



APT Programs: Unlocking the Potential of Youth in Afghanistan



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Impact Stories

Today, more than two years since the unfolding of the perilous events in Afghanistan, the shadow of uncertainty is growing over the future of young women and men in the country. The current restrictions and challenges have significantly rendered their development and stifled their potential. However, over the past two decades, youth in Afghanistan have been the drivers of growth and had remarkable achievements in the socio-political sphere. Tragically, their gains are on the verge of being wiped out altogether. In these challenging times, to help them reclaim their voices, APT is providing young women and men from across the country platforms to foster their skills and encourage their engagements.

During the year 2023, we have organized a variety of educational programs and implemented different initiatives to empower youth by building their resilience and helping them gain the necessary abilities and mindset. More than 100 youth from Afghanistan who graduated from our programs have learned different skills oriented toward growth and productivity.

After attending our programs, the young participants have shared their stories highlighting the impact it has had on their lives. These stories provide a better understanding of how APT programs in the current challenging situation play a crucial role in igniting hope among youth and preparing them to contribute to building a better future.

Last but not least, a lot of people put in a lot of effort and hours in support of our programs and youth in Afghanistan. The list is a little long but the contributions of every one of them have been vital and we sincerely appreciate all their dedication.

About APT.

Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) is a youth-led nonprofit organization in Afghanistan that actively addresses human rights crises, with a specific focus on women's rights, while simultaneously promoting girls' access to education through creative and impactful initiatives.

Since its inception in 2010, APT activities have impacted and inspired over 60,000 youth and children to build a vision for a just and inclusive society.

“ My name is Horia Sultanzada, and I live in Kabul city. Currently, I am working remotely for one of the international organizations based in Kabul. I have a Bachelor’s degree in the BBA faculty from Kabul University, and I have also taken courses related to my field of study, focusing on leadership, effective communication, English programs, entrepreneurship, and mentorship. During the program, I encountered some challenges, such as struggling with new ideas and prompts and having limited time to complete assignments. Additionally, adjusting to the rigorous schedule and managing my workload alongside the coursework was tough. However, with the support of the organizers and instructors, I was able to overcome these obstacles, thrive in the program, and grow as a writer.

Before participating in the APT Creative Writing program, I had always enjoyed writing, but I felt that my skills needed further development. I learned about the program through a friend who had participated in previous programs and was impressed by their newfound confidence and improved skill level. I applied and was accepted into the program. Now, I feel more confident in my writing abilities. I highly recommend the APT Creative Writing program to anyone looking to improve their writing skills and gain valuable insights into the industry. As a result of my participation, I have gained a deeper understanding of my passion for writing and have developed new skills that have helped me excel in my current role. I highly recommend the APT Programs to anyone looking to enhance their professional development.

- Horia Sultanzada

“ My name is Safia Akbari, and I am from Nangarhar province in Afghanistan. The oppressive laws of the Taliban regime deprived women and girls of their rights to education, work, and employment, essentially denying them any opportunities for improvement.

Like many other girls, I found myself overwhelmed with hopelessness after witnessing the fall of my beloved country. However, in the midst

of this darkness, a beacon of hope emerged in the form of Afghans for Progressive Thinking organization. It was time for me to embark on a new journey through their remarkable mentorship program.

Through this extraordinary mentorship program offered by Afghans for Progressive Thinking organization, I was granted an invaluable opportunity to explore writing research papers within a collaborative team setting. This experience not only equipped me with essential research skills but also connected me with exceptional individuals from across my country. Furthermore, this mentorship program served as a gateway for me to learn vital life skills, such as critical thinking and conflict analysis. In these challenging times, it is essential for every individual to possess the ability to comprehend various conflicts they encounter and to utilize critical thinking skills to find effective solutions.

The impact this mentorship program has had on my life is profound. It has not only enhanced my understanding of conflict analysis and critical thinking but has also empowered me to implement these skills in my own life. Overall, I am proud to say that Afghans for Progressive Thinking, with its mentorship program, has made remarkable changes in my life. I firmly believe that the skills I have learned through this program will greatly benefit me in my future endeavours and enable me to contribute to the betterment of my community.

- Safia Akbari

“ My name is Mursal Rahimi. I am a medical student and a junior in English language literature. Throughout my journey, I have studied English at the Muslim Institute for 3 months, English at the Cambridge Organization for 5 months, and TOEFL at ELCLC. Furthermore, I have worked as an intern at Ali Sina Hospital, and now I am a general member of EAAW and a CT instructor.

I became aware of APT through social media, and after filling out the form, I had an interview. During the interview, I faced some challenges,

but due to my background, I successfully passed the interview and was added to the mentorship group. In this program, I have learned a lot of things, such as how to mentor a group, human rights in international law, and developing goals, among other important issues. We had numerous sessions with both male and female American instructors, and we thoroughly enjoyed them. I was pleased to be introduced to impressive individuals from around the world. I cannot express how grateful I am to APT for providing this awesome and amazing opportunity for young people. I consider myself lucky to be part of the APT family.

- Mursal Rahimi

“ I am Nazia Amiri, a student of Archaeology and Anthropology at Kabul University. Unfortunately, I couldn't continue my education due to restrictions. Currently, I work as an instructor of intermediate-level English language at Hujjat Khorasan network in the 16th district. I have recently joined Roshan Company as an intern in customer care. Additionally, I am cooperating with Let's Be Friends network, which works voluntarily to empower children and youths in this catastrophic situation in Afghanistan.

However, I would like to express my admiration for APT (Afghans for Progressive Thinking). It has truly supported me in pursuing my ambitions. Since the Taliban took power, I thought I had lost my hopes and dreams and became frustrated. As an Afghan girl, especially a university student with a strong desire to gain knowledge and serve my country, this situation had a profoundly negative impact on me and other girls and students. The Taliban, in particular, has prohibited girls from continuing their education and deprived them of job opportunities and independence.

