

Telling Our Story

What's up, DOC!



The team from Panjsher Institute poses with their coaches at the Afghan National Round of the Jessup International Moot Court Competition.

By the Light of A Cell Phone

Five students from a rural Afghan college decided to enter a grueling legal competition but they faced a few problems: 1. The contest was in English, a language they didn't speak; 2. They didn't have a coach; and 3. They had to study at night, but without a reliable power supply the lighting often failed, plunging the rooms into blackness.

Yet, by working 14 hours a day, and reading by the light of their cell phones, the team placed third in the Afghan National Round of the prestigious Jessup International Law Moot competition. Panjsher Institute was established in 2012 on the former site of a US Provincial Reconstruction Team in

Panjsher province. Classes are held in refurbished shipping containers without internet, adequate desks and chairs, and with only intermittent heat and electricity. The Jessup is the world's largest moot court contest. National winners converge on Washington annually for the international competition. USAID funds the event in Afghanistan, and this year USAID expanded the competition to include Kandahar, Khost, Takhar and Panjsher, in addition to Herat, Balkh, Al Biruni, and Nangarhar universities. The Panjsher boys were going to be facing tough competitors. Nonetheless, the students from Panjsher competed with tenacity at the Afghan National Round, displaying their newly

Tip of the Week

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Team DOC!

developed written and oral advocacy skills. When the judges announced the results, the team placed third, surpassing the winner from last year. The students exploded with delight as if they had won as their peers applauded in respect.

Chancellor Saifullah Ziaee of the Panjsher Institute described the participation of Panjsher students in Jessup as a great achievement. "The significance of their performance cannot be overlooked, this will bring hope to other students of this institute."

The enthusiasm and ingenuity of the students proves: it's not whether you win or lose; it's how you compete that counts.

Also in this edition...



It's a Park Life!



Khost's Farmers are Home for Good



Photo of the Week



Kabul Municipality and Kabul City Initiative inaugurated four public parks between November 2012 and January 2013. All four parks are equipped with safe, colorful playground equipment.

It's a Park Life!

Despite cloudy skies and chilly weather, crowds of excited children rushed to use Kabul's newly inaugurated Shirino Park. The park features a playground with brightly colored slides, swings, and other equipment that drew animated chatter from the children and praise from community members attending the opening ceremony. Parks have been shown to revitalize neighborhoods, increase economic development, and improve public health. These benefits, and more, are why an adequate system of parks is fundamental to Kabul's healthy development.

A partnership between Kabul Municipality and the USAID-funded Kabul City Initiative is rehabilitating or constructing 10 neighborhood parks, complete with sports courts, irrigation systems, security fencing, gazebos, bathrooms, lighting, guard/concession buildings, and playground equipment. In addition to Shirino Park, Kabul Municipality and Kabul City Initiative recently

opened three more parks and will inaugurate the remaining six in 2013.

Kabul Municipality carefully planned the neighborhood parks, targeting locations that are particularly accessible for women and families. These parks provide much-needed green space, as well as play areas for young children. The first-rate playground equipment, constructed of recycled plastic, includes slides, swings, spinners, monkey bars, and other equipment never before seen in Afghanistan.

The Kabul City Initiative also provided Greenery Department staff with training on park maintenance and landscaping techniques. As a result, dozens of other parks throughout the city can now be improved.

USAID works with Kabul Municipality to build public support through improved delivery of city services.

Khost's Farmers are Home for Good

When Abdul Ahmad left Pakistan for Afghanistan, it symbolized more than one man's decision to come home. It marked the return of a generation of farmers who had left Tani district in the eastern province of Khost because their lands were too dry for crops to grow. "For years I worked in Pakistan because we had no water for our farmland. We are all farmers in my village," says Abdul Ahmad.

Tani depended on agriculture but years of neglect of its irrigation infrastructure had made it impossible to grow wheat, corn and barley, once the region's staple crops. Villagers like Abdul Ahmad were forced to leave for Pakistan to find work. They got by and sent money home to support their families.

The Afghan government partnered with USAID on a project that recruited 850 residents to repair the district's irrigation infrastructure. Laborers drawn from the community rebuilt 2.5 km of canals, canal banks and a crucial water-intake. Abdul Ahmad was one of those who worked on the project. "Not only did I get to come home to work, my job was to help develop my region. The improvements we made will last for decades," he says proudly.

Tani is transformed. Flooding is a thing of the past. Healthy crops stand tall on land that had not yielded a harvest in years. Not a single home has been damaged by flooding since August, when the project concluded. More than 3,500 households are reaping the economic benefits of the change that has about.

Abdul Ahmad says he does not expect to return to Pakistan any time soon. "Look at the nice crops we are growing. We are even growing tomatoes and potatoes and radishes," he says enthusiastically. "Now I can farm to feed my family and supplement my income. We are self-sufficient again. And I am home."



Laborers from Tani district repair irrigation infrastructure.

facebook focus



Afghanistan is rich with a variety of minerals and in a positive step for the country, three bidders were recently granted key copper and gold permits. Read more >> <http://goo.gl/ewd2s>

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Postcards from Afghanistan!

*Dear Grandma... remember when you asked what I was doing in Kabul? Well, I work with other international donors on Afghanistan's largest assistance fund, the **Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund**. Better known as the ARTF, it provides support to the people of Afghanistan by building roads, providing healthcare and training teachers, among others. We of course work closely with Afghan government officials to coordinate our activities and ensure they can provide these services themselves one day.*

*Wish you were here!
Chris*



Photo of the Week

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for roughly 75 percent of the Afghan population, and is crucial in driving economic growth for the entire country. U.S. assistance to the Afghan agriculture sector focuses on creating employment and increasing both incomes and Afghans' confidence in their own government.

That said... we just thought this photo was funny. Have a great weekend!

