

Emerging Leaders of Pakistan (ELP): Forum for Change

About ELP:

The Emerging Leaders of Pakistan project seeks to empower the next generation of Pakistan's leaders. The project will build an in-person and online networking forum of engagement and collaboration for civil society leaders from Pakistan to discuss and make an impact on issues such as democracy and Islam, economic development, employment, governance.

From October 27 to November 17, fifteen young ELP Fellows from Pakistan will come to the United States to meet with policymakers, student groups, community leaders, diaspora communities, and regional experts. An online forum will be built to facilitate sustainable idea exchange among participants and with the broader community in Pakistan, the region, and the world.

The purpose of the US visit and meetings will be three-fold, simultaneous, and in no particular priority:

- **Provide a safe, central space** for young Pakistani leaders to network with each other, exchange ideas and build long term collaborative relationships.
- Provide an opportunity for forum participants to meet civil servants and civil society leaders, and others to **gain best practices/lessons learned** and adapt them to their own context in Pakistan.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to **share their experiences, knowledge, and recommendations** with policymakers, experts, and other stakeholders, on the future of Pakistan, employment of youth, religious misperceptions, and other key issues affecting young people in the country today.

About the Fellows:

The inaugural class of ELP Fellows were selected from a pool of 250 applicants and selected for their perseverance, leadership, and relentless commitment to their communities and their country. The 2012 Fellows also met these following basic criteria:

- Person of Pakistani origin, currently residing in Pakistan, ages 18-30.
- Demonstrated involvement in civic engagement activities or groups.
- Willingness and ability to travel to the United States for seminar.
- Ability to communicate in English.
- No previous travel to the US or Europe.

2012 ELP Fellows:*

- **Abdul Majeed Abid:** A final year medical student in Lahore with interests in history, political economy and literature. He blogs at abdulmajeedabid.blogspot.com and tweets as @abdulmajeedabid. He is the assistant editor at Pak Tea House, a leading progressive blog in Pakistan, www.pakteahouse.net, and has written for the *Express Tribune* and other Pakistan publications. He also has a regular feature in the *Friday Times* called the "The Diary of a Young Doctor." He recently wrote a widely circulated piece about the inequities of compensation for public sector doctors in Pakistan for *Dawn* (<http://dawn.com/2012/07/01/why-are-the-doctors-out-on-the-streets/>), and participated in the first India-Pakistan Social Media Summit in July. He wishes to become an oncologist, while continuing his work on social issues affecting his country.

* List subject to change, depending on approval/denial of US Visa for each Fellow. If ELP Finalist is unable to obtain a visa for travel, an alternate candidate will be invited to participate in his/her place.

- **Said Nazir Afridi:** A working journalist from the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) of Pakistan, Said Nazir Afridi serves as the Station Manager for Radio Khyber, the first ever news channel in FATA, based in the tribal region of Jamrud in the Khyber Agency, a high risk area known to be a hot-bed for militant activity. Through Khyber Radio, Said has brought awareness and a first-hand perspective of the people from that fragile region. In 2008, he introduced female reporters to Khyber Radio, and despite threats to his life, has continued to cover sensitive issues such as militancy and the war on terror. He is currently working on developing the Tribal News Network, which will focus on the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and FATA, and bring forward, to other Pakistanis, the untold stories of life and people in that region through radio stations and a magazine, and internet technology.
- **Younas Chowdhry:** Younas is currently a Student Life Coordinator at the Salamat International Campus for Advanced Studies in Lahore, and a Teaching Assistant at the School for Social Science & Humanities at Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). In 2009, while he was in college, Younas came up with an idea to start a street theater for underprivileged children, where he would teach the children of factory workers how to act and produce plays, as a means of creating cost effective entertainment for average laborers in the community. The plays he selected highlighted the problems and plight of the poor and other societal issues. The project is still in existence – called Laal Theatre. Since its inception, Laal Theatre has delivered 80 performances and reached more than 3000 people. Some of the actors, many of whom come from low-income communities, have been given the opportunity to perform at different platforms and have also been invited to other countries.
- **Arsalan Kashfi:** Arsalan is heading the Microfinance & Enterprise Development programme of the Azad Jammu Kashmir Rural Support Programme (AJKRSP), working for community development by establishing and empowering grassroots institutions throughout the State. He also manages different donor funded projects related to livelihood, social mobilization, education, and nutrition and food security. Arsalan started his career in 2006 with the National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), the largest Rural Support Programme (RSP) of Pakistan, in post-earthquake scenario in Pakistani controlled region of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K). He established the first microfinance setup of NRSP in district Muzaffarabad of the Pakistani controlled part of J&K and ran the operations in all of the urban areas while introducing innovative micro loan products like Maternity Health Loan, Maternity Home Loan and Housing Loan which had never been customary loans in that region of Pakistan. Arsalan completed his Masters degree in Statistics from Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad and his Post Graduate Diploma in Islamic Banking and Finance.
- **Imran Khan:** Born and raised in Nawa Killi, Quetta, in Balochistan, Imran remains a leader in his community, most recently leading the creation of the “Youth and Gender Development Network,” a youth led initiative that creates a platform for debates and assesses the gaps in the province in the areas of youth and gender development. As part of this role, he worked with the provincial government of Balochistan to implement a youth policy to further meaningful engagement of youth and youth engagement in the province. Imran also previously served as General Secretary of the Youth Advocacy Network Pakistan (www.yansrhr.org) and participated in the Youth Professional Network (YPN), an initiative of the Friederich Ebert Stiftung (FES). He also represented Pakistan, as a youth speaker, at the International Conference on Family Planning in Dakar, Senegal in 2011 and presented a paper at the World Youth Conference in Mexico, where he conducted a session on “Gender Equality and Change in Young People’s Mindsets.”
- **Sadiqa Sultan:** A female activist from Quetta, Balochistan, Sadiqa is part of the Hazara Shiite community, a persecuted minority group in Pakistan. As a student at the University of Balochistan, Sadiqa was active in promoting inter-community harmony and founded a welfare organization called Hazara Tameerians. After receiving her Masters in Journalism degree, she helped launch a community channel named Mechid TV to help bring awareness to issues being faced by the Hazaras. She is also currently serving as an Assistant Program Manager in the Baluchistan Boy Scouts Association. Her long term goals involve being an active journalist and continuing her activism on behalf of her community.
- **Muhammad Azhar Malik:** Azhar is originally from Jhang in the province of Punjab. His education began in a madrassah, but he was pulled out at the insistence of his older sister. (Some of his classmates became jihadists, a number of whom have been killed.) After completing his secondary education, he went on to study at Punjab