Fortunately, I have had the opportunity to be a remote participant in APT. Honestly, APT has been a guiding light in my educational journey, never allowing me to lose hope or become frustrated. In this dreadful

situation where everyone is losing hope, APT provides young women and youths with hope to pursue their goals and be optimistic about their future. Young people are like diamonds, and the more we polish them, the more precious they become. The youth of Afghanistan need support and fundamental rights without violence, so they can become unique and exceptional individuals

- Nazia Amiri

“ I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the Mentorship Program provided by APT, which has been instrumental in helping us grow both personally and professionally. The online format of the program was not only accessible but also highly effective, allowing us to engage with our mentors and fellow mentees successfully. The guidance provided by our mentors was invaluable, particularly in enhancing our critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which have proven to be essential in our personal and professional lives. The responsiveness and support from the program administrators and staff made the overall experience seamless. APT’s Mentorship Program has indeed been a valuable resource in advancing our analytical and problem-solving abilities. We also had the opportunity to collaborate with other individuals, enabling us to co-author a research paper and gain valuable insights into the art of research. Thank you to the entire APT Team for your commitment to the development of Afghanistan and for this amazing experience.

- Horia Akhgar

“ My name is Maleka Amiri, and I graduated from school in 2022. I am currently looking to secure a scholarship in another country. Additionally, I am planning to take some courses to improve my English language skills and prepare for the TOEFL test as quickly as possible.

I first heard about the opportunity with APT (Afghans for Progressive Thinking) from one of my friends, and I asked her to share the link with me. Thankfully, I was able to participate in this program. One of the challenges I initially faced was feeling alienated and having the fear of communicating with others. However, after attending two or three sessions, I started to feel more comfortable in the environment.

When I first joined the program, my expectation was to improve my English language skills. I saw this program as an opportunity to practice my English. However, as the program progressed, I realized that I gained more than what I had expected.

This was my first online course experience, as I had never participated in any online programs before joining APT. Being a member of APT was a new and beneficial experience for me. With the strong support of APT, I was able to explore new perspectives on various issues. Studying with APT opened up new horizons for me. Ultimately, being a member of APT was a source of great pride for me

- Maleka Amiri

“ I am Hadia Nezami from Nangarhar province. I graduated from Nasrat High School and I am currently a student at Nangarhar University, majoring in Public Administration. I have also worked as a teacher in various private schools, and I am currently teaching at one of them. I love my job, and my field of study is related to leadership and management.

I was searching for good online courses that could enhance my knowledge and skills, and fortunately, I came across APT (Afghan Progressive Thinking). I truly appreciate the work they do. This course has given me a great deal of confidence and courage because, as a student of leadership and management, I had lost some of my confidence due to the current situation in Afghanistan. However, this program has given me new hope that I can still achieve my goals and

dreams.

Through this program, I have learned that leadership is a highly spiritual position or skill that not everyone possesses. It is a skill that only honest and good-hearted individuals deserve. Moreover, this course has provided me with numerous other opportunities from various perspectives. I am truly grateful to be one of the participants in APT's programs.

- Hadia Nezami

“ My name is Aqdas Darwish, and I'm a determined individual who uses the power of art and voluntary work to shed light on the dire situation faced by women in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, it has been really challenging to acquire knowledge and express myself artistically. However, in the middle of these circumstances, I have found a glimmer of hope and personal growth through my involvement in the mentorship class By Afghans for Progressive Thinking program.

The mentorship program has given me countless opportunities to gain new knowledge and a wide range of skills. Through actively participating in the conflict analysis class, I have developed my abilities to promote change, stand up for my rights, and challenge the pervasive voice-suppression in my nation. Moreover, this newfound realization has given me the confidence to take initiatives, including assuming the role of a leader in writing a research paper alongside my teammates. As a result, this experience has helped me grow personally and professionally as a leader while also teaching me about the persuasive power of research and written communication.

Above all, APT has provided me with a supportive community where I feel a sense of freedom and empowerment. We have developed a network that supports and strengthens one another by working together with teammates from various backgrounds while taking benefits of guidance of the professional instructors. Together, we have started on

a journey to advocate for change and empower ourselves and those around us.

In conclusion, being a part of the APT'S mentorship program has given me a new hope and ignited my desire for continuing to fight for the freedom and rights of women in Afghanistan. It has shown me the transforming potential of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and teamwork.

- Aqdas Darwish

“ I am Hela Rahimi. After graduating from high school in 2019 and successfully passing the university entrance exam, I enrolled at Kabul Polytechnic University to study engineering. During my time at the university, I also dedicated myself to learning English. I pursued various beneficial courses related to my field of study and received certificates of appreciation from the university. Additionally, I had the opportunity to participate in an internship at one of the Afghan ministries, which was arranged by the university.

However, after the Taliban regained control of the country, women's rights and activities in Afghanistan were severely restricted and halted. They imposed strict rules preventing girls from attending schools and imposed strict regulations on their movements. The situation for women in cities and marketplaces deteriorated rapidly, and after a year of Taliban rule, universities and educational programs were closed off to Afghan women. Currently, girls like myself are isolated within society and deprived of our civil and human rights. The Taliban's actions have caused immense harm to the lives of women and girls, including myself, by denying us access to education and civil participation, leaving us in a state of despair.

In light of the current situation, my suggestion to the global community and powerful nations is to provide educational opportunities for young individuals, especially Afghan girls, in foreign countries. It is crucial to prevent darkness from prevailing over light by ensuring that access to

education is not completely lost for the girls and women of Afghanistan. By investing in their education and empowering them, we can help them build a brighter future and overcome the challenges they face.

