



COUNTERPART

# Counterpart

**A Newsletter of Counterpart International – Afghanistan  
Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS)**

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## **Counterpart works to build awareness about Afghan civil society among Koochis and Jirga members in order to enhance their role in the development of Afghan civil society**

On May 19, Counterpart, with the assistance and cooperation of the Independent General Directorate of Koochis (nomads) at the Ministry of Frontier Affairs, organized the national civil society conference on the role of Koochis and Jirga members in the development of Afghan civil society in Kabul. The conference was attended by 207 participants including 106 Koochis (one of the socially isolated groups in Afghan society) and 101 tribal leaders and heads of Shuras/Jirgas from 34 provinces. The purpose of the conference was to build awareness among Koochis and Jirga members and to enhance the role of traditional structures in the development of Afghan civil society.

Counterpart's Chief of Party, Ms. Tilly Reed, welcomed the participants. Deputy Minister of Frontier Affairs Mr. Mohammad Yaqoob Ahmadzai, General Director of the Koochis Haji Daud Shah Niazai, I-PACS Media and Communications Program Coordinator Halim Fidai, and Head of the Bayat Tribe Mr. Qasem Yar spoke at the opening session.

Participants mentioned that prior to the Conference, they had minimal understanding of civil society and how they could assist its development. However, by the end of the conference, they stated that they have a basic understanding of civil society and their role in it. A series of recommendations were drawn up and endorsed by nearly all of the 200 participants.



*The National Civil Society Conference on the Role of Koochis and Jirga Members in the Development of Afghan Civil Society—Kabul*

One of the recommendations states that Jirga members and Koochis should take practical steps to stop violations against women and they should do so in three ways: a) commitment and action by the Jirga members within their communities. The members of the Jirgas should play a watch dog role and seriously monitor these violations against women's rights in their villages; b) Ulema (religious scholars) should issue a fatwa (religious decree) to prohibit traditions that are in violation of women's rights; and c) through the implementation of the law, the government should ban any traditions that hamper the development of women in society. *(Continued on page 2)*

## **Counterpart provides trainings on Introduction to Advocacy to I-PACS Partners**

Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) conducted a four-day training on Introduction to Advocacy for the staff of Counterpart and three I-PACS partners, Afghan Civil Society Forum (ACSF), Afghan Women's Educational Center (AWEC) and Tribal Liaison Office (TLO), who are participating in the advocacy re-granting scheme. During the training, the participants learned about the concept of advocacy, reasons for doing advocacy and the nature of the advocacy cycle.

In addition, CPAU also delivered three two-day trainings on Basic Advocacy for the target CSOs of

ACSF, AWEC and TLO who may also participate in the re-granting scheme.

The other trainings include a five-day training and a one-day Training of Trainers (ToT) on Basic Advocacy for the staff of I-PACS CSSCs. The five day training on the concept of advocacy served as a basis to prepare trainees to participate in the one-day advocacy ToT.

After receiving the ToT, the newly trained trainers delivered a one-day training on advocacy to approximately 320 participants from their target CSOs. *(Continued on page 4)*

## Afghanistan Center for Training and Development (ACTD) has become a new I-PACS partner as a Civil Society Support Center

After a thorough and transparent selection process, Afghanistan Center for Training and Development (ACTD), a registered non-governmental organization working for the development and transformation of civil society in Afghanistan was selected as the Civil Society Support Center (CSSC) for the Kandahar region.

ACTD was established in June 2006 by a group of Afghan professionals to offer research, training and consultancy services to develop practically applicable knowledge. ACTD has an active presence in four provinces of Afghanistan – Hirat, Kandahar, Nangarhar

and Balkh and as a CSSC will work with I-PACS target Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Kandahar, Hilmand, Uruzgan and Zabul provinces.

ACTD works to bring about and support genuine and coherent development practices among people, organizations, and institutions working for the development of Afghan civil society through capacity building, service delivery and research. ACTD is committed to achieving its mission through transparent, equitable, professional, ethical and gender sensitive services with dignity to human being.

**Koochis and Jirga members** *(Continued from page 1)* International and local media gave an unprecedented coverage of the event that included Radio Ashna, Washington, DC, Radio Azadi, Radio Voice of America, BBC, Radio and Television of Afghanistan, Pajhwok News Agency, Ariana TV, Bakhtar News Agency, Shamshad TV, Tamadoon, and others.

