



AFGHANISTAN 21 YOUNG LEADERS FORUM

**Kabul, Afghanistan
October 31 – November 2, 2012**

2012-2013 CLASS PROFILES



Mohammad Sulaiman Akbari is Business Development Manager for Mercy Corps on a USAID funded project and a part-time researcher at the National Center for Policy and Research (NCPR) - Kabul University. He has also served as Deputy Director of Investment Support, as Deputy Director of the licensing department at AISA (Afghanistan Investment Support Agency), and as Administrator at AWCC (Afghan Wireless Communications Company). Mohammad was awarded a scholarship to pursue his BA at the University of Delhi (2009), and received an appreciation letter from the Afghan ambassador to India in recognition of his outstanding academic achievements. He also holds an MBA with a specialization in Finance and International Business from Indraprastha University New Delhi (2011), and a diploma from the Institute of United Nations Studies in New Delhi where he majored in United Nations & International Understanding.



Abdul Alim Atarud is a Medical Doctor with over 10 years of experience working with public and nongovernmental organizations the field of health and development. He is currently the Health Partners International of Canada Country Director for Afghanistan. Abdul also served as National Health Accounts Coordinator for the Afghan Ministry of Health where he laid the foundation for the National Health Accounts program in the Afghanistan Health System. He has worked on various policy and research papers on health, environment, and development. Abdul is also active in several civic and academic organizations, including the Afghanistan National Public Health Association where he was elected President for the year 2012-2013 and the Organization of Afghan Alumni (which includes Fulbright Alumni) where he holds the post of Deputy Executive Director. Abdul was a Fulbright Scholar and holds an MD degree from Kabul Medical University, a Master's in Public Health from Saint Louis University, and Certificates in Development Planning and Authentic Leadership from IMA International (UK) and Glomcs (Netherlands). He is currently working on his Doctorate and Management Studies (DMS) degree.



Habib Athaee is the Assistant Director of Student Affairs for career and alumni services at American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) where he also serves as the director of the Alumni Association of AUAF. He was among the first students to enroll at AUAF in 2006 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in management in December 2010. Habib also obtained a minor degree in law from the Legal Studies Program at American University (run by the Stanford School of Law) in May 2012. He graduated from Tarbiat-e Islami High School in Iran in 2003 after a 3 year gap due to the civil war.

Manizha Baraki is a young activist working to promote women's rights and the freedom of media and expression. She is currently a member of the UN Women's national team focusing on issues of violence against women and women's protection throughout the country. She is also a member of the Women Future Leaders Club. Manizha has worked in the Office of Presidential Spokesperson where she interviewed and wrote about several Afghan government officials. She also worked as a freelance journalist and photographer. Manizha has acted as judge in two annual university debates hosted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. She graduated from Kabul University with a degree in Journalism.



Mohammad Behroozian is a civil society activist currently working as communications manager with Tawanmandi, a program that aims to strengthen civil society in Afghanistan. Previously, he has held managerial positions in the areas of program implementation, capacity development and communications with War Child Holland, Sobhan Foundation, ACSF. Mohammad has also worked in the private sector and for the Afghan Government Media and Information Center. He is in his senior year in the Political Science Program of American University of Afghanistan. Mohammad has been a volunteer judge for two national debate programs run by USAID in Kabul and has participated in Model UN sessions in Germany and NATO forums in France.



Sediqa Nawrozian is a Board Member of the Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANAFAE) and a Board Member of the Ghawharshad Higher Education Institute Women Improvement Department. Sediqa has twenty-two years of experience in teaching, conducting capacity building trainings, manual development, and management and leadership. She has participated in conferences in Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia, Turkey, and India which mainly were focused on women's rights issues, peace building, anticorruption and advocacy. Currently, Sediqa is the Lead Trainer for the Afghanistan Civil Society Forum organization (ACSFo) and facilitates trainings in the following: Trainer of Trainers workshop on PDPW for CSOs, Good Governance Training workshop for Ghoor and Samangan province, Rule and Principles of government staff workshop for Ghoor and Samangan Province. She holds a Master's Degree in Public Law from Islamic Azad University.