University and University of Sargodha, focusing on political science and history. He then completed his LLM at Punjab University and is currently a teaching assistant in Islamic Studies at the prestigious Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). In addition to his position at LUMS, Azhar is active in initiatives like Café Bol, a politically active space in Lahore, which invites lectures, discussions, and workshops, by local and international academics, lawyers, activists, and communities. He also took part in the Lawyers' Movement to protest the removal of the Chief Justice of Pakistan in 2007. Azhar would like to use his legal background to support marginalized and exploited communities and also teach law. He also seeks to enter politics in 10-12 years.

- **Esha Iqbal:** An avid rock climber from the region of Azad Kashmir, Esha was the first girl in her family to get admission at one of the preeminent universities in Pakistan, the National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST) in Islamabad, where she is pursuing her Bachelors in Business Administration. When not studying and not climbing, Esha works with Pakistan Relief, at their Resource Center, where she teaches basic computer skills to the children of underprivileged communities in Islamabad. She spent this past summer in the Guraize Valley, in the northern areas of the Neelum Valley, where she educated children and women. After completing her studies, she hopes to become a Fellow with Teach For Pakistan. Esha was also recently invited by the Pagosa Springs Rotary Club in Colorado, as the Ambassador of Peaceful Pakistan, to attend meetings and share Pakistan Relief's humanitarian efforts with their sister community in the US. However, once learning about the Engaging Young Leaders program, Esha chose to forego that opportunity and participate in ELP because she felt that this opportunity would give her the skills to be a leader in her community and country.
- **Shahid Rehmat:** Shahid Rehmat belongs to the minority Christian community in Lahore, and is a strong advocate for the rights of minorities and women. For the past seven years, he has volunteered with a number of community groups, including, but not limited to, the Catholic Youth Commission of Pakistan, National Commission for Inter-religious Dialogues and Ecumenism (NCIDE), and the National Commission for Justice and Peace (NCJP). Having faced discrimination for being Christian throughout his life, he helped found Interfaith Youth in Action in 2009, an organization committed to building bridges among faiths, especially between Muslims and Christians in Pakistan. In addition to his extracurricular activities, Shahid serves as a Youth Coordinator for the Catholic Youth Ministry in Lahore, and is pursuing his Masters degree in Political Science from Punjab University. After completing his education, he wishes to continue his advocacy work on behalf of minorities in Pakistan.
- **Muhammad Sabir:** Sabir, who grew up in a slum community in Lahore, is currently a Project Manager for Door of Awareness (www.doorofawareness.org), which is an awareness campaign for the education of slum children. He is also a youth representative of the Awami Party, where he hosts a weekly political study circle with young people from different backgrounds. In addition, Sabir is an active member of Khudi Pakistan, a "Counter-Extremism Social Movement working to promote a Democratic Culture in Pakistan," and is an active advocate for youth against the acts of violence and terrorism. As part of his work with Khudi, he initiated a partnership with De Paix Yatra, an Indian initiative for spreading messages of peace through journey on motorbike. In addition to becoming a chartered accountant, Sabir hopes to start a career in politics, so he can "change the fate" of communities like his.
- **Nasreen Samad:** Nasreen, born in Chitral, a district in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and raised in Karachi, returned to her place of birth to serve as the operations manager for MOGH Ltd, the first publicly traded company in Chitral, set up by the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme. (Shareholders in MOGH Ltd are the Chitrali women who embroider, the Chitrali men who weave, local artisans and craftspeople, including those who work in the honey production, set up and supported by the Hashoo Foundation.) As Operations Manager, Nasreen oversees 32 village based centers across Chitral town, engaging over 2000 female artisans. While she has received offers to work with other companies elsewhere, she remains committed to the community in Chitral, where she believes there is a lot to be done. She is passionate about empowering women and an advocate for the equal participation of women in economic activities in her community.