### Why Aren't We Shocked?

Narrated by Gohar Ali

It was a hard and tough journey through the most horrible and dusty mountains of Lataband. The trip from the Surobi District of Kabul Province to Mullah Omar Darra, a place named after Mullah Omar, the leader during the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, took about three hours. We were anticipating a relaxing break after the exhausting journey. Kabul, the capital city of the country, is approximately one hour away from this place.

Upon reaching Mullah Omar Darra, I washed my face and refreshed myself. A large number of people were there, including women and children, who arrived by bus and by car and were also desperate to drink water before continuing on their dusty and difficult journey.

While I was waiting for the driver, I saw a man of approximately 55 years of age holding the hand of a disabled/handicapped girl of about 16, who appeared to be his daughter. She was walking behind the man trying to keep up with him, but was not able to go at the same speed because her neck, hands and legs were curved and crippled.

Because of the season, there were rivulets of water flowing everywhere on the ground. The girl did not want to go through the water, but the man dragged her and forced her to follow him. I approached the man and suggested that he use an alternative path that would be easier for the girl. At this moment, I realized that the man was angry at his daughter. After they crossed the water, the man was dragging her so forcefully that she fell down and started crawling until she was able to stand up and start walking again. She seemed to be very afraid and nervous. I was shocked that the man was treating another human being like an animal, and more so because the girl had a physical disability.

I kept watching them, the man pulling the girl and the girl trying to keep up. They reached a certain spot, and I realized that the girl needed to use the toilet. From his gestures, I gathered that the man was telling her to sit right there and relieve herself, but she obviously did not want to sit in the open as there were a lot of people around making ablution and getting ready for prayers. At her refusal, the man suddenly gave her a hard slap across the face and forced her to sit right there. Our driver was also watching this happening, he lost his temper and decided to reprimand the man, but the man disappeared in the rush of people. We both felt so guilty, because we could not help the disabled girl. After the tiring, dusty and scary three hour journey through the Lataband Mountains, a person needs to take a rest and especially women and children traveling in buses. Later, I saw the man praying and the girl was standing nearby waiting for him. She was trembling due to her weak health, her disability and her fear.

I have always heard activists shout for women's rights and the elimination of violence against women, but truthfully it had no real affect on me. However, this experience, this traumatizing situation, changed my understanding of violence against women and girls. I realized that men are sometimes very cruel to women and keep them oppressed and suppressed. The strange thing is that she was not only a girl, she was a disabled girl. She needed more care than others who have no physical disabilities.

This is a small story, but incidents such as this where women, girls and the disabled suffer at the hands of men are common practice. Although I tried to convince the man to be more considerate of the girl, I feel that I could have done more to help her at the time. I, therefore, decided to write about the experience in the hopes that the story will somehow influence others to stop violence against women as they are human beings and have the right to live their own life with respect and dignity.

## Counterpart International holds a one-day Gender Budgeting Panel Discussion with Afghan Ministers and Members of Parliament

On August 17, 2008, Counterpart International held a one-day Gender Budgeting Panel Discussion with Afghan Ministers and Members of Parliament at the Serena Hotel in Kabul. The purpose of the Panel Discussion was to raise the awareness of civil society about gender budgeting, and to secure the government's commitment to gender budgeting within the national budget. The event also provided a forum for civil society organizations to develop a mechanism to follow up on the government's commitment.

During the morning session Counterpart Chief of Party Tilly Reed welcomed the participants and explained the purpose of the Panel Discussion. This was followed by a series of presentations: the Deputy Minister of Women's Affairs, Syeda Mojgan Mostafavi gave a presentation on the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA); MP Shinkai Karokhel, a member of the Parliamentary Finance Commission, explained gender budgeting and its importance to the women of Afghanistan; the Sector Coordinator for Social Protection of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS), Zalmi Allawdin, described the ANDS highlighting its implications for Afghan women; the Director of the Afghan Civil Society Forum, Aziz Rafiee, spoke about Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3), which promotes gender equity and empowering women, as well as the role of civil society in national budget development.

