



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

AFGHANISTAN

USAID **50** ANNIVERSARY

SNAPSHOT

Farmer Training Takes A Bow

Live training dramas bring horticultural knowledge to farmers in southern Afghanistan



Photo: USAID/S-RAD/IRD

Members of the Traveling Agricultural Theatre perform for farmers in the southern Afghan province of Kandahar.

Live stage dramas provide a humorous venue for important agricultural training, bringing laughs and learning to Afghan farmers in remote areas.

In Afghanistan, where 80 percent of the workforce is engaged in farming, agricultural training is vital. But how do you teach the latest horticultural techniques in a country where farmers are scattered and transportation is difficult?

In the southern province of Kandahar, USAID's Traveling Agricultural Theatre is putting horticultural training on center stage. Combining action, comedy and the most advanced farming practices, the one-hour live drama is giving farmers in remote areas their first taste of live stage performance, and teaching them valuable skills along the way.

The drama tells the story of a village elder and the strange and sometimes hilarious farming problems that preoccupy him and the members of his village. Their livestock is dying, their vegetables aren't producing and insects are constantly ravaging their fields. Little by little, the villagers learn to find a balance between the traditions of the past and the horticultural advances of the present.

More than 1,500 farmers have attended the performances, including Shah Mohammad, a village elder from Dand District. While the village elder in the play is sometimes portrayed as stubborn and foolish, Mohammad wasn't offended. "It's a funny story, and it makes some good points about how to design a garden, how to properly use pesticide and other matters that farmers need to know," he said.

In addition, because the performances are held at District Centers, the project connects farmers with their local government. At one performance, Ahmadullah Nazak, the Dand District Governor, was on hand to talk to farmers after the show.

"Most of these farmers had never heard about concepts such as crop rotation," he said. "They would grow the same crop for decades until the field was worn out. The USAID traveling agricultural theatre not only gives them a good laugh, it gives these farmers something to think about."