

'Enlightening Pakistan' **(A Proposal for KWD 'Projects for Peace' Fellowship)**

This project is going to be carried out in Pakistan in the summer of 2007, in collaboration with 'Seeds of Peace', Pakistan. Seeds of Peace (<http://www.seedsofpeace.org>), an international organization, was founded in 1993 by late journalist John Wallach (Middlebury '64); and has nearly 3000 alumni globally - around 100 of them in Pakistan. A pre-approval for support from Seeds of Peace has been obtained and my fellow alumni from that organization will be working with me on this project.

I view Pakistan as an integral part of the global and regional peace equation. The world has come to realize that if there is security, stability and enlightenment in Pakistan, there will be an immediate and far-reaching positive effect on the regional and global peace situation—the converse is also true. Global peace hinges on the situation inside Pakistan because of the influence of religious extremist/jihadi groups in the country, results of whose actions trickle down to all parts of the world; and also because of the seriousness of Pakistan's Kashmir dispute with India, which involves approximately 1/6th of the world's population.

Objectives:

Through the proposed project we intend to:

- Work for a practical and acceptable resolution of the Kashmir dispute from the youth's angle.
- Work to dissipate biases against other religions/nations, and also address the religious fundamentalist and jihadi propaganda in the country.
- Work for tolerance towards minorities in Pakistan; subsequently providing a model for the not only for other people in Pakistan but also other Muslim countries to follow.
- Give the Pakistani youth a direction to make a difference, in which they could continue in future.

Components and Execution:

I believe that all these objectives can be achieved by doing various things simultaneously, instead of working linearly in one direction. We indeed have the skill and the manpower to carry it all out.

a) Kashmir Proposal and Cross-border Interaction

A group of students from both India and Pakistan will sit together to draft a solution for the Kashmir problem which would be acceptable to both 'sides'. This proposal will later be publicized as 'The Youth's Resolution' drafted by people who were fully aware of their respective country's interests and problems. It will be forwarded to higher authorities of both countries and made public.

Moreover, the students coming to Lahore from India (who will be recruited by Seeds of Peace India, however, will not be members of Seeds of Peace) to take part in this activity will also get a chance to stay in their Pakistani counterparts' houses, getting to know their culture and families. They will hence take back fond memories that will enable them to actually differentiate stereotypes from reality and spread the message of peace in their communities. Considering that travel between India and Pakistan is not very easy to arrange, the blue-prints of the logistics of travel will be taken from Seeds of Peace as its Indian alumni groups have traveled to Pakistan in the past.

b) Textbook Revision Report

The facts given in textbooks used in Pakistani schools are marred with bias and propaganda of hate against other peoples, notably Jews and Hindus. This leads to the formation of a mind-set that tilts towards intolerance and lack of trust. This imbedded hatred makes the people an easy target for the religious extremists to exploit. The reverberations of this problem have been felt globally and it's a serious impediment to the process of solving internal as well as external conflicts. It is only natural for people to question peace if they grow up reading about war. We, therefore, propose to bring in textbooks from different parts of the world to show how history varies with the pen of the historian.

We will highlight factual errors and contradictions in various history books and will attempt to make a well-rounded, neutral record of the history of Pakistan. In doing this, I would also like to take help from Middlebury's History and Political Science departments. The final result would be a report that would contain recommendations about what changes should be made to what textbooks. The report would be submitted through proper channel to the Federal Ministry of Education, Punjab Department of Education and National Textbook Board. I have achieved an understanding on this matter with the Secretary to the Punjab Education Department. Salient features of this report would also be made public through print media (especially 'The Friday Times').

c) Peace Journal

Students from different schools will compete for cash prizes in an essay competition with articles related to the theme of regional and global peace—there will be no specific topic(s). Selected articles will then be printed in the form of a journal, and publicized through print media. This thing could either be done by inviting students from ten top private and ten top public schools of Lahore (most of the private schools are on Seeds of Peace's panel, and the public schools would be invited through the Department of Education), or by making it open for all high-school students from the Lahore region and publicizing the competition through posters, flyers and online social networking sites. The essays will be evaluated by a panel of five college students and one high school instructor (recruited from Seeds of Peace's alumni and support staff).

d) School Workshop Campaign

Teams of different students/Seeds of Peace alumni will be trained to go to different schools across the country in order to organize seminars/workshops for emphasizing the importance of critical thinking, tolerance, awareness regarding political issues and peace. A basic fund will be established to set up this practice; later philanthropists and organizations will be invited to contribute to that fund so that this thing could be continued and sustained.

e) Peace Walk

We will organize a Peace Walk in Lahore. The purpose of that walk would be to bring to people's attention our ideas and the work that we'd have done—especially the Kashmir conflict proposal and the textbook revision report.

f) Religious Tolerance Workshop

The attitude toward minority groups in Pakistan can be termed as less than satisfactory. The major reason for this is be the lack of interaction between different religious groups. This three-day workshop in a suitable location in the country will provide an opportunity for a group of Muslim students to freely interact with a group of Christian students. The camp will consist of activities like facilitated dialogue, sports, arts, group-learning, trust-building exercises, talent show and talks by renowned scholars. These activities revolve mainly around the concept of co-existence and will give the participants a chance to look beyond their pre-set differences.