

Meet the 2018 APF Fellows



APF Fellows with NRSP and RSPN

We are proud to introduce the nine 2018 APF Fellows. They are serving the National Rural Support Program (NRSP) this summer in Pakistan. NRSP works with over two million rural households, 150,000 community organizations, and 500 local support organizations. It is a part of the Rural Support Program Network (RSPN), the largest development network in Pakistan, which is comprised of eleven Rural Support Programmes (RSPs). They espouse a common approach to rural development: social mobilization centered on the belief that impoverished people have the innate potential to help themselves by better managing their limited resources if they organize and are provided with social, technical, and financial support



2018 APF Fellows



Urwah Ahmad
Brooklyn, NY

Urwah Ahmad is a recent graduate of St. Joseph's College with a double major in Journalism New Media Studies and Political Science. Despite having come to the New York at a young age, her Pakistani identity still plays a big a part in her life. She was elected Senior Class Representative and was on the Budget Committee her past year in school. She was also the Digital Editorial Director for the Campus Newspaper. She has previously worked with the Brooklyn Reporter, a well-known and respected local newspaper and interned Tzu Chi an international non-profit organization. Recently, she completed her Virtual Student Foreign/Federal Service e-internship with the State Department. She also likes to serve as a volunteer photographer at school events, orchestra performances, and book presentations. She hopes to get her Masters Degree in Foreign Relations and pursue a career in international

diplomacy or human rights. While working as an APF Fellow she hopes to help others look past what we are shown, told, and read and actually see, tell, and write.

Aleeza Ali was born in Washington D.C. and raised with a strong passion for politics, service, and diplomacy. She is currently a B.A. candidate at George Mason University, studying Global Affairs and Conflict Resolution. While at George Mason, Aleeza has served as a Peacebuilding Fellow at the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Through her coursework and strong connection with Pakistan, and more broadly South Asia, Aleeza also served as an Adviser to the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations, working specifically with the 6th committee. Her interests include cross-cultural diplomacy, international development, education and gender equality. Aside from her work and school, Aleeza is an art enthusiast and avid reader. Having been apart of APF for the past two years, Aleeza is excited to continue to serve the organization as an APF fellow in Islamabad, where she hopes to combine her school and professional experience while working with NRSP.



Aleeza Ali
Fairfax, Virginia



Owais Fazal
Frisco, Texas

Owais Fazal is a social policy analysis and global health technologies B.A. candidate at Rice University. He has co-authored publications on topics such as the recent outbreak of the Zika virus as well as the multi-drug resistant bacteria *A. baumannii*. Alongside board positions on the Rice Catalyst Science Journal and the Rice Journal of Public Policy, Owais is also a key member of Team Si-Low, an award-winning group that recently designed a novel treatment for gastroschisis in Africa. His long-term career goal is to become a physician and help control the spread of infectious diseases on a global scale, specifically focusing on regions such as Latin and Central America. The APF Fellows Program provides Owais with a distinctive opportunity to observe and help combat the socioeconomic inequalities that promote the prevalence of infectious diseases in developing countries worldwide.

Meraal Hakeem is an International Relations and Global Studies and Government double major at the University of Texas at Austin, concentrating on international political economy and identity politics. Meraal has always been interested in dissecting the inner workings of globalization and nationalism and hopes to work in public policy fields relating to international development and human rights focusing on South Asia and the Middle East. As part of a Feminist Geography Research Collective on her campus, Meraal studies the different factors that make certain actors and policies dominant in the global arena while exploring the role of women and the aftermath of post-colonialism in societies across the globe. In her free time, Meraal usually finds herself writing short fiction stories, with characters drawing on her own Pakistani identity.



Meraal Hakeem
Austin, Texas



Sawera Hussan
Newington, CT

Sawera Hussan is an undergraduate student at the University of Connecticut studying Political Science and Human Rights. She has been a Correspondent Intern for the American Pakistan Foundation since 2017. She is also the Outreach Intern for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. She seeks to protect the civil liberties and advocate for the Muslim-American community. As an American-Pakistani, she firmly believes that it is not only her moral obligation but her civic duty to exercise her privilege in assisting marginalized communities throughout the provinces of Pakistan.

