Connecting Academics with Peace

Amna Aziz never thought of this before but now actively believes that her profession can build peace and mitigate conflicts.

My students are not only young at their hearts but also young in minds. Understanding their issues and conflict dynamics were greatly challenging but not anymore. Instead of exercising my executive write, I now indulge and rather lead the peacebuilding process.

Life for Amna Aziz has been nearly the same, professionally and personally for years. Being a young lecturer at the University of Azad Jammu & Jashmir, Muzafarabad, her focus has been mostly engaging with academics, student affairs and general curricular and extracurricular activities. “My life has been in a routine but in all truthfulness, I never thought that my profession could have a much wider, and positive, impact on hundreds of young people. This realization came to me only when I walked into the room where ‘Youth Leaders for Peace’ training was taking place. Since then, the lens through which I used to see my routine job is changed for the rest of my life,” Amna speaks of her experience.

Amna is now much more active, responsive and positive in dealing with the conflicts that arise in her sphere of life i.e. either at home, in her community, at the university or with her colleagues. “We do not usually realize that during our routine life, we come across all kinds of personal and professional conflicts. And most of us do not have both the understanding and capacity to understand and mitigate these problems,” she highlights a prevailing social trend in a traditional society where she lives in Muzaffarabad, capital city of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In most of the cases, mere personal and professional differences are categorized as serious conflicts where either side is unwilling to let go. “Instead of finding a ‘Common Ground,’ most people in my sphere of life try to prove the other wrong and that only aggravates the situation and does not provide any solution,” Amna states. But the training equipped her with appropriate social and conceptual tools that she could utilize whenever faced with a conflict in most situations of her life.

She says that she now feels much more capable to handle the problems that her students bring to her. “All my students are young at hearts and minds; quick to react and quick to repent also. Most of them are always willing to show their superiority to their ‘opponents.’ It has been a standard process on campus and in my own practices that teachers use their executive authority to handle such issues but that used to only brush the problem under the carpet. And such conflicts erupted again – sooner than expected.”

Amna deeply appreciates the training as she found the whole of it “helpful in enhancing my personal and professional capabilities.” Before the training, she says, she was reactive to things but now “I have changed my attitude towards conflict by analyzing it according to the tools that I learnt.” The training has not just changed her personal but also the professional perspective. “My skills and learning have also improved because ‘Conflict Analysis and Conflict Resolution’ and ‘Conflict Management’ are major courses that I teach at the University. And after the training, I improved my teaching methods by including simulation exercises, group activities etc. which I learnt during the trainings.” The affects are simply amazing, she says.

“Thank you SFCG Pakistan” she smiles and says.

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