- Hela Rahimi

“ My name is Mohammad Imam. The courses offered by APT not just enhanced my knowledge but provided me opportunities to build my exhibiting skills.

The first course was a gateway to understanding leadership in its true essence. I learned that effective leadership isn't about wielding power but about inspiring and empowering others. Through interactive sessions and practical exercises, I discovered the art of motivating a team, steering them towards a common goal, and fostering an environment where everyone's strengths flourish. Next came the course on honing debate skills. It was more than constructing arguments; it was about cultivating critical thinking, active listening, and respectful discourse. I realized the power of presenting ideas cogently and persuasively, a skillset not just vital in debates but in everyday interactions, whether negotiating, problem-solving, or sharing opinions.

Managing a group of individuals was an enlightening experience in itself. From understanding diverse personalities to orchestrating collaboration, I grasped the nuances of effective team management. Conflict resolution, time management, and adapting leadership styles to suit various situations were lessons ingrained deeply. Implementing small projects provided a hands-on experience that sealed the theoretical learnings. It taught me the importance of meticulous planning, adaptability to unforeseen challenges, and the satisfaction of seeing ideas materialize. As I step forward, I carry the invaluable lessons from these courses, not merely as acquired knowledge but as pillars shaping my personal and professional endeavours.

- Mohammad Imam

“ My name is Zoha Sherzoy. Throughout my journey, I have developed valuable skills in socializing with people, effective communication as a speaker and listener, and understanding the qualities of a good and responsible leader. I was introduced to the APT leadership program by a friend of mine who had participated in it herself. She encouraged me to take advantage of this impactful program.

Being a part of the APT leadership program was both exciting and challenging. Initially, I struggled with expressing myself and often found myself influenced by the ideas of my team members, which was a fear I had before joining. However, after attending a few sessions, I overcame this problem and became more confident in expressing my ideas, asking questions to the instructors, and becoming a better speaker.

Participating in the APT leadership program allowed me to acquire numerous new skills that I needed. It was truly one of the best opportunities I could have utilized in such a situation. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the APT team and all the facilitators for organizing this valuable program for Afghan girls who are deprived of the right to education and employment.

- Zoha Sherzoy

“ My name is Sarah Zaheer, and I currently hold the position of LQAS monitor in WHO, while also being a first-semester academy student at AUAF. Throughout my journey, I have had the experience of writing a policy brief about the educational barriers facing Afghan students amidst an unknown future with a group of girls at the APT, and it was one of the most valuable experiences for me. It was my first year of studying at Kabul University when I heard about APT and learned about their activities for Afghan youth. Their impactful programs motivated me to join this institution and participate in some of their programs. Therefore, I applied to the leadership program of

this organization.

The program helped me learn how to write a policy brief by following its specific rules. For instance, using a policy brief can help us be vigorous students or members of civil society. My own experience is a good example of this. When our policy brief was published on September 17, 2023, through social media, an institution by the name of UNOY asked us to publish this policy brief, which is about education, on their pages. Additionally, by following writing courses like motivation letter, recommendation letter, and personal statement, I have gotten an online scholarship for my bachelor's degree from AUAF.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to APT for providing such wonderful programs in these challenging times to empower afghan women.

- Sarah Zaheer

“ I'm Ayesha Ahmadzai, and I completed my law degree at Kabul University in 2022. After graduation, I was actively involved in practical legal work. Unfortunately, since August 2022, we have faced prohibitions on both work and education, which made me feel devastated and uncertain about the future. During this challenging time, I discovered the APT program through social media. The most important lesson I gained was realizing my leadership potential. Discovering my ability to lead and inspire others through effective decision-making, communication, and teamwork, I am delighted to have been a part of this program, where I've had the opportunity to meet renowned and experienced individuals. I am sincerely grateful for APT and hope that such impactful programs continue, as there are thousands of girls, like me, who are in need of such opportunities and could benefit from them.

- Ayesha Ahmadzai

“ My name is Behishta Zafar. I studied pharmacy at Kabul University and worked at an organization named AEESO. My decision to join APT was fueled by a desire to delve deeper into leadership. Despite the challenges of our program being conducted online, this leadership program helped me hone my skills in collaborating with my team, teachers, and classmates. This experience significantly improved my communication and teamwork in today’s digital world. We also had the privilege of learning about leadership from instructors in the US, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands. It showed me how to be a good leader in different places and collaborate effectively with diverse groups of people.

In short, the leadership course was amazing, offering an incredibly positive and personally enriching experience. I’m extremely grateful for programs like these, especially given the challenges our country is facing. A huge thank you to Mr. Ajmal and everyone at APT for their dedication to making this program a success.

- Behishta Zafar

“ I am Sohaiba Azizi. I hold a bachelor’s degree in law and political science from Afghanistan. I have completed relevant courses in women’s leadership, legal writing, English programs, and forensics as part of my field studies. I learned about APT through a friend who had participated in it herself, and I chose the mentorship program. My expectation was to understand the steps of writing through this program and to begin narrating the history of my people.

Upon completing the first course of the coaching program, I acquired skills such as Conflict Analysis, Critical Thinking, and Reflective Writing. I applied these skills in the second part of the program, where we wrote articles. I conducted proper research for my article in collaboration with our team. Now, I am able to articulate the challenging situations faced by people on paper. In conclusion, we express our gratitude to APT for providing us with a training ground and continuous support.

I consistently recommend my friends to participate in the programs offered by this organization.

- Sohaiba Azizi

“ I am Farida Poya, I hold a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Kabul University. Being one of APT’s Mentorship Program Participants, learning about the program through APT’s Facebook page and successfully completing the course marked one of the most significant events in my journey.