- **Ahmad Shah:** Ahmad hails from the remote valley of Arkari in the Chitral district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and serves as a youth facilitator for the Drug Free Welfare Organization Chitral (DFWOC), which promotes drug use prevention in the community. Ahmad has also participated in a number of international youth initiatives, including the Asian Youth Congress in Bali, Indonesia. He also visited Kabul, at the request of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, for the Afghan Youth Congress, where he helped deliver skills to the Afghan youth to help curb narcotics use.
- **Samreen Shahbaz:** Samreen is an independent researcher and activist based in Lahore. Several years ago, she and her friends, through their concern about the radicalization of the middle class, started to develop ideas on how to reach these communities. What resulted was an online blog, Roshni, which promotes an alternative discourse about various social, political, and religious issues in Urdu-speaking communities of Pakistan, of which Samreen serves as Co-founder, editor and contributor. At her day job, Samreen serves as a project coordinator and software quality assurance analyst in a software development company. Samreen is very interested in the use of social media as a tool for activism. She recently participated in the Women in Security, Conflict Management, and Peace conference in New Delhi, India.
- **Saba Shaikh:** Saba is currently working as Director Advocacy and Networking of Dastak, a charitable trust running a shelter for women in Lahore, Pakistan. She is extensively involved in expanding the network base of Dastak and advocating for the protection needs of women suffering from gender based violence in the country. Previously she worked as the coordinator for a child rights project at AGHS Legal Aid Cell, a human rights and legal aid organization operating in Pakistan since 1980 - the first established in the country. The major focus of the organization has been the rights of women, children and minorities in Pakistan. She joined the organization at a time when the child rights project was in need of organizational restructuring and helped build and develop the project towards a wider institutional base, ensuring timely execution of the project, both independently and in collaboration with other team members. Saba has also worked as a research associate at Lahore University of Management Sciences where she undertook research on international law issues. She started her career as an apprentice at a corporate law firm in Lahore. She has also been undertaking independent consultations/projects. More recently she was part of the team conducting Child Protection Mapping and Assessment Exercise (a UNICEF project) in Punjab. She regularly writes the child rights chapter of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan's Annual Report on the State of Human Rights in Pakistan. Saba is also a member of South Asians for Human Rights (SAHR), a regional human rights organization, and has conducted two research studies for the organization on minority rights and emergency laws of Pakistan. Saba has a University of London LLB degree (international program) and Masters in Public Policy from Forman Christian College, Pakistan.
- **Mehjabeen Zameer:** Mehjabeen, who grew up in Karachi and received her Bachelors degree in Computer Science at the prestigious Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), thought she would spend her career as a scientist, only to discover, after an internship, that it wasn't her calling and that she was interested in making a tangible impact in her country. She applied and was accepted as a Fellow for Teach For Pakistan, an internationally recognized, highly selective fellowship of recent college graduates teaching in under-resourced communities and becoming life-long leaders in a wide range of careers. Mehjabeen is now a math teacher for 7th and 8th graders in the Sultanabad area of Karachi, where she teaches and motivates 220 female students on a daily basis, and challenges age-old conservative beliefs about girl's education. In addition to her significant workload as a teacher, Mehjabeen works within the community to engage other teachers and parents in their children's education, and she is working with her TFP colleagues in creating an apprenticeship program for the schools where they teach. In the future, Mehjabeen plans to pursue her Masters in Educational Policy, apply for the Fulbright Fellowship, and serve as an advocate for educational equity at the policy level, either through a think tank, at an NGO working on education, or as a civil servant in the Ministry of Education in Pakistan.