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SUCCESS STORY

Finding Courage in Kachoor

In a small village in Afghanistan a victim of civil strife starts his own grocery business—and succeeds beyond his dreams.

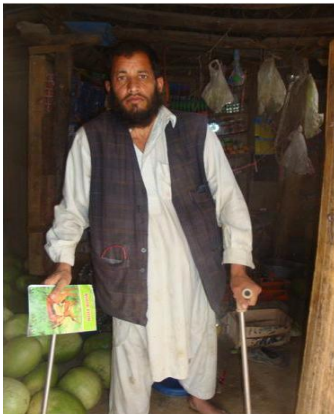


Photo: UN-HABITAT

“Now I can save money, feed my children, and am no longer a burden on society. My shop has given me a reason to live!”

—Samiullah from Kachoor village

Decades of war in Afghanistan have exacted a heavy toll on people from all walks of life, and particularly those from the poorest elements of society. An example of someone who has demonstrated extraordinary resilience in the face of immense obstacles is Samiullah, a father of four living in the remote village of Kachoor in Laghman province. After losing the use of both his legs Samiullah became despondent from having to rely on others for support, and not being able to care for his own family. In addition he was illiterate, and he held out little hope for the future.

Every aspect of his life changed when UN-HABITAT implemented the USAID-funded Learning for Community Empowerment Program (LCEP-2) to begin offering literacy and skills training classes for the residents of Kachoor. At first hesitant to sign up on account of his disability Samiullah soon became an enthusiastic learner, rarely missing a lesson. He quickly learned how to work with numbers, and acquired basic accounting skills. He discovered that he had a passion for small business, and joined the Self Help Group established through the program that provided start-up loans to its members.

Samiullah knew from his own experience that the people of Kachoor badly needed a new grocery store. The existing store offered a limited variety of items for the village residents. He applied to the Self Help Group and received a loan of 5,000 Afs (approximately US\$110) to set up one on his own.

In less than three months Samiullah’s small shop expanded to four times its original size. He invested most of his profits in a wide range of goods from wholesalers in the city that he knew would quickly sell in Kachoor. He used his newly acquired literacy skills to label items for sale, and to keep records of his enterprise.

“I feel extremely happy when I calculate my benefits at the end of the day”, Samiullah reported. “Now I can save money, feed my children and am no longer a burden on society. My shop has given me a reason to live!”