

**REPORT OF**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> PAKISTAN BLIND YOUTH CONFERENCE (PBYC) - KARACHI**  
**Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2012**



Youth and People With Disabilities - Together Making It Happen

For the First Time in Pakistan  
Visionary Foundation Pakistan  
Organizing

**1<sup>ST</sup> PAKISTAN  
BLIND YOUTH CONFERENCE**

Creating a central support system for the Specially able  
and giving them a platform to discuss their issues.

**On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2012  
at the  
"Regent Plaza Hotel, Karachi."**

The objective of the conference are:

1. To create a central support system for young, disable youth of Pakistan to address the issue of persons with disabilities.
2. To bridge the gap between (Disable and Able Community).
3. To raise the awareness regarding issue of blind people.
4. To present & share case the potential of persons with special needs.

**Exclusive Media Partner**  
News

**Radio Partners**  
Radio 24/7  
Radio 101

**Potential Participated Institutes**  
KAM  
PAB

**Official Photographer**  
Dance Machine

**Organized by**  
Visionary Foundation Pakistan

**Sponsors**  
MAZARS  
HQ  
YFM  
MEDI

**Technical Partners**  
BRITISH COUNCIL

**Visionary Foundation Pakistan**

[www.vfpakistan.com](http://www.vfpakistan.com) ; [info@vfpakistan.com](mailto:info@vfpakistan.com); [vf.pakistan123@yahoo.com](mailto:vf.pakistan123@yahoo.com)

Contact No: 0323-2364687, 0311-2006817, 0312-2330204

## **BACKGROUND:**

Like the rest of the world, the development sector of Pakistan has shifted its focus to youth development, especially considering the fact that it comprises of the 65% of the total Pakistani population. Despite the fact that many programs are being designed and implemented for the capacity development and income generation of youth, so far not much has been done for the development of youth with special needs. Presently, majority of the vulnerable youth with special needs tends to withdraw from the society, hiding its talents and potential, while the ratio of the determined few who take up the challenge against all odds and excel in their respective fields is very small.

To address this issue Visionary Foundation Pakistan took an initiative to provide such youth with a platform for interaction, exposure and learning. Organisation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Blind Youth Conference was an effort to bring together the youth (with and without the gift of sight) and give them an opportunity to understand and learn from each others' experiences.

### **The main objectives of the conference were to:**

- Create a support group for Youth with disabilities that would address the issue of disabilities.
- Identify the issues for bridging the gap between communities & to sustain the efforts.
- Raise awareness regarding issues of visually impaired people.
- Interact / showcase the potential of visually impaired persons.

The conference was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012 at Regent Plaza Karachi and attended by a total of 65 participants out of which 40 were sighted and 25 were blind. The conference was arranged with the help of eight voluntary Active Citizens & members of Visionary Foundation Pakistan and the occasion was graced by eight different and eminent speakers. Several civil society organization members visit 1<sup>st</sup> PBYC as a guest and shared their valuable comments and feedbacks.

## PROCEEDINGS:

The day begins with the participant's registration at registration desk.



Conference program was hosted by Dr. Nawarah Mukhtar, she is serving FM 101, as a RJ. Conference proceeding starts with the recitation of Holy Quraan by Mr. Dabber, which was followed by a welcome speech by Chief Executive Officer of Visionary Foundation Pakistan, Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan in which he gave an introduction of 1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Blind You Conference, Visionary Foundation Pakistan, Its Vision, Mission, goals and achievements in the past 3 years. He Say's:



“It was the efforts of a few individuals, which made it possible for **VISIONARY FOUNDATION PAKISTAN** to come into existence. In addition, the British Council recognizes the efforts of these individuals and they have been awarded with ‘Active Citizen of the Year 2009-10’.”



**MISSION:**

**Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan, CEO VF Pakistan.**

He says Our Mission is to work for betterment of Humanity.

**AIM:**

He says Our Aim is to identify the areas which concern society and render services to our capacity.

**OBJECTIVE:**

In addition, he says Our Objectives are to improve the Awareness about Education, Healthcare, Environment, Issues and problem of Person with Disabilities, Capacity-Building of Youth and Women for poverty alleviation through Mobilization for our Human resource.



