Seven Years of Dynamic Outcomes

Building capacity in Jalalabad, Afghanistan, using the instruction and technology of Afghan Youth Connect to engage Afghan students with their peers in the USA

Sponsored by the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club Foundation in collaboration with San Diego~Jalalabad Sister Cities

About the Authors

Stephen R. Brown

Steve was a partner in the law firm of Luce, Forward from 1972 until he retired several years ago, and a member of the Stanford Law School Board of Visitors. He received the Eleanor Roosevelt Human Rights Award from the United Nations Association of San Diego. A Rotarian since 1986, he has served the Rotary Foundation as vice chair and trustee, member of various committees, and Permanent Fund National Advisor. Since 2002, he has worked as a volunteer on projects in Afghanistan. Steve has engaged Rotary Foundation projects in numerous countries, and he has traveled extensively to support international service through Rotary. Steve appreciates his wife Susan's strong support of his Rotary activities.

Steve believes the AYC program is building capacity in Afghan youth, empowering them to chart their own courses in life though the skills they attain and their learned abilities to think for themselves. Afghan AYC students are certainly able to form unbiased views towards their American peers, and judge for themselves the American lifestyle and culture. US students are better able to understand the challenges of Afghan youth, and see that hopes and dreams are universal regardless of religion and culture. Steve has no doubt that AYC has changed the lives of thousands of individuals, and has helped to grow peace, community and prosperity.

Meltem Çelik

In 2014 Meltem received her BA in Manufacturing Systems and Industrial Engineering with a minor in Mathematics from Sabanci University in her home city of Istanbul, Turkey. In the summer of 2011 she attended the London School of Economics and Political Science. She studied abroad for a semester at Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain as an Erasmus Exchange student. Meltem enjoys being immersed in an international environment with people from different backgrounds. Her business courses in London and Barcelona inspired her to advance to graduate study for an MBA at San Diego State University. She knows that the United States is a marvelous place for her to gain exposure to myriad worldviews, perspectives and approaches in business administration.

Meltem was deeply involved in the preparation of this report. She thinks her experience with La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club gave her the opportunity to see how much work and effort is necessary to run programs like AYC. She is touched to see how Rotarians work to make the world a better place and educate people so that those people can be successful individuals who one day can and will help the development of their countries. She thinks this internship would have been a life lesson for anyone as it was for her. It showed her working voluntarily for a good cause is actually more satisfying than just focusing on making money and neglecting what is happening around the world. It is rewarding intrinsically. She believes witnessing the stories of Afghan students made her question the way she lives her life and what she does for her community. She thinks a lot of people take having access to technology and knowing English for granted while some people on the other side of the world do not know what a computer is. She believes AYC has changed the people who have been a part of it greatly. She thinks not only learning technology and English, but also the online connection via social media and the Skype calls AYC students have with American and other students around the world enlarge all participating sides' perspective of the world; give them the opportunity to see other lives, religions and cultures; see similarities and differences between themselves and their peers around the world; reduce prejudices towards each other; and make lifelong friendships.

An electronic copy of this Afghan Youth Connect report is available at:
http://www.ljgtrotaryclubfoundation.org/afghanistan.html

Afghan Youth Connect

By Stephen R. Brown[1] and Meltem Çelik
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Table of Contents

Afghan Youth Connect Executive Summary 2
Background of Afghan Youth Connect 4
Testimonials 8
- AYC Alumni 9
- AYC Current Students 11
- AYC Parents 12
- AYC Afghan Administrators 13
- AYC School Principals 15
- Afghan Rotarians familiar with AYC 16
- US Students participating in AYC 17
- US Teachers participating in AYC 18
- US Rotarians familiar with AYC 19
- US Officials commenting on AYC 20

The Future of Afghan Youth Connect 21
Appendix A. Census of AYC Afghan Participants by School, Academic Year and Gender 22
Appendix B. Methodology in preparing report 23
Appendix C. The internship program 23
Appendix D. Acknowledgements to those involved or supporting AYC 23
- Terry and Barbara Caster 23
- William H. Donner Foundation 23
- Fary Moini 24
- Anna Mussman 24
- Cynthia Villis 24

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Afghan Youth Connect Executive Summary

Since 2002 the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club Foundation -- a 501(c) 3 organization (the Foundation) -- has developed many successful projects in Jalalabad, the second largest city in eastern Afghanistan. What began as the construction of an elementary school, and the creation of a computer lab for Nangarhar University, has resulted in a ripple effect establishing many key programs. Afghan Youth Connect (AYC), connecting thousands of Afghan students to the outside world, is one of these programs.

This report details the outcomes of seven years of operating Afghan Youth Connect in Jalalabad. The program has impacted thousands of Afghan lives, instilling strong elements of citizenship and very positively influencing Afghan students' perceptions of citizens in the United States.

In 2008 the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club Foundation received a grant from the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to establish a Global Connection and Exchange Program (GCEP) via internet-based computer labs in schools in Jalalabad. GCEP's primary goals were to develop information technology (IT) skills in Afghan students, and to use technology to connect Afghan students with their peers in the United States, while promoting good citizenship skills.

Five high schools were selected originally to participate in GCEP, but -- at the request of the Afghan government and as additional funds became available -- eventually all 20 boys' and girls' public high schools in Jalalabad were brought online as participants. GCEP became known as Afghan Youth Connect as the Foundation received operating funds from the US Embassy in Kabul and private donors. At today's full capacity, AYC operates on a $175,000 annual budget.

AYC participating schools are equipped with fully furnished computer labs: habitable classroom, 10 to 20 computers, professional trainer, internet connectivity, electricity as needed, desks and chairs, supplies, software, security bars, etc. Current AYC sites are 18 high schools and one central site serving two additional high schools.

AYC students learn basic word processing, spreadsheet management, creation of PowerPoint presentations, internet-based searches, use of social media and e-mail. English is taught as part of the curriculum. Students use a closed and moderated Facebook group and NING to communicate with each other, with students in other Jalalabad high schools, and with students in the US.

Skype conference calls frequently occur between high school students in Jalalabad and the US. Topics developed by the students include citizenship responsibilities in a civil society, academic issues, gender-related issues, current events, environmental issues, lifestyles, hopes and dreams, and more. Afghan AYC students have Skyped with students in Pakistan, Canada, and India, and with US officials too.

Afghan students must pass a basic English test to enroll in AYC. There is no shortage of qualified candidates. At any one time over 2,000 Afghan students participate directly. At the request of Jalalabad educational authorities, an additional 4,500 additional Afghan students "stand in" AYC computer classrooms each year to observe instruction and lab activities.

A particularly popular aspect of AYC has been to involve the Afghan students in civic projects that they create, which are funded by small grants ($200 - $400). The idea of community service is new to the Afghans, and they become readily involved.

AYC builds capacity in each and every student participant. They see the outside world through a new lens, one unavailable to them in the past. This in turn informs and changes their experiences of life in the modern world. They tell their families and other students about AYC. Each AYC high school in Jalalabad enrolls several thousand students, girls and boys.

Graduates who have completed the program possess employable IT skills, basic proficiency in English, and a firm concept of what it means to be a responsible citizen. The following report cites testimonials from Afghan and US participants; AYC alumni, including trainers; parents of AYC students, teachers and principals, program administrators, and representatives from the US Departments of State and Defense.

AYC alumnus **Qais Ahmad** (Wazeer Mohammad Gull Khan High School) writes:

> *Before joining AYC we didn't have enough information about Americans. We thought they came here to harm our religion and country. After I joined AYC I saw that Americans are not the kind of people I thought they were. Thanks to AYC we can share and exchange our ideas with American students. When we have Skype calls with them we learn a lot of things about their culture, religion, country. I am thankful to AYC for changing our views toward Americans.*

AYC has had a strong team of Afghan trainers and administrators on the ground in Jalalabad for years. Program supervision occurs daily via email and Skype with Foundation representatives in San Diego, Rotarians Fary Moini and Steve Brown. Moini and Brown have made a combined 35 project oversight trips to Jalalabad in the last ten years. Their presence on site is much less necessary now.

The Foundation intends to operate AYC in Jalalabad for several more years, as Afghanistan navigates difficult transitions. Eventually AYC should be fully supported by the Afghanistan Ministry of Education, when and if it possesses the resources and willingness.

