

There is so much that lies in our inner self, but it takes ~~many years ages~~ to realize the ~~person we will become in the future~~ ~~whole truth~~. Everything we endured, more especially when we are young, ~~defines~~ ~~scribes~~ the person we ~~will~~ become, ~~in future~~. I opened my eyes in a ~~poor developing~~ and in a conflicted county where schools, colleges and the ~~whole~~ educational systems ~~has~~ve been badly destroyed by ~~decades of war~~. ~~A country s and conflicts~~, where people ~~are living~~ in poverty and hunger, ~~and~~ sometimes facing extreme malnutrition, where ~~the~~ majority of the people are unemployed due to ~~the~~ destruction of ~~the~~ economic systems. ~~Living in this country, Afghanistan, Living in such conflicts~~, I have always desired to contribute to ~~its~~ restoration, ~~to help i.e to~~ bring it back on the ~~same~~ path ~~as~~ it was ~~on~~ before the conflicts ~~by destroyed~~ ~~contributing to~~ education system, the economy, and ~~economy~~, ~~led to a country where~~ poverty, and hunger prevail. ~~As~~ I grew up in a refugee camp where I saw my father teaching kids in camps. Education for an Afghan refugee in such circumstances was extremely challenging, however, I remember my father always ~~saying repeated~~, **“I know it is hard to learn in this situation, but without education we will remain in the dark forever.”** These ~~words lines~~ never let my spirits down and I not only continued my ~~own~~ education against all odds, but also started teaching chemistry, computer ~~science~~, and English classes to kids in the same camp as a volunteer to ease ~~the~~ odds for them, and in order to satisfy my desire to ~~help~~ rebuild ~~my country. ing~~.

Living in the era of conflicts, I always thought of my country's sustainable future which includes its economic growth, food security, employment generation and poverty alleviation. I did the same when it came to selecting my field of studies ~~for my in bachelors~~ Bachelor's degree. ~~Many~~ ~~Nearly all~~ countries ~~have~~ started off poor, and only a handful have achieved high-income status. However, the ones that achieved it started with agriculture and went through an economic transformation that accelerated growth and reduced hunger and undernutrition. Thus, to contribute to the sustainable future of my country, I ~~pursued a got admitted into~~ Agriculture. ~~Attending my B~~ Bachelor's degree in plant science and ~~an~~ MSc in Agronomy, ~~which~~ opened up many possibilities and interesting challenges as ~~A~~ agricultural science and technology are evolving and advancing to face a variety of challenges and problems. While learning agriculture, I realized that ~~there Agriculture has ais a~~ story to be told. ~~It, it~~ is not ~~only about just just simply~~ producing food for over seven billion people around the world, but if we want sustainable futures through agriculture, there is a need to provide an opportunity for people through teaching to understand that agriculture is not limited to farming alone: it's a sustainable way of life. Therefore, ~~while I initially until~~ ~~about my bachelors, I had~~ desired to be an agriculture teacher to ~~help make aware~~ people ~~aware of about~~ the benefits they can gain as a society, ~~I but~~ eventually, ~~I~~ came to realize that the best teachers ~~are I ever had were~~ those ~~with he had~~ real world experience in their fields before teaching. ~~This led me and considered this fact to and~~ set myself on the path to ~~obtain have not just an~~ advanced degree in agriculture ~~major agriculture but also, and a~~ career within the ~~agricultural~~ industry. As a young person ~~already~~ involved in the industry, I ~~have had had a wide array of beneficial~~ experiences, ~~such as those mentioned below~~.

I have served in national and international development organizations including ~~the~~ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), ACIDI VOCA – USAID, CIMMYT (International Maize & Wheat ~~I~~ improvement & ~~r~~Research ~~e~~Center), ~~L~~ecturer and head of ~~the~~ Agriculture ~~d~~Department for Nokhbaghan University, Regional Agronomist for on ~~at~~ farm-water ~~(???)~~ ~~project we implemented,~~ management ~~of a project of~~ World Bank ~~project~~. I also provided consulting services for the ASA (American Soybean Association) as well AAEP (Afghanistan Agriculture Extension Program) to design and deliver training on wheat cultivation and production. In addition, I have attended and design~~ed~~ various trainings ~~and, courses,~~ workshops ~~based~~ on agriculture and handling pesticides. I always believed that **courage is not trying to be what you are not but instead it is about realizing your full potential being what you are.** ~~The and honestly this sublime~~ exposure to the ~~both the actual~~ agriculture industrial world ~~and~~ ~~agricultural development has made me a made me~~ **technically more proficient person. stronger and a**

~~braver person.~~ Moreover, to bring advancement to the field and to explore more about healthy methods of production, I have conducted various researches based on improving production and have developed and published various research papers that infused in me **a deeper understanding of the scientific process.**

