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THE YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Promoting Tolerance and International Understanding

“The feedback that I get as I travel helps shape our public diplomacy efforts – for example, when I visited one of our English-teaching programs in Morocco, I asked a young man what difference the program had made to him and he said, ‘I have a job and none of my friends do.’ This young man came from the same neighborhood that produced ... suicide bombers – yet he now has a job and hope. We are expanding our English-language teaching programs to give more young people a marketable skill and the opportunity for a better future – a reason to live rather than a reason to die.”

– Under Secretary of State Karen P. Hughes

In the summer of 2007, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen P. Hughes launched 20 Youth Enrichment Programs (YEP) for more than 6,000 young people in 13 countries and in the West Bank and Gaza. The programs offer a variety of activities and classes that aim to foster tolerance, respect for diversity and a better understanding of the United States.

YEP is breaking new ground and reaching out to a new audience at an even younger age than those who participate in traditional exchange programs. Because the majority of the population in many countries is under the age of 25, it is more important than ever before to reach out to this younger age group and introduce them to America.

COUNTERING EXTREMISM

YEP is an innovative program designed to develop leadership skills, promote respect for diversity and counter ideological support for violent extremism. The program reaches out to children ages 8-14, from underprivileged and underserved regions, whose knowledge of the United States and American values is often influenced by distorted anti-American ideologies.

YEP activities are carried out in close cooperation with host country partner organizations. Programs vary from country to country, but generally include English-language instruction, sports, civics classes, leadership training, science and art activities in summer camp-like settings.

PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS

“Americans have big hearts and they help everybody regardless if they are poor or rich.”

“I had another picture of Americans and I learned from them here and have changed that picture.”

“Thanks to the camp, I have new relationships with Americans.”

“They want peace just like we do.”

“Americans respect diversity.”

“People are good in both countries, we all want to do good things together.”

“Americans are generous.”

“I learned how to have a relationship with Americans and to learn about myself better.”

Participants are drawn from remote regions of each country, and scholarships ensure a chance for the economically disadvantaged to travel to such camps and interact on an equal footing with other youths. American artists, coaches, Peace Corps volunteers and diplomats provide their time as coaches, instructors and counselors.

YEP is active in Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, South Africa, Turkey, and the West Bank and Gaza.