Background of Afghan Youth Connect

Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, Rotarians Fary Moini and Steve Brown, members of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club (California) explored the idea of building a school in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. They discussed this with Rotarians in Peshawar, Pakistan and traveled with the Pakistani Rotarians through the Khyber Pass to Jalalabad in November 2002.They met with **Haji Din Mohammad**, Governor of Nangarhar Province (photo left) who advised he would set aside land for a school to be built by Rotarians. Approvals were obtained and construction started soon after.

The Rotary School of Jalalabad (right), funded by the Club Foundation, opened in April 2004 with Moini, Brown and Rotarians from Pakistan attending its dedication. The School's interior was equipped by a $45,000 grant from The Rotary Foundation. Part of these funds furnished and equipped a 10-station computer lab. However, the costs of internet installation, instructional salaries, and monthly internet service for the School were not available through The Rotary Foundation grant.

Rotarian Cynthia Villis, also a member of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club, researched potential funding to further develop the lab. She located an RFP issued by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs to develop a Global Connection and Exchange Program (GCEP): Internet-connected computer labs and teaching technology to connect students in Afghanistan and the USA, highlighting the responsibilities of citizenship. Dr. Villis, an administrator at the University of San Diego, prepared the proposal. In August 2008 Anna Mussman, the responsible DOS program officer, advised Brown that the GCEP proposal was approved for $150,000 for one year, with the opportunity to seek additional funding annually for two more years at $100,000 per year to the extent funds would be available.[2]

Brown and Moini hired Abdul Qaum Almas as the in-country director to oversee the development of GCEP. Five computer labs were established at the Jalalabad Rotary School, and Bibi Zainab, Bibi Aisha, Mia Omar, and Abdul Wakil High Schools. GCEP had the full cooperation of the Nangarhar Director of Education as well as the principals of the participating schools. The ten-station computer labs were each equipped with internet connection, router, generator, solar panels, projectors, screens, software, desks and chairs. Trainers were hired and salaried. Computer classes were taught in six one-hour sessions six days a week throughout the academic year, and on a reduced schedule during the summer.

[2] GCEP/AYC is part of the relationship established when San Diego and Jalalabad became Sister Cities in 2004, an initiative led by Rotarians. La Jolla is part of the City of San Diego.

Afghan students need to pass an English proficiency exam to participate. English language instruction is a significant part of the program. To the extent practical, instruction in the lab is provided in English, as the software applications are English-based. Students first complete a 28 day course of basic computer and software operation. They then engage a deeper curriculum with a variety of applications, which foster student-centric activities like web research, posting to social media, teaching fellow students, etc. Topics of interest for research and media include:

- Holidays: International Day of the Woman, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Afghan historical days
- Medical challenges: polio eradication, drug use, importance of hygiene, blood donation, first aid
- Civil rights: violence against women, gender discrimination, ethnic discrimination
- Civic responsibilities: being informed about political candidates, environmental issues, voting, leadership, volunteerism, developing student councils
- Education: peacebuilding, the importance of higher education, student-centric pedagogy, study habits, creative thinking, English language and idioms, college preparation, mentoring
- Ethics: honesty, integrity, personal responsibility
- Arts and culture: photography, theater, role-playing, poetry
- Media: role of media, appropriate uses of social media, honesty in media

Initial GCEP grant activities encouraged Afghan and US participants to use the International Education and Resource Network platform to communicate, but iEARN was not able to link participants in direct conversation. GCEP administrators easily transitioned participants to closed and moderated groups on Facebook and NING, posting thought-provoking discussion topics. Students quickly began to post their own topics. Social media exchanges take place in English.

Skype conference calls were first arranged between Afghan and US GCEP students, and later with students in India, Pakistan, and Canada. Professionals in the US also present via Skype to Afghan students on citizens' responsibilities, personal motivation, career opportunities, success in high school and college, and cultural differences.

After GCEP's first three years, the US Embassy in Kabul granted funds to expand and continue the program. Embassy staff suggested a name change to Afghan Youth Connect, since security concerns precluded the physical exchange of students between Jalalabad and San Diego.

In seven years AYC has grown to operate computer labs at 15 public high school sites in Jalalabad. One central facility, the Nangarhar University Faculty of Education Learning Center (FELC, built by the Club Foundation[3]; right) hosts five public schools and other educational institutions in a 30-station computer lab. This summer AYC adds three schools to serve all public high schools in Jalalabad, 18 sites in high schools and two at the FELC (see Figure 1, p. 6).

Since its inception, AYC has directly engaged a total of 11,523 Afghan students (6,255 males and 5,268 females) and an additional 9,030 observers -- 20,553 in total[4]. Currently 6,500 Afghan students participate directly (or indirectly as observers).

[3] The FELC and the Jalalabad Rotary School were designed by architect and Rotarian Rick Clark.
[4] See Appendix A.

Over 1,150 male and 1,000 female participants directly engage in training and connect with peers via social media. At the request of Jalalabad educational authorities, 4,500 additional Afghan students per year are allowed to observe in the AYC computer labs, and to a more limited extent they also receive training.

Figure 1. AYC Participating High Schools in Jalalabad		
Boys	**Girls**	**Boys and Girls**
Abdul Wakil	Bibi Zainab	Rotary High School
Mia Omar	Bibi Aisha	Wazeer Mohammad Gull Khan
Agricultural Institute	Bibi Mariam	Nasrat I
Technical Institute	Bibi Hawa	Nasrat II[5]
Nangarhar	Alie	Chiknawary
Ahmad Shah Durani	Nazo Anna	Tajirabawi
Istiqlal		Abdul Rahim Niazi

In AYC's fourth year, Afghan students were encouraged to develop service activities that would enhance their leadership skills and benefit their local communities. Participants could apply for small AYC grants (about $200 per school, which could be combined with other schools' funds). Most AYC schools participated. Many projects on school grounds were funded by small grants:

- Landscaping
- Installing trash collection
- Improving clean water access
- Installing carpets and white boards in classrooms
- Improving laboratory space and materials
- Hosting a public forum about violence against women
- Establishing nurseries for children of faculty members
- Creating play areas
- Creating a cooking classroom
- Repairing chairs and desks
- Repairing toilets

Projects outside of AYC school grounds included:

- Establishing a bakery for two widows
- Establishing a grocery shop for a widow
- Fundraising for polio eradication
- Assisting at an orphanage clinic
- Establishing poultry farms for widows and disabled individuals
- Facilitating a public forum relating to violence against women
- Distributing food to poor families

[5] Funds from The Rotary Foundation and Rotarians in Canada built the Nasrat II High School.

Afghan AYC students have participated in over 200 Skype conference calls with students in the USA, Canada, India and Pakistan. Students develop questions prior to the call. Typical questions from Afghan students include:

- What makes American people different from Afghan people?
- What is your happiest childhood memory? What makes it so special?
- What does life mean to you?
- If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?
- If you became a multi-millionaire overnight, what would you buy?
- What would you do if you knew it was the end of the world?
- What has made US a superpower of the world?
- Tell us about something or someone you have been inspired by in the history of your country? Why? Tell me something about you that most people don't know.
- What do you think of Islam as an American?
- What would you do different if you were reborn?
- If you knew that everyone you know was going to die tomorrow, who would you visit today?

Sample questions from US students:

- What immediate impact did 9/11 have on Afghanistan?
  How about the long-term impact?
- Does your education open you to many different perspectives, especially in history class?
- What genre of music is popular there? What's your favorite American music artist?
- How do you feel about the US intervention in Afghanistan, specifically the War?
- What are some Afghan stereotypes of Americans that you know?
- How have you been affected by the suicide bombing that is happening in your city?
- If you could travel to the US, would you? Where would you go and why?
- How large of a role do American soldiers play in your daily life?
- What is your perception of Americans?
- What sports are popular in Afghanistan?

