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AFGHANISTAN

CASE STUDY

ICT Solutions for Afghans, by Afghans

iLabs in Herat and Kabul utilize new technology for social change



iLabs encourage participants to view innovation through the lens of the Afghan context, and to bring their own experiences to the design process.

“I have participated in many capacity-building events, but this program has been the only one to bring the social and technology worlds together. In collaboration with each other, these sectors can design easy-to-use programs that are beneficial for society.”

— Mohammad Amin Naimi, 2015 Kabul anti-corruption team

CHALLENGE The way Afghans interact and access information is rapidly evolving. With mobile phone usage exploding, Afghanistan’s IT community is eager to usher users into the digital era. And yet, Afghans still struggle every day with problems stemming from years of violence, endemic corruption, and country-wide poverty. Too few opportunities exist for entrepreneurial leaders to put adapt available technologies for the purpose of affecting positive social change.

INITIATIVE With local organization Technation, in February and March 2015 Internews ran two three day workshops in which participants designed mobile apps that address real-world problems in the realms of governance, security, health, environment, and education, while simultaneously promoting good governance and civic participation. The Herat iLab marked the first time Internews had introduced such an event outside of Kabul.

Winning teams developed the following app prototypes:

- In Herat, the education team created a system for university entrance exam takers to receive their results.
- In Kabul, the governance team designed **iNobat**, which will allow users to pre-register for a passport or visa, thus cutting down on prohibitively long waiting periods.

RESULTS Although the awards ceremonies are consistently the most anticipated parts of these events, more important than any tangible outcome is the foundation iLabs lay for future collaboration between Afghan leaders in the private, public, and non-profit sectors. iLabs create a local brain trust for analyzing how communication technologies can accelerate development.

The widely covered events ([BBC Pashto](#) reported on the Kabul security team’s **Farkhunda**) also demonstrate to local, national, and international audiences that Afghanistan is a place where young men and women are eager to come together to develop entrepreneurial approaches for moving their society forward.

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