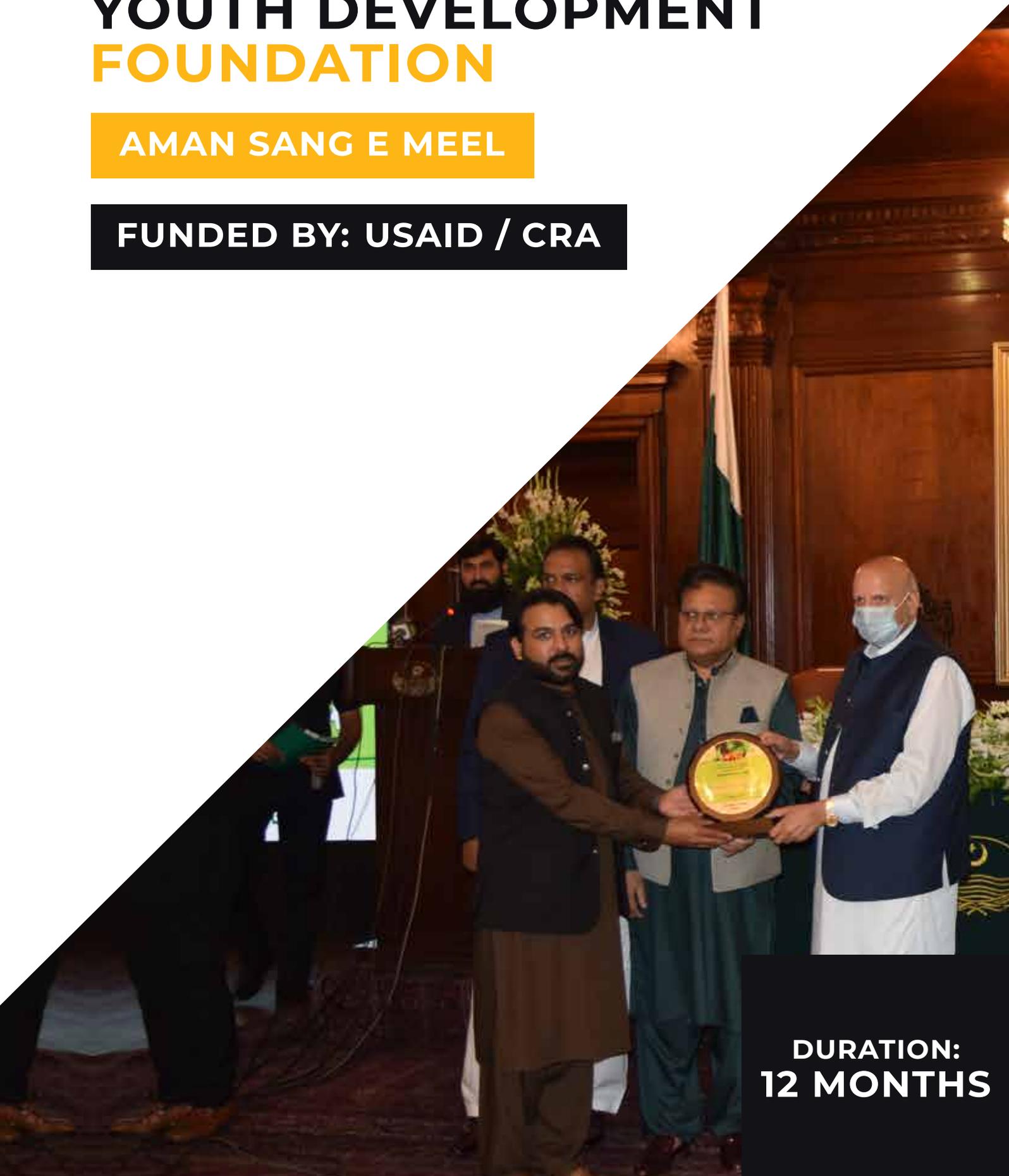




YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

AMAN SANG E MEEL

FUNDED BY: USAID / CRA



DURATION:
12 MONTHS



PROJECT BACKGROUND

Continuing interfaith tensions and violence in Pakistan – particularly along sectarian lines – have recently resulted in a heightened policy response from the government at multiple levels, which signals that it is committed to promoting and investing in interfaith harmony to counter violent extremism effectively. However, weak linkages with local community/faith leaders who champion community peace initiatives have limited access to government-relevant information to inform its approach to interfaith harmony. These weak linkages also prevent the government from collaborating with and supporting these leaders to promote interfaith harmony at the grassroots level. Also, there has been a well-observed gap among the religious/faith leaders of South Punjab, mainly Multan and Bahawalpur, and to bridge this gap, YDF organized a set of activities under Aman Sang e Meel. This 12-month activity built linkages and collaboration between national, provincial and district government entities with local community/faith leaders. The interfaith/inter-sectarian harmony initiatives connected government and religious leaders through exposure meetings, collaboration on an interfaith/sectarian media campaign and Social Action Projects. The activity intends to increase government access to relevant information and best practices and increase its ability to collaborate with and support these leaders to promote interfaith/inter-sectarian harmony. Under this project, YDF launched a phased media campaign across Pakistan and on regional stations through TV and radio. 10 Exposure and collaboration visits between religious leaders and government entities were organized, and Social Action Projects in 2 target districts of Punjab, including Bahawalpur and Multan, were organized. The Closing Event of the project, the Punjab Tolerance Summit, was organized at the Governor House Lahore and attended by dignitaries, including members of parliament, religious/faith leaders, community leaders, civil society, media, human rights activists, students, academia, youth and women. The 2-day event managed to keep the audience engaged in discussion through its interactive panels comprising keynote speakers and interesting topics.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The overall objectives in its implementation areas could be stated as

- To provide different platforms to government/elected representatives and community leaders for interaction around messaging on interfaith harmony
- To increase the opportunities of collaboration among government /elected representatives and community leaders for initiatives around interfaith harmony.

OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT:

Based on the activities devised to attain the maximum proximate of the objectives, the project's successful outcomes have been:

- Increased capacity of targeted Government of Pakistan institutions/initiatives to counter Violent Extremist groups
- Increased broad-based citizen engagement in community decision making.



PROJECT ACTIVITIES:

- 8 video and audio messages on tolerance, inter-sectarian and interfaith harmony were broadcasted through National TV Channels and Regional Radio stations.
- A delegation of 12 Religious/faith/community leaders from Multan and Bahawalpur belonging to diverse faiths were invited to attend exposure meetings with Provincial and Federal offices/organizations/institutions.