Some of the US schools whose students participated in Skype conference calls:

- Mount Carmel High School (San Diego, CA, arranged by Kim Muslusky)
- USD TRiO Upward Bound/Kearny High (San Diego, CA, moderated by Cynthia Villis)
- The Preuss (High) School UCSD (San Diego, CA, arranged by Kathleen Roche-Tansey)
- Oroville High School (Oroville, WA, arranged by George Thornton)
- Palo Verde Community College (Blythe, CA, facilitated by Denise Edgerton)
- Beaver Country Day High School (Chestnut Hill, MA, moderated by Kader Adjiot)
- Wasatch Academy (Mt. Pleasant, Utah, arranged by Alyssa Wolf)
- Cleveland Charter High School[6] (Reseda, CA, facilitated by Evelyn Seubert)
- University of San Diego Rotaract Club (San Diego, CA, facilitated by Cynthia Villis)
- Rotary Youth Leadership Academy Conference (San Diego, CA, arranged by Fary Moini)

[6] This relationship resulted in the production of a film involving US students, AYC students, and Serbian students.

Afghan AYC students have enjoyed many Skype conference calls with professionals in the US:

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE JUDITH MC HALE TALKS TO JALALABAD HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS VIA SKYPE

- Anna Mussman, US Public Diplomacy Officer, Task Force Bronco Fenty Airbase
- Judith McHale, US Assistant Secretary of State
- Colonel Baumgartner, US Marine Corps
- Christine Hawk, Researcher, Antarctica
- Karefa Johnson, Officer, US Calvary
- Kari Fletcher, Major, JAG USAF
- Mark Holmes, Photographer
- Samuel Spratt, Art instructor, Ceramics
- Sheauchi Cheng, Agriculture advisor, USDA
- Helen Eckman, Professor, Leadership Studies
- Katie Spencer, AYC Assistant Project Manager
- Steve Spencer, Professor, San Diego State University
- Sarah Nicita, Art teacher, Francis Parker High School
- Parham Shariat, Social media specialist, American-Iranian raised in the US
- Fary Moini, AYC Program Manager
- Steve Brown, AYC Program Director

Facebook and NING social media are popular with AYC participants. The AYC Facebook group currently has 2,483 members, the AYC alumni Facebook group has 236 members, and the NING site has 5,320 members. Members are Afghan and US AYC students, alumni, administrators, and supportive professionals. The sites are secure; an AYC administrator must approve membership. The Facebook groups are closed; posts and members are not visible to the public.

There have been many in-person interactions between Afghan AYC members and US individuals. Brown and Moini visited AYC schools during their many project oversight trips to Afghanistan. High school teacher Mark Morgan spent considerable time with AYC students while in Afghanistan installing donated Smart Boards. US citizens Dr. Dave Warner, Diana Tacey, Madeline Warner, Jenn Gold, Rachel Robb, Stephanie Hanson, and Lynn Mathews have each visited AYC schools. Afghan AYC students enjoyed a specially arranged field trip to the US military base Fenty in Jalalabad, spending time with US military personnel.

Testimonials[7]

Participant testimonials provide compelling qualitative evidence of the effectiveness and impact of Afghan Youth Connect – now with outcomes far beyond teaching computer skills and facilitating communication between students in two countries. Many individuals in various AYC roles have shared their reflections regarding its value.

[7] Most quotes are excerpted from Skype interviews. They have been recorded as accurately as possible.

Former US Ambassador to Niger, US Foreign Service Officer and Rotarian **Barbro Kirkpatrick**:

AYC is an important project. By connecting people, the program has a major impact in Afghanistan and the USA. It has helped the American students widen their understanding of the situation in Afghanistan, and the challenges young people there face. It is good for US students to see how lucky they are, to have access to such broad educational options and to realize this is not the case in every country. Many students in Afghanistan still don't get an education, especially girls.

In terms of foreign relations: When these students grow up, finish high school and university, they will be leaders in their communities. They have learned how to communicate with other cultures.

The more of this type of program, the better. There are misperceptions in Afghanistan of the US and vice versa. People receive only what the media reports. Foreign students visiting the US are shocked and surprised at how wonderful the US is, how open and welcoming its people, how easy it is to communicate, and how generous the people are. They have heard completely different stories in their countries.

A project like AYC means better dialogue, better understanding between countries, and hopefully increased ability to solve issues and problems.

AYC Alumni

Alumni work in many different settings, teach, and/or pursue bachelors or master's degrees in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and the United Kingdom. Some work as AYC trainers in the high schools where they were once students. Through Skype calls they learned more about other cultures, and exchanged ideas. They became close friends with people they had never seen in real life. AYC builds bridges between cultures and destroys biases. Its graduates are better equipped to secure meaningful employment in Afghanistan:

- **Ikrumullah Hatemyar**: Senior IT officer, Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan
- **Darya Khan Shinwari**: IT officer, British Council in Jalalabad
- **Sohrab Shohab**: District manager, BRAC, Girls' education
- **Ismatullah Afghan**: Senior administrator, Public Health Hospital
- **Hijratullah Amin**: Finance manager, Nangarhar Department of Education
- **Khalid Shaheed**: IT assistant, Medical Faculty
- **Imran Momand**: Senior advisor, Governor's Office, Nangarhar Province
- **Nelofar Ghafori**: IT trainer, German AID NGO
- **Sayed Maqsood Hashimi**: Administrator, Governor's Office, Kunar Province
- **Hidayat Amani Shinwari**: Senior IT officer, Torkham Custom Department
- **Sayed Jawed**: English and IT instructor, Afghanistan National Military
- **Rafiullah Khan**: IT officer, Afghan Ministry of Defense, Kabul
- **Shabana Arman**: Field officer, USAID
- **Sayed Khalid**: English and IT instructor, National Police Academy of Afghanistan
- **Abdul Ahad:** General market manager, Chirat Cement Company
- **Habibullah Hekmat**: IT instructor, Teacher Training College, Kunar Province
- **Sharifa Yousafzai**: Supervisor, Jalalabad Female Sports Association
- **Shafiullah Safi**: Senior manager, Afghanistan Passport Office
- **Alimyar Sajjad**: Manager, Lemar Internet Cafe
- **Rahmina Afghan**: Vice principal, Bibi Zainab High School
- **Farid Ahmad**: Senior database officer, Refilling station
- **Safia Sahab**: Medical student, Author of medical books

Abdul Aziz Shoja, Business Administration major with honors, Islamabad, Pakistan: *I communicated with people in the US regarding their lifestyles, culture, clothing, hobbies, education, favorite sports and all other things that one must know. This really changed my views towards Americans. Earlier I heard that Americans are selfish and not loving, but when I started to communicate with them via Skype and social media I really came to know that Americans are not selfish but they are social and loving ones instead. It was said that Americans are against Afghanistan and hate Afghans. AYC proved to me that Americans are good people and they do love Afghanistan. It helped me to become the person I am today. It polished my skills, built and enhanced my capacity and improved my courage. I am thankful that I am a part of this program.*

I feel very happy and satisfied communicating via Facebook or NING. I discuss different issues with different students and teachers. I learn and share my learning with others that is quite good and interesting for me. I have made a lot of new friends online from all over the world. That is really important and amazing. It is something I have never ever thought about before. Social media enlarged my friendships and relationships. It made me a global person. It brought a lot of ease to my daily activities. It kept me in touch with friends 24/7. It informs me of issues and things happening around and across the world soonest and finally increased my information about many things.

Alumna **Laila Yusofzai**[8]: *Before AYC I was jealous of Americans. I thought they were the people who get to speak English. They were the people who can use new technology while we cannot. After I was admitted to AYC I had Skype calls with them. They persuaded me that my English was good enough. Then I was more interested in them because they were admiring me. I saw that there is nothing impossible and they are just normal people like us. We shared our ideas, we shared our cultures. Now we are good friends with each other.*

AYC has operated since 2008; the current IT trainers are all alumni. Being trained and employed as IT trainers has allowed them to take control of their lives. They support themselves and their extended families. They are recognized successful individuals in Jalalabad society.

