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**AFGHANISTAN**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Guided by the Light

### Future Afghan lawyers overcome the odds to compete for international award



USAID/IRLS-Formal

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

*Students from the newly established Panjsher Institute overcome a lack of electricity and classroom resources to achieve success at the Afghan National Round of Jessup International Moot Court Competition.*

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Students at Panjsher Institute lack the basic classroom resources enjoyed by their peers at other universities. Classes are held in refurbished shipping containers without adequate desks and chairs, no internet and intermittent electricity and heating. Undeterred by these challenges, a team of five students from the Institute's *Sharia* faculty recently achieved success at the USAID-funded Afghan National Round of the Jessup International Moot Court Competition in Kabul.

The Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition is the world's largest moot court competition and USAID's Formal Rule of Law Program sponsors the participation of students from universities across Afghanistan. This year USAID expanded the competition to include Kandahar, Khost, Takhar and Panjsher in addition to Herat, Balkh, Al Biruni, and Nangarhar Universities.

As a team competing for the first time, expectations were low for the students from Panjsher Institute. The team lacked a trained coach and had limited speaking and writing capacity in English, the language of the competition. Undaunted by these obstacles, the students worked over 14 hours per day to prepare for the competition, often times studying late into the night by only the light of their cell phones.

Nonetheless, the students from Panjsher competed with tenacity at the Afghan National Round, displaying their newly 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 into rapture as if they had won as their peers applauded in respect.

Chancellor Saifullah Ziaee of Panjsher Institute described the significance of their performance: "the participation of Panjsher students in Jessup was a great achievement... this will bring hope to other students of this institute." The Institute was established in 2012 at the former site of a US Provincial Reconstruction Team in Panjsher province.

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