- YDF facilitated the delegation of local faith leaders to have five meetings/exposure visits with Provincial government departments, including the Ministry of Human Rights Punjab, Home Department Punjab, Punjab's Standing committee on Human Rights, Muttahida Ulema Board and Punjab Parliamentary Working Group on Countering Violent Extremism.
- The delegation also visited Federal Government's departments/offices that are directly engaged with countering religious hate speech, violent extremism, or potential stakeholders to the process. For example, the delegation paid visits to offices of Paigham e Pakistan, National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA), Supreme Court's One-man Commission on Minority Rights (The Suddle Commission), Special Advisor to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony (SAPM), The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), Federal Parliamentary Standing committee on Human Rights & Minorities Affairs and National Consortium of Vice-Chancellors of leading Universities of Pakistan.
- The Exposure visits/meetings helped the local faith leaders connect with Government offices, share the situation of their local areas, and gain know-how these offices could assist them in developing their local community.
- 5 Policy Briefs were developed under Aman Sang e Meel (The Milestone of Peace Project). The 2-paged policy briefs were developed on specific policy issues linked to particular government entities in the exposure meetings like the office of the SAPM to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony, the role of government institutions in countering hate speech with Punjab Muttahida Board, NACTA's National Counter-extremism Policy Guidelines; the work of district peace committees, and Paigham-e-Pakistan. In addition, the briefs provided an overview of the relevant government entity's work, successes and challenges.
- Forty-two days second Media campaign was designed and launched. In the second campaign, messages of top and mid-tier religious leaders such as Allama Tahir Ashrafi, Allama Azad Abdul Khabeer, Allama Muhammad Hussain Akbar, Dr Samia Raheel Qazi, Raghieb Naeemi, Qibla Ayaz, Allama Mujahid Abbas Gardezi and Allama Abdul Watto were recorded on sectarian harmony. These Audio and Video messages were aired on National TV channels, regional TV channels and Regional Radio Channels.
- 25 Social Action Projects were organized by local faith leaders, who were part of the delegation in their local

community to promote the messages of Peace, Harmony and Social Cohesion.

- A dedicated social media campaign was launched on Social Media handles of the Ministry of Human Rights & Minorities Affairs Punjab and YDF Facebook page along with Twitter/Instagram handles. YDF reached over 100k masses through this campaign on all social media platforms.
- Punjab Tolerance Summit, a 2-day event, was organized at Governor House Lahore. The event was attended by dignitaries, including members of parliament, religious/faith leaders, community leaders, civil society, media, human rights activists, students, academia, youth and women. The 2-day event managed to keep the audience engaged in discussion through its interactive panels comprising keynote speakers and interesting topics.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES:

Aman Sang e Meel (the Milestone of Peace) reached masses at multiple levels through its activities. The project engaged 12 local religious leaders to foster their capacities and engaged more than 50 Government Officials. Through Media campaigns, the project reached out to about 20 million masses across Pakistan, whereas around 100k masses were reached through social media. Through Social Action Projects, the project capacitated about 2000 masses on the ground with knowledge of peace, harmony and peaceful co-existence.





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