Mr. Mohammed Yunis Qanooni, Chairperson of the Wolesi Jirga, opened the afternoon session with a speech on the importance of gender issues in Afghanistan and the responsibilities of the Parliament



Counterpart conducted a one-day Gender Budgeting Panel Discussion with Afghan Ministers and MPs—Kabul

and government ministries to consider gender issues in their activities. Also during the afternoon, the Ministers of Finance, Education, and Higher Education, as well as the Deputy Ministers of Public Health, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Labor and Social Affairs, and the Head of the Women's Affairs, Civil Society and Human Rights Commission of Parliament delivered speeches on their plans for gender considerations in the national budget. A representative of the Gender Coordination Donor Group also spoke, pledging donor support for these initiatives. Twelve other deputy ministers and MPs also attended the event, and representatives from over 140 CSOs participated. USAID, the United Nations Development Program and GTZ provided financial support for the Gender Budgeting Panel Discussion with Afghan Ministers and Members of Parliament.

## Counterpart I-PACS Staff participate in Organizational Development Facilitation Skills training in India

Counterpart's Organizational Development Officer and the ISOs' (AWEC and ACSF) I-PACS Managers attended a training in June 2008 on Organizational Development Facilitation Skills in India, conducted by Integrated Development Management Technology and Services (IDMTS).

The training was very useful in enhancing the capacity of Counterpart and partners' staff as they will be able to use these skills and knowledge in providing more effective support and assistance to partner organizations.

More than 20 participants from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India and Afghanistan attended the training.



## SUCCESS STORY

According to Nabi Tanha (Bulbul), there was a rush to buy the film; one video-store reportedly sold 200 DVDs of the film in a matter of days.



Film *Bulbul and Civil Society*

**Just as Bulbul and his friends discovered the importance of a gender equitable civil society to Afghanistan, the film has helped – and will continue to help – to change attitudes and broaden understanding of civil society among Afghans.**

“First there was Communism, then there was Talibanism and now there is NGOism.” Or so it was said in the early days of post-Taliban Afghanistan in 2001-2002. Whether intended as a joke or serious comment, these words captured the suspicion and distrust that pervaded public views of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Afghanistan. Many in the government accused Afghan NGOs of engaging in profit-making activities and siphoning foreign aid money away from the Afghans. International NGOs suffered from misperceptions that grouped the international community together as one monolithic entity, making them an easy target for politicians playing on populist sentiment.

The question was how to reach out and communicate to ordinary people the important role that civil society organizations play in the development of Afghanistan. The solution was found in using what is perhaps the most popular media form in Afghanistan: dramatic film. Packaging issues relating to civil society, law and gender in a dramatic – and indeed, comic – narrative setting, and putting it all in a film with famous Afghan actors would certainly attract public attention. Among several film production companies operating in Afghanistan, Jawan Sheer Haidary, famous for a series entitled “Bulbul and Friends” was contracted by ICNL, Counterpart’s partner for implementation of USAID-funded Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society. Bulbul is an immediately recognizable face to Afghan people.

The story of *Bulbul and Civil Society* is one of search and discovery. As the film opens, Bulbul and his friends are celebrating, but soon realize that one of their closest friends is missing. So they go to find him at the school where he is teaching. Outside of the window, they listen as he discusses with the children in his classroom the meaning of civil society. And thus begins their own journey of discovery into civil society, the laws supporting it, and gender issues. The journey culminates with a village contest about civil society, between Bulbul and his friends on one hand, and a rival team on the other.

On June 9, 2008 the 55 minute film *Bulbul and Civil Society* was broadcast on the National TV of Afghanistan. Given the popularity of Nabi Tanha and the Bulbul film series, *Bulbul and Civil Society* almost certainly reached a large segment of Afghan people. The National TV of Afghanistan has a viewing audience of approximately 6 million people in the country and also broadcasts beyond Afghanistan to reach viewers abroad. Abdul Rahman, Head of the Provincial Department of the Ministry of Economy in Balkh Province praised the film, “*The film was really good. I was surprised when I watched the film to see the actors explain the NGO registration process. I can say it was great.*”

In the days following the film’s airing on national TV, DVD versions of the film appeared in the retail markets and video shops. According to Nabi Tanha, there was a rush to buy the film; one video-store reportedly sold 200 DVDs of the film in a matter of days.

Just as Bulbul and his friends discovered the importance of a gender equitable civil society to Afghanistan, so the film has helped – and will continue to help – to change attitudes towards NGOs and broaden understanding of civil society among Afghans.

**Counterpart Advocacy Trainings** (Continued from page 1) The results of the training were very encouraging and positive as suggested by the data collected by the Counterpart Monitoring and Evaluation department following the delivery of the trainings. The target CSOs gained a solid understanding of the topics presented and requested further trainings to enhance their skills and knowledge.



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