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TAJIKISTAN

SNAPSHOT

Afghan Women Pursue Studies across the Border

Fourteen women awarded scholarships to study English, IT and bookkeeping in neighbor to the northeast



Photo: Khursand Saichusainov, UCA

These 14 women are among the 60 Afghans furthering their educations in neighbor Tajikistan.

“It is so interesting, I want to continue studying and learning about networking and computer programming,” says Palwasha, 19.

With the help of USAID, Afghans are now able to access higher education opportunities in Tajikistan, its neighbor to the north-east. The joint initiative between the University of Central Asia and USAID fosters cross-border cooperation and employment opportunities between the two countries.

On May 14, the program awarded 60 scholarships to Afghans to pursue courses in English, IT, and bookkeeping at UCA’s School of Professional and Continuing Education in Khorog. Fourteen of these scholarship recipients are women between 19 and 25 years old from different parts of Afghanistan.

Negina, 24, is one of seven women studying English through the program. Before arriving in Tajikistan, she worked at the French Medical Institute for Children in Kabul. Her father learned about the project scholarship and encouraged her to apply. Though she gave up a stable income, she has no regrets about her decision.

“I wanted to learn English at a professional level. The teachers here are qualified and I would like to stay and pursue more courses,” she said. Negina first learned English in Pakistan but was not able to improve her skills when she returned home. She enrolled in classes in Kabul, but the school did not have any materials. “Here we use tape recorders to practice pronunciation. When I first arrived, no one understood what I said, but through this method, I’ve improved my pronunciation.”

Marina, 25, from Faizabad, is a mother of three. She is accompanied by her youngest child, a four-year-old boy, who attends kindergarten while Marina studies. He speaks a local language and can communicate easily with the other children. Marina hopes to continue her studies and one day to be a teacher.

“One of the most important things I’ve learned is grammar. In Faizabad you learn English but you do not study grammar.”

Through the program, these women have gained new skills they can take with them to improve their lives and build stronger communities back home in Afghanistan.

Improving the quality of education for Afghans is one of USAID’s priorities in the war-torn country. Since 2006, the Agency has implemented several higher education projects that are necessary to support sustainable development.