Dialogue doing wonders
Muhammad Israr Khattak, an NGO worker, learns to mediate disputes… and with humility he resolves them!

“From now onwards I have decided to train my friends and colleagues on the approach of mediation and dialogue learned from the SFCG trainings for resolving local conflicts.”

Muhammad Israr Khattak is a young bright employee at a local NGO in Peshawar. He holds two Bachelor’s degrees, Science from the Agriculture University of Peshawar and Sociology from the Kohat University. He has a special interest in studying and resolving challenges besetting society. He belongs to the oil and gas rich district of Karak in Kyber Pakhtunkhwa. Karak has been relatively calm in the recent turbulent years compared to the rest of the province. Furthermore, nature has blessed Karak with numerous natural resources such as petrol, salt, gas and uranium. However, several conflicts have emerged as a result of these natural resources as well.

Competition amongst people for access to natural gas has given rise to many problems in the district as differences have emerged, which at times, turn into violence.

Israr took the initiative to play his due role for the betterment of society, as he tried to resolve the underlying differences among people belonging to various communities by encouraging them to deliberate over their issues at the dialogue table. With the help of a local organization, and through the participation of his fellow youth activists and government officials, he was able to initiate a peaceful dialogue.

To further develop Israr’s conflict management and dialogue skills, PAIMAN Trust invited him to join Search for Common Ground Pakistan’s (SFCG) training program on “Youth Capacity Building on Mediation and Dialogue” organized under the project “Promoting Peace in KPK and FATA - Connecting Youth and Policymakers through Mediation and Dialogue”. Israr attended the primary and advanced trainings on peace promotion through dialogue and mediation. He learnt various techniques on promoting peace and transforming conflicts through cooperative solutions.

After completing the trainings, Israr went back to his hometown and made efforts to resolve prevailing conflicts in his village through mediation and dialogue by engaging the local community and community leaders. He shared and replicated his training experience with his friends and community. He focused on the sensitive issue of gas connections in his village, which was a bone of contention between the Oil and Gas Development Authorities and the local community.

With the support of fellow villagers and techniques learned from the training, Israr was able to bring all stakeholders to the table. He organized and conducted the dialogue in a systematic way and applied the lessons learnt during his training to resolve the conflict. He was able to resolve the conflict in an organized manner through mediation.

“I am greatly thankful to SFCG and PAIMAN trust for providing me with the opportunity of attending such fruitful trainings”, says Israr. After the trainings, dialogue and conflict resolution “have a new meaning for me,” he smiles.

Search for Common Ground Pakistan works to transform the way communities and societies deal with disagreement – away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving. We work with local partners to find culturally appropriate means to strengthen societies’ capacity to deal with disputes and disagreements constructively: to understand the differences and act on the commonalities.

For more information, please contact infopk@sfcg.com