

## Religious Youth Service Project Planned in Pakistan

Marcus Younas

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Religious Youth Service-Pakistan

Multan, Pakistan - Religious Youth Service Pakistan is organizing a second project in Pakistan with the theme "Youth of Faith Build Peace by Practice of Love and Service" March 15-22. Local and international youth are invited to come together to explore cultural unity through working together in a volunteer service project in one of the ancient cities of Asia. The program will include an international peace conference, planting trees at religious institutions, and visits to historical places in Multan.

Community-based service: Participants will plant trees at both Muslim and Christian sites. The 400 saplings (100 saplings at each institution) of trees that survived an atomic bomb will be provided by UNITAR Green Legacy Project of Hiroshima, Japan.

Values education and leadership training: This will be a strong part of the project, and different religious experts, educators, scholars, and development practitioners will deliver high-quality sessions on building peace, creating strong relationship among religious groups, the messages and concepts of different religions regarding peace, leadership development, and strategic solutions for issues in South Asia.

Interfaith visits and dialogues: This will be the most interesting part of the project, in which all participants will visit different holy places, including a Hindu temple, a mosque, and a church. During these visits various religious leaders will share about the history of religion in Pakistan, peacebuilding strategies among the religious groups in Pakistan, creating harmony, and promoting the message of love and humanitarian concern in the world.

Cross-cultural learning experiences: As participants are expected to come from different religions, languages, and cultures in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Eurasia, everyone will be interested to know about the various languages, traditions, faiths, cultures, and religions of others.

### Background

Multan is a city in the Punjab province of Pakistan. It is Pakistan's third largest city by area and its fifth largest by population. The city is located on the banks of the Chenab River in the geographic center of the country and is about 562 km (349 mi) from the capital Islamabad, 356 km (221 mi) from Lahore, and 966 km (600 mi) from Karachi. Multan District has a population of 3.1 million (1998).

Multan is known as the City of Sufis or City of Saints and Madinat-ul-Awliyah because of the large number of shrines and Sufi saints from the city. The city is full of bazaars, mosques, shrines, and ornate tombs. It is the birthplace of Fariduddin Ganjshakar, popularly known as Baba Farid, an early Punjabi language poet. Multan is located in a bend created by five rivers of central Pakistan. The Sutlej River separates it from Bahawalpur and the Chenab River from Muzaffar Garh. The city has grown to become an influential political and economic center for the country, with a dry port and excellent transport links. Multan is famous for its crops: wheat, cotton, and sugar cane as well as mangoes, citrus, guavas, and pomegranates.

Multan is heading to be a capital of a new province with a new name: maybe Multan Province, Saraiki Province, or South Punjab Province; the matter is being taken up by the president of Pakistan.

Multan is one of the oldest cities not only in the Asian subcontinent but also in the world. According to Hindu legends, it was the capital of the Trigarta Kingdom at the time of the Mahabharata war, ruled by the Katoch Dynasty. It has been postulated that the current name is derived from the Sanskrit name Mulasthana named after a Sun Temple. Multan has frequently been a site of conflict due to its location on a major invasion route between South Asia and Central Asia. It was conquered by Alexander the Great in 326 BC. In the mid-fifth century BC, the city was attacked by a group of Huna Hephthalite nomads led by Toramana. Multan was conquered along with Sindh by Muhammad bin Qasim from the local ruler, Chach of Alor, circa 712 AD. Following bin Qasim's conquest, the city was securely under Muslim rule, although it was in effect an independent state and most of the subjects were non-Muslim. Multan's location at the entrance to the subcontinent resulted in it being invaded by a long series of conquerors on their way to Delhi.

After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, the minority Hindus and Sikh populations migrated to India while the Muslim refugees from India settled in Multan. It initially lacked industry, hospitals, and universities. Since then, there has been some industrial growth, and the city's population is continually growing. But the old city continues to be in a dilapidated state, and many monuments bear the effects of the warfare that has visited the city.

Multan is one of the oldest cities in South Asia, with many tombs, shrines, temples, cathedrals, and mausoleums, as well as a historical fort. Today Multan is a combination of old and the new Pakistan culture. There is much hustle and bustle in the old city and the comfort of a five-star hotel and fine dining in the new. The old city has a various bazaars selling mystical artifacts and perfumes as well as arts and crafts. There are also elaborately decorated shrines of the Sufi saints and tombs of various travellers and important people within the old city of Multan.

For more information and details contact:

Marcus Younas (Executive Director)

Society for the Promotion of Education and Awareness (SEAP – Pakistan)