~~However, But~~ all these academic and professional experiences ~~have not been were not~~ enough to satisfy me as I have a broader objective ~~since beginning~~ and a deep-rooted desire to contribute to my country's sustainability in which agriculture plays a crucial role in the economy and well-being of a society. It not only provides food and raw material, but also offers employment opportunities to a considerable proportion of the population. For this, we need to teach and train tomorrow's scientist, nutritionists, teachers and so much more, a combination of classroom instruction and applied agriculture experiences outside of the classroom ~~to build a~~ foundation for educated consumers and agriculturists. However, considering the situation of education in my country where people are devoid of the basic education, ~~the enforcing~~ agricultural education system ~~also lacks without~~ proper curriculum and practical training, ~~and thus does not address~~ ~~was not only difficult but ineffective because it does not incorporate~~ the modern needs of society. Therefore, firstly, there is a need to establish agricultural education system with proper curriculum, enhance technical education and efficient training and secondly, there is a need to ~~implement enforce~~ the enhanced agricultural education to not only students, but ~~also~~ to non-students (stakeholders of agriculture). To accomplish the objectives, I joined ~~the USAID~~ Catalyzing Afghan Agricultural Innovation (CAAI) project ~~managed by Virginia Tech~~ to bring advancement in agricultural education. ~~The USAID's Catalyzing Afghan Agricultural Innovation (CAAI) project activity partnered by Virginia Tech University~~ supported Afghan-led innovation in agriculture by training a highly skilled, modern agricultural workforce, strengthening the capacity of research and extension actors to deploy innovative solutions to the practical challenges of Afghan farmers and agribusinesses, and institutionalizing coordination among agricultural value chain stakeholders. Through this program, we ~~worked with established the~~ agricultural institutions such as high schools, ~~technical institutes, and universities, and employ teachers and trained universities~~ ~~trained teachers and them and~~ agricultural leaders on ~~pedagogy, how to teach, working with~~ agricultural value chains, ~~and~~ youth engagement in agriculture activities. For the capacity building of teachers, we conducted a survey to find out their competencies, their ICT skills, communication skills and hired local trainers to improve the expertise. Those experiences were not only ~~enhanced my able to capture my~~ interest in agricultural education, ~~e~~ but also illuminated important skills such as **communication, listening, collaboration, adaptability, empathy, and patience** that set me on the path to pursue teaching, as I always desired.

With the same intention, I ~~applied to and was admitted to a took admission in~~ PhD in ~~T~~the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program ~~in the Virginia Tech School of Education. at Virginia Tech. University~~ which prepares teachers, administrators, and teach educators for the in-demand field of CTE such as agriculture and while working on CAAI project in Afghanistan as the classes were conducted remotely due to pandemic. All was going according to my plan of contributing to the ~~post-after~~ conflict rebuilding of my country until ~~the my homeland faced another~~ conflict escalated with the eventual takeover by the Taliban and the closing of the CAAI project. ~~which I could not imagine in my worst dream. Afghanistan~~ It is now facing one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The Afghan economy has no cash to pay salaries or buy food. Western aid has been suspended ~~and because the Taliban government took over to the country~~ which includes designated terrorists and millions of Afghans face acute malnutrition and starvation ~~in the coming months~~. It not only ~~ended stopped~~ the CAAI project, ~~in Afghanistan~~ but also ~~stopped ease my~~ funding ~~for my PhD at the~~ program. As someone who has worked for the U.S. Government in Afghanistan, ~~and suddenly got discarded from employment and education,~~ I ~~face a perilous situation. am in a panicking situation.~~ I not only intend to seek refuge in another country, but to get back to my education again, this time with a more resolute objective of post-conflict rebuilding. ~~To this end, I am interested in~~ Experiencing

~~the current situation of conflict in my country, I have decided to~~ exploring as a research focus the ~~e-on~~ “Restoring and **S**trengthening Higher Agricultural Education systems in Afghanistan so they can contribute to sector rebuilding and peacebuilding”. This leads me to the doorsteps of The Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community at Virginia Tech university, that is committed to provide the best possible opportunity for students to learn and develop as professionals in their areas of interest and also recognizes the significant contributions made by graduate students to departmental research, teaching, and ~~e~~Extension programs. Therefore, I would like to pursue my Ph.D. in ALCE from Virginia Tech University as it will allow me to explore, teach and research about agricultural ~~al educatione~~ particularly, on sector rebuilding through education to ~~help ensure that make-it can~~ contribute to ~~post-conflicts and implement building human capital to restore the the skills learned on my country to improve its situation through agricultural sector. e-education.~~ Dr. Van Crowder, whom I know through the CAAI project, has agreed to work with me on this research focus.

~~Working on a bigger cause requires one to move, as I have no such opportunities available in my country. Studying abroad will make me see the world from a wider horizon and new perspective.~~ Through this study, I will continue to have a thirst for knowledge needed to give back to my community, to help others, and most importantly to prove that what really matters is not where one comes from, but where ones ~~headingis heading~~ to. Sadly, I have ~~faced seen severe~~ hurdles in my country, but my passion to make a difference in my country and live up to the potential my family sees in me, never ~~has~~ stopped me from ~~moving forward. doing progress.~~ So, ~~if accepted for an ALCE PhD,~~ I will work hard to make the most out of this chosen carrier path with the goal of contributing to rebuilding the agricultural sector. —in the most Challenging sector, and I intend to continue doing so in the future.