The first session of the day was conducted by Ms. Mariam Azeem on “Disabilism” from Youth Parliament of Pakistan, She is the Project Manager of “Know your Rights Program” of Youth Parliament of Paksitan. She began the session with an energizer after which she divided the participants into 5 groups with the task of making small projects from the provided resources in half an hour.



Blind and Sighted Participant



Group Work



Each group comprised of both sighted and visually impaired youth. They were encouraged to actively participate in the activity. At the end of the activity the participants were asked how they felt about the activity and if it was easy or difficult to work in a group. The participants responded that that it wasn't difficult for them to make their projects and they enjoyed it a lot.



The objective of the activity was to motivate the youth to come forward and work together. They were told that if they could work together to make beautiful projects from limited resources then they could definitely work in the community for the betterment of our society and that many people will be there to assist them as they experienced today.



The next session of the day was on “Motivation” delivered by Mr. Zain Goplani from School of Leadership. He talked about values and beliefs and how they define a person.

He also shared an example and documentary of Mr. Abdul Sattar Edhi and how he started with nothing but dreams and hopes of making a difference which kept him motivated and now he owns the largest



number of ambulance in the world. He shared that everyone has been gifted by God, how they utilize those gifts defines them.

Then next session was on the “Role and responsibilities of youth as future leaders of Pakistan”, conducted by Prof. Dr. Shahida Sajjad. She is serving as a Chairperson of, Special Education Department, Sheikh Zaid Institute, University of Karachi.



She also touched upon the qualities of a good leader.

The next session was a simulation activity named “**Mobility Exercise**” in which the sighted participants were blindfolded while they had lunch. This session was conducted by Ms. Saira Saleem, Visually Impaired Lecturer at Karachi University.

After that feedback was taken from the participants on how they felt during the activity.





The participants shared that they felt vulnerable and had difficulty in moving around. This activity made them realize that they have been given a wonderful gift of sight and how the young people who are visually impaired cope with things every day.



The next session conducted by Mr. Ahsan Rizvi was on “Envisioning the Way Forward”. He pointed out how the people today don’t have any vision which could motivate them to move forward. He emphasized that we should from a vision which will help us focus our energies in the right direction.



The next session conducted by Mr. Muhammad Arif Azeemi, training consultant and ABT Training Firm, was on self esteem and self discovery in which he talked about How to chose a right direction?, and how to sustain on it and what life event effects on us naturally? He told that till that a persons did not find his of herself then no body care his existence. If somebody has some deficiencies then it doesn’t matter just focus on the abilities which a person has, and try to get the full benefits of your abilities.



## **ILMPOSSIBLE DAY:**

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2012 is also celebrated as a “**ILMPOSSIBLE Day**”. This day is celebrated by the ILMBASSADORS who are working for the cause of Education in Pakistan. This project is aimed to spread awareness on the Right of Education in communities about Article 25A and issues of accessibility and quality of education in Pakistan.

According to Article 25-A, Constitution of Pakistan amended on 18<sup>th</sup> amendment “State will be bound to provide free basic education to children of age from 5-16 years according to Law and constitution.



Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan, and Ms. Zainab Khan give a brief presentation on ILMPOSSIBLE Project. This project is supported by British Council and a National Steering Committee has been formed for looking after and running this project. Mr. Rashid and Ms. Zainab is member of British Council National Steering Committee members.

After the presentation and briefing they take oath from the participants, they asked to participants to stand up and raise their right hand and repeat as they say the clauses of the oath one by one.



**Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan**



**Ms. Zainab Khan.**



### **Oath of ILMPOSSIBLE Project:**

In the darkness of illiteracy, the time for vague promises is at the end. To ensure that every child will be afforded an education no matter his or her circumstances. I take this Oath.

1. I promise to work for a literate Pakistan, in which Education is provided to all;
2. I spread to spread this National Education Movement to every city and village;



3. I won't stop till every child, parent and teacher of Pakistan is aware of a child's right to Education under Article 25-A.
4. I fully commit myself to making a difference in the lives of those deprived of education;
5. I will become an agent of change for a Pakistan committed to educating its children.

After the Oath, Mr. Rashid and Zainab, congratulate participants for becoming ILMBASSADORS.

