

# STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF YOUTH AND MOTHERS/WOMEN FOR PEACE BUILDING AND SOCIAL COHESION



## Small Grants (SG) Project assigned to TOLANA Members 'Initiative for inter-communal understanding and harmony through Sports and Culture'

SG-3

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**Project Duration:** 1st Jan-15th Feb, 2016

**Target Area:** Khyber Agency

### Beneficiaries:

Direct-1,500 (Community members, Youth, Students)  
In-direct 12, 000 ( Parents of students and community members)

### Background:

Khyber Agency is administrated by Federal Government. In the last few years extremism has increased in this area which has destroyed the peace and social harmony among people and created distrust in communities. With the passage of time this wave of extremism has converted into violent extremism and has affected the education and economic of this agency. Violent extremism was at its peak in 2009; when army launched a military operation to curb militant forces. This situation led to the displacement of thousands of people and hence destroyed the peace, harmony, cultural values and happiness of the local community. Their optimism turned into pessimism.

Culture is the invisible bond which ties people together and is represented by the art, literature, language, and belief system of a community. Our cultural values and beliefs manifest

themselves through our lifestyle and our moral. Revival of these shared features can be a very effective tool for bringing the distanced people closer. Similarly sports activities are also beyond religious constraints and bring people closer to each other.

**Through this project an effort has been made to build social cohesion and have interfaith harmony in the region through cultural revival and sports.**

### Project Goal:

"To promote peaceful environment, inter-communal understanding and cultural values and prosperity in the community through revival of Pukhtun traditional Poetry, music & sports".

### Project Objectives:

- To revive cultural and traditional values through organizing traditional music competition.
- To build social harmony and inter-communal relationship by organizing sports tournaments.

### Planned Activities:

- Collection of Traditional Pashto Tappa (Poetry)
- A cricket match
- Three Musical Programs in Hujras
- Peace Gala

### Collection of Traditional Pashto Tappa:

Tappa is the amazing folk poetry of Pushtoons which convey

messages of love, peace, harmony and happiness. Under this project, it was decided that the team members would collect Pashtu Tapps's, hence 2 team members were tasked with the responsibility of collecting Pashto Tappa's. They travelled far and wide in khyber agency to collect Tappa's from different people. If we go through these collections, it is very clear that these Tappa's depict the love and pride for the motherland, peaceful nature of the pushtoons, their aesthetic sense for their sublime and subtle music and poetry and the traditions of Pashtuns.

### Hujra Musical Programs:

Pushtoons have a tradition of arranging musical programs in Hujra's (Male guest house). They make their evening colourful



with these musical programs. During the time when extremism peaked in the region, the extremist banned these musical programs as they considered these programs against the dictates of the Islamic religion. Many of these musicians left the tribal areas or changed their occupation. Through this project an effort was made to support these musicians and provide an environment which could revive this musical tradition.

### 1<sup>st</sup> HujraMajlis:

The 1st cultural music program was arranged by TOLANA Members Muhammad Shafiq and Said khan at Bara. It was highly appreciated by the local community. As the program started more and more people started arriving to enjoy the musical event. During the event a number of pushto folk songs were sung by the local singers. Apart from that musical presentation, Rabab Mangay were also highly enjoyed by the audience.



Sharing the views of local people Saleem Mangal said that ***"Music is the soul of life, and they felt very jubilant and relaxed after a long time"***.

The local artist/musician Fazal Rabi Ustad said that ***"During the time when the militants were in power, he was unable to show his skills as no one was allowed to organize music programs. But after a long time he was feeling energized. He also thanked PAIMAN for organizing the event"***.

Other audience also shared their views after attending the program and expected more of such programs in the future. .

***"It is after decades that we have gathered here for poetry and musical event, we feel as if new soul has taken birth in us as without these enlightened pushto verses we were like dead people"***.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Hujra Majlis:

The 2nd cultural music program was arranged by M shafiq and Said khan at Dranguna, Zawa, Bara. This program was also highly appreciated by the local community. As the program started the numbers of people also increased and by the end of the program there was a huge gathering in the Hujra. The people enjoyed the cultural melody and music because now a days cultural music programs have become rare.

Sharing his views, Abdullah a taxi driver shared that, ***"He loved the live music program and he found it fascinating."*** He also said that, ***"He listens to music all day in his car but the live show transported him into another world which was all joy and happiness"***.

After attending the program most of the people commented that they felt very joyful and relaxed. Another person Shoaib said that, ***" A pushtoon is nothing without its music and poetry. Today is the revival of that centuries old tradition which has always kept us strong, chivalrous and accommodating. It is the revival of our thinking"***

### 3<sup>rd</sup> HujraMajlis:

The 3rd and last cultural music program was arranged by Shahnawaz and Said khan at Jamrud. This event was also highly appreciated by the local community because it provided them the opportunity after a long time to sit together with other community members and enjoyed the



long last tunes of pushto Tappa's. The youth were particularly very enthusiastic about the cultural music event because such programs were rarely organized and there were rarely any entertainment opportunities which gave them utter joy or relaxed their minds.

