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SNAPSHOT Pioneering Women Pave the Way in Kandahar



Female data entry clerks enter parcel registration data at the City Hall in Kandahar.

Photo Credit: RAMP UP-South

“The Kandahar municipality has held many meetings with the provincial governor and relevant institutions to hire women employees in the municipality. We are actively trying to increase women’s engagement in municipal government.”

**-Zumarai Sargand, spokesman
for the Kandahar municipality**

Kandahar, the largest city in southern Afghanistan, has tremendous economic potential. Restrictive cultural attitudes, however, have prevented Kandahar from benefiting from one of the keys to long-term economic growth: female workforce participation. Recognizing this, government agencies, with the support of USAID’s Regional Afghan Municipalities Program for Urban Populations (RAMP-UP) program, are partnering with local leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and civic organizations to create opportunities for women in the workplace.

To start, the program developed a data entry training program for Kandahari women, providing them with valuable computer skills. The Kandahar municipality then recruited several of the women as data entry clerks, marking the first time it hired women in a technical capacity. At the municipality, the women play an essential role in entering land registration data, which is then used by the municipality to generate vital tax revenue.

“The Kandahar municipality has held many meetings with the provincial governor and relevant institutions to hire women employees in the municipality,” said Zumarai Sargand, the municipality spokesman. “We are actively trying to increase women’s engagement in the municipal government.”

Even as progress is made, the experiences of these women reflect the complexity of working in southern Afghanistan. In entering the workplace, the women have taken on substantial personal risks. “I was stopped by an unknown man right in front of municipality who questioned why I am going there every day,” said one female clerk. “My closest family members don’t even know that I am working here.”

Nevertheless, the female clerks have opened the door for other women to pursue technical careers in local government. USAID will continue supporting the government’s efforts to challenge long-established stereotypes and provide women with training and employment opportunities to maximize economic growth.