The program provided me with a fresh perspective on conflict management, taught me to be objective and critical, to separate facts from biases, and to find the best solutions through effective communication. It has also given me the opportunity to a to meet and network with talented and motivated, young women from diverse backgrounds. Completing the mentorship program has significantly contributed to my growth as a writer. program’s well-organized structure and the effective topics covered have played a crucial role in my mental and personal development. I express my gratitude to the APT team and donors for supporting Afghan youths in paving the way for a bright future.

- Farida Poya

“ This is Yoldoz Atif Fanoos. I graduated from the law faculty with a percentage of 95.33. I have been working in the Legal and Administrative department for two years, and I also worked in the Attorney General’s office of Afghanistan. I have participated in and received valid certificates from the Afghanistan Second Annual International Criminal Court (ICC), two Leadership Programs certificates, TEDx Kabul University EVENT, the United States Institute

of Peace (Defining Rule of Law and Related Concepts), Afghanistan top-notch intellectuals, and I have a Turkish language certificate from a Turkish university.

I came to know about the Leadership Development Course of APT, and I was very interested in participating in it. Fortunately, I found this chance to participate in the leadership program. During all those trainings, I learned very useful and effective issues about leadership. Through those sessions, I was able to meet very successful people who participated in the program. During the program, I met successful coaches who taught us online from different countries, which was very influential for me. The challenge was internet problems. In Afghanistan, more people have network connection problems. I want to be a leader who can easily solve the problems of my people and be popular in their hearts. After joining this program, I knew that I can be a very good and successful leader. I express sincere gratitude to APT for conducting programs that elevate the talents of Afghanistan's youth.

- Yoldoz Atif Fanoos

“ I am Saleha Salimy from Badakhshan Province. I graduated from the Engineering faculty of Kabul Polytechnic University and recently completed the advanced level of English language at the Lincoln Learning Center. I have worked in different fields and am currently pursuing my education through online platforms. One of the great opportunities where I learned many crucial lessons was the Leadership program at APT., I heard about this amazing platform from one of my friends, and she shared how effective this program was for her. I can say that it was an amazing opportunity for me and had a significant impact on my personal and professional life. The way the instructors presented the material was outstanding, and I learned many useful lessons. Through this program, I gained insights into effective leadership, enhanced my communication skills, and developed a deeper understanding of teamwork. These lessons have been invaluable in both my personal and professional spheres. I

express my heartfelt gratitude to APT for providing such transformative programs and contributing to the growth and development of the youth of Afghanistan.

- Saleha Salimy

“ I am Mawloda Koofi, a 20-year-old with thousands of hopes. I enrolled in several English language courses, completed an advanced level in an online program funded by the USA embassy, and participated in boot camp programs at the American University of Afghanistan in July 2023. I was in 12th grade when the Taliban announced that girls over the 6th grade were no longer allowed to attend school. However, it wasn't the end for me; I didn't give up and started studying by myself, I covered my school subjects and prepared for the national exam. After a successful school journey and taking the Kankor exam (national exam for university entrance) in 2022, I got admitted to the Public Policy Faculty at Balkh University. I was excited about starting my degree, but then came another declaration from the Taliban. banning university for women. It was another big shock, and I lost all my motivation and courage.

In my darkest moments, APT emerged as a guiding light. Through the leadership training, I gained valuable insights into significant issues and had the opportunity to exchange ideas with others. The program not only equipped me with essential skills but also played a pivotal role in rebuilding my confidence and resilience. I am grateful to APT for providing this opportunity, and I highly recommend APT's programs for anyone seeking capacity improvement.

- Mawloda Koofi

“ My name is Nelofar Mohammadi, and live in Afghanistan. Since the Taliban took over, I have been living in fear and despair. I have witnessed violence, injustice, and oppression in my society, especially against women and girls. In the depth of hopelessness, I heard about the online leadership program offered by APT, that works to promote human rights and peace in Afghanistan.

The training was a life-changing experience for me. I learned a lot from the facilitators and the other participants, who came from different provinces and backgrounds. We discussed various topics related to human rights, such as women’s rights, education, democracy, and civic engagement. We also learned practical skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, and leadership. The training helped me to develop my confidence, creativity, and critical thinking abilities.

This online leadership training was one of the best opportunities I ever had. It not only enhanced my knowledge and skills, but also inspired me to become a positive change-maker in my society. I am grateful to APT for offering me this opportunity to participate. I hope to continue engaging in their programs to contribute towards building a more peaceful, inclusive, and progressive Afghanistan.

- Nelofar Mohammadi

“ My name is Moqadisa Azizi. When the Taliban took power, I had completed grade seven. Despite being forbidden to attend school during my ninth grade, I was determined to continue my education. Through relentless online searches, I stumbled upon a remarkable program that has made a significant impact on my life. This life-changing discovery came through WhatsApp, and I am currently fully engaged in it. Prior to joining the program, my aspirations were centred around learning how to lead and make a positive impact on society. Participating in APT programs was always my ultimate goal because of the immense opportunity they offer to individuals seeking to enhance their leadership skills. Thanks to this program; I have

gained valuable insights on effective leadership and learned how to lead not just a group but an entire society. It has been an enriching journey, filled with lessons that have melded me into a better leader. I now possess the knowledge and skills to make a tangible difference in the world.

Today, I stand proud as I have accomplished my goal of becoming a capable and influential leader. I am immensely grateful to APT for providing me with this incredible platform to learn and grow. The impact of this program on my life is immeasurable, and I will carry its teachings with me as I continue to strive towards positive change.