Jawid Omar is Aid Information Management and Reporting Manager at the Ministry of Finance. Previously he worked as a National Officer at UNDP and as an Administrative Assistant for Mercy Corps International. He is the co-founder of the Green Club, a social organization aimed at promoting greening and sustainable environmental well-being in Afghanistan. Jawid graduated with a B.A. from American University of Afghanistan in 2012. Before moving back to Kabul in 2002 he was living in exile in Pakistan.



Mohammad Ehsan Qaane is a Researcher for the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN). He contributes to AAN by carrying out daily media monitoring and independent research focusing on political parties, human rights and transitional justice. His previous engagements include serving as National Coordinator for the International Center for Transitional Justice's (ICTJ) Afghanistan Program from 2010 to 2011. Prior to this, he served as a member of the research team with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), assisting with the forthcoming conflict-mapping document, the first Afghan-lead documentation report of human rights violations from 1978-2001. He also worked as a senior trainer for human rights and transitional justice with the Civil Society and Human Rights Network (CSHRN), an umbrella organization for civil society groups focused on human rights and rule of law in Afghanistan. Mohammad co-authored *The Handbook on Transitional Justice*, an official training manual for civil society, the first of its kind written by and for Afghans. He holds a BA in Law from the Katib Institute of Higher Education, in Kabul.

Arezo Qanih first became involved in activism when at a young age she helped her mother run a vocational training center during the Taliban regime. This was her first step toward a career dedicated to supporting and enabling women to improve their own lives. Arezo is now on the Board of Advisory of Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF) and the member of steering committee of Afghan Women's Network (AWN). Starting in 2004 she took an active role in ECW (Educational & training Center for poor Women and girls of Afghanistan) and is currently Program Manager for the organization. She has participated in several conferences on Afghanistan and the challenges facing Afghan women. In January 2010 Arezo was one of two delegates representing civil society in the London Conference on Afghanistan where she offered recommendations on behalf of civil society and the women of Afghanistan. Arezo obtained her first Bachelor's Degree from Kabul University in German Literature. She returned to school to pursue a Bachelor of Law (LLB) and is now a LLM second year student.



Shoaib Rahim has been the Program Manager of CeReTechs Ltd. since his return to Afghanistan. Shoaib, a Fulbright Scholar, has a Master's in Engineering Management from Duke University (USA) and a Bachelor of Science from Multimedia University in Selangor, Malaysia. He is a strong believer in the individual's ability to bring change to society. He believes in the power knowledge and education can bring to communities and would like to play an active role in empowering those around him. He enjoys classic Afghan music, chess, football and cruising across Darul Aman road at night with Ahmad Zahir playing in the background.



Ahmad Zia Rasouli has been working at Roshan Telecom as Loyalty Manager on the marketing team since 2010. He was a research assistant at the Afghan Independent Human Rights committee (AIHRC). Ahmad also collaborated with local NGOs DCSA and ODDW. After graduating from high school in Iran he returned to Afghanistan where he worked for the Ministry of Economics for 3 years. Ahmad received Indian government scholarships to pursue a BA in commerce and an MBA in International Business and Retail Management from the University of Pune, India. There he was active in various initiatives, which include serving as co-secretary of "World Organization for Students and Youth" in India, and as Head of Afghan students in Pune. Ahmad has been awarded "Best National Student" trophy, was Captain of Afghan student's football team, and was twice Speaker at the "International Conference on combating Global Warming."



Mohammad Hashim Wahdatyar is the United Nations Regional Program Officer for Afghanistan and Neighboring Countries. He is based in Kabul and has more than ten years of experience working with the United Nations and other international organizations in Afghanistan particularly in the field of regional cooperation, governance, law enforcement and capacity building. Mohammad has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration and is currently working towards a Master in Public Administration as distance learner at Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in India.

