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SNAPSHOT

Afghan Widows Find Employment

A social marketing project creates jobs and a life-sustaining income for widows



Photo: USAID/COMPRI-A

Widows repackaging health products to support themselves and their children.

USAID promotes quality health products while helping to decrease poverty through job opportunities for women in Afghanistan.

There are more than two million widows in Afghanistan as a result of two decades of conflict and civil war. In Kabul alone, there are an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 widows, many of whom are uneducated, illiterate, and lack basic job skills. Many Afghan widows are left to support themselves and their families with little hope and few prospects.

A USAID project employs fifty-eight widows who provide warehouse packaging support services for health products including condoms, contraceptives, iron folate, oral rehydration salts, and chlorine safe water solution. These women are hired through an arrangement with CARE International, who supports the workers with transportation to and from the warehouse, daily lunch, and a wage sufficient to support themselves and their children.

In addition to providing employment, the project has also trained more than 1,000 widows on basic hygiene practices, dehydration prevention, and the importance of a safe water system. These efforts are helping to ensure healthier and happier lives and a better future for the women and their children.

"Prior to working in the packaging center, I didn't have much opportunity for work. I used to wash clothes at other people's houses," said Jamela, one of the widow packagers. "But since I joined the packaging center, I can feed my family and send my children to school with the money I receive as my monthly wage."

The widows also acknowledge the importance of the products they package. One of the widows, Nasima, said, "Chlorine solution is a very good product. It's an easy way to clean water and wash fruits and vegetables. We use it regularly because it cleans water and keeps us from contracting diarrheal diseases."