



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

SUCCESS STORY

The Enabling Environment for Civil Society in Afghanistan First-of-its-Kind Report

It is essential that positive accomplishments made over the last 15 years are maintained, and the enabling environment continues to strengthen.



Photo: Taken by AICS, launch of the *State of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan* report in Kabul, September 28, 2016

This study will contribute to informing future advocacy efforts and government policy-development.

The enabling environment for civil society in Afghanistan has accomplished many improvements over the last 15 years, and continues to make steady progress. Following the security transition of 2014, it is crucial to maintain the fragile progress made, and further strengthen the enabling environment. In this vein, the Afghanistan Institute for Civil Society (AICS), launched its first publication of the *State of the Enabling Environment for Civil Society Organizations in Afghanistan*, to assess progress made over this period.

AICS was established by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), under the USAID funded Afghanistan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP), to support a credible and capable civil society, through certification and policy engagement. Launched in Kabul on September 28, 2016, the report is a study that identifies critical challenges, needs, and opportunities for civil society. Data was collected from Kabul, Samangan, Kandahar, Herat, and Bamyan, through 367 closed-ended interviews, 63 open-ended interviews, 10 focus group discussions and five case studies. Through examining the legal, socio-cultural, governance and financial environment, this will be an annual study that contributes to informing advocacy efforts and government policy-development, which enables stakeholders attain better insight into the current state of the enabling environment.

The report was formally presented to an audience comprising 153 community leaders, senior government officials, civil society member, media, academia, international organizations, and representatives from all regions of the country. As keynote speakers, H.E. Mr. Abdul Sattar Murad (Minister of Economy), and Mr. Ahmad Nader Naderi (the President's Senior Advisor on Strategic and Public Relations) both commended the significance of this research and re-emphasized the government's support for civil society, as a key partner in the country's development.

Planned as an annual study, the *State of the Enabling Environment for CSOs in Afghanistan* report was intended to be a significant tool that civil society could use for future planning and program implementation. The report's overall index scored 0.33 on a scale from -1 to 1, thereby indicating Afghanistan offers basic support for the CSO enabling environment. Findings and recommendations resulted regarding four key areas concerning: 1) enforcing laws (such as the Access to Information Law), 2) curbing endemic corruption, 3) improving security, and 4) building trust between civil society and government in order to CSOs' access to funding and strengthen their technical capacity.