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SUCCESS STORY

Law Students Safeguarding Media Rights

ACEP enables Afghan students to acquire a deeper understanding and appreciation of media law.



[Insert Photo Credit]

Setara Sakhizada speaks at the Moot Court Competition 2016 finals in Kabul.

"This experience has really improved my understanding of media law and freedom of expression, and I hope to specialize in this area in the future."

- Setara Sakhizada, Jowzjan University

While media in Afghanistan continues to play an essential role in the country's democratization process, there is a need to ensure it has support from the legal community, to maintain hard won rights and continue freedom of expression advocacy. The annual Media Law Moot Court Competition, conducted by Internews under the USAID funded Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP), allows selected law students to hone their skills as aspiring lawyers, and develop a comprehensive insight of emerging media and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) legal issues.

The national 2016 Media Law Moot Court competition incorporates topics specific to Afghanistan, including online freedom of expression and internet content rulings, along with unregulated areas, such as hate speech. Participating teams from law faculties of Kandahar, Kunduz, Jowzjan, Parwan, Kapisa and Takhar Universities were judged on written submissions and oral argument presentations, with Jowzjan University emerging as this year's winner. Team member Setara Sakhizada, who was awarded Best Oralist, said: "This experience has really improved my understanding of media law and freedom of expression, and I hope to specialize in this area in future."

The Moot Court Competition allows aspiring young female lawyers like Setara, to break the barrier of what is possible in a male-dominated environment, and encourages others to consider doing the same. Setara said, "I am proud to have been competitively selected to be in this competition team, and proved to be as good as my male colleagues."

Four successive annual Media Law Moot Court competitions under ACEP, have resulted in the creation of a cadre of lawyers with greater interest in critical legal issues relating to Afghan media. It has also helped develop lawyers' and judges' capacity to contribute more effectively towards the moot court process. Naira Amin - a young lawyer involved with the Moot Court since its initiation - and one of this year's judges remarked: "I can see how this program has really improved. It is clear participants have conducted thorough research and their oral and written skills are significantly better developed than in the past."