

**Youth Convention, SS Hotel, Peshawar,  
20-21 November, 2017.**

Sungi Development Foundation hosted a Youth Convention in Peshawar on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2017. The venue selected for this event was SS Hotel. Youth participants, a total of 145, from all over Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, arrived at the venue; all logistics arrangements had been done and completed by Sungi's administration staff. Officials from Aurat Foundation (AF), Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), SAP-PK and Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI) also arrived on the 20<sup>th</sup>.

**Details of the Proceedings.**

Once everyone had settled down, Ms. Khadija Nadeem, from Sungi development Foundation, started the event with an introduction of AAWAZ and the Youth Convention. She then asked Ms. Uzma Latif, from DAI, to come and further continue the proceedings. Ms. Uzma Latif then talked about the Youth Circle of Influence; addressing the youth she said that in order to change the society's mindset towards a progressive approach, the youth have to change their mindset first. Once the youth have a progressive mindset, then those progressive ideas can influence others around them. The youth, being the future of the country, have a big role to play for the country to develop and flourish. She further added that when we hear something from people from our age group, that tends to influence us more, and that is how the youth present in the event can increase the circle of influence, and eventually, lead to a better, more progressive society.



Figure 1 Ms. Uzma Latif, DAI, addressing the Youth.

She then explained the first activity that had to be conducted; an ice-breaking activity amongst the participants to make the environment more comfortable and interactive for them. This activity had the participants to take off their shoes and place them on the stage, and then the participants would, one by one, pick up a random shoe and whoever it belonged to, had to pair up for

a round of introductions. This activity brought about an air of excitement amongst the participants and heightened their confidence and interactivity.



Figure 2 Participants posting their murals on the wall.

The next activity included the participants to form groups and paint murals with how they imagine a new world they would like to see. The participants actively participated in this activity, drawing and writing their ideas of a new better world. These murals majorly focused on a society free from

Violence Against Women, forms of modern slavery, and gender equality, with all three genders in focus. The murals were then posted on a wall, but as the participants were many in number, this activity took some time, and once this activity was completed, there was a break for tea.

Returning back from the tea, the next activity was success stories of the youth present, and a total of 9 people were selected from the participants to come on stage and narrate their story. These 9 people included 4 males, 4 females and 1 transgender. These success stories were about the how the individual had overcome social and cultural barriers present in their abiding societies, and had gained influence and support after being criticized not only by the society, but by their loved ones as well. These stories were truly inspiring and added a lot of positivity to the convention's setting. After these success stories, the proceedings for the first day were brought to an end, the agenda for the next day was discussed by Ms. Uzma Latif, and it was time for dinner.



Figure 3 Some selected participants with their success stories.

The next day started with Mr. Omar Javed, the Director of Operations, Sungi, taking the stage. He invited one of the participants to come and recite some verses in order to start the day with the Word of God. After the recitation, Mr. Omar Javed gave an introduction of Sungi. He spoke about Mr. Omar Asghar Khan's vision of a better, prosperous society and the reason of Sungi's inception, and the work in different development sectors that Sungi had achieved since its formation in 1989. After this, he talked about the role of Youth Circle of Influence, how they had to bring about change within themselves to actually be able to influence others around them, and its importance in the development of the society, leading to prosperity and development in the country.



Figure 4 Mr. Omar Javed, Director Operations, Sungi, addressing the youth.

Next, Mr. Saif-Ullah, regional head of SPO, then came on stage and addressed the convention. Talking about the existing societal issues, he said that divisions should not exist as all lives are equally important and pretty much the same. He further added the no one gets to choose religion, caste, ethnicity by birth and people are born that way, so being judgmental of others is irrational and everyone should be looked at as equal to oneself.

Ms. Uzma Latif then came on stage and gave a recap of the previous day, engaging the participants and making the recap an interactive one. She then talked about the different problems faced by women in Pakistan, especially in rural settings. She added that around 89% of Pakistani women are sexually harassed

according to an international survey, which is a very alarming figure. They are not given their due shares of inheritances and fortunes by males from their own families, and are subject to abuse when they raise their concern regarding it, leading to domestic violence, which is a sad matter prevailing since the country's inception and found to exist in all provinces. She emphasized that the youth, the future of the society and country, should work to eradicate these problems caused by gender imbalances and work to create a more gender equal environment. She concluded her address by saying 'diay se diya jalta hai', which, in this context means that the positivity attitude will spread from one person to the other in a chain formation.

The next activity was a talk show hosted by a member of the youth from Mansehra. This show had a selected number of participants belonging from different districts and villages. The participants were questioned about their journey with Sungi and AAWAZ, how difficult was this journey and what were their biggest achievements during this time. The answers were truly over whelming, as the journeys, specially of women, were remarkable. They had been subject to criticism by their loved ones, and by their societies, but they continued their work and now had won everyone's support due to their work. After this talk show, it was time for tea.

After the tea break, the final activity took place. This activity required the participants to sit in diversified groups, and each group was provided with a topic from the following;

- Youth perspective on Gender/Women Political Participation
- Youth perspective on Diversity
- Youth perspective on Social Accountability



Figure 5 Participants working in diversified groups.

The groups were provided charts for this activity, and each group, after making their charts, presented their work one by one. The enthusiasm observed during this activity was very inspiring, as the youth discussed their perspectives on the given topics and the change brought about in their mindsets by Sungi and AAWAZ were very apparent.



Figure 6 MPA Zia Ullah Bangash addressing the crowd.

After this activity, Mr. Zia Ullah Bangash, Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) from Kohat came on stage and gave his remarks about the youth convention. He talked about how he had been an active participant in the development activities in his area during his youth. He talked about how the youth were now more knowledgeable and aware about the political situation prevailing in the country, and he persuaded the youth to take initiatives and get involved in the political spheres, as they are the future of the country.

After Mr. Zia Bangash had addressed the convention, it was time for a theater performance. The youth from a district had prepared a theatrical play, highlighting the issues of gender injustices and domestic violence in the Pakhtoon culture. The play depicted the life of a Pakhtoon housewife living in a rural setting, and how she is suppressed and treated. It was presented in Pushto, as majority of the crowd were Pushto speaking, but it was enjoyed by non-Pushto speakers as well. The participants acting in the play were greeted with a round of applause by the convention after the play.



After the play, the Youth Convention was concluded by the Director of Social Welfare and Women Development, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Mr. Abid-Ullah Khan, who expressed his excitement of being present amongst the youth. He congratulated Sungi on its efforts with the youth and expressed his concern that Sungi continues to do so as there is still a lot to be done. He expressed the importance of gender equality, talking about all three genders; males, females and trans genders. He expressed his satisfaction with the



present youth and how they were being able to influence other in their surroundings after being subject to criticism at one point in time. After his speech, Ms. Khadija Nadeem ended the convention and congratulated the participants on a job well done.

Figure 7 Head of Dept - Social Welfare, Mr.--- during his concluding address.