



## Women Entrepreneurs from Herat Link with Kabul-Area Markets



**A woman entrepreneur from Herat displays her food products at the Rural Women Exhibition in Bagh-e-Babur, Kabul.**

Women from across the western province of Herat are engaged in a number of entrepreneurship activities that include making handicrafts and jewelry, growing saffron and processing dry fruit such as pistachio and almond. Women entrepreneurs from Herat City, and Gozara, Injil, Karukh, Koshan and Zindajan districts of Herat province are particularly active in running and expanding their small-scale businesses.

But the major concern they grappled with was how to gain ground in provincial as well as Kabul-area markets where demand is high for their products. They also had to learn marketing skills to help them connect with their potential buyers.

Since 2011, United National Development Programme (UNDP) through its Gender Equality Project trained nearly 200 women in Herat in making jewelries and handicrafts, growing cotton, sewing garments and skills to market their products and expand their businesses. Additionally, nine businesswomen have been sponsored to take part in exhibits abroad.

Recently, UNDP facilitated participation of 10 Herati businesswomen at the Rural Women Exhibition in Bagh-e-Babur of Kabul where they showcased saffron, soap, dry fruit and a variety of handicrafts consisting of jewelries, silk garments and hand embroidered dresses. During the two day, the exhibition attracted more than 5,000 visitors including suppliers, handicraft dealers and other Kabul-area business owners interested in products of these women.

Each of the participating businesses sold an average of 100,000 Afghanis worth of their products and established useful links with handicrafts stores and dry fruit dealers from Kabul markets. Among the participants were, Habiba Karimi, a jewelry producer and Nasrin Anwari, owner of a dry fruit processing business, who showcased their products at the Kabul exhibit and each secured sales of 95,000 and 100,000 Afghanis respectively.

We learned how to set up our booths, what products to showcase and how to attract attention of our potential buyers in an exhibition like this," said Ms. Karimi. "Despite the disappointing market situation, the exhibit helped us sell our products and enjoy profitable deals."

Ms. Karimi forged several business links during the two-day exhibit with a good number of dealers in Kabul. After her return to Herat, she has been able to supply 110 sets of jewelry and 60 sets of bathroom accessories to three separate vendors in Kabul. She's optimistic that the demand for her products will further grow that will expand her business network and bring her profitable deals.

Ms. Anwari is also satisfied with her business exposure at the Kabul exhibit that helped her sign a contract with a Kabul dry fruit dealer. "In the first shipment, I supplied 100Kg of pistachio and 50Kg of almond to the dealer," said Ms. Anwari. "I expect to fill even more orders for the same products as well as dry flowers from the same vendor in Kabul."

Ms. Karimi employs 50 women in her small-scale handicrafts facility with each earning an average of 5,000 Afghanis a month, while Ms. Anwari has created jobs for 23 women, each earning an average monthly income of 3,500 Afghanis.

Both Ms. Karimi and Ms. Anwari support their family with the income from their businesses. Each having six children, their money is mostly spent on putting their children through school and buying them food and clothes.

UNDP's Gender Equality Project focuses on three major issues that Afghan women face: lack of or weak support provided to women's rights through policies and legal documents; feeble participation of women in the economic activities; and limited access to justice and human rights systems due to the weakness of the judicial system.

## About 400 Households in a Village in Badghis Province Get Access to Drinkable Water



A woman in a village in Badghis province brings drinkable water from a nearby water point.

In a remote part of western Badghis province where underground water is mostly salty, people in Dahane Abshar-e-Rigi village of Maqur district responded to their drinking water need by building rainwater reservoirs with US\$ 125,000 funding from the National Area-Based Development Programme of UNDP and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

Standard water safety measures have been employed in building the reservoirs and piping them out to different points in the village. Once rain stops, the assigned community members have been trained in carefully covering the reservoirs with concrete slabs blocking dusts and any other outside objects that might affect the water safety.

Previously, the villagers had to bring drinking water on donkeys and on their backs from a river, several kilometres east of their village, but as that water was not safe, it caused them various intestinal problems, especially diarrhea in children.

“Before, in our village we didn’t have any source of drinking water,” said Abdul Haleem, a member of the village’s community development council. “We used to bring water from the river that made our children sick and they even died of diarrhea, but fortunately now we have enough safe water.”

To rule out any occasional contamination, water inside the reservoirs is periodically chlorinated. Each extended to a cluster of village houses, the 20 water

points each equipped with a tap ensure easy access of more than 400 families to drinkable water throughout the village.

During a three month period, the village’s community development council led the work of building eight water reservoirs across the village in which they engaged 60 locals daily as labourers, each receiving an average of US\$ 8 a day.