2011-2012 Class Profiles

Rohullah Ahmadzai is the director of Investment Promotion Department at Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA). Prior to joining AISA, Dr. Ahmadzai worked for a number of public and private sector organizations such as Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan (EPAA), Afghanistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), and in the Economic & Political units of Tolo and Ariana Televisions, where he played a vital role in private sector development and in advocating for an investment and trade-friendly environment. He has extensive experience in the fields of Communications, Event Management, Public Relations and Investment Promotion, Marketing & Stakeholders' Engagement and Private Sector development. Dr. Ahmadzai received his medical degree from Kabul Medical University, Afghanistan.

Tamim Asey is the Director and Senior Policy Advisor (Private Sector Development) at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Afghanistan (MAIL). He is a development economist with double Masters in Economics and International Business with more than 5 years of national and international experience in foreign aid management, international business, central banking and empirical economics. He is currently serving as the Director of Private Sector Development Directorate and Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock of Afghanistan. His previous assignments include working at senior management positions with Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in Afghanistan, ACBAR and other renowned national and international agencies. He has written extensively on foreign aid management and aid effectiveness and its contribution to the economic growth and development of Afghanistan. Tamim also has a keen interest in national security analysis, international relations and international policy and program management. He is a avid reader, writer and has a keen interest in learning foreign languages.

Sadiquallah Fahim is the Director of the Organisation for Health and Welfare (OHW). Sadiquallah is one of the founding members of the OHW, an Afghan NGO, which aims to alleviate poverty through the provision of basic services, including health and education, and support agricultural livelihoods. He is responsible for overall management of the OHW, donor liaison and reporting. Sadiquallah has increased the revenue of the organization to \$210,000 within one year and expanded OHW's operations to 4 provinces in Southern Afghanistan. He has been working in development and humanitarian aid for the last 17 years. He specializes in managing service sector related projects, including health, education, water and sanitation and agriculture. Previously, he worked for Oxfam GB, Afghanistan, starting as an Office Manager in June 2000 and was gradually promoted to Deputy Program Coordinator, Program Coordinator of the Kandahar program, and finally to Program Development Coordinator for the Afghanistan. Sadiquallah received an MBA with specialization in General Management from the US Preston University Pakistan Branch, Islamabad in 2005.

Ahmad Fawad Farzad is a Professor of Public Health Department at Kabul Medical University. He is also affiliated with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung's (FES) Afghanistan Office, where he serves as a Project Coordinator. Additionally, Farzad serves as an Advisor, Coordinator, Trainer, or an Officer to several other large non-profit organizations, such as DAI/ASMED, USAID/ ASAP, MOE, Altai, and STEP. Farzad's interest in politics as well as social and volunteer activities has led him to attend the YLF-Young Leaders Forum activities in 2008 and acquired its membership in 2009. He is an active member of the YLF-Young Leaders Forum and has been involved with its field projects in Ghazni, Balkh, Bamian, Parwan, Kabul and Kapisa. He has worked as a YLF Training Coordinator since 2009, which has put him in close contact with youths from different generations and professional backgrounds. After graduating from a medical school, he joined the department of public health at Kabul Medical University.

Sayed Zaman Hashemi is currently working as Legal Services Director for the Afghan Ministry of Mines. He has worked an assistant at a UNDP/ANBP/DDR(Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration) project in Kunduz, Afghanistan and later assumed a post of Director of International Relations at the Afghan Parliament. This provided Sayed with a unique perspective on political and economic development in a combat zone through the lens of an international organization and a state legislative body. A strong expertise in public management and law has allowed Sayed to build close relationships between the Afghan Parliament, foreign missions and international organizations headquartered in Kabul. As JJ/WBGSP scholar studying at Syracuse University, he has initiated and implemented a capstone project on corruption and poppy supply in Afghanistan and presented solid policy recommendations for the Afghan government. He received a Bachelor in Law from the Law School of Kabul University in 2002.

