills. They showed extreme excitement, passion and dedication towards the program. The Youth Summer Camp for Peace provided an opportunity for the Headmasters and teachers to witness a just and professional selection process and for some to witness and learn from the entire program. One of the headmasters whom I purposely gave responsibility to participate in Youth Summer Camp, Khuram Baig, stated in his speech: "I am used to being respected and to only be around elders. I feel very humble that I spent one week in this camp, slept, ate and worked only with kids. I wish we could adapt such an interactive and friendly learning style in our academic curriculum. I will never forget the everlasting experience of the program." Most importantly, the students both from Kabul and village were exposed to a new culture, place, people and program. One of the Kabul students told me "after I finish my education I would love to work here." Moreover, this project helped some villagers earning extra money from working as dishwashers, guards and cooks at the camp. After the project was accomplished I was busy making videos and finishing a summary report for the organization to use in future programs. Some members of the His Highness Prince Aga Khan National Council of Afghanistan came to evaluate the Youth Summer Camp. It was their first time to visit that village since they had not been able to visit the village due to its dangerous stereotype. After the project they sent books and other learning materials to children in the village and now they are considering that village in their upcoming projects. After the project I would see students participating more in activities in the mosque. They were constantly asking questions from my family and finding ways to send letters to their village friends. One of the counselors had a student from the village whose father and mother just passed away and she was very poor. She sewed five sets of beautiful clothes for her. I hand-delivered it to the little girl when I went to village after the project to submit reports, pictures and videos and thanked them from their active participation. I witnessed friendship, love, care, contacts, passion and dedication to building Afghanistan, mutual respect as well as beautiful smiles. These experiences showed me all the excitements that took place pre, during and post Youth Summer Camp. The Youth Leadership for Peace had successfully reached its objectives; however, the program's advantages and impacts will continue to benefit those who participated in this projects and community they live in. Many wished this Youth Summer Camp would remain a tradition among students during their summer break. It was an incredible experience and pleasure for me to be able to serve and give back to my community. It is very humbling to be able to go home after three years and do such great work. I have learned how it is like to work at home being a woman; the hard part is to still remain faithful to justice. Even though it was extremely hard and stressful to get everything accomplished, the outcomes were just incredible and definitely worth it.

I would like to thank the KWD 100 Projects for Peace for their generous contribution and for allowing me to make positive difference people's lives.