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AFGHANISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Afghan Women's Associations Surge

With USAID support and guidance, civil society organizations are becoming more active and sustainable



WASSA Organization

WASSA is leading development in the western region of Afghanistan and is working to build internal capacity and core sustainability.

“During my time here, I have learned how to design projects and write proposals. As the center grew stronger, so did I, and I am proud,” said Raihana Jawad.

In January 2005, a majority of Afghan civil society organizations lacked the capacity to design quality projects and proposals or professionally liaise with donors. The Afghan Women's Educational Center is an example: although it had been in operation for 15 years, it was still managed like a new organization. There were no clear reporting lines and no long-term strategic planning to guide its activities. As a result, the center was implementing approximately five projects annually with an operating budget of \$500,000.

With USAID assistance, the center identified its weaknesses and strengthened the organization in several areas. By September 2010, it had developed its own three-year strategic plan, a gender policy, an official communications strategy, and a human resources management policy. Now, the center is implementing 16 projects with an annual budget of \$5.7 million.

Raihana Jawad, who has worked with the center for three years, said, “During my time here, I have learned how to design projects and write proposals. As the center grew stronger, so did I, and I am proud.”

The Women's Activities and Social Services Association in Herat Province is another good example. Five years ago, the association did not have a clear mission statement, and its capacity to secure core or long-term funding was low. It struggled to have a long-term impact in the communities in which it worked. With USAID's technical assistance and training, the association has become a leading development body in the western region of Afghanistan. By signing a long-term partnership agreement with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in September 2010, the association ensured its own sustainability, legitimacy, and development work in Herat Province.

“The association has become a very strong support center for civil society organizations in Herat and its surrounding provinces,” said a commission representative.

The initiative is an example of how USAID is building local capacity as part of the USAID *Forward* reform agenda. Forward aims to change the way the Agency does business with new partnerships, an emphasis on innovation and focus on results.