Ahmad Sulieman Hedayat currently works with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) as Change Management Director working towards institutionalizing change in MAIL and improving the

capacity as well as performance at the organizational level. He has also worked for the development of the education sector helping the efforts made in rout to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) on quality education for all in Afghanistan in his capacity as a Technical Advisor to the Ministry of Education. Ahmad has been active in the civil society as well. He is also one of the founders of Sela [www.sela-foundation.org], a social volunteer group which carries out activities to help those in need during emergencies as well as help in causes such as education, health and development in the grass root levels. Ahmad has also been advocating for the cause of women's rights and gender equality and has been actively involved in activities ranging from leading initiatives, to facilitating and helping in developing publications. A national level chess player and the Secretary General of the National Chess Federation, he has represented Afghanistan in international competitions notably the 2006 Chess Olympiad in Turin, Italy.

Mohammad Rahim Jami is the Deputy Director of Cooperation for Peace and Development (CPD). He has a rich background in advocacy and lobbying, organizing campaigns, developing training curricula and facilitating materials for national campaigns (Peace for All, Justice for All, Child Abuse prevention movement and education for All Campaigns), and coordinating media campaigns. He graduated with a BA from Economics Faculty (National Economic and Planning) Department at Kabul University. Mohammad has held several important positions including Founder and Media in-charge of Afghanistan Human Rights Volunteers Foundation (AHRVF); Program Manager, Consultant & News Publisher with Kabul Group Consulting (KGC); Editorials Chief, ZAR Monthly Magazine and ASHTAR Economical Monthly Magazine; CEO, Higher Education Institute of KARWAN; Local consultant, Pioneers Consulting (PC); Campaigns Manager, Saba Media Organization (SMO); and Public Relations & Campaigns Manager, Watch on Basic Rights Afghanistan Organization (WBRAO). Mohammad has also been hosting daily news and political programs in Saba TV and NAWA radio for more than 4 years.

Abida Najeeb Kakar is currently working as a Human Resource Analyst for the UNDP in Afghanistan. She has worked for a number of national and international NGOs in various capacities including Program, Gender, Admin and Human Resources Officer. Abida considers getting selected the first female "National Professional Officer" by UNDP Afghanistan as her biggest professional achievement so far. She returned to Afghanistan with her family in 2010, after having forced to migrate to Pakistan two decades earlier in 1990. Abida completed her undergraduate studies and received a degree in Business Administration (BBA) from Iqra University, in Quetta Pakistan. She also obtained a bachelor's degree in Arts (BA) from University of Baluchistan, in Pakistan.

Shakir Majeedi is a Senior Strategic Planning Advisor in the General Directorate of Planning & Policy Department in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock of Afghanistan. He has worked in formulation of Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) from 2005 to 2008, and also was a key member in Ministry of Finance for coordination of implementation of ANDS during 2008-2011. Shakir has undertaken a number of workshops in results-based management and is an activist in introducing results-based planning, budgeting and reporting in the public sector. He is also keen to undertake structural reforms within government organizations to increase output and quality of services for the public. Shakir received his bachelor degree in Business Administration, and Masters in Development Economics from Williams College, Massachusetts.

Omaid Sharifi, a social and human rights activist, is the founder of White Ribbon Movement. He is also the Country Representative of International Center for Democratic Transition; Co-Founder of Sela Foundation; Co-Founder of South Asian Good News Channel; and a member of Paywand Afghanan Association. In addition, Omaid has worked in several national and international organizations such as USAID, World Bank, Afghan government in different managerial and decision making positions. He has been working voluntarily for the rights of women, children and youth in Afghanistan since 2004. He has been involved in establishing youth and social networks and organizing workshops, seminars, conferences, radio broadcasts and TV shows around the country to enhance awareness. Omaid received his bachelor's degree with a major in Political Science and Public Administration from American University of Afghanistan. He also has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Kardan Institute of Higher Education.