Furthermore, she serves as the Vice President of the Muslim Students Association, an Undergraduate Student Government Senator, the Chairwoman of the Student Development Committee on the Undergraduate Student Government, and the Program Coordinator for Salaam, a program aiming to

eradicate islamophobia and xenophobia. Sawera understands the amount of effort and dedication it takes to effect change in a developing country, and would like to sincerely thank the APF Fellowship Program for providing her the opportunity to actively engage in creating socioeconomic change in Pakistan.

Uzair Iqbal helps businesses and apartment residents recycle effectively as a Recycling Coordinator for the City of San Antonio. Through the City's ReWorksSA Recycling Certification, he helps businesses get recognized for their best recycling practices. He can be found online talking about different elements of successful recycling programs in videos throughout ReWorksSA.org. Before graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU), he was a Student Advisor for the Muslim Student Association. During that role he helped initiate the Muslim Awareness Project. As an International Ambassador, he also mentored international students studying at FGCU through exchange programs.



Uzair Iqbal
San Antonio, Texas

Uzair was actively engaged in sustainability on his campus through his role as the Director of Sustainability in Student Government for two years. During this role, he was awarded the Student Government Cabinet Member of the Year (2015) for Excellence in Leadership and Involvement. He has traveled throughout the United States and Dominican Republic being actively engaged in mining, renewable energy, and environmental justice issues. Outside of work, he can be found playing basketball and cricket weekly and forcing his family to recycle.



Samar Shahid
Boston, MA

Samar Shahid recently graduated from Harvard Medical School with a Master of Bioethics degree. During graduate school, she collaborated with Public Responsibility in Medicine and Research (PRIM&R) for her Capstone Project, which entailed creating easily accessible educational tools for Institutional Review Board members to aid in upholding the highest ethical standards in research. Previously, Samar was a lead Clinical Research Coordinator for the Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine at Columbia University Medical Center, where she conducted National Institutes of Health (NIH) research studies involving vulnerable populations. Prior to her career as a health professional, Samar received her BS in Biology with a minor in Sociology, from the University at Albany. During her undergraduate studies, Samar had the opportunity to study abroad in China, where she

researched Tui Na (Traditional Chinese Medicine) at Chengdu University of Traditional Chinese Medicine. While in China, Samar also served children, elderly and disabled populations in impoverished areas. Samar's passion for social justice and global health stems from her aspiration to promote opportunities that reduce inequalities and health inequities.

Saira Shakeel is a graduate of University of California, Berkeley, where she studied pre-health and majored in South and Southeast Asian Studies. She is interested in pursuing optometry and is working on applying to the graduate program this year. During her undergrad, she was heavily involved in local service organizations such as The Berkeley Project, which aims to bridge the gap between the university and surrounding city by organizing large-scale service events. Thousands of volunteers would offer a day of service at many local community gardens, senior homes, and other locations. Saira was also involved with Project Vision, a student-run organization that provides free vision care referrals to local underserved communities in need. This includes free eye exams, glasses, and eye disease treatments. Saira was also the Director of Vision Education, where she planned events at the Children's Hospital to teach young patients about vision through a series of educational and fun games and activities. She has been involved with a lot of local projects but has always dreamed of expanding the scope of her service and having it reach the global level. The APF Fellowship will be the perfect opportunity for her to do just that.



Saira Shakeel
El Sobrante, CA

Saira was born and raised in California, but has a strong connection to her roots in Pakistan. It has been one of her favorite places to visit but she has noticed, first-hand, some of the socioeconomic issues that are prevalent in communities there. She hopes that with a higher level of education and experience, she can give back to such communities to make a positive and meaningful impact.



Akber Sheikh
Fresno, CA

Akber Sheikh is a recent graduate from the University of California, Berkeley, with a bachelors in Molecular and Cell Biology - Neurobiology and South Asian Studies. During his undergraduate career, he accumulated a wide array of research, laboratory, clinical, and public health experiences. He has a personal connection to the larger Indian subcontinent and is deeply invested in rural and youth empowerment, human rights, education, social justice, cultural issues, and health education. He aspires to pursue medicine and become more actively involved with global public health initiatives and rural development projects. Through the APF Fellowship, he hopes to see how people are tackling social issues on the ground in Pakistan, and hopes to work to learn from and improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of NRSP's initiatives.