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AFGHANISTAN

Success Story

Wall of Kindness Builds Hope in Helmand

Youth mobilize to achieve better community and government outcomes.



Agha Mohammad Qurisi in front of the “Wall of Kindness,” where donated clothing and food was distributed among Lashkargarh’s poorest families.



During Ramadan activists staged public gatherings near the “Wall of Kindness” advocating increased government and public support for the poor.

An unexpected wave of public support prompted greater government attention upon the living situation of the poor.

Now in its fourth year, the Emerging Civil Society Leader’s (ECSL) initiative inspires and supports a network of emerging youth leaders from across Afghanistan, empowering young men and women to be catalysts for change. Part of the Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP), funded by USAID, it identifies and draws together like-minded individuals through the exchange of ideas and perspectives that are designed to create positive social and political transformation.

The program is represented in 33 provinces across Afghanistan, building professional skills and strengthening leadership capacities by promoting common interest networks among civil society, with an emphasis upon youth activism. Training includes proposal writing, public speaking, financial management, negotiating tactics and civic and political advocacy guidance. Central to the ECSL concept is that youth transfer this acquired knowledge back to their communities, through more effective civic and government interaction, non-violent advocacy, volunteerism and responsible citizenship.

Agha Mohammad Qurishi is a 30-year old ECSL program graduate, who together with ten alumni members from different provinces (including 3 women), formed the Afghanistan Civil Society Leaders Network (ACSLN), with a charter to organize civil society activism that amplifies marginalized and under-represented community voices.

In consultation with local activists, ACSLN developed a strategy to launch its first project in Helmand province. The “Wall of Kindness” was launched in March 2016, with the aim of supporting the needs of poor families in the capital city of Lashkargah. Coordinating youth groups, ACSLN utilized the wall of a centrally located mosque, where residents could bring clothing, food and other items to distribute among the poor. In coordination with a media campaign, and word of mouth, the activity rapidly achieved a high public profile. This in turn gained the attention of government officials, who noted the significant level of public goodwill towards the ACSLN initiative. During the month of Ramadan youth groups staged peaceful public gatherings outside the mosque, displaying banners and placards calling for public donations and increased government support for the poor. An unexpected wave of public support for the “Wall of Kindness,” has prompted the provincial government to focus greater attention upon the needs of the poor, their living situation and access to public facilities.

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