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How did your experiences living in both Kazakhstan and Japan impact your life trajectory and career?

Kazakhstan, my country of origin has more than hundred ethnic groups, each of which has its traditions, customs, languages and delicious cuisines. In my childhood I had Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Tatar and, of course, Kazakh friends. I visited their homes and tried different dishes and observed different customs. We all spoke Russian and it was fine. At home though, I had to speak Kazakh as my mom did not speak Russian well although she lived next to Russians for more than half a century. So I have grown up in a rich cultural diversity that probably helped me to develop respect, tolerance and curiosity for the unknown and new. My Kazakh roots were strong too, thanks to my mom. So, when I went to Japan I felt many similarities with Kazakh traditions. I fell in love with this country and embraced its culture, language and traditions. Japan gave me a chance to polish some qualities like respect, tolerance, and, above all, trust in people. I admired the Japanese quality not to doubt a person's good will even at first glance and I really think that

it pays out. I hope I developed that quality in me as well at least to some extent.

You were one of the main pillars for the Hiroshima Fellowship for Afghanistan during your time at UNITAR and you continued as a mentor after. How did Hiroshima, the Fellowship and Afghanistan itself impact your life?

Hiroshima is a special city and I could feel it from the first visit. I did not feel hate or irritation, but rather peace and tranquility in the air. I love their saying "Forgive, but not forget". To me, it reflects efforts of so many citizens to promote peace around them.



Dr. Kakimova at the UNITAR Hiroshima Fellowship training session (2008).

Sharapiya Kakimova graduated from Kazakh State Polytechnic Institute in 1993 as a system engineer. She obtained a Master of Arts degree in the field of International Relations and later her Ph.D. on Peace Studies from Hiroshima University with specific focus on public administration and its reform in post conflict countries in general and in Afghanistan in particular. She worked in various governmental institutions of Kazakhstan for six years and was responsible for external aid coordination. Dr. Kakimova has participated in many courses related to international cooperation. She joined the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) first as an Associate, in 2002 and in 2003, and then as a Training Assistant at UNITAR's Hiroshima Office from 2004 to 2009. From 2011 to 2013, she held teaching positions at Los Lagos University of Chile. In 2013, Dr. Kakimova joined the Chilean National Agency for Research and Development (ANID) where she is currently in charge of international cooperation and agreements' negotiations with foreign institutions related to science, technology and innovation. Dr. Kakimova's research interests are capacity building, international relations, conflict resolution and governance.



There was no better choice than for the Fellowship to take place. When devastated by war, Afghans came to Hiroshima and visited Peace Memorial Park and Museum. They felt strength that they also can become a new Hiroshima. I loved to see these emotions and was moved by them. I went through the same emotions every time I visited the Museum. The Fellowship gave another sense to my life – I wanted to be useful for Afghans and do my best, so they can have better experiences, learn more and rebuild their country. I truly believed that Afghanistan will be a better place. With every visit to Kabul I believed more, especially when I saw many girls going to school. So, it is painful for me to see the Taliban back. We spent so much energy, time and efforts for the Fellowship and I hope it was not in wane. I believe that our Fellowship Community in Afghanistan can make change, not now maybe, but sometime soon in the future. The Fellowship and Afghanistan gave me the opportunity to know great people: warm hearted Afghans who sincerely wanted to learn and make change; volunteers around the world who dedicated their time and energy as they wanted to contribute to Afghanistan's development and,

of course, the UNITAR team, small but committed and multitasked. I loved to be a part of this great mixture of cultures, languages and ideas. The Fellowship represented a powerful spirit of incredible people to make change for better.

Your postgraduate studies were in peace and conflict. How important and impactful is GLH's message about peace and nature?

