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AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

Community Health Advocacy Reduces Five Hour Walk to Clinic

Without basic understanding of governance and constitutional choices, the general public has diminished opportunities to participate in meaningful advocacy.



Men and women at a Community High Council working group meeting. Over 200 influential signatures petitioned government for a hospital.

A working group was formed and meetings conducted with neighboring villages, to enlist support and consult how best to approach government.

Tagab village is located in the central Miramor district of Diakunki, which is traditionally a predominantly ethnic Hazara province. It is characterized by a lack of infrastructure and inadequate government services, Tagab villagers seeking health care must walk for five hours to the nearest clinic. Despite numerous calls for government assistance to improve access to health facilities for families preparing for childbirth, the sick or elderly – and also despite officials regularly providing assurances – a lack of support had resulted.

Then the women-led New Message for Afghan Women Organization (NMAWO), began work in the province, conducting civic education and community dialogue sessions with the overarching aim of informing people about their constitutional rights, and the roles of parliament, the judiciary and rule of law. Community participants were advised that without basic civic understanding of governance and their constitutional rights, the general public has significantly diminished opportunities to participate in meaningful advocacy for itself.

Under the USAID funded Afghanistan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP), NMAWO organized a community gathering to provide training on how to coordinate interactive networks, compile research, develop compelling presentations and better comprehend how to effectively petition government. The session was attended by 30 villagers (16 women; 14 men); whose enthusiasm to further develop their newly acquired insight; resulted in ongoing communication with NMAWO, and seeking further guidance as final presentations were developed. Villagers formed a Community High Council working group, who enlisted support from neighboring villagers, and collaborated on how best to approach government.

Over 200 influential signatures were collected, and plans were arranged for community representatives to travel to Kabul to meet with public health officials. Several Kabul visits occurred, involving meetings with other influential members of Parliament and the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), which led to successfully securing a meeting with MoPH Minister, Dr Ferozuddin Feroz. The working group provided regular progress updates to district representatives. Their diligent efforts were rewarded when a formal MoPH letter arrived, advising that a 30-bed hospital would be constructed near Tagab in 2017. This new facility will drastically reduce the time spent walking to access health care down to about 30 minutes.