The next session conducted by Mr. Akram Lodhi, President Vision Foundation, in which he shared his research regarding the Retinitis Pigmentosa, an eye disease leading to blindness. He discovered a therapy which restores the sight to some extent. Considering the hurdles a common man has to face in the medical field and the government is



unable to cope up with increasing population a team of volunteers stood up and decided to join hands with the slogan "Together we can" to fight against blindness. This spirit led them to combine on one platform and registered as "Vision Foundation".

Mr. Shahid Memon, President Pakistan Disable Foundation, say's in his guest remarks, that their is a dying need of working in a different ways for raising awareness, and this conference is one of those steps. He appreciated the efforts of Visionary Foundation Pakistan Team and encourage them with a great gratitude. He explains the working and Pakistan Disable Foundation towards the Blinds People.



**During the conference Mr. Hanif Shaikh, Executive Secretary of Paksitan Eye Bank Society also observed the activities in 1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Blind Youth Conference, and appreciated alot with a unique style of its organizing, interacting of both sighted and viaually impaired participants. He emphasize for organizing such type of events in future as well, and ensure his and Pakistan Eye Bank Society full support.**



## Feedback / Comments from Participants:



A visually impaired participant of the conference, Mr. Faiz Rasool said “as a participant of first PBYC I felt that the blind youth of today wants a change. The change wanted by the visually impaired youth does not appreciate any assistance that perpetuates need for financial assistance. It only welcomes help that makes visually impaired more educated, and more empowered.”



A Sighted Participant Mr. Muhammad Sarmad said, “Today i actually learned that there is no difference in the abilities and skills of the abled-bodied and the so called disabled”. He said “Our society tends to make assumptions about people who are apparently disabled in any way without considering the fact that we are all disabled in different ways ”.



A Visually Impaired participant Ms. Ester Jane, who works on removing false perceptions about people with special needs. She teaches at the Government Special Education Complex. She has even visited other countries as well. She said “Through participating in such conferences, i can tell people that what i am doing in my life, they can do it as well”.



Mr. Ahsan Rizvi, a certified cooperative trainer for the visually challenged people at Pratham, an Indian NGO, candidly shared that he was a pampered child till he met Jane (A Visually Impaired Girl), “She used to come to university on the bus while i used to wait for my chauffeur-driven car. I thought if she could do everything and go everywhere despite her visually impairment then why could i, who was perfectly normal not do the same?? I have learnt a lot from Jane and this 1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Blind Youth Conference and still do.”



A Visually Impaired participant Salman Elahi, Who is also a PhD student in sociology commented that the visually challenged and people with unimpaired eyesight should find ways to work together to develop an inclusive and barrier free society. We (people with disabilities) have made a false perception of being inferior (other) people. This perception keeps people with physical challenges from providing themselves in front of the world.

Before closing the conference Mr. Shahid Mehmood Khan, President of Visionary Foundation,





and Ms. Saira Saleem Visually impaired member of Visionary Foundation Pakistan thanked the participants, the guest speakers for taking out the time to attend the conference and the sponsors whose support made this event possible.

In the end participants appreciated the efforts of the Visionary Foundation Pakistan team.

## **Problems of the Visually Impaired Youth**

### **Suggestions and Their Solutions:**

Following issues and problem find out by the participants of 1stPBYC:

In this part of the document will give an overview of the suggestions of the visually impaired participants of first Pakistan Blind Youth Conference (PBYC). The first PBYC was organised by Visionary Foundation Pakistan (VFP) on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2012. The conference was attended by visually impaired people belonging to different walks of life. Students, teachers, employees of private sector organisation, and individuals fighting for the rights of the visually impaired were all present. Few sighted individuals who wanted to learn more about the visually impaired community, and what they can do to support it were also in attendance.

Participants of the conference agreed that the problems faced by the visually impaired community can be grouped under the following major categories:

#### **Educational problems.**

Unavailability of textbooks in Braille or in any other accessible format. Finding writers who can write on the behalf of the visually impaired person in exams. Insufficient knowledge of many teachers about how to handle visually impaired student in their classes.

#### **Employment related problems.**

Widespread unemployment in the visually impaired community. Limited job opportunities in the government as well as in the private sector.

#### **Problems in commuting.**

Lack of awareness about White cane among drivers of public transport as well as among drivers of private vehicles.

