

## Young leaders promote tolerance between UK and Pakistan Creative expeditions motivate students to improve own communities

Offscreen Expeditions, in partnership with the British Council, has enabled groups of young creatives to undertake two phenomenal journeys from their homes in the UK and Pakistan, and travel to the other side of the world to learn from each other's point of view.

Six students from Pakistan participated in the expedition of a lifetime to the UK in July 2010 and returned home full of ideas and plans to begin their own social enterprises. In October, six students from the UK journeyed to Pakistan and experienced positive sides of the country, not often portrayed by the media.

Through activities with social entrepreneurs, artists, journalists and students as part of the Offscreen Expedition, these aspiring and creative young people are returning to their home country inspired and motivated to make changes in their own communities.

The team created visual travelogues of their journeys, which can be explored online at [www.offscreenexpedition.com](http://www.offscreenexpedition.com) and downloaded as a free educational resource.

Journey to the UK aimed to explore the Britain behind the headlines and develop the students' practical skills for engaging in dialogue across local and global issues. Activities ranged from questioning an MP in Parliament to writing for a youth magazine, building a dry stone-wall in Yorkshire to reclaiming a disused public building in Birmingham.

The diversity of opinion, nationality, religion and even landscape came as a surprise to the young team, who were impressed by the openness and acceptance of the British people. They expressed opinions of hope and optimism after learning how widespread the concepts of social entrepreneurship and charity are in the UK.

Journey to Pakistan took six young British artists around the country to explore different aspects of life which are often sidelined. As well as truck-painting and hiking in the mountains, the team spent a day speaking to students at a madrassa in Kashmir, discussed Islam with a student of the well-known Islamic scholar Dr. Javed Ahmed Ghamidi, and created artwork depicting the intersection of many faiths in Pakistan with interfaith NGO FACES Pakistan. They were especially touched by the ability to interact with the daily lives of Pakistanis.

Both the English and Pakistani students had great things to say about their respective travels and the personal journeys they had been on. Muhammad Ali Piracha, a Pakistani engineering graduate and musician, equipped with skills he learnt in London with the youth magazine LiveEast, will now issue a magazine linked to his own already-established NGO, 'The Awakening.' His aim is to engage young Pakistanis to build a contact network of organisations working within the community between Britain and Pakistan.

Imran, a student from Birmingham, UK, said about Pakistan: "There are lots of people setting up projects to improve things in their communities. Terrorism does exist but there are people here doing a lot to help end it. I hope I can implement my new ideas that will inspire change in my own community."

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All participants are available for interview.

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## Notes for Editors

### About the Offscreen Expedition 2010

#### Journey to the UK

National competitions ran in Pakistan, Jordan, Kuwait and Qatar throughout May and invited online applications from young creatives. The Expedition itself ran from 11<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> July and included travel and activities in London, Birmingham and Yorkshire, including Bradford.

#### Journey to Pakistan

A national competition in the United Kingdom invited online applications from young artists in preparation for the October trip. The Expedition ran from 14<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> October and included travel and activities in Islamabad, Kashmir, Rawalpindi, and Mirpur.

All expedition participants are available for interview.

Offscreen Expeditions Director Stephen Stapleton explains: “The aim of the project is to give young people from the UK and Pakistan the chance to communicate and learn from each other in positive and creative ways.”

### About The British Council

The British Council is the UK’s international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We work in over 100 countries worldwide to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people. For more information, please visit: [www.britishcouncil.org/pakistan](http://www.britishcouncil.org/pakistan).

David Martin, British Council Director in Pakistan, says: “In our Connecting Classrooms project we work with over 250 schools linking communities across Pakistan and the UK. We’re delighted to be working with Offscreen to offer talented pupils from all backgrounds this fantastic opportunity to travel, learn and share their ideas and experiences with thousands more across both countries.”

### About Offscreen Expeditions

Offscreen Expeditions is an expedition-based education programme run by UK-based educational social enterprises Offscreen Education Programme and Digital Explorer. Since the first Offscreen Expedition in 2007, the programme has garnered international praise and awards for its much needed work in developing greater understanding between young people in the UK and the Middle East.

See our previous expeditions at:

[www.offscreened.com/expedition/2007](http://www.offscreened.com/expedition/2007)

[www.offscreened.com/expedition/2008](http://www.offscreened.com/expedition/2008).

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