- Moqadasa Azizi

“ I’m Benafsha Nazari from Badakhshan province. Before the Taliban’s takeover, I was in 10th grade. After that, I faced numerous challenges, including mental health and social issues. However, with the support of my family and friends, I began my journey in APT’s Leadership program, which transformed my perspective on life. Through this program, I discovered my creative abilities, gaining valuable knowledge and advantages in the process. Intrigued by APT’s offerings, I then applied for the mentorship program, expecting coaching and guidance but found it to be much more. The program provided me with essential life skills and information beyond expectations. Now, I consider myself a knowledgeable person among my peers, confidently using the knowledge acquired from APT’s leadership and mentorship programs to solve my problems. I’m grateful for APT’s unique educational approach and valuable programs that empower young individuals to enhance their skills and broaden their knowledge. A heartfelt thank you to APT for their impactful initiatives.

- Benafsha Nazari

“ My name is Sefatullah Khalid, and I currently work as an IT Assistant at IMC Organization. Through my journey, I have achieved significant milestones in leadership. When I joined the APT leadership program, it equipped me with essential skills and techniques that have influenced my approach to leadership. I came to know about the APT Programs from a close friend who had previously participated. Intrigued by the opportunity to enhance my leadership skills and expand my network, I eagerly applied and was fortunate to be selected. I had high expectations of gaining valuable insights and new strategies to excel in my role. Participating in the APT program has made a profound impact on my professional growth. It provided me with a comprehensive understanding of effective leadership techniques. I learned to adapt my approach to different situations, enabling me to navigate challenges more effectively and create a harmonious work environment. The program also emphasized the importance of continuous learning and personal development. Seeking feedback from my team and superiors helped me identify areas for improvement and implement necessary changes. Embracing a growth mindset has allowed me to enhance my leadership abilities and achieve even greater success. Overall, I sincerely thank the APT organizers for delivering an exceptional program and their commitment to our growth and development.

- Sefatullah Khalid

“ This is Abdul Muir Malekzada from Kabul province of Afghanistan. In my sixth semester at Kabul University's Political Science Faculty, I recognized the need to enhance my expertise in areas such as social networking, community development, communications, and international relations. This led me to Afghans for Progressive Thinkers (APT), particularly their debate initiatives, which captivated my interest. Subsequently, I joined the APT Leadership Program in 2022, solidifying my commitment to personal and professional growth.

The APT Leadership Program provided me with valuable insights

into the realm of effective leadership within the context of intellectual discourse. I gained a deeper understanding of strategic thinking, collaboration, and the art of negotiation. These skills and knowledge have not only enriched my capabilities as a debater but have also laid a strong foundation for future leadership roles.

The journey I embarked upon with APT has had a transformative impact on my personal and professional development. It has instilled in me a profound sense of responsibility and optimism for the future. By broadening my knowledge, enhancing my communication skills, and fostering teamwork, this experience has prepared me to excel in my academic pursuits and beyond.

In conclusion, I express my heartfelt gratitude to APT and its esteemed leadership team for creating an extraordinary platform for intellectual growth and leadership development. The APT programs, coupled with the vibrant debate club at Kabul University, have propelled me forward in my journey to become a future leader. I eagerly look forward to further capacity-building opportunities and continued collaboration with APT in shaping the next generation of leaders. Thank you, APT, for your invaluable contribution to my growth and that of my peers.

- Abdul Munir Malekzada

“ My name is Salma Rahman, and I am currently a first-year student at the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF). Despite the challenges posed by the Taliban’s rise to power, I remained committed to my pursuit of knowledge and continued my education through online classes and free platforms. During my educational journey, a friend who had completed the APT Leadership Program informed me about its opening for new applications.

After a successful interview, I was admitted into the program, and it exceeded my expectations in terms of the knowledge and skills I gained. The emphasis on practical learning through group work was

particularly captivating, allowing us to delve into each topic with hands-on experience. The APT Leadership Program has had a profound impact on my life. It has equipped me with essential skills, bolstered my leadership abilities, and broadened my perspective. The program's emphasis on practical learning and the opportunity to participate in meaningful initiatives allowed me to make a tangible difference in the lives of Afghan girls seeking education. Moreover, the program's impact extended beyond my personal growth.

By investing my time and knowledge in assisting Afghan girls in accessing free courses, I contributed to empowering them and providing them with opportunities for self-improvement. Witnessing the positive impact on their lives further reinforced my belief in the importance of education and leadership.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the chance to be part of such a transformative program and remain committed to using the knowledge and skills I have gained to create a brighter future for my country and its people.

- Salma Rahman

“ My name is Ayesha Ahmadzai, and in 2022, I graduated from Kabul University Faculty of Law. I was passionate about pursuing a career in law and had been actively involved in practical legal work. During this challenging period, I was excited upon information about the APT program through social media.

Learning about by the opportunity it presented, I decided to participate. Despite the difficulties of not being able to attend the program in person due to the ban, I persevered and took part in it remotely. The APT program proved to be transformative for me in numerous ways. One of the most significant outcomes was the realization of my leadership

potential. Through the program, I discovered strengths within myself that I had previously overlooked. It provided me with a platform to develop my skills, broaden my knowledge, and enhance my confidence. Today, I am filled with joy and gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the APT program. It enabled me to connect with renowned and experienced individuals, expanding my network and exposing me to new perspectives. The program has not only empowered me as an individual but also equipped me with the tools and knowledge to make a meaningful impact in my community.

In conclusion, I am grateful for the opportunities I have been given and remain committed to creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

- Ayesha Ahmadzai

“ I am Sahar Sultani, a graduate of Rukhshana High School. Currently, I live in Pakistan and I am taking English classes and computer programming courses. I have also searched for online classes to acquire valuable knowledge from home. I came across the APT Program via Instagram. After completing the form and interview, I was given the chance to participate in the Leadership Program. At the beginning of the program, I faced the challenge of dealing with a weak internet connection, but I never gave up. During the program, I felt many changes within myself, including improved communication skills and working in a team, as well as boosting my self-confidence to express my ideas without fear. I thank the APT program for providing such a good opportunity.