According to Wazir Afridi one of the community members, ***cultural music events are becoming rare these days. He further said that he felt very joyful and relaxed and rejuvenated.*** According to him after a long days work, ***it is necessary to unwind in some way and what better than some folk music to relax the senses.***

Another community member, Sajjad said, ***"This gathering has really given us the hope that we can face any challenge. Every Tappa that was sung today revive my spirit and i was able to overcome my difficulties. It made me realize how important it is for all of us to live in peace"***

### Cricket Match:

In all cultures and traditions of the world sports has a unique place. Sports activities have always been associated with physical & mental health of individuals thus all educational institutions ensure sports activities as compulsory for their students because they understand how important such activities are for a child's physical and mental health. Apart from that sports has no religion, race or ethnicity and breaks all such barriers that divide people.

Taking this into account and to bring people from different religions, sects & ethnicities together a friendly cricket match was organized between the cricket teams of Bara and Jamrod, in Jamrod. The objective of the match was to provide an opportunity to people to come together and understand each other and live in harmony with each other. A huge number of spectators showed up to enjoy the match and support their teams.



Both the teams put in their maximum effort to win the match. irrespective of outcome of the match, both teams were awarded with cash prizes and trophies by the guest of honour to encourage them. The sole purpose of the match was to bring people together and enjoy a sporting event in a peaceful environment.

### Peace Gala/ Aman Mela:

In South Asian tradition the "Lok Mela" holds a very significant place, through the lok mela the essence of Folk Tradition is awakened. Through such events people get an opportunity



to showcase their talent, skills and products with immense pride. following the tradition of Lok Mela the TOLANA group from Khyber decided to organize Aman Mela. The purpose of Aman Mela was to promote peace through various activities of interest for the local community.

On this occasion the winners of the previously organized musical events also got an opportunity to perform in front of a larger audience, the Peace Gala was arranged in village NekiKhel, LandiKotal Tehsil, Khyber Agency on 18<sup>th</sup> of February. Five main activities were organized during the peace Mela.

● **National Anthem and National Songs by School Children:** Singing competition was held where children of a



Public school sung different national songs and National Anthem that attracted a wide range of youth and children. To encourage all the students who participated in this competition, medals were awarded.

A participant of the singing competition shared " I Love Singing and I always wanted to sing but due to fear of extremists I was not allowed to sing in public and today I got an opportunity to sing for so many people" We should have more of such competition. Another participants shared that "This competition has given me the confidence to pursue my dream to become a singer".

● **Volley Ball Match:** A Volley Ball match was played between NekiKhel and Sultan Khel teams. Sultan Khel team won the match after a tough game. Amanat Afridi, the Zakat Officer, distributed medals and trophies among the players and shared his views that **"After a long time I saw so many free spirited Happy Children. It seems we have gone back into time when our children use to play together without any fear"**.

● **Foot Ball Match:** A Foot Ball Match was played between Young Eleven and Khyber Eleven. Khyber Eleven won the match as they scored 3 goals. The losing team showed great sports man spirit and stepped forth and congratulated the victors of the match. The Players of both the teams expressed that more of such matches should be organized because such



opportunities bring people closer to each other.

A Parent expressing his views on this occasion said "These days our children only see these games on TV, they rarely get a chance to play these games themselves. Our children had in the past been stopped from playing games like hockey, cricket, football e.t.c for the last decade or so people have stop sending their children to play out of fear of the extremist. After a long time an opportunity has been provided to them to participate in a sports event".

### ● **Racing and Tug of war competitions:**

Racing and Tug of war were also organized and teams were entertained with Trophies and medals. On this occasion the



competitive spirits among the players was at its peak, adrenaline was flowing and all biases were forgotten.

Some government representatives were also invited for the Peace Mela such as representatives of political agent office, Social welfare department, Leves e.t.c.

***They were of the view that such gatherings are almost nonexistent in Khyber agency and therefore people do not get such instances to socialise and interact with each other. If we want people to live in harmony with each other, it is necessary that more of such events are organized in the agency in future.***

### **Conclusion:**

The team faced many challenges but successfully completed the project. There was great risk of arranging music programs in Bara, Khyber Agency but the team managed to successfully arrange the music programs and no mishaps happened.

In spite of the challenges, the outcome of these sessions have been considerably fruitful. Due to organizing such events and sports activities, people have put aside their differences and made efforts to socialize amongst each other more.

Different community members at their individual levels are also making efforts to organize musical events in their hujras. It was a great learning experience for TOLANA members them as they got enormous support from the community and got appreciation from people from all spheres of life.



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