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AFGHANISTAN



HABITAT

SUCCESS STORY

Jam Maker Now “The Talk of the Town”

In Kabul a widow of the civil war finds her own way through home-made jam production.



Photo: Nargis Jamal

Mrs. Sediqa is busy receiving orders for her home-made jams via cell phone. Business is booming, and she invests some of her profits in increasing her production.

“After I lost my husband in Afghanistan’s civil war I had no hope. I needed to support my two younger sisters, mother and son. As a result of my jam making business I am the talk of the town, and enjoying my newfound independence.”

U.S. Agency for International Development
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In many parts of Afghanistan, including the capital city of Kabul, people are acquiring new skills and finding employment as the result of an ambitious apprenticeship initiative that has become a key component of the UN-HABITAT’s Learning for Community Empowerment Program (LCEP-2) funded by USAID.

One example is Mrs. Sediqa, a resident of District 13 in Kabul, who after successfully completing six months of literacy classes decided to put her natural abilities as an entrepreneur to work. Surprising her family and friends she signed up for apprenticeship training in jam making, and quickly became proficient. “After I learned to read, write and calculate I was determined to start my own business”, reported Mrs. Sediqa to a visitor recently. “I received a small loan from the Self Help Group which I used to purchase jars and sterilizing equipment. After the apprenticeship training I immediately started my own jam production at home, and after two months I had saved almost 25,000 Afs.” (US\$ 540)

At present more than 42,000 LCEP-2 learners in 12 different provinces of Afghanistan are enrolled in individual apprenticeships, approximately 12,000 of whom are women. Popular choices of trades for women include traditional livelihood activities such as sewing and embroidery, but increasing numbers are deciding to apprentice as health workers, midwives, and veterinarians’ assistants.

According to Mrs. Sediqa learning a trade, UN-HABITAT has contributed to completely changing her social and economic status. Before on account of poverty she was not able to attend her relatives and neighbors’ ceremonies and celebrations, including engagement parties and weddings. Now Mrs. Sediqa’s entire family is benefitting.

Mrs. Sediqa’s confidence is obvious to all: “After I lost my husband in Afghanistan’s civil war I had little hope. I needed to support my two younger sisters, mother and son. As a result of my jam making business I am the talk of the town, and enjoying my newfound independence.”

UN-HABITAT Afghanistan: www.afg-unhabitat.org