- Sahar Sultani

“ My name is Latifa Ansari, one of the debaters of Balkh University, Department of Law and Political Sciences, Balkh Province.

I participated in various debate programs in Dari and English. I have had good experiences with debate programs, these programs make us believe in our ability and also increase our personal growth and knowledge of analyzing social phenomena and reasoning logic, these programs increase our capacity and create a positive feeling. A motivation for us to find our true talent by compete among teams, build a social and personal position in our society, find good friends, and contribute to the social development of the society. I understand that unfortunately we currently face various challenges, however, they cannot hinder our progress, we have big dreams and big goals in life.

To sum up, I would like to express my special thanks to the Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) and their colleagues who created such good opportunities for the youth in Afghanistan and paved the way for equipping us with skills.

- Latifa Ansari

“ My name is Elaha Paiman, I am 21 years old and I am a third-year student of sociology field in Kabul Educational University. Most of my achievements are related to scientific themes, especially mathematics, for which I have seven certificates. My second achievement is that I am a beautiful calligrapher and I have many certificates in this field, I also have complete knowledge of psychology and essential information about different religions, especially Islam. Well, life is full of experiences, every moment is a new experience for a person in life and we had many experiences during our time as students one of these experiences is my experience as a teacher, I have worked in different educational centers teaching different topics and it is a great experience.

In this tough situation in Afghanistan, APT played a crucial role by organizing useful programs like Debate Clubs. Although the ground is not paved in Afghanistan for girls to learn knowledge, Debate Club

lighted up our way to learn some skills and some new things like having the ability to declare our views to other people and the ability to connect with others and develop our communication, and also having the ability to wisely disagree and agree with different views. I strongly thank APT for making these opportunities for us. Afghanistan is a country that has been struggling with political challenges for centuries my suggestion for the youth is to not lose their perseverance and stability and move forward. I want APT to create more learning opportunities for Afghan girls to cause them to draw a wonderful future for themselves and their country.

- Elaha Paiman

“ My name is Husna Jalil and I am from Kabul, Afghanistan. I have worked as a volunteer in different provinces to provide aid and food for women in rural areas. I am a writer and also a reader. I love writing stories and reading novels and historical books. It has been more than a year since Kabul fell to the hands of the Taliban and ever since I have not seen a day without worry and stress. The schools and universities were banned for us and we are not allowed to practice our basic rights. All these restrictions and right-violating policies has driven us young women to a state of helplessness. We are not allowed to acquire knowledge in anywhere in Afghanistan and our future in Kabul is very dark. However, in the past couple of months I have learned about Afghans for Progressive Thinking and its wonderful programs. I applied to the mentorship program by APT and it has brought lots of changes in my life. After the ban on education, I thought that life was finished for me, however, the APT programs encouraged me to raise my voice against the injustice young women are facing in Afghanistan and be a future leader in my country. In a place where education is banned finding alternative ways to learn is a dream of everyone. Through the mentorship program, I learned about critical thinking and conflict analysis. The two most important subjects for all young women in Afghanistan. In the current conflicts and instability in Afghanistan requires all its youth to be familiar with

the concept of conflict analysis and resolution.

Furthermore, in the mentorship program, we also learned how to conduct research and, fortunately, we got the chance to divide into groups and write a research paper with other young women from across Afghanistan. Through this opportunity, I was connected with other youth in other provinces and established a network with them. Through this network, we used every tool at hand to raise our voices collectively and share our views with wider audience about our demands and the future of Afghanistan. We have also decided to expand our network and work toward a common goal in the near future.

- Husna Jalil

“ This is Shaiysta Rahmani. I recently joined Afghans for Progressive Thinking (APT) as an intern. Before joining APT, I was seeking a way to apply the knowledge and skills I gained during my education, particularly in debate and research, to benefit others and contribute to the development of my society.

When I first encountered APT in 2020 through their debate program, I was immediately drawn to their mission and values. I decided to continue my involvement with APT through their leadership program and also had the opportunity to collaborate with professors and students from Monash University in Australia on research projects.

Joining APT has truly changed me as an individual. I now feel a sense of efficacy in society and have the privilege to contribute to the development of my peers daily. Each day, I strive to impart new knowledge and continuously expand my skillset. Ultimately, my experience with APT has reaffirmed my commitment to making a difference through education and dialogue.

- Shaiysta Rahmani

“ My name is Faheema Ahmadi, and I am a graduate of urban planning and design from Kabul University, now I am a student at VSA virtual school Australia. While searching for online platforms to improve my skills, I discovered the APT programs from my cousin. I registered and applied to their leadership program, eager to delve deeper into leadership development.

After being shortlisted, I successfully passed the interview and began the program. Facilitated by experienced leaders from foreign countries, the sessions provided valuable insights into leadership. I am grateful to APT for offering such a wonderful opportunity to Afghan youth like me.

I am sincerely grateful for the invaluable impact your programs have had on my personal and professional growth. Your commitment to empowering the youth in Afghanistan has not only equipped me with valuable knowledge and skills but has also ignited a deep sense of excitement to apply these newfound abilities to make a positive difference in my community.

Thank you for being a beacon of support and guidance on my journey. Your dedication to fostering growth is truly commendable, and I look forward to contributing meaningfully to the betterment of my community, thanks to the foundation you've provided.

- Faheema Ahmadi

“ I am Najia Fakhri, and I currently work voluntarily in an NGO that aims to empower young Afghan girls through capacity-building programs. Throughout my learning journey, I have gained a lot of knowledge and experience by participating in various youth social gatherings such as debate clubs, book clubs, Model United Nations, and volunteer work.

