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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Creating Opportunities for Women and Girls

USAID helps an Afghan civil society organization provide training for girls in Kandahar



Photo: IPACS/KHDO

Schoolgirls in Kandahar celebrate their achievements in English and computer courses offered by the Kandahar Health and Development Organization.

“We are happy that they are getting this extra opportunity inside their own school, where it is safe and we know the staff.”

—Father of a KHDO program participant

Many Afghan women and girls are illiterate due to cultural norms and oppressive measures enforced during Taliban rule. Denied the opportunity to learn marketable skills, these women and their families lack employment opportunities and face poverty. Today, there is a critical need for vocational training that reaches out to women.

USAID’s Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS) program works to improve the effectiveness of Afghan civil society organizations. The program provides training and support to local organizations that are working to create a more democratic, gender-equitable Afghanistan. For example, with the support of I-PACS, the Kandahar Health and Development Organization (KHDO) has conducted computer and English training for girls and young women to increase their employability and, ultimately, their financial independence.

After attending an I-PACS workshop on proposal writing, KHDO staff members put these skills into practice, submitted a proposal to the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, and received \$19,000 to run extracurricular computer and English-language classes for adolescent girls.

KHDO provided these enrichment courses for girls attending AINU High School in Kandahar City in 2009. Led by three qualified female teachers, a class of 70 girls became skilled in computer use and basic English conversation and writing. “If these courses were offered somewhere else – not at the school – I don’t think I or other parents would feel comfortable letting our daughters attend,” shared one student’s father. “However, we are happy that they are getting this extra opportunity inside their own school, where it is safe and we know the staff.”

As a result of the training, one girl passed the entrance exam for Kabul University, and Canada’s SAIT Polytechnic online management degree program accepted two girls into their online management degree program. At the end of the project, KHDO donated the computers and other equipments to AINU High School.

By supporting and providing capacity building interventions to organizations such as KDHO, USAID and implementing partner Counterpart are not simply strengthening Afghan civil society, but are also able to support local Afghan groups that directly address the needs of women and girls.