Orzala Ashraf Nemat, a civil society activist is pursuing a PhD at SOAS on governance. Under the Taliban regime, Orzala launched underground literacy and health education programs for women and girls, often putting her directly at risk. During the mid-1990s, she served as a guide and translator to journalists and foreign aid visitors to the refugee camps where she lived, having fled Kabul with her family when she was 12. In 1999, she founded Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan, which provides free services in education, protection, counseling, health, and child care and promotes income-generating activities for women. Orzala has long been a strong advocate for human rights and active participation of women in the reconstruction

and development of Afghanistan. She is a member of the Afghan Women's Network and Civil Society and Human Rights Network, the Persian Gender Network, the Gender and Law working group (professionals and scholars involved in crafting the constitution), and is one of the founding members of the Women's Political Participation Committee. For recognition of her work, she has received several international awards and titles including Chevening Scholarship(2006), Yale World Fellows (2008), Young Global Leader (2009) and various others from Amnesty International. Orzala appears on international and local media regularly as analyst and activist speaking about Afghanistan and her work. She also writes for some newspapers such as *Guardian* (UK) and *Nytid* (Norway).

Mohammad Hashim Samim is Deputy Chief Electoral Officer (Operations) for Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC). He started his career in the field of elections in 2003 and since then has been working in different capacities for elections in Afghanistan. Before being appointed as DCEO (Operations), Mohammad was working for UNICEF Afghanistan Country Office, as a program officer, the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB), as a legal advisor, the Electoral Complaints Commission, as a senior legal advisor and the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan as head of legal department. He is a lawyer by trade but during the course of work with different UN agencies and government of Afghanistan, Mohammad has developed skills in operations and management. As Deputy CEO in Operations, he is responsible for managing the operations side of elections, which mainly covers planning and management of logistics, training, information technology and communication services, public outreach activities, field coordination, security and staffing of the election process.

Najib Sharifi is a medical doctor by training. Najib has worked for different foreign news organizations such as the *New York Times*, *CNN*, and National Public Radio (NPR), among others, for almost ten years. Additionally, he has worked as a researcher for Afghanistan's Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) and the Human Rights Watch. Najib has also worked as senior political officer for the Office of the Special Representative of the EU for Afghanistan. In 2009, he received a Humphrey/Fulbright scholarship and studied public policy and leadership in the University of Maryland. During his scholarship in the United States, he served as a researcher at the Middle East Institute as part of his internship. Najib is currently director of Afghanistan's New Generation Organization.

Zakia Soleiman graduated from American University of Afghanistan in December 2010. She has been working since 2005 with different organizations in management positions. Zakia's past experiences were working with different projects such as civil society, education and gender equality. A key similarity for the projects she worked is to approach a systematic way to develop Afghan women capacity and empower them to raise their voice when their rights are violated and develop their capacity to become self-sufficient. In addition, she has been an active member of AUAF students and she took part in the event entitled "Afghan NATO Students form" in Bayonne, France, representing Afghanistan.

Wahidullah Waissi is a Senior Advisor to Minister of Finance. He has served as director and formulation manager of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and Afghanistan's Millennium Development Goals (MDG), where he was also involved in coordination of several international events and conferences that secured over USD 30 billion financial pledges for reconstruction of Afghanistan. His professional work focuses on development since 1998, when he started working with an Afghan NGO followed by a few years of work in an international development organization in remote areas of Afghanistan. Later he joined the Government of Afghanistan, undertaking socio-economic development policy level work. As practitioners, Wahid and his team have introduced Results Based Management (RBM) mechanism into national policy framework and budget of Afghanistan. He is member of Asia-Pacific Community of Practice (AP-CoP) on Managing for Development Results (MfDR). Wahid is now working on the upcoming Bonn Conference on Afghanistan and its content and process together with the International Contact Group; and as member of the AP-CoP; he is contributing to the 4th global High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, which will be held in November this year in Busan, Korean Republic. He is the founder and chairperson of the Green Club Afghanistan. It is a voluntary based association initiated for green activities. Green Club's main focus is raising awareness, promoting voluntary participation and advocacy for green environment in Afghanistan and in the world. Wahid received a Master's degree in development economics from the Williams College of Massachusetts. He was founder and editor-in-chief of Shams (The Sun) youth magazine in high school, which was awarded second best national magazine and he received the title of honorary journalist of Afghanistan. Wahid has also written several essays on development and social issues of Afghanistan, and his articles are published in national and international journals.