I have already participated in two other programs offered by APT (Afghans for Progressive Thinking). I have gained valuable knowledge

from their leadership, mentorship, and coaching programs. As an alumna of APT programs, I was already a member of their WhatsApp group, and it was through this group that I became aware of the opportunity to join the creative writing program. As soon as I learned about the program, I registered myself.

Before the program started, my expectation was to gain information and insights about writing that would help me brainstorm and overcome any hesitation I had when writing for different purposes.

As I began participating in the first session of the creative writing program, I realized that anyone with a pen and paper can set a goal to write creatively by brainstorming and understanding what they want to write about, drawing on their own writing abilities. We all have the ability to express our deepest emotions, thoughts, and experiences through writing.

The program itself was smooth and presented in a good flow. Our instructor was well-educated and knowledgeable, and she conducted the sessions in a professional manner. Her prompts always encouraged me to write freely and without hesitation.

-Najia Fakhri

“ I am a student in the 4th semester of BBA faculty at one of my private universities. Currently, I am a student in the dental prosthesis field. I am learning the German language online to get a scholarship and I follow some computer courses. I am passionate about leadership and being an active youth and like to attend workshops to boost my capacities.

I became aware of APT through social media. Like many other youths, I filled out the application and passed the process of being selected to join leadership sessions. It was effective for me. I learned different

topics and found familiarity with other people across Afghanistan. It was a good space for exchanging ideas and capacity building. I offer APT programs for those who are seeking a valid certificate and it is a good opportunity to gain effective insights about significant issues. I would like to express my special thanks from APT for youth empowerment.

- Treena Mohammadi

“ My name is Sulaiman Rahimy, I was born and raised in Kabul, Afghanistan and after the successful completion of my school degree, I went to India to pursue my bachelor’s degree in commerce at Goa University. During my time in India, I also worked as a marketing assistant in a private company for 3 years. After completing my bachelor’s degree, I came back to Afghanistan in 2023. After coming back to my country, APT gave me the great opportunity to be accepted as one of their interns, which I am delighted them, as they are teaching, me how to enhance my skills and achieve my goals by gaining more knowledge through their mentorship program which had a positive impact on both my personal and professional life. I am grateful for APT because of their commitment and empowering Afghan Youth by giving them various opportunities.

- Sulaiman Rahimy

“ My name is Mursal Khairkhwa, and I recently graduated from Kabul University with a degree in urban planning and design. Currently, I am pursuing my MBA. During my search for online platforms to enhance my skills, a friend recommended that I apply to the mentorship program offered by the APT organization. Intrigued by the prospect of mentorship, I eagerly submitted my application.

To my delight, I received a response from the APT organization

informing me that I had been shortlisted for their mentorship program. After a successful interview, I was thrilled to begin the program. The sessions were conducted by experienced facilitators from foreign countries who were experts in mentorship.

Throughout the mentorship program, I gained valuable knowledge in various areas. I learned about conflict analysis, critical thinking, the components of conflict, analysing conflict resolution, and the writing process, among other topics. The sessions were incredibly enlightening, and I am grateful to APT for providing such a wonderful opportunity to the youth in Afghanistan.

By participating in the mentorship program, I have not only expanded my skills and knowledge but also developed a deeper understanding of conflict and its resolution. This experience has been invaluable in shaping my personal and professional growth.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to APT for their commitment to empowering Afghan youth through various opportunities. Their dedication to fostering learning and development is commendable, and I am truly grateful for the impact they have had on my journey.

- Mursal Khairkhwa

“ I am Sahar Sahebzada, and I am currently studying Medical Science with the goal of becoming a general surgeon in the future. While I am dedicated to my academic pursuits, I also have a keen interest in becoming an effective leader and entrepreneur. My aim is to create opportunities for other young individuals and guide them towards a brighter future.

When education became inaccessible for Afghan girls and optimism was scarce, the leadership program offered a glimmer of hope and opened new doors for Afghan females. The phrase “Wait is over!”

resonated deeply with me as we had been eagerly waiting for the program for a long time. Consequently, I decided to take the opportunity and apply.

To be honest, the leadership program was incredibly impactful and offered a wealth of knowledge. It covered a wide range of topics including communication skills, strategic and critical thinking, various types of leadership (including servant leadership), writing motivation letters, understanding the true meaning of honour, the power of soft skills, and innovation and creation in leadership. Such programs have a profound influence on young individuals, shaping their personalities and encouraging progressive thinking.

In conclusion, it is crucial to acknowledge that Afghans are currently living in challenging circumstances where influential programs like these are needed more than ever. Therefore, we wholeheartedly hope to see more from APT (Afghans for Progressive Thinking) and their impactful initiatives.

- Sahar Sahebzada

“ My name is Homa Batoori, and I am from Kabul province in Afghanistan. I recently graduated from Sooria Girls High School, obtaining my 12th Grade Graduation Certificate as well as an English language certificate.

I first learned about the APT Leadership program through social media and friends, and I immediately recognized the opportunity it presented. My main goal in joining the program was to enhance my abilities and communication skills, while also learning about the strategies for developing effective leadership, understanding its values, and grasping its essential features.

I am delighted to share that participating in this program has provided me with valuable insights into public speaking, effective communication,

and the significant role of a servant leader in society. It has empowered me to adopt the best strategies to become a professional leader. Additionally, the APT platform has offered beneficial opportunities that have encouraged me to confidently share my ideas and thoughts. This experience has also contributed to my progress in academic writing and has further improved my overall communication skills. I am truly honored and grateful for these valuable experiences. Thank you, APT.

- Homa Batoori

“ My name is Muzhda Wafa, and I was a high school student in Kabul, Afghanistan, before the Taliban takeover. It was through social media that I first learned about the APT Leadership Program. Intrigued by the opportunity to learn about leadership in such uncertain times, I eagerly applied, hoping to acquire skills that could make a difference in my life and community.

