



COUNTERPART

Counterpart

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Role of the Parliament and Civil Society Organizations in the Development of Afghan Civil Society

On April 8, 2008, Counterpart held a discussion on the role of the Parliament-Civil Society Forum (PCSF) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the development of a vibrant civil society. Participants included Senators Rida Azimi and Sediqa Balkhi, Members of Parliament Shinkai Karokhail and Shukria Barakzai as well as 23 representatives from Civil Society Organizations. Tilly Reed, Counterpart's Chief of Party, opened the event and Mohammad Halim Fidai, the Media and Communications Program Coordinator, facilitated the discussions.

In order to build the PCSF into a strong and vibrant forum, the participants emphasized the need for greater coordination between CSOs and the Parliament. The group concluded that it is important to a) continue strengthening the PCSF b) include more like minded MPs in the discussions and c) organize monthly meetings to discuss specific civil society



Meeting on the role of the Parliament-Civil Society Forum in the development of Afghan civil society at the Counterpart office - Kabul

issues. Based on these recommendations, Counterpart will coordinate efforts to ensure establishment of an effective and vibrant forum.

Counterpart Conducts Strategic Leadership Training for the I-PACS Partners

On April 28 and 29, working under Counterpart auspices, two trainers from Afghan NGO Ibn Sina conducted a two-day training on Strategic Leadership for ISO and CSSC Directors and I-PACS Managers, as well as for some Counterpart staff. Sixteen participants (including 8 women) participated in the training which covered the concepts of strategic leadership, definitions of leadership and management, various styles of leadership, strategic thinking, vision and mission development and the relationship between these concepts and strategic planning.

Participants had an average score of 81 % on post-training learning evaluations, demonstrating that they learned most of the key elements presented in the training. Counterpart will follow this training with a related training on Strategic Planning in May and then begin assisting the partners with developing their own strategic plans.



Strategic Leadership training for I-PACS Partners at Counterpart Office - Kabul

Kabul Has Changed

Anika Ayrapetyants, the Manager of Counterpart International's Civil Society Division in Washington, DC, recently visited Kabul and remarked upon the changes that have taken place since her last visit. She said; "I've been visiting Kabul once or twice a year since the winter of 2005, and had rarely noticed any change in the city. This time was different. Kabul started impressing me with its new buildings, houses and roads as I was riding from the airport to our office in Kart-e-Sey. Since I visited Herat in 2006 I had always been jealous of its green parks, well-lit evening streets and, most of all – of its wedding halls, with music that started as early as 5 o'clock in the evening and beautifully dressed men, women and children that came to share the joy of the family. There had been nothing like that in Kabul, with its dusty streets, old, decrepit houses and one large shopping center. I kept thinking - when will Kabul start recovering from the endless wars and show its proud face to the nation?"

On this visit I felt that it was finally happening! I saw new roads and sidewalks, a renovated airport that will make a nice impression on any visitor arriving to the city by air, I passed by shiny gas stations, lavishly built houses, tall business centers and two grandiose mosques nearing completion. Finally, I saw the Dubai Wedding Hall and a wedding cortege! For some reason seeing the wedding hall was important to me. Weddings, with their abundant food and lively music signify the revival of life. People get married all the time – at the time of war or peace. But having a wedding in a new, shiny and large wedding hall is something that the residents of Kabul didn't have an opportunity to do for a long time. This wedding hall was a sign of revival of the city to me. And, of course, plentiful billboards along the streets of Kabul spoke of the growing trade and people's growing ability to earn and spend money. Kabul now does look like a capital of the country that's awakening to a new, prosperous life."



View of Bagh -e- Babur - Kabul

I-PACS Partners Improve Organizational Capacity

One of the I-PACS objectives is to build the capacity of local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to design, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate their activities effectively, with transparency and accountability. To meet this objective, I-PACS interventions have focused on creating a sustainable infrastructure of partner NGO ISOs and Civil Society Support Centers (CSSCs) to support the development of CSOs throughout Afghanistan. During the first three years of the I-PACS program, Counterpart provided a variety of trainings, trainings of trainers and technical assistance to these organizations to build their capacity.

In order to accurately gauge changes in the capacity of the partner ISOs and CSSCs, Counterpart conducts annual, in-depth organizational development assessments of the organizations. The assessments involve reviewing key organizational documents and conducting a wide range of interviews with staff, donors, beneficiaries and board members of each organization. Early this year Counterpart completed the latest round of assessments, findings from which were shared with the staff of those organizations and used to develop organizational capacity building goals, objectives and activities for the coming year. Comparative analysis of the partner capacity building scores demonstrates that all but one of the partners has improved their organizational assessment score

since the baseline survey in 2006, with an aggregate percentage increase of 24%. Given the comprehensiveness of the Counterpart Organizational Development assessment tool and the thoroughness of the process, this increase in scores demonstrates that the organizational capacity of the vast majority of Counterpart's partners really is improving, thus enhancing their overall sustainability. This is a very positive sign for I-PACS, since the ability of its partner network to continue to provide capacity building services to Afghan CSOs after I-PACS concludes will be one of the key legacies of the project.



I-PACS team during the Organizational Development Assessment – Samangan

International Development Class for I-PACS Staff

Counterpart's Program Coordinator, Nathan Stock, recently completed teaching a university-level academic course on international development for Counterpart and partner Intermediary Service Organization staff. The course provided an introduction to the basic concepts, theories and history of international development as it has evolved since the Second World War. Participants were asked to read several articles per week in preparation for weekly classes, during which they discussed a variety of topics related to international development—from the experiences of the Asian “miracle” economies to the evolution of dependency theory in Latin America. The course was designed to provide an intellectual context for I-PACS activities, while also exposing participants to models of development in other parts of the world and prompting them to compare the experience of Afghanistan with other contexts. We believe that in Afghanistan, where national literacy levels are low and the transmission of knowledge is correspondingly



I-PACS Program Coordinator, Nathan Stock, teaching a part of the International Development course at the Counterpart office - Kabul

difficult, this type of basic teaching—to provide concepts and ideas—is a critical compliment to skills built in trainings.