Hossai Wardak has a strong background in program development and has worked extensively with the United Nations, both inside and outside Afghanistan. She was recently based Baku, Azerbaijan as UNICEF's Social Policy Planning and M&E Specialist. Hossai has several unique program achievements including design and implementation of Program under the title of Healthy Family Relations from Islamic perspective, Gender and Ethics in Policing, Inclusion of psycho social and trauma counseling in Basic Package of Health services and Health Through literacy. She also developed the Country Program Action Plan for UNICEF, a policy document with government of Azerbaijan for four years. Hossai is a certified trainer of Culturally Sensitive Approaches from University of Costa Rico in collaboration with UNFPA. She is also awarded by Minister of Women Affairs of Afghanistan for her unique efforts on Women Rights and Empowerment. Hossai obtained her Bachelors in Business Administration and Masters in International Management with specialization in Program Development from University of Leicester in UK. She also has diploma in Population Issues from University of Costa Rico, and is a Peace Building and Peace Keeping Associate with Hiroshima Peace Center, Japan. She is active in variety of organization and these include UNICEF Social Policy Specialists' Network, Gender and Human Rights Global Task Force UNFPA, Hiroshima Peace Center and UNOCHA Gender Based Violence Task Force. She is also active in writing and this includes writing on Women Trafficking in Asia and Middle East under the title of "Vanished Identity."

Mohammad Nader Yama is Director for Strategic Coordination at the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG). In this capacity, his responsibilities include managing effective implementation of IDLG 5 Year Strategy to improve local governance; coordination, implementation, M&E and reporting on results of the IDLG 6 Priority Programs; leading the Sub-national Governance component of Governance Cluster and post Kabul Conference efforts; supporting Transition, Peace and Reintegration; and representing IDLG in senior management meetings across the government and engaging with partners in the International Community. Previously, Mohammad has worked for the United Nations, Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Human Rights Commission and the Afghan Government

Assad Zamir is an active member of civil society in Afghanistan. In 2008, he established the Humanitarian Organization for Local Development (HOLD). He has served on the Board of Director of a number of NGOs. He has been the President of the Fulbright Alumni since its establishment in 2007. Assad has worked as Finance Advisor to Minister of Rural from 2003 to 2004 and as the Economic Development Consultant to Minister in 2005. He has also served as Senior Advisor to Minister of Education from 2007 to 2009. He has worked as Chief Program Coordinator and General Director of Programs to the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock. He has received accreditation by the Institute of Management and Leadership as "Certified strategic Planner". Assad received BBA, MBA in 2002, and M.A Economics from the California State University East Bay in 2006 as Fulbright Scholar.

PROFILES of ASIA 21 FELLOWS from AFGHANISTAN

Fawad Ahmad Muslim is the CEO and President of Jahaan Technology Corporation, an IT company he started in 2006, after resigning from the Afghan government. Jahaan Technology Corporation is a software development company with over 150 employees and is also the main partner of Microsoft in Afghanistan. He returned to Afghanistan in December 2001, and worked at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan as a Director-General of Communication & Archives. There, he built the first IT department and training center at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trained over 2600 employees of the government. Mr. Muslim received a degree in Computer Science from George Mason University, Virginia.