Building peace after a conflict is not an easy task, not only because there is a need to create new institutions and laws and develop economy, but most importantly there is a need for a new society, a society that is committed to be a part of the process of peace building. This last part is not an easy task as in post-conflict societies people are skeptical about the progress and fear of relapse. GLH is a great way to show society that life continues, that reconstruction is possible and that peace could be their reality too. Presence of silent trees with the GLH message is a powerful way to plant hope and belief in people's mind and contribute to the new society's inner strength and reconstruction.

Partners in Profile

You worked to create GLH partners in both Chile and Kazakhstan. Please tell us about the experience and what motivated you to take on this task?

As mentioned before, the message of GLH is very powerful and as a citizen of Kazakhstan and a resident of Chile, I strongly felt the necessity to share GLH's message with all my dear countries. Kazakhstan used to be a primary testing place for nuclear weapons for the Soviet Union, so GLH had to be present in the country to remind everyone of the horror of nuclear weapons and of the possibility of re-birth and peace construction. It took some time though to find right contacts as I was living in Chile by then, but with support from different groups it was done. I am very happy that my country of origin is a part of the initiative.

As for Chile, its history of war is thankfully far in the nineteenth century, so one could say that probably Chile is not an appropriate place for GLH. However, to me, people in prospering and peaceful countries forget, or often don't give enough importance to conflicts or wars and their consequences, so, it is even more important to spread the message of GLH in Chile and other countries with similar characteristics. People have to be reminded of the devastation that nuclear weapons can bring and allow them to better appreciate and value their own reality and lives. To me all countries and places on Earth have to be part of the initiative. During my first visit to Chile in 2003 I visited the city of Valdivia and its Austral University. The University's garden impressed me by its simplicity and beauty at the same time. So, when I was asked whether I would be



Dr. Kakimova (at right) with UNITAR Hiroshima Fellowship mission to Kabul. (2006)

interested to explore the possibility of Chile to become a part of the family, I had no doubt it had to be Austral University and its garden. I am so happy that now, Austral University will be a regional hub for GLH.

You speak and have worked using 5 languages including English. How do plants and art transcend beyond language barriers?

Trees as a part of nature do not need words – you can contemplate and enjoy nature for hours and in silence. I think that the strength of GLH is that it uses trees as a messenger and it is not important whether people speak English, Kazakh, Spanish or other languages as nature speaks by itself, the same as art does. Paintings or sculpture or buildings don't need words, you can see what the artist wanted to say just by observing. I participated in the project Art-Party Hiroshima Exhibit where I managed to send pictures painted by kids from Kazakhstan, Chile and El Salvador to Hiroshima. Kids were asked to represent their understanding of peace. It was such a pleasure to share some time with kids, especially from rural areas, and see their pictures! Many

painted their daily lives, boats with fisherman and cattle and dogs. I found it amazing that they actually knew very well what peace meant. Art-Party Hiroshima collected paintings from kids from around the world and showed them to Hiroshima citizens who appreciated them. So, it does not matter what language you speak or how many languages you speak if you can show your message using nature and art.

How important is science education and awareness, especially for those not in the field?

Scientific knowledge is essential because it allows us to explore the potential of nature without damaging it, and respecting our planet. Scientific knowledge also helps us to have control over the selection and maintenance of the technology that is used in our day to day lives. Science is in our kitchen, in our bed, in our garden – everywhere. Thanks to science and technology, we have our smartphones that are part and parcel of our life, we have healthy food, vaccines, robots and whatnot. Unfortunately, not enough people attribute these developments to science, so it is important that we teach students from early age that science is everywhere and that they can be a part of its magical world by understanding and embracing it. Science education can boost students' potential in the future and can allow building knowledgeable societies where decisions are based on scientific evidences and analysis. To be able to do it not only do we need scientific discoveries, but also good science communicators as they can explain science to the general public – without them science will not be understood and will remain

isolated, a privilege of the few. So not only do countries have to invest on science, but also to ensure that there are educators and researchers committed to science education and communication, to bring it closer to all.



Dr. Kakimova (seated, right) and the Afghan Fellowship team and participants, in Hiroshima (2003).

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