#### **Problems in social acceptance.**

There is a widespread perception that visually impaired individuals are incapable to excel and flourish in their lives. Generally visually impaired individual are seen with sympathy. Visually impaired girls, in particular, are not considered suitable for marriage with a sighted male.

## **Suggestions:**

All the participants of PBYC agreed that in recent times situation of the visually impaired community has started to improve. However continuous efforts and hard work is required to make sure that the things continue to improve for the visually impaired in Pakistan.

1. There was a consensus among the participants of the PBYC that a paradigm shift is needed in efforts of making visually impaired individuals an equal member of the society. So far, the approach has been to evoke sympathy towards the visually impaired in the general public, and take donations for the organisations working for them.
2. A new approach of empowering the visually impaired is needed. The central principle of this approach should be to increase technological literacy i.e. knowledge of how computer, internet, and scanners can be used as a support in studies among visually impaired community.
3. Technological literacy increases the chances of getting employment as well as it can help in becoming self-employed.
4. This new approach has two limitations:
  - a) First, it assumes that user of the technology has sufficient knowledge of the English language.
  - b) Second it is only applicable to students of schools, colleges and universities. These limitations can be overcome by the following steps.
5. Make it compulsory for all institutes where visually impaired are educated that they have at least one teacher of computer.
6. Introduce specialised courses of English language for the visually impaired students so that any deficiency of English language may be overcome.
7. Identify people with visual impairment who are not going to an educational institution and help them getting into educational institutes.
8. Increase awareness in teachers of colleges and universities about how visually impaired can take advantage of technology in their education.
9. Traditionally teaching and telephone operator have been two careers considered appropriate for the visually impaired. Computer literacy can open up new careers for the visually impaired. Internet radio and writing for websites are examples of few careers that can be opted for by the computer literate visually impaired.

In sum, as a participants of first PBYC we felt that the blind youth of today wants a change. The change wanted by the visually impaired youth does not appreciate any assistance that perpetuates need for financial assistance. It only welcomes help that makes visually impaired more educated, and more empowered.



## Sponsors / Supporters / Partners

The conference sponsored by:

- M/s Mazars
- M/s HQ Firm, and YEW
- Entrepreneurship and Community Development Institute



MANAGEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANTS



## Participated Institutions .

The conference had participation from Institutes such as:

- Pakistan Association of Blind
- IDA RIEU College for Blinds & Deaf
- Pakistan Disable Foundation
- Pakistan Eye Bank Society
- Special Education Department, University of Karachi



Media Partners included:

- Geo News
- Radio Vision Pakistan
- Note: Daily Jung Newspaper, Daily Business Recorder, Daily Express Tribune Newspapers published news before, during and after the Conference



1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Blind Youth Conference is dully covered by Geo News, during the comments to Geo News, Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan, says that “ Now its time for youth to come forward and take the responsibility, for changing the behaviour of the society. Disable Community is not asking our help they want our support to stand side by side with them.



Mr. Rashid thanks to Geo News to come forward and show its corporate social responsibility, and cover this event.

The Official Photographer:

**Bench Marker**

And conference photographs also covered by

**Durrani's Photography:**



Technical Supporters were:

- British Council
- ILMPOSSIBLE,
- City Institute of Image Management, KMC
- Memon Media Cell
- NOWPDP





Visionary Foundation Pakistan is also very thankful to Honourable Mr. Ardeshir Cowasjee , for his generous support for making this conference happen.



We are also very thankful to following personalities for their unconditional support, guidance, suggestions, and continuous feedback.

1. Mr. Obaid Khan Project Manager, British Council
2. Mr. Raja Iftikhar Ahmed British Council
3. Mrs. Perveen Shaikh Chairperson ECDI
4. Ms. Aasia Ashfaq Farooqui Training, Monitoring and Evaluation Associate, ECDI
5. Mr. Shakeel Ahmed Kham Training Consultant
6. Mr. Manzoor Hussain National Program Officer, RSPN
7. Mrs. Saira Nizam Training Consultant
8. Mr. Muhammad Farooq Khan Shahana Farooq and Co. Legal Firm.
9. Mr. Nadeem Arshad Malik Chief Financial Officer, Mazars Consulting

