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AFGHANISTAN

From Conflict to Cohesion: How Local Leaders Foster Unity in their Communities

The USAID Afghanistan Support Program (ASP) supports civil society organizations, human rights defenders, and journalists to protect and advance basic rights and freedoms.



Peacebuilder facilitates a community dialogue to engage the local community in peace-building initiatives.

“Our responsibilities are increasing, especially in the current situation. With the economy in bad shape, conflicts are rising, and the de facto authorities lack the capacity to respond to all conflicts. People need us. I promise to stay in contact with the people, identify their issues, provide guidance, and follow their cases voluntarily.” - a young activist who wished to remain anonymous

The USAID Afghanistan Support Program (ASP) implemented a six-month program to help alleviate social and political turmoil within local communities. The program empowered local leaders and young activists to promote unity, build resilience, and raise awareness about the rights of women, and ethnic and religious minorities from a progressive Islamic standpoint. This was achieved through open dialogues, campaigns, advocacy, and dispute resolution.

ASP reached out to local leaders and young activists to identify and then train local “peacebuilders” in five provinces and engaged the younger generation to create Afghanistan diversity ambassadors on social media to promote social cohesion and counter divisive speech.

Through community dialogues, the local leaders engaged 2,000 (1,000 women) community members, who worked diligently to build trust and unity within communities, paving the way for mediation and dialogue efforts. Fifty local peacebuilders, including 25 women, identified and resolved over 100 local disputes and conflicts in the provinces, which included gender-based violence, forced and child marriages, as well as business, land, and other domestic conflicts. They quickly understood the effectiveness of volunteer work in resolving conflicts and supporting the community.

The diversity ambassadors produced 100 videos and infographics on social media promoting unity, tolerance, and respect for diversity. They collaborated with influencers and activists to amplify these messages. In 2024, during Eid-ul-Adha, they launched a social media campaign to highlight its cultural and historical significance and promote unity, reconciliation, and mutual respect among diverse communities.

The groups have built trust and possess the professional skills to continue actively contributing to conflict prevention and maintaining community resilience and unity. The program’s success is a clear indication of the local community’s steadfast commitment to peace and development, even in the presence of significant challenges.