Trainer **Khatira Niamaty**: *AYC changed a lot of things in my life. It changed my personality, my role in the society and my role in my family. When I was a student nobody knew me, but after I got the job when I go outside people know me. I feel lucky that it made me a recognized and respected person. On the financial side, I can support my family, send my brothers to university and save for my future.*

Haroon Ahmadi, AYC Alumnus and Trainer, Moderator of Public Workshop on Relationship between Education and Peace: *AYC is not only about teaching English or computer. AYC is about discipline, helping students understand their role in society. Besides the quality education, we teach volunteerism, how to help the society. It changed the mentality of students. Many people in my country didn't receive education, many are against technology. Many people think technology as something against Islam. AYC helps people to end those misunderstandings, understand the true meaning of technology in today's modern society. Technology is something new in Afghanistan. Making someone understand is really tough. I am very happy that AYC did it. I am with AYC for 5 years and all I see is helping people, helping your community, creating jobs for people and bringing quality education.*

Trainer **Ziba Youfszai**: *People who live around me, my neighbors and my relatives appreciate my position in the society. Before my uncles were against me participating in AYC, but my father supported me and did not allow my uncles to interrupt me. After seeing how successful I am today my uncles decided their daughters should join AYC as well.*

[8] Afghan women commenting are not pictured in this report, in keeping with their cultural preferences.

Alumnus **Ulfat Kazemi**, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, selected for a full four-year scholarship to the American University of Central Asia: *All of the positive changes in my life came after I joined AYC. It changed my life greatly. I discovered who I was, I learned how to become a social citizen in my community. I understood what my responsibilities were, what a young man can accomplish. AYC was a family for me. It was my home. I cannot forget those days. I learned everything there. I didn't even know how to scroll a mouse before. I got this scholarship and the chance to study in Bishkek today all thanks to AYC.*

AYC Alumnus and Trainer **Faradullah Shayan** was awarded a scholarship from the US Embassy in Kabul to study at the American University of Central Asia: *Thanks to social media I learned so much. I had so many communications with foreigners. Not only we have learned from each other but we became friends. Now I have friends from other countries. I am sincerely grateful to AFC for contributing to my achieving this scholarship. AYC has helped me learn, expand my horizons, and been a source of inspiration and encouragement to me.*

Some alumni became teachers at non-AYC schools. Alumnus **Ismail Shafi** works as a private English teacher, and also teaches English to young children as a volunteer: *Before joining AYC family I was working at a paint store with my uncle to fight the poverty my family was facing. Thanks to AYC I gained the confidence to become a teacher. Before AYC I was a stranger to this modern life. Now I can support myself, my siblings and my parents financially. The best part is besides learning English, how to use computer and Internet, AYC provides workshops, trainings, seminars, interaction with other people around the world through Skype calls. It turns us into talented people who can live modern life comfortably.*

AYC boys and girls become adults who are able to support themselves and their families. AYC provides its students with career opportunities. Many have been involved in the Small Grants program. They began to care about their environment and their society.

Trainer **Laila Yusofzai**: *The Small Grants Program teaches volunteerism. There are some activities we should do without expecting anything in return. Before, I thought if I get paid I will do the task and if I don't get paid I will not do the task. Now I am doing activities voluntarily. It has changed me, it has changed my students, and it has changed the society.*

Alumni share new social norms with their parents, friends, siblings, spouses, and colleagues. They make the world a better place using the education, discipline and values they have gained.

AYC Current Students

Abdul Aziz, Student, Agricultural Institute: *Before enrolling in AYC I thought I was too simple. My English and computer skills were poor. I thought nothing will be changed in my life and I will always be the same. However, after I enrolled in AYC I thought the world is changing every day, I will not remain simple forever, I can change and I can be smart. My English communication skills got much better. AYC was a mirror of the world to me. Before, I see no interface between me and the world. Now I can communicate to the world in a few seconds and can seek culture. Being a student of AYC lets me deserve all the rights and privileges that other students from the developed countries deserve. I can imagine being self-sufficient. I can watch practical lessons from the Internet. I can go online to find information about agriculture. I can fortify my skills and conscious.*

Fazila Naseri, Student, Alie Girls High School: *Being a student in AYC is an advantage. When you become a student of this project you will know the importance of everything in your life, you will get aware of what*

you didn't know, you will know the ways of communicating with people, the way of expressing your ideas, the way of behaving with others, the way of exchanging of opinions, sociality.

Parwana Halim, Student, Nasrat I High School: *Whatever I have learned until today is because of AYC. I can use a computer and can work on it. I can work online, I can share my thoughts on social media. I can understand and talk English language. I had dream for being expert in computer one day and now I am.*

Selgi Sharifi, Student, Nasrat I High School: *We are not only learning English, computer and Internet but we are doing more. We are holding workshops and doing volunteer tasks. The students stand and share ideas. When they stand and talk it gives them courage and provides success to them. Every one wishes to be self-confident and brave. Being student in AYC they find more courage and become educated. They can support their lives. They are familiar with working online and communicating with others.*

Nagina Sharifzai, Student, Bibi Aisha High School: *I feel proud that I am a member of AYC. It changed my life and my classmates' lives. It helped me to learn new technology, to put my ideas and thoughts on work, to explore about the world cultures, to cooperate with others, to improve my talent, to become an active person in the society, to solve my problems effectively and efficiently and to get involved in different global problems and work on them to solve as a team and individually.*

Participating in AYC changes students' views toward Americans:

Imran Khan Safi, Student, Nangarhar High School: *I remember that I have been told several times that Americans are not good people. It was so confusing to me because I had no idea why they were saying so. When I started learning in AYC, I found out that Americans are very good people because I saw they have done a lot of good work for us. AYC project is a good example of their good actions.*

Wais Ahmad, Student, WMGK High School: *Before joining AYC we didn't have enough information about Americans. We thought they came here to harm our religion and country. After I joined AYC I saw that Americans are not the kind of people I thought they were. Thanks to AYC we can share and exchange our ideas with American students. When we have Skype calls we learn a lot of things about their culture, religion, country. I am thankful to AYC for changing our views towards Americans.*

Dost Muhammad Dost, Student, Abdul Wakil High School, posts a topic: Why is having a sister is blessing? He answers: *Our society never welcomes a girl child. In most families, girls are not pampered as compared to boys because having a son is considered greater than having a daughter. But, as the brother of a girl, I truly believe I am blessed to have her as a sister. Let me know your thoughts.*

AYC Parents

AYC parents have significant insight into their students' learning outcomes:

Fatima, mother of Jamila, Alie High School: *Every parent has a dream to see their child in a high position, to see their child make them proud, to have a child with good personality. The only thing which is really important to reach all these dreams is education. AYC is the only program not only makes our children learn, but also shows them the ways to live to survive in this world.*

Khudaja, father of Ayesha, Bibi Aisha High School: *I am really happy to see my daughter becoming an educated girl. In these bad situations of wars in Afghanistan she is gaining knowledge. As a father I am proud of my daughter. AYC has brought changes in my daughter's life. Youth can get benefits from this program as well as my daughter. It is a big facility for them to get good education inside the school. They can learn more. They can get new ideas, new knowledge which our country really needs nowadays. Educating youth is the only way that goes to development of Afghanistan.*

Meer Agha, father of Liaqat, Abdul Wakil High School: *As a father of sons and daughters I am really happy that my children are getting education and they are improving day by day. I know one day they will make me proud. My son is teaching English and some easy computer programs to his small sisters and brothers. In the future I believe they will have good jobs and they will serve their country and will support us financially and solve our problems.*

Aimal Hassanzai, father of Sahar, Bibi Hawa High School: *It is wish of every parent to have educated daughters and sons. During these times it is very hard to be educated. I am very happy to have this program in our city so that my daughter can learn new technology. I can see that my daughter is really happy because whenever she comes back home she is explaining to me the new stuff she learned that day at the computer lab. I am sure after my daughter graduates high school she will go to university and then will have a good job. It is the time of technology and AYC brings technology to its students.*

Khalida, mother of Nadia, Bibi Mariam High School: *I have seen many changes in my daughter after she joined AYC. Now she knows about Internet, computer and English. Sometimes she is participating in volunteer jobs. Before we didn't even know what volunteerism is. Now my daughter is teaching English language to other students at home. She wants to carry everything she has learnt to others.*

Javeed Ahmad, father of Zarina, Bibi Mariam High School: *Our daughter now knows more about the world and new technologies than before. First we didn't think AYC will change my child's life and we didn't allow her to join because we had heard some negative opinions about Internet. Today we know it is very important for our daughter to solve her problems by the help of the Internet. Her English is very good as well. Now we feel lucky to have an educated daughter because there is a big difference between an educated and uneducated person. When our daughter is intelligent and educated she can get everything such as respect, money and job.*