Counterpart Facilitates a Discussion on the Media's Role in Addressing Gender Issues

During the April Gender Coordination Meeting at ACBAR, the participants raised their concern that the media does not adequately cover issues that affect women and girls. It was decided to hold discussions with the media to encourage them to broadcast programs and/or spots on the elimination of violence against women and girls, human rights and girls' education from an Islamic perspective.

On April 23rd, in follow-up to the recommendation made at the Gender Coordination Meeting, Marina Nawabi and Halim Fidai, Counterpart's Gender Coordination Officer and Media and Communications Program Coordinator, facilitated a discussion with the heads of media organizations to foster gender sensitive reporting as a long term strategy and promote their social responsibility in this direction.

Participants included media organizations and other CSOs and Members of Parliament.

The participants agreed that on-going meetings of this type are needed and the Center for Coordination of Civil Society Organizations accepted the responsibility of facilitating future meetings. These will further enhance healthy relationships between media, the Parliament and civil society, which will lead to improved reporting on women's, girls' and gender issues.

An immediate outcome of the discussion was Radio Kilid's broadcast of a roundtable discussion on the issues that affect women and girls in Afghanistan.

Counterpart Grant Increases more than 2000 Families' Incomes

The people of Yakawlang District in Bamyan Province rely heavily on animal husbandry for their livelihood; however, there was only one animal health care clinic, which was four and a half kilometers away. Because of lack of awareness and economic conditions in the district, when an animal became ill it was slaughtered and the meat was consumed. This practice had a negative impact on the health of the community as well as the income of the families.

In December 2006, Counterpart awarded a community development grant to the Agency for Assistance and Development of Afghanistan (AADA) to increase family incomes through activities related to animal products and services. As a result of the grant, AADA trained 15 community volunteers in basic veterinary care and established 8 animal health care clinics. *(Continued on page 4)*



A community veterinary health volunteer tends to a sick horse at one of the animal clinics.

SUCCESS STORY

The celebration was aimed at changing the outlook of key stakeholders towards women's rights.



Mrs. Shinkai Karokhail, an Afghan MP, addressing over 600 people at the Women's Day ceremony in Kabul.

Photo by: Pajhwok Afghan News
Story by: Halim Fidai

This year on International Women's day, Counterpart helped to unite civil society organizations, donors, media and government in support of better financing for gender equality and the empowerment of Afghan women.

Women's Day Celebration: Gifts Changed to Commitments

March 8th, International Women's Day (IWD), has been celebrated for over 30 years. In Afghanistan, the tradition has been for various groups, including civil society organizations, to hold formal and informal gatherings to recognize the role of women in society, to exchange gifts and flowers, and to congratulate one another. For the most part, IWD has been underutilized as a day to raise awareness of women's issues and to work for expanded rights for Afghan women.

In order to take advantage of IWD as an opportunity to advocate on behalf of Afghan women, Counterpart International – in coordination with other donors, NGOs and media organizations – celebrated Women's Day differently this year. Counterpart and the other organizations decided to speak with a unified voice in support of gender equality efforts. Together, they planned events for the day under the slogans of "Financing for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women" and "Women! Education is Empowerment."

Mrs. Shinkai Karokhail, a member of the Afghan Parliament said, "Almost all media are focused on entertainment and delivering news, but ignore their educational and development role. NGOs see women's issues as a project not as a goal, and the public and journalists are mere spectators."

Prior to the celebration, 10 meetings were held with media watchdog representatives, media organization directors, editors, journalists, women activists, civil society actors, donors and eight Parliamentarians to discuss ways of utilizing the high profile of IWD to promote women's rights and gender equity in Afghanistan.

During the IWD celebrations, over 600 people including the Speaker of the Parliament, four ministers, a representative of the Supreme Court, the Canadian Ambassador, several Provincial Governors and several MPs jointly committed to increase funding for programs empowering Afghan women and to do more to improve education in Afghanistan, particularly for girls and women. Similar gatherings spreading the same messages took place in almost all of the provincial capital cities.

The event was widely covered by the Afghan media who arranged roundtables, special features, success stories and discussions to promote the slogans. All 16 Afghan TV stations, as well as almost every radio station, news agency, and newspaper across the country focused their programs on topics of women's empowerment.

Instead of sporadic celebrations with little impact, this year there were coordinated efforts among civil society, government and donors. MP Karokhail said, "This coordinated effort changed the mentality of CSOs, government and journalists towards women. Now, women's rights are not considered a project, rather a goal to uplift the lives of Afghan women. It had a unified message instead of oily slogans, exchange of gifts and flowers." She added, "This initiative changed gifts and flowers to commitment and dedication from all parties."

Yakawlang District in Bamyan Province (Continued from page 3) After the training and creation of clinics, people in the district are able to identify health issues and take precautionary measures to keep their domestic animals in good physical condition. The project also helped decrease the livestock mortality rate.

At the end of the project in November, 2007, AADA reported 21,207 treatments, 210 surgical procedures and 31,839 immunizations against seasonal diseases such as Lamb Dysentery, Enterotoxaemia, Anthrax, Black Leg, Hemorrhagic Septicemia and many others. Thus, with financial support from Counterpart, AADA set in motion sustainable improvements in the economy of Yakawlang District through increased awareness and provision of health care for livestock.

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