Ahmad Nader Nadery is a Commissioner at the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission. He represented Afghan Civil Society at the UN peace talks for Afghanistan in the Bonn Conference 2001. Mr. Nadery also works as Chairperson of the Fair and Free Election Foundation of Afghanistan. He is a member of the Steering Committee of Citizens Against Terror and is a member of the advisory board of the Open Society Institute (OSI) Afghanistan programs. He has written extensively on politics and human rights in Afghanistan and is a member of the Board of Editors of the Oxford Journal on Transitional Justice. He served as Spokesperson for the national assembly (Loya Jerga) in 2002. Prior to his appointment at the AIHRC, he worked as country director for the international human rights law group (Global Rights). Mr. Nadery won several international awards and was recognized as an "Asian Hero" by Time Magazine in 2004. He was recognized as Young Global Leader (YGL) by the World Economic Forum in 2008. He studied law and political science at Kabul University and earned his Master's degree in International Affairs from George Washington University.

Lotfullah Najafizada is the Head of Current Affairs at Afghanistan's first 24 hour news channel, ToloNews. In this capacity, Lotfullah oversees a team of 35 reporters, editors, presenters, producers and researchers who produce 7 hours live and pre-recorded content a day in the sphere of politics, economy and culture under his supervision. Lotfullah began his journalistic activities in mid-2004 for a local newspaper in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e Sharif. Over the course of the last eight years, he has worked for the NATO mission in Afghanistan, providing strategic communications services. As a World Press Institute fellow, Lotfullah conducted a research on the US mid-term elections in 2010.

Nilofar Sakhi is the Country Director at Open Society Institute in Afghanistan. Prior to this, Ms. Sakhi worked as a Senior Consultant on Rule of Law, Transitional Justice, Human Rights and Women Rights at Open Society Institute in Afghanistan. She also served as an Executive Director of Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA), an organization she founded in 2002, where she also established the Center for Peace building and Conflict Resolution at WASSA. Prior to WASSA, Nilofar was a political education officer in Aurat Foundation, a national NGO in Pakistan. She served as a visiting fellow at National Endowment for Democracy, Columbia University and a fellow at the International Center for Tolerance Education. During various conflicts in Western Afghanistan she provided political analysis to BBC, Human Rights Watch and UNAMA. Her recent paper published on EurAsia Critic, a monthly magazine on EurAsian politics is titled "Afghanistan's Presidential Election: Hope for the future or not?" Ms. Sakhi conducted round table conferences and participated as a speaker on democracy and development and freedom of speech related issues. She holds a BA in Political Science. She completed her MA in Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding as a Fulbright scholar.

Mohammad Omar Sharifi is the Director of the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies, Kabul Office. He is also a member of the advisory board of the Civil Society Development Center (CSDC) and member of the Board of Directors of the Afghan Alumni Association. A native of Kabul, he graduated from Kabul Medical Institute in 2003. Following his medical studies, he worked as Head of research and publications for the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society in Kabul, and Director of the Open Media Fund for Afghanistan. From 2006 to 2008, he studied Cultural Anthropology at Columbia University in New York under a Fulbright Fellowship. Mohammad has written several essays on politics and social issues in Afghanistan, and his articles are published in national and international journals.

Asia Society Staff

Michael G. Kulma is the Executive Director of Global Leadership Initiatives at the Asia Society headquarters in New York. In this capacity he directs the Society's four major leadership initiatives: Asia 21 Young Leaders, Diversity Leadership Forum, Williamsburg Conference, and Women Leaders of New Asia. He began his career at the Asia Society in 2000 working on policy issues related to Northeast Asia with a specific concentration on China. Prior to that, he lectured at a number of colleges in the New York City area, focusing on East Asian politics, foreign policy, and international relations. Michael contributes regularly to print and broadcast media on Asia-focused issues. He is a member of The National Committee on United States-China Relations. Michael received a BA in economics from the University of Chicago, a Master's in public and international affairs from the University of Pittsburgh, and a PhD in political science from the City University of New York.

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