Sheer Mohammad, father of Saida, Bibi Zainab High School: *I have observed many changes in my three daughters' lives after AYC. Now they are able to solve their problems on their own. They help me in my office job and others who need help in computer. I am really happy that my daughters are receiving education. They can help their people in the future. AYC is a safe place for our children. We can send them to school without any concerns.*

Shafiqullah, father of Lima, Bibi Zainab High School: *Today's world is computerized and we need to be in touch with new technology. AYC is important for our children. It introduces them to the world and they learn about people and customs. Now my daughter can help her sisters and brothers. She can solve her own problems. Since our people are poor it is a golden chance for them to get free knowledge in AYC.*

Ajmal Faryadi, father of Nisar, WMGK High School: *AYC brought so many changes in my children's life rather than the other private institutes they have studied. I spent lots of money on my children in order to learn English language and computer, but it didn't work. AYC is one of those rare places where students can get to learn in abundance, improve their confidence and express themselves in the society.*

AYC Afghan Administrators

Allah Dad Esmailzai is the Director of Education for Nangarhar Province. He is very familiar with AYC, has visited its classrooms, and has worked with Afghan and US AYC administrators for many years: *In all participating schools where AYC established computer labs, students are fortunate to have this opportunity to be a part of this helpful, valuable and outstanding program. As a university professor I know the importance of new technology, how essential it is for the new generation. Learning new technology gives them a new and exciting perspective on their education.*

I know that even teachers in all schools were students of AYC computer labs where they learned new technology. Due to conflict and almost four decades of war in Afghanistan which brought lots of unexpected destructions, the education system was fully destroyed. Most teachers in schools don't have enough

information about computer and Internet, but thanks to AYC, teachers can make their lessons more interactive, interesting, and rewarding. This method has been proved to improve students' performance as lessons are more memorable and therefore students are able to retain information more effectively. Teachers, like students, can also find resources on the Internet to provide inspiration and advice for classes. They can recommend resources to students to encourage and stimulate their learning.

Technology can help students cultivate skills that they can carry with them through university and as adults in the working world. Computer programming can help develop critical thinking skills as students learn how to place tasks into a logical sequence and technical skills are developed through using various software tools. When they access new information online, they feel motivated. Incorporating technology in the curriculum gives students a sense of purpose and their attitude towards their education becomes positive. It also makes the participating students better job candidates in the future.

Parents are not able to support their children's education financially in Afghanistan because the majority is jobless and uneducated. Most often girl students are not allowed to attend private courses to develop their skills and knowledge of technology and English. AYC is the only imperative platform for students to learn new technology without any cost. It shows how necessary this program is for those parents whose children are learning new technology in such peaceful and calm environment without paying any fees.

The concept of volunteerism has been created through AYC. It changed their mentality and the program instructed them to follow their responsibility in their community. Youth is empowered and supported to act as leaders. Now students are voluntarily helping their community in Jalalabad. This is the biggest difference in their attitude compared to high school students in other provinces.

I am enormously thankful for all provided services, extraordinary efforts and contribution so far. I hope this program will be extended further.

Abdul Qaum Almas, Director of AYC (right, in white, with Allah Dad): *When first students of AYC graduated they got jobs at nice places. This showed the importance of AYC to people. Their minds changed. Students, religious leaders, parents, society changed. They saw what students of AYC could accomplish. Like other people, I change every day thanks to AYC. I train my staff to train students. To teach my trainers I learn new things and this increases my knowledge. I meet a lot of people from in and out of the country. I made a lot of friends. I have a lot of people behind me, following me. I will never stop serving my community.*

Sheer Maqsood, AYC IT Coordinator: *Because of the long-lasting conflict in Afghanistan, education system hasn't improved. We couldn't learn in a free environment, but now AYC students can study here for free. Their parents are mostly poor. Technology makes studying easier for students. It gives the opportunity to learn many methods and be connected to many resources.*

Social media has been really useful for students. They learned about other countries, talked to other students from different countries. We connect several students in Jalalabad with students in the US. They learned about each other's culture, educational system. Our students are happy to know and learn from them. Through AYC I met incredible American people. I met soldiers, advisors. I learned their hard work, their culture and how generous they are. They keep their promises. They are really good people.

The San Diego ~ Jalalabad Sister Cities Foundation has established a girls' sports program at nine of the AYC schools. **Shughla Shanwari**, AYC alumna supervises the Female Sports Program: *When I was a student of AYC I learned new technology and English. It was a great chance for me. I was lucky because my family wasn't able to pay for private courses. After I graduated I got a job at the sports project. Now I*

am studying in college in the English branch. I am able to pay my own expenses and support my family financially. In the community, a lot of people including lots of female students, teachers and principals know me. I am so happy and lucky that I am the supervisor of this project.

Thanks to this project, students play sports inside the school. Students don't have any other chance to play anywhere else in the city because there is no security for girls. We have volleyball and table tennis teams. Now they are really happy and they say they are healthier than before. I hope this project continues for long years, because it gives students an opportunity that they cannot find anywhere else.

Mullah Rehanullah, religious leader and teacher of Islamic subjects in Abdul Wakil High School: *AYC brought many changes in my life. At first I was an opponent of this program and I didn't let students go there, but one day I was invited to visit by the AYC administrators, to see what is going on. When I entered to the AYC computer lab I saw small and orphan students learning computer programs, English and Internet. A few days later I saw the students of AYC cleaning the school environment and planting. Then I understood that AYC is a very beneficial program for all. I also enrolled myself in this program and learned lots of things about new technology. I am searching for Islamic topics in Google to have more information. When students ask me difficult questions I use Google to search and solve my problems. Thanks to AYC today I am trying to write a book of Hadith in computer to present it to others.*

As Mullah I would like to say that there are two kinds of people in the world: good and bad. We really want to support the good people who would like to support our poor country such as US people who established many educational programs in our country. I can say those who want to bring positive changes to our country and working for the welfare of our country are our brothers.

Dr. Noorshah Kamawal joined a Rotary Club when he was studying in Australia. Upon his return to Jalalabad, he has presented educational workshops for AYC students on relevant civic issues: *The past three decades of war have destroyed the infrastructure in Afghanistan, not only physical but also cultural. The attitude was destroyed. Young generation grew up in the period of war and conflict. There was civil war after 1992 in Afghanistan, and the new generation born into this. They don't know freedom of speech, equality, participation, engagement of women in elections, education, and other values. AYC brought all these values to the young generation. They acquired behavioral and attitude changes as well as information and knowledge. AYC is useful in this sense. Afghan conflicts and challenges require Afghan solutions. Young people are sitting together to discuss and find solutions.*

The more the education the more the knowledge the more the change coming to society. The more you add to the level of peace, security, democracy, participation, equality, you are better.

AYC School Principals

Every AYC school principal has been very supportive. They made classroom space available and situated the program in the general curriculum of their schools. They have allowed students who are not AYC participants to observe in the labs and receive supplemental instruction from AYC trainers, which helps to satisfy a requirement for computer training recently mandated by the Afghanistan Ministry of Education.

Principal of Abdul Wakil High School, **Mohammad Ismail Noori**: *AYC is such a beneficial program all over Jalalabad City. I am grateful that AYC brought changes to the lives of my students. My brother was a student in AYC computer lab and a teacher in Abdul Wakil High School. Now he works as an administrator at an international organization. It is because of AYC that he learned technology, Internet and English. Students who graduated from AYC have good and high positions in our society and they support their families financially. Some work as computer and English lecturers at private institutions in the morning and go to university to complete their high education in the afternoon.*

AYC not only teaches computer, Internet and English but also trains students in every aspect of their lives. After joining AYC students socialize and would like to help others and would like to work for the betterment of their school voluntarily. According to the Education Department of Nangarhar province, Abdul Wakil High School is the first school that has a good environment, trash cans and other facilities. All these facilities brought to our school thanks to AYC through the Small Grants Program.