10. Mr. Junaid Pirzada CEO, Shanghai Hongqing Industry Co. Ltd.
11. Mr. Hanif Shaikh Executive Secretary, Pakistan Eye Bank Society.
12. Mr. Muhammad Hussain National Coordinator, Pakistan Association of Blinds
13. Mrs. Qudsia Khan Principal IDA RIEU College for Blind and Deaf
14. Mr. Atif Shaikh Vice President, Special Talent Exchange Program.
15. Mr. Syed Ayaz Hussain Abidi Director Finance, Sindh Small Industries Corporation
16. Mr. Ubaid ur Rehman Asst. Sales Manaer, Regent Plaza Hotel
17. Mr. Naweed Saud Raja Director Sales, Beach Luxury hotel.
18. Mr. Aizaz Imtiaz Associate Manger, Corporate Affairs, Geo TV
19. Mr. Nouman Ahmed Riyaz Senior Executive Director, FM 96.
20. Mr. Jalal Qureshi Senior Editor, Daily Express
21. Mr. Yasir Babbar Staff Reporter, Daily Business Recorder
22. Ms. Aliya Azeemi Sub Editor, Daily Jung Newspaper
23. Shaikh M. Owais Anjum RJ, Dhak Dhak Radio
24. Mr. Darya Khan Gopang Proprietor, Piar Graphics and Printing
25. Mr. Azmat Qazi From Action Aid Pakistan
26. Ms. Ammara Anwar HR Coordinator, Gogi Studios, Islamabad
27. Mr. Talal Ferhat Tele Films
28. Syed Isaad Abidi Photographer
29. Ms. Sajida Andleeb Monitoring Officer, RSPN

**Organizing Team of 1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Blind Youth Conference:**



**Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan**



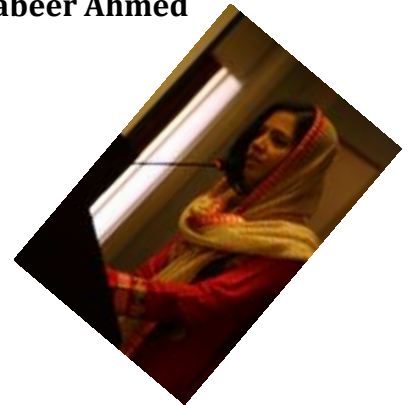
**Mr. Dabeer Ahmed**



**Ms. Saira Saleem**



**Mrs. Razia Rashid**



**Dr. Nawara Mukhtar**



**Mr. Shahrukh Siddiui**



**Mr. Ali Khan**



**Mr. Razzaq**



**Ms. Zainab Khan**



**Ms. Nisa Mustafa**



**Ms. Huma Ali**



**Mr. Shahbaz Ali Khan**



**Mr. Ahmed Azeemi**



**Mr. Muhammad Jamil**



**Glimpse of 1<sup>st</sup> Pakistan Blind Youth Conference:**



**Participant Hugging Each other as part of the Activity**



**Dr. Nawarah Mukhta (Host)**



**Participant in Group**



**Listening and Sharing Ideas**



**ECDI Team (In front row)**



**Finding the Group Partner**



**Ms. Mariam  
Azeem**



**Mr. Faiz Rasool  
Lecturer at SZABIST**



**Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan CEO VF Paksitan**



**Material Use for Group Activities**



**Find a Member by Voice of an Animal**



**Groups Members**



**Sighted and Blind Group Members at work**



**Result of Group Activities**



**Result of Group Activities**





**Result of Group Activities**



**Result of Group Activities**



**Result of Group Activities**



**Self Appreciation**



**Self Appreciation**



**VF Pakistan Standee**



**Honorable Guest Mr. Hanif**



**Session Presentation Slide**



**Activity during the session**



**Conference Speakers**



**Female Visually Impaired Participants**



**Male Visually Impaired Participants**



**Ms. Ester John (Female Visually Impaired)**





**Visually Impaired and Sighted Participants together at Activities**



**A Group Photo, (From Right to left) Mr. Rashid Mehmood Khan, CEO VF Pakistan with the Conference Speaker Mrs. Shahida Sajjad, Chairperson, Special Education Department, University of Karachi, VF Member Ms. Huma Ali, Conference Host, Dr. Nawarah Mukhtar, Conference Speaker Mr. Muhammad Arif, and Conference Guest, Mr. Tala Farhat.**

Youth & People with

Disabilities Together

Make it Happen! 😊