The APT Leadership Development Program exceeded my expectations in every aspect. Each session covered a wide range of leadership topics, including servant leadership, virtual leadership, public speaking, personal branding, networking, critical thinking, and much more. One of the most impactful experiences was working on a team to develop a policy brief. This not only enhanced my understanding of policy briefs but also improved my teamwork and collaboration skills. I am determined to apply the skills I gained from this program in both my personal and professional endeavors.

Overall, the APT Leadership Program has transformed my leadership abilities and equipped me with the necessary tools to be a more effective leader. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this program, as I believe it has a positive impact on the lives of young individuals like myself.

- Muzhda Wafa

“ My name is Narges, and I am from Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. I was studying at Balkh University, specializing in the Faculty of Public Administration and following the Taliban ban on girls’ education, I am left behind and can’t attend university and educational centers. Hopefully, APT programs have opened a new window to Afghan girls to resist and continue.

During my third year of university, I had the opportunity to join APT and participate in their events. I found the APT programs to be incredibly valuable, as they provided me with the opportunity to learn new things and enhance my skills. Through APT, my capacity for speaking and engaging in debates with others significantly improved. I am grateful to be able to participate in all of APT’s events alongside my university studies, and I consider myself fortunate to be a part of the APT community.

I am committed to attending all of APT’s debate sessions in the future. In conclusion, I believe it is essential for us to seize every opportunity that comes our way in life, as they may not come again. I am truly grateful for APT and the impact it has had on my personal and academic growth. Thank you, APT, for everything you do.

- Narges

“ This is Nilab Ibrahimy. I am studying engineering at Kabul polytechnic University. I am also a program manager and workshop manager at EAW (Empowering Afghan Women). I like reading novels in my free time and I am suitable to communicate with others. I came to cognize about the Leadership Development Course of APT in 2022 through social media. I was very attached to attending it because leadership can benefit every aspect of your life, giving you greater confidence, strengthening your communication and negotiation skills, and developing character. The values you learn as a leader can improve your personal life and relationships and set you on the fast track to success in your career and life.

During the course, I learned various points about leadership; its fundamentals, and styles. Besides, I found some nice friends from different backgrounds and leadership potential. Furthermore, we met some talented national and international instructors. Since they were from different countries such as; Germany and Afghanistan, we came to know what the leader is from their perspectives and what do they think about the Afghan people. We learned what is honor, tribute, and how important trust is, and how to influence more. Overall, our leadership course was just fantastic. To lead is to influence. It can be at home, at the university, or with the whole community. Since I am a program manager, I need to know a lot about it. This course helped me to lead the programs and manage them all very well. After the program, I decided to change my leadership style so that I make the members more interested. I realized I was more like a position leader; I came to know that being a people leader will be more efficient. So, I decided to interact more with the members, have some suggestions individually and provide them with more practical materials. As a result, the program has provided me with tools that could implement into my life and my workplace in the future that will encourage my students, college, friends, and my family to think about situations differently. I hope to be able to pass on newly found knowledge of negotiation and assist other people in relocating their dreams.

- Nilab Ibrahimy

“ This is Somaia Qasemi. I studied sociology at Kabul educational university. I studied English some years ago up to the pre-advance level. I like reading novels and also biographies. I love painting and calligraphy and I do it in my free time. I love the calligraphy of Dari Persian poems, especially the poems of Rumi.

I joined Afghans for Progressive Thinking program in 2022. It was a wonderful course for learning leadership and I learned many good and important points about leadership. In this course, I met many good people, I made many good friends with different backgrounds

and leadership potential. I learned many good things about leadership like communicating with people, values, setting goals, values, and about my own leadership and the leader characteristic. We had many national and international instructors with different backgrounds who were really experts in their fields and one of them was from Germany we came to know what they think about Afghan people. Overall, our leadership program truly intriguing.

In this program, I learned that leadership is very important and to lead is to influence people, to make people our followers by their heart and it can happen everywhere like at home, at university, among our friends, and in our relations. Actually, before joining this program my goals were not clear to me, and even though I didn't have any specific plan for myself now I learned how to have a plan and how to set my goals not only this but also, I was weak at communicating with people but I came to know that communication is important and as a result now I have a notebook and every night I write all my activities which I did during the day and I write my goals and trying to find ways for achieving them. And in the end, I thank APT for providing such programs for youth.

- Somaia Qasemi

“ I am Tahmina Rahraw. I am graduated from social science Faculty of Kabul University, History Department. Lately, I was studying in medical collage at one of private universities in Kabul. It was my first year at stomatology faculty. As I was interested in learning high quality English, so I started my studies at Kardan University. I joined APT'S leadership program through my friend's recommendation. One of my friends who has participated in APT leadership program, recommended this program to me as an outstanding and life changing opportunity. I filled an application. After a few days, I received an invitation to attend an interview. I got selected and invited for an orientation session, which provided information about the program process as well as

schedules. That is how my journey started with ATP. APT's online leadership development program had so much impact in my personal choices, opinions and professional life. Despite all challenges that I faced through this program, it forced me to learn something new. It was my first experience to be part of an amazing online program; I learned a lot through these sessions like: who is a leader, what is the responsibilities of a leader, knowing my brand.

Last but not least, building my strength, trigger points and knowing my weaknesses, it thought us how to improve our communication skills, doing advocacy for our rights, conflict analyses, work of leadership, writing policy brief which was new thing for me. Furthermore, the most important part was what is writing policy brief and the idea of creating peace which is the need of our society right now. I will take a moment to thank APT for providing such opportunity for Afghan girls in the horrific situation that we are deprived of learning.

- Tahmina Rahraw

THE END