Principal of Chiknawary High School, **Mohammad Ibrahim**: *AYC students have proved to me many times that their lives are quite different from those of other students. AYC has been playing a crucial role in youth development. It is not only about teaching student's computer or Internet but also involving students in social activities, teaching them social manners. I can see real difference in each single student because they are so talented in the class and well-disciplined students among other students. They can handle both education and part-time jobs. Many are currently hired on high positions in various organizations. Those students are considered privileged students. They can support themselves and their families. They have made their lives different in most effective ways. Since AYC is established in Chiknawary High school I have observed many changes. AYC students yearly do plantation to make school field green, they implement cleaning projects and they do campaigns in order to motivate students to keep school environment clean and tidy.*

Principal of Nangarhar High School, **Jan Muhammad Majboor**: *Since I have begun my job here I have witnessed positive differences in the entire school. These kids have always been involved in activities that we accomplish for the better promotion of education level of students. Their computer lab has helped us hold different types of educational and cultural seminars, workshops and conferences for both teachers and students.*

I see these kids who attend their AYC class before school in order to make sure they attend both their AYC and school classes. I have seen passion, enthusiasm and the thirst for learning in these students. They have amazed us with their creative and remarkable activities in their classes as well as around the school. Once they held a debate on Peace and Education. I was a member of the panel and program being telecasted through online radio streaming which was indeed something new for me. All in all, AYC students have been a helpful tool towards the change and transformation of the school into a better education environment. Their cleaning team always involved in different school activities for the beauty and safety of the school environment. The spring season has just begun in Jalalabad; these kids did some plantation around the school, with their entire team cooperating with each other. They also provide assistance in arranging and controlling the general school gatherings and managing the workshops for school students.

The AYC project has been a great source of education through technology. Technology is a tremendous and productive phenomenon that has made the world a global village where people of any age, gender, culture, religion, language and race exchange words and thoughts to seek solutions to the challenges we face. The Internet has paved the way for learning and exploring the secrets and beauty of the world. I think AYC plays a pivotal role in changing the mindset of students regarding many issues which concern their future life and career.

Principal of Mia Omar Boys High School, **Sarwar Khan Shirzad**: *When AYC was first established in my school I was not really supportive, but now I regret the way I behaved at the beginning. Now I can confidently say that AYC is the only program which has served our Afghan students effectively. AYC students are worth to be called challengers because many of them have scholarships and they are studying abroad beyond any difficulty. This is because of what they had been taught in AYC. They are like our assistants because whenever a teacher gets a problem in a subject, they solve it through Internet with ease and do not let the teachers ask one another, read books only for a tiny issue as we did before AYC.*

Principal of Alie Girls High School, **Farida Jan**: *My school has received a lot of benefits from AYC because AYC has changed students positively in every side of their lives. Students are trying much harder for their education now. It is a proof that AYC motivated the new generation for themselves, for the society and for the environment. They are making us proud to have such intelligent and responsible students.*

Afghan Rotarians familiar with AYC

Fazal Rabani, President, Jalalabad Rotary Club: *AYC has had great impact on learning, especially of marginalized girls, and supported positive/conducive quality learning environments. It provided more conductive atmosphere for high school students in Jalalabad city. It has increased demand for and engagement in quality education within communities. By collaboration with the communities, it has strengthened relationships and capacity among the community members to sustain girls' education.*

For security, people brought their families from the suburbs to live in this small city. They are poor and cannot pay for their children's education, especially English and computer, AYC has provided an adequate atmosphere for them to learn. Projects like AYC need to be funded to provide opportunities for learning free of cost. It will not be helpful in learning only, but very useful for positively changing the families' views and attitudes towards the USA.

Mohib Israr, Past President, Jalalabad Rotary Club: *AYC has tremendously improved the knowledge and capacity of students especially the girls. There are several English language and computer institutes in Jalalabad, but the girls cannot attend them due to cultural restrictions. AYC's English language courses provided in FELC building and the computer programs provided in girls' schools are located in culturally appropriate locations that convince the families to allow their daughters to attend the programs.*

I have run a private school for the last 4 years, where I have hired more than 20 female teachers. Two years back, I had a hard time finding teachers who have basic English and computer skills, but this year I have hired 4 new teachers who have attended AYC in their schools. The reason I hired them is that these teachers can teach English and can prepare their paper using their computer literacy skills. AYC supported the students in employment opportunities, and employers can now obtain required staff. The whole community benefits when capable teachers teach children.

AYC students also learn to use the Internet. Teachers can now search for information through Google and other search engines. There is no public library in Jalalabad.

US Students participating in AYC

AYC is not built into the curriculum of US schools, unlike Afghanistan. It is an extracurricular activity under the leadership of school administrators.

High school teacher and Rotarian Kim Muslusky has arranged many AYC Skype calls. Her student **Annelise Morgan**: *I benefited from the conversations with Afghan students. I was exposed to different lifestyles and perspectives regarding the war and different cultures. It encouraged me to value the opportunities for education here because it was clear how much the Afghan students cherish it. It helped me to connect with the people over their suffering rather than remaining detached because of media influence.*

Afghan students benefit from AYC because they too are exposed to different cultures and methods for living life. It gives them hope because it demonstrates to them the great opportunities available for them in the future and the simple fact that there are people out there who care and are willing to help them in their endeavors. AYC is very important for helping us create a global perspective and to encourage tolerance through educating people about the different cultures.

Fernanda Gonzelez, Student, Academy of Our Lady of Peace: *I strongly treasure the Skype session we had with the men from Afghanistan. It truly made me more grateful to see the myriad of opportunities that we have here in the United States. However, it also made me realize the importance of stretching out a hand and helping other countries like Afghanistan.*

Serena Carper, Alumna, Oroville High School: *I saw the Afghan students benefit from AYC because they saw what another culture was like. We learned that we had similar chores yet we wore completely different clothing and ate different foods. It was an amazing thing to see these Jalalabad girls, who were complete strangers, joking and laughing with us even though we had so many differences. I am thankful for the way we live here in America. Our freedom is an amazing thing that we take for granted.*

From 50 to 75 first generation and/or low-income students of Kearny High participate each year in the federal TRiO program Upward Bound hosted by the University of San Diego.

Sou Fang, Alumnus, Kearny High/USD Upward Bound: *As an immigrant, I knew that although we have different cultures, habits and beliefs, people want roughly the same things. By chatting with Afghan students I was happy to find out we have similar interests (music, sports, school). They too want to go to the best colleges and have professional ambitions. They too want to use their knowledge and skills and make the world a better place. This made me see them as peers, rather than strangers from a foreign land. I believe this was the greatest accomplishment of AYC, given the (then) ongoing war in Afghanistan, and the media's portrayal of the Afghan people.*

Tania Sanchez, Alumna, Kearny High/USD Upward Bound: *My perspectives have changed after my conversations with Afghan students. When one develops a connection with individuals from around the world, there is a greater level of respect and regard established between those individuals. Every conversation was kind and respectful. It was amazing to see how connected these students are to life and their environment. They are filled with dreams just like we are, here in the United States. I developed a greater respect towards them.*

US Teachers participating in AYC

Kim Muslusky, Teacher, Mount Carmel High School: *My conversation with Afghan students has changed my perspective of how I view the media. Talking with the Afghan students gave me a more accurate view of their lives than what I generally see on TV. I feel like they are our friends now and worry about their safety if the U.S. pulls our people out of their country; especially for their girls. There are many misconceptions about the U.S. people around the world because of TV, movies, media bias. I think these one-on-one discussions let both groups see that we are all good people who want to help others. I believe these conversations between the US and Afghan students are a win-win for all concerned. It gives both sides a new perspective on other cultures and makes all of them more sensitive to the needs of the world. I think if we could do more of this, it would promote more peace in the world.*

Dennese Edgerton, Faculty member, Palo Verde Community College: *I have changed as a result of my conversation with Afghan students. My world view has expanded. I have benefited from watching American students interacting with the students in Afghanistan. Some ask for recipes so they can make Afghan foods; some teach Afghan students Spanish; some ask questions or discuss the many similarities between the cultures. Seeing students from two worlds interacting fills my heart with joy. In some small part, it promotes the inclusiveness we need in this world.*

My students have grown in their world view. They find themselves feeling compassion for a people they never knew. They have heartfelt hopes for the young people and the cultures of Afghanistan. Many of my students find a renewed appreciation for what they have here at home.