In addition to lending their time and leadership to its implementation, the community covered 10 percent of the overall project spending. This was mainly in-kind contribution by the locals, such as providing free labour, transporting sand and gravel to the project sites and offering their construction machinery to the project work. The Maqur District Development Assembly and Provincial Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development had the responsibility to monitor construction of the reservoirs so as to ensure high-quality work.

Since its inception in 2003, the National Area-Based Development Programme has implemented 490 water supply and sanitation projects benefiting nearly 230,000 households throughout rural Afghanistan.

The National Area-Based Development Programme works to achieve a significant reduction in poverty in Afghanistan focusing on agriculture and rural employment generation, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and the development of rural infrastructure.

## Gap between Communities and Police Becoming Narrower in Herat, More Suspicious Incidents Reported



**Afghan National Police personnel play volleyball with a local team in Herat. Joint sports such as this bring police closer to community.**

In a country like Afghanistan, emerging from decades of conflict, people deeply feel the need for a police force that is closer to the community. Traditionally, Afghan citizens have harboured suspicion and fear towards the police dating back to the years of war. But this image is now gradually changing as the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MOIA) has rolled out a model for Community Oriented Policing with technical support and funding from the Law and Order Trust Fund, which seeks to bring communities and police

Fund, which seeks to bring communities and police closer to each other.

In a good number of cities and rural communities in Afghanistan, community elders now regularly meet with police officers to share security updates from their respective areas and inform them of any foreseeable threats to their security and safety.

Herat city and its neighbouring districts of Injeel, Guzara and Karukh have set inspiring and clear examples of this new engagement between the community and police. Community members and the Afghan National Police personnel in Herat have recently come together in friendly sport matches, for example. This has attracted a lot of attention in the province and people gradually become more comfortable in their interactions with police.

So far, in Herat ordinary people have played volleyball, football and wrestling with police at public playgrounds in Herat city and its adjacent districts. Small sports events attract up to 200 viewers from the community and local government and police authorities, while large events have seen the participation of over 3,000 people.

“When I saw police for the first time in sports outfit, I felt myself very close to them,” says a Herat city resident Abdul Sami. “During the match I got a chance to chat with some policemen and found them so friendly.”

As people in Herat city gets closer to police, signs of enhanced cooperation between them have emerged that will ensure better security in the city as well as the neighbouring districts. “I can see how people became so supportive while we are patrolling inside the city,” says, Abdul Ghaffar, a police football player from Herat city. “I can recall that many times people

have shared their problems and complaints with us when we met them in the playgrounds. I’ve now realized that without people’s help, we can’t maintain security.”

Citizens being in touch over informal occasions with police creates an environment of trust among them. As a result of regular meetings of community representatives with police and community-police sports games in Herat, there has been a surge in the

sports games in Herat, there has been a surge in the number of calls to 119 Call Centre and visits to the seven police information desks in the province.

According to a recent report of the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, over the last 18 months, residents of Herat have reported 700 suspicious incidents to the police and such contacts made by the public resulted in dozens of security incidents being prevented in Herat.

Residents of Herat city admit unprecedented improvements in behaviour of police towards them. A Herat city entrepreneur Khalid Shahim says, “Police have started to win people’s confidence, however there are areas such as literacy in which they still have to grow.”

Some people associate improvements in the local security situation within the province to the regular contacts between the public and police. “Herat has been recently witnessing less insurgent attacks and I think this is because the police have focused more attention on countering suspicious activities as they’re fed with reports from the people,” says Nazir Ahmad Azizi, a resident of Herat city.

The community policing initiative is aimed at bringing the police closer to the communities they serve. In addition to joint sports events and regular consultation meetings with people’s representatives, a number of other efforts, such as community outreach campaigns and making complaints boxes available in various locations, have also been employed in Herat that have built on police’s relations with the public.

UNDP supports the Community Policing model as part of the implementation of the Law and Order Trust Fund in eight major provinces across the country, including Herat.

## UNDP Boosts Legal Representation for Women, Children and the Poor in Herat



**A woman waits at the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association office in Herat to seek legal aid for her case.**

Fahima\*, pregnant, was forced by her husband to crawl on all fours with the family's dogs. It was just one of the ways she was abused during her one year marriage. He also beat her with sticks, yelled obscenities at her and poured boiling water on her hands.

"It was such a bad life. You can't imagine. I couldn't see a good future for me or my child," she says quietly, sitting in the corner of a room at the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA) in Herat. Fatima's mother cries as she relates her story.

The Legal Aid Grant Facility (LAGF), established in 2014 as part of a partnership between AIBA, UNDP's Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan (JHRA) project and the Ministry of Justice, has mobilized defence lawyers to represent 189 women, children and indigent men in Herat who, like Fahima, cannot afford legal representation.

