



AFGHAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM (ACEP)

DECEMBER 2013 – DECEMBER 2019

\$79 MILLION

OVERVIEW

ACEP ensures that Afghan citizens are well informed about the actions of government officials, and that citizens have the means to influence public policy and advocate for political reform.

The program aims to achieve this goal through five areas: (1) regular civil society organization (CSO) engagement with government; (2) increased CSO and media thematic expertise in democracy and governance; (3) expanded civic engagement; (4) improved access to independent news and public affairs information; and (5) increased CSO organizational capacity.

Originally ending in 2018, the program was extended an additional year, and in 2019 will focus on supporting public engagement around the parliamentary and Presidential elections. The program is implemented by Counterpart International, in partnership with Internews Network, Aga Khan Foundation, and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law.

ACTIVITIES:

- Support civil society engagement with the Afghan government through strengthening legislative working groups to advocate for policy priorities.
- Increase CSO's expertise by assisting their research capabilities, technical area expertise, and supporting the creation or strengthening of CSO networks.
- Facilitate Civil Society Election Coordination Group meetings to improve coordination between civil society and Electoral Management Bodies.
- Expand civic and voter education through countrywide outreach.
- Support media advocacy and policy reform to improve access to quality, independent news and increase the professionalism of journalists.
- Support the Afghan Institute for Civil Society, which serves as an institute for the certification of Afghan CSOs.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Reached nearly 480,000 Afghans through civic education, community, district and provincial dialogue sessions. Community dialogues resulted in the construction of a 30-bed hospital in Tagab village of Daikundi Province; installed street lighting in Sultan Wesh Baba village, Laghman Province; contributed a \$400,000 community fund to build a women's high school in Gor-e-Mar village, Balkh Province; reopened a boys school and plans finalized a girls school in a village in Paktika Province; constructed a wall around the only girls school in Faryab Provinces' Qurghan district; and repaired a seven-kilometer road in Hasanak-e Mir Aabad village.
- Awarded 235 grants to 214 Afghan CSOs and media organizations. Advocacy under these grants led to policy changes, including the creation of one of the top-ranked Freedom of Information laws in the world; the lifting of a restrictive government ban on messenger apps such as WhatsApp; and the passing of 53 amendments to the Law on NGOs that reduced administrative barriers and financial burdens for NGOs.
- Trained approximately 4,000 journalists in basic and advanced journalism skills. These journalists used their new skills to report on issues of public importance, such as corruption that led to the firing of six government officials in Bamyan, and increased scrutiny of a languishing water project in Nimroz that now provides 300,000 people access to clean drinking water.
- Supported the Civil Society Joint Working Group to present position papers on Afghanistan at national and international donor conferences in London (2014), Brussels (2016), and Geneva (2018).
- The Emerging Civil Society Leaders (ECSLs) Program produced politically-active leaders, including emerging leader Ramiz Bakhtiar, who became the first ever youth to speak at the United Nations Security Council; and Mohammad Mustafa Raheal, who became a recipient of the One Young World Scholarship Program. In addition, six other ECSLs (including two women) ran in the parliamentary elections in 2018.

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