George Thornton, Retired teacher, Oroville High School: *This program allowed our small, remote, rural school to connect with a greater world. This opened our students to a much broader vision of themselves and others in the world. Through Skype calls with Afghan students my students gained a broader knowledge of Central Asia and specifically what was going on in Jalalabad. They learned about distance communication and the whole exposure to other cultures, other religions. It was huge. My assumption is it gave Afghan students to chance to be exposed to the world. The opportunity to have the exposure, to exchange, to have multimedia connections via Skype or a similar program is valuable.*

Kader Adjout, Teacher, Beaver Country Day: *AYC made a difference for my students. One of them said "This is making history come alive." We will never get these perspectives in a text book. This is something they will never find anywhere else. My students talk to other students thousands of miles away, with a country that is in war. They are sitting on the other side of the screen and talking. They are telling the truth. They have honest questions and answers. My students ask why boys and girls are not studying in the same classrooms and they answer. Then my students understand. It builds empathy in both sides.*

Scott Barton, Principal, Preuss School UCSD: *When our students build relationships they gain confidence in learning, in taking risks. When they are able to communicate with folks from Afghanistan and share with them their culture, our culture, learn about it, I think it really is a peace making process, a culture building process, a learning process. There is an unwritten learning and communication that they are doing. We have boys and girls sitting in a classroom at the same time. I think this is great for them to see our students sitting in the same classroom, working together.*

I think AYC is a great culture, a relationship builder. Our students gained confidence when they talk, they learned about themselves, they built friendships with folks in Afghanistan, they learned to plan, they learned to organize. It has been a good learning experience.

Shae Phillips, Teacher, Preuss School UCSD: *Throughout the four years of conducting Skype calls with Afghan students, the progression in communication has been a testament to its success. When we first started the questions were basic, very fact-based and very little debate on sensitive material. The reason for this is due to our basic initial ignorance about their culture. More recently the discussion has been fluent and we are able to talk about deeper issues. For example, our last discussion touched on immunizations, and how this topic affects both of our countries. This shows a progression of knowledge from both parties about current topics. There has been a language barrier that we have had to get over, many questions were misinterpreted. We have gotten better at interpreting the meaning of their statements and are very impressed with their ability to communicate with us in English. Our students have taken so much from this experience and are always excited for the Skype call. This experience opened their eyes to a culture that is so different and similar at the same time.*

US Rotarians familiar with AYC

Fary Moini, US AYC Program Manager: *During my 25 visits to Afghanistan in 13 years, I realized: The hope for peace and stability in Afghanistan and around the world is to empower the youth through education. The growing access to the web has allowed students to empower themselves by using various tools on the internet faster than traditional education. Students have begun to use social networking sites to organize campaigns and voice their opinions for equality, rights. With the accessibility and affordability of AYC centers at the public high schools we empower youth to advocate for change in today's advancing globalized world. AYC provides a keyhole for solutions that could help open the door to the future of Afghanistan.*

Cynthia Villis, Director, University of San Diego Institute of College Initiatives: *AYC changes lives in Afghanistan **and** the US. Our USD Upward Bound students are from first generation and low-income backgrounds. More than most US students, they understand the Afghan students' struggles with the expectations of close extended family members, poverty and the need to bring an income into the house, trying to achieve educational goals with fewer resources than others might have, and having the family split by an international border. For my students whose parents drive taxis, clean hotels, and work concession stands, the words of their Afghan peers were eye-opening affirmations. They were not so alone! – the Afghans had the same hopes and dreams, had to work, had to babysit, had limits set on their activities by their parents, fretted about courtship and marriage, and loved music and poetry. Our US students talk about these Skype calls for years after they occur.*

Kathleen Roche-Tansey, a leader in Sister Cities International, has worked for the last four years with students at Preuss School UCSD, a Sister School to an AYC school. She has observed numerous Skype

calls: *Preuss UCSD students report how their Sister Schools partnership with AYC students has broadened their understanding of the world. Several students have shared with me that they have chosen to major or minor in International Relations in college as a result of their experience with AYC.*

Rick Clark, Architect: *When we first started to get involved in Jalalabad in 2002 there was so much lacking in the education program. Girls were not able to get educated for last several years and there were no computers. Since that time Fary Moini and Steve Brown in particular have computerized the town in Jalalabad. I think it brought the town to the 21st century. I can honestly say that in our contributions from this office, there is nothing that I have done in my career that has affected or will affect more people than what we did there in Afghanistan.*

US Officials commenting on AYC

Colonel **Pete Baumgarten** (US Marine Corps, retired) Skyped from Camp Pendleton (USA): *I think AYC is an important project from my personal (military) perspective. It reaches out to youth in Afghanistan. I have experience in military Marine courts in Afghanistan and Iraq. One of the aspects that concerned us was how the young people seem to get caught up and pooled into radical ideas. It is a cycle that continues to grow. Programs like AYC provide opportunities to more secular education, interaction from a western view point, allowing students to see different opportunities that are out there in the world and hopefully will have a tendency to break that cycle. Changing the youth environment in the Middle Eastern countries needs to be long-term priority and a long-term interest of the US and western democracies.*

The call I had with the young women from Afghanistan made an impression on me based on their confidence, assertiveness and their outgoingness. They were teenagers relating to me, who they didn't even know. We had a great conversation and I was able get great insights and understanding on how AYC affected them. I think AYC is a long-term great benefit to the US, and the relationships between the western world and the eastern world relative to education.

Anna Mussman, Program officer at US Department of State overseeing AYC**:** *Garnering the power of the Internet, Rotary created a unique program for Afghan youth that exceeded expectations. Eyes lit up as the Afghan students touched their keyboards and gazed in wonder at their screens. They were no longer isolated from the world and they began to believe in a future. The transformation was incredible and continues until this day.*

Dr. Dave Warner has been to Jalalabad many times and observed and talked to AYC participants: *AYC is a vital link between the Afghan youth and their American peers. It provides a direct link where youth can express concerns and details of their lives to one another. This contact results in a deeper appreciation of each other's cultures and leads to a better understanding of the rest of the world. The sustained engagement of AYC provides a platform for ongoing dialogue and continued interaction in ways that are just not possible through other media.*

AYC is part of a larger effort to bring stability to an area plagued by misguided social ideology and ignorance of the modern world. By connecting the youth and letting them gain a larger perspective for themselves of life in other places through interactive dialogue, we are better able to encourage the ideals peaceful prosperity tolerance and respect for all parts of society.

Linton Wells, former Acting Chief Information Officer and Deputy Assistant Secretary for US Secretary of Defense: *The only thing foreigners know about the US is what they see in the movies. They hear rumors. This is an opportunity to get to know Americans personally and learn more about us. Projects like AYC should be part of any foreign engagement that we do.*

Katie Spencer assisted AYC through social media: *AYC is a very important project. It extends the capability of students from Afghanistan to connect with people from other countries. It helps to expand*

their capability to use social media, English and the Internet. At a younger age once you connect students to each other, you bridge those national and gender gaps.

AYC is a very good investment for the long term. When you are working with students who are ages 15 to 19, you are getting them on board. Many continue to be a part of AYC after they graduate. They maintain the principles they learned. You give them skills and capacity. It is very good value for money. Every dollar that goes into AYC is utilized over and over. It is not just purchasing a book. Students have a tool that they can use for the rest of their lives.

The Future of Afghan Youth Connect

It is clear that the Afghan Youth Connect program yields dynamic outcomes for Afghan participants:

- Employable information technology skills
- A heightened sense of community, and hope, among participants and their families
- Improved English language proficiency
- Increased motivation, self-confidence and internal locus of control
- Increased desire for education and increased ability to pursue further education
- Increased civic responsibility and volunteerism
- Increased respect from others (parents, teachers, principals, other students)
- A sense of entering the world community, and a sense of being of value to that community
- Increased empathy, support and respect for others in the world, especially Americans

AYC is unique. It is offered in all the public high schools in one of the largest cities in Afghanistan. It has the full support of the Office of the Director of Education, the principals of all Jalalabad high schools, and the students' parents. AYC has its own identity throughout the Jalalabad community.

Funds to establish the 20 computer labs and to operate the program have been raised by the Foundation. Going forward, the annual cost of AYC is $175,000. Funds are in hand to run the program through May 2016. Efforts to seek additional funds are ongoing.

The Afghan education system is strapped for funds. Programs like AYC are seen as a luxury when the government is challenged to find funds for instructional salaries, fundamental physical plant repairs like broken windows, and utilities. At some point in the future AYC will be funded and operated by the Nangarhar Office of Education, or it will be dismantled. If administered by the Nangarhar office of Education, AYC will likely be downgraded to basic computer training classes. Funds may not even be available for internet connections.