Registered with LAGF, 94 defence lawyers, 25 of whom are women, have been able to resolve 122 out of 189 cases in Herat. According to the Afghan Constitution, every individual has the right to appoint a defence lawyer, but many Afghans do not have access or cannot afford one. The LAGF aims to address that problem with provision of free legal services.

Fahima was assigned a free defence lawyer through LAGF. Despite receiving personal threats from her husband, the lawyer processed the case, and eventually she was able to seek divorce. She says she is grateful for the assistance that she received from the lawyer.

There are an estimated 3080 people, including 2904 men and 176 women, awaiting access to justice in Herat province. Some of them are detained due to misinterpretation of the law. According to the International Crisis Group, in Afghanistan "a substantial number of arbitrary detentions stem from the criminalisation of acts that do not constitute actual crimes." It adds that in numerous occasions "citizens are detained for alleged crimes involving land disputes, debts, or family conflicts although the law expressly prohibits detention in such cases".

Until the LAGF started accepting cases in mid-2014, there was limited legal assistance available in Herat through lawyers working for NGOs and the government's Legal Aid Department. The opening of LAGF has helped increase access to legal assistance in the province. "Many people were going unrepresented. The active legal aid providers could not cover all the cases because the demand was too high," said Zabihullah Karimullah, the access to justice coordinator for JHRA. "The LAGF is a step in the right direction to provide increased access to legal services to the poor, marginalised and women in Afghanistan."

UNDP's Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan project works with the Ministry of Justice and other partners to support and facilitate the implementation of the Afghan National Priority Plans on Justice and Human Rights across the country.

*\*The name has been changed for privacy reasons.*

## Canal Repaired, No More Threat from Flood in Qala-e-Naw City of Badghis Province



This repaired canal will protect Qala-e-Naw city from flash-floods in the coming spring season.

A canal that passes through Qala-e-Naw city and its eight adjacent villages in western Badghis province no longer leaks during flooding after it has been repaired with US \$ 740,000 funding from the National Area-Based Development Programme, a joint rural development initiative of UNDP and the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development.

The 1,250-meter long canal, also called, Baghak Canal, flows from south to north of the city that irrigates hundreds of hectares of agricultural land en route. Built with reinforced cement concrete, the canal also features 29 culverts along the way allowing pedestrians and people with cars to safely cross the canal throughout the city.

“We’ve seen very brutal floods in the past that caused deaths, property loss and even some people had to move elsewhere after their houses collapsed,” said Abdul Rasheed Khalifazada, head of the Community Development Council of Baghak village.

As a result of this project, seasonal floods that used to wash away agricultural lands in the villages around Qala-e-Naw city and inflict damage on houses, shops and other properties of the city residents have now been withheld and people go by their daily lives with peace of mind.

“This canal has almost completely protected our city from floods. I don’t think this year the flashfloods could pose any damage to the city because the construction work of the canal is so robust and can easily put back the kind of floods we’ve experienced in the past few years,” said Muhammad Haider, a schoolteacher from Murad Bayee village next to Qala-

schoolteacher from Murad Bayee village next to Qala-e-Naw.

In total, lives of over 15,000 people have been improved. Commute to work from villages to the city and within the city has become faster and much less

troublesome. “Now things have changed. There are over twenty small bridges along the canal that allows people and cars to comfortably move around in the city,” added Mr. Khalifazada.

With better access to district and provincial markets, now fresh produce, mainly vegetables, from the city and eight neighbouring villages brings a higher income to the farmers.

An average of 120 people worked on the canal project for over eight months, each skilled worker receiving US\$ 12 and unskilled worker US\$ 8 a day. This is a decent pay to cover expenses of a small family of up to seven in a rural community of Badghis province.

Repairing this canal, community took the lead in executing all of the work involved as well as contributed 10 percent of the total project cost in the shape of labour, machinery and transportation of locally available construction materials, such as sand and gravel, to the project sites. The relevant District Development Assembly and Provincial Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development monitored the repairing work of the canal ensuring high-quality implementation of the project.

In total, the National Area-Based Development Programme has repaired 455 kilometres of canal since 2003 ensuring irrigation for several thousand hectares of farmland and boosting fresh produce that benefited close to 145,000 households in rural Afghanistan.

The National Area-Based Development Programme works to achieve a significant reduction in poverty in

works to achieve a significant reduction in poverty in Afghanistan focusing on agriculture and rural employment generation, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and the development of rural infrastructure.

United Nations Development Programme | Afghanistan Country Office

**KEEP IN TOUCH! FOLLOW US:**



Facebook



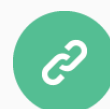
Twitter



YouTube



Google Plus



Website