AYC has added capacity and value to the life of each and every participating Afghan student. It has imparted skills, agency, community, hope and the desire and confidence to engage the modern world.

May it endure and continue!

Appendix A. Census of AYC Afghan Participants by School, Academic Year and Gender

School	2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013		2014		2014 Observers	2015		2015 Observers	Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		M	F		
FELC Main Lab	90	70	95	95	95	95	90	82	100	110	120	130	170	150	0	70	150	0	1712
Bibi Aisha Girls		80		90		95		95		95		95		95	640		95	640	2020
Bibi Zainab Girls		110		170		140		142		160		170		150	845		130	845	2862
Abdul Wakil Boys			136		116		128		96		76		192		696	160		696	2296
Mia Omar Boys			116		48		48		66		212		176		300	165		300	1431
Bibi Mariam Girls						40		43		41		50		48	0		50	0	272
Rotary Girls										200		210		216	240		230	240	1336
Rotary Boys			65		28		83		70		68		60		0	60		0	434
Wazeer M. Gull Khan Girls						40		65		65		65		65	0		65	0	365
Wazeer M. Gull Khan Boys					50		50		55		60		60		0	70		0	345
Technical Institute Boys					66		72		92		88		78		0	80		0	476
Agricultural Institute Boys					64		55		48		88		92		0	54		0	401
Nasrat II Girls						50		70		70		70		70	0	70		0	400
Nasrat II Boys							70		80		70		70		0		70	0	360
Bibi Hawa Girls										80		85		105	800		110	800	1980
Chiknawary Boys							100		98		124		100		994	104		994	2514
Nangarhar Boys									120		131		169		0	95		0	515
Nasrat I Boys									60		65		70		0	69		0	264
Nasrat I Girls										50		60		64	0		67	0	241
Alie Girls										40		85		102	0		102	0	329
Total	90	260	412	355	467	460	696	497	885	871	1102	935	1337	1065	4515	997	1069	4515	20,553
Direct Participants	**Total Males = 6,255**					**Total Females = 5,268**					**Observers = 9,030**					**Total Participants = 20,553**			

Appendix B. Methodology in preparing report

The authors' first task was to establish a timeline to complete the tasks required. Reaching out to the many individuals participating in AYC would yield a massive amount of data, a significant amount of which would come from individuals in Afghanistan. Meltem Çelik coordinated with the AYC Afghan administrative team to arrange individual Skype calls there. She transcribed the calls immediately. When interviewees did not speak English, our AYC Afghan team would help with the translation. Some information was obtained via written responses to questions. The testimonials cited in this report are a small fraction of those obtained during over 50 Skype calls.

Steve and Meltem met weekly to review progress and modify the operational plan as needed. Steve sent letters of introduction to all individuals in the US to be interviewed by Meltem. When possible, she interviewed subjects in person. When all data was collected, Meltem prioritized the information to include in the report and participated in the drafting of the report. Steve provided background information. Meltem provided much of the work on the testimonials.

Appendix C. The internship program

Meltem Çelik was selected to assist in preparing this report. Her internship was partially sponsored by the Qualcomm Social Entrepreneurship Internship Program, coordinated through the Lavin Entrepreneurship Center at San Diego State University. This program connects students with internships that will further develop their skills and professional competence, and at the same time will benefit non-profit organizations with talented interns. Students build a relationship with an experienced professional who transfers advice, knowledge, and insight, and provides guidance and support as they build their careers. The non-profit organization receiving the intern makes a financial contribution to help support the program. Qualcomm lends an employee to this program to help guide the non-profit organization and its intern; Hiren Bhinde provided excellent guidance, for which we are grateful.

Appendix D. Acknowledgements to those involved or supporting AYC

Terry and Barbara Caster

Terry Caster is a long-time Rotarian. He and his wife Barbara have made significant contributions to philanthropic causes in the US and across the globe for many years. They are devout Catholics, and recognize the importance of education for people of all faiths. They also recognize the importance for youth of all cultures to have mutual understanding and respect. They have been strong financial supporters of AYC in its seventh and upcoming eighth years of operation.

William H. Donner Foundation

The Donner Foundation contributed funds for AYC students to participate in the public workshops discussing civic responsibilities with a special focus on elections, in addition to other significant and generous funding for other Rotary Club-related projects in Afghanistan.

Fary Moini

Fary Moini has traveled to Jalalabad 25 times since 2002. She has met with the students in all the AYC classrooms many times, met regularly with Nangarhar Province Director of Education, and stayed in touch with the Afghan administrators weekly through e-mail and Skype calls. She has had the primary front line administrative responsibility for this program since its inception. Fary is a naturalized US citizen having first grown up in Iran and receiving her degree in nursing from the University of Tehran.

Anna Mussman

Anna was the program officer at US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, overseeing the Request for Proposals that solicited applications for funding under the Global Connection and Exchange Program. She was responsible for reviewing all proposals, assisting in the evaluations, and coordinating with the Foundation after the grant was awarded. Following her departure from BECA, Anna took an assignment at the US Fenty Airbase in Jalalabad, Afghanistan. From there she helped Foundation representatives secure additional funds for AYC from the US Embassy in Kabul. Since 2009 Anna remains an active member of the NING and Facebook sites, posting daily with Afghan students. Anna is retired, and enjoys her life with family members in Israel.

Cynthia Villis

Cynthia is the AYC Coordinator for the US. She wrote the original proposal, piloted the use of iEARN and Facebook, moderated ten Skype conference calls, and presented at four conferences on GCEP/AYC. She encouraged US students to participate by briefing them at their schools. A university administrator for 35 years, with an APA-accredited doctorate in counseling psychology and a higher education management certificate from Harvard, Cynthia's first love is working with students. Two of her Institute's programs are involved in AYC, Upward Bound and the University of San Diego Rotaract Club. Cynthia is a Rotarian, past president of the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club, and she chaired its International Service Committee for 15 years. She provided much appreciated and valuable editorial assistance for this report.

About the La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club

The La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club has been active in international service projects since its charter in 1986. These humanitarian or educational projects most often occur within the The Rotary Foundation's Areas of Focus. The Rotary Club has funded these projects directly or through its Club Foundation, frequently with support from The Rotary Foundation. The Club has worked in some countries for many years. In Afghanistan alone Club members have successfully completed over 40 projects and programs from 2002 to the present day.

The chart below mentions the countries in which club members have been involved. The key below sets forth various Areas of Focus relating to one or more of the projects in the identified country. The /S represents a scholarship in the Area of Focus identified by the preceding letter. If S stands alone, the scholarship did not fall within one of the areas of focus.

A	Peace and Conflict Prevention/Resolution
B	Disease Prevention and Treatment
C	Water and Sanitation
D	Maternal and Child Health
E	Basic Education
F	Economic and Community Development
/S	Donated Scholarship in an area above

Afghanistan	A/S,B,C,D,E/S,F	Guatemala	E	Romania	B
Argentina	F	India	A,B,C,E	Russia	E
Bolivia	B,F	Indonesia	B,E,C	Rwanda	A
Brazil	A/S,B/S,F	Iran	A,C,E	South Africa	C,E
Chile	F/S	Japan	S	South Korea	E
China	A/S,F	Kenya	A,C,E	South Sudan	A
Costa Rica	E	Lithuania	B	Somalia (USA diaspora)	F
Ecuador	E	Malawi	B	Swaziland	F
Eritrea	A/S,B,D,E/S,F/S	Mexico	A,B,C,D,E	Tajikistan	A,C
Ethiopia	B,D,E	Mozambique	B	Tanzania	A/S,C
Kazakhstan	A,C	Nepal	D,F	Tibet	E/S
Kyrgyzstan	A,C	Niger	B,D	Turkey	B,C,D
Fiji	E	Pakistan	A/S,C,E	Uzbekistan	A,C
Georgia	B	Peru	E,F	Uganda	C,E
Ghana	C,F	Philippines	B	Vietnam	B

Visit our website http://www.lajollagtrotary.org/ Foundation website www.ljgtrotaryclubfoundation.org/
Or Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/La.Jolla.Golden.Triangle.Rotary

Youth are the Future of Afghanistan