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**AFGHANISTAN**

# Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI)

## SUCCESS STORY

# Community Unity Through Dialogue

**USAID's Community Cohesion Jirga provided a forum for community discussion and debate.**



Upon the successful completion of the Community Cohesion Jirga, the Kunar District Governor handed out Certificates of Appreciation to participating community representatives.

***The community cohesion jirga allowed for community representatives to engage with the District Government and identify and prioritize common objectives to help cohesion among communities.***

In recent years, GIRoA has made progress building connections with communities in the turbulent border district of Sarkani in Kunar Province. USAID/OTI's Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) works to enhance those linkages and increase cohesion by strengthening community-based resiliencies to respond to community concerns and address the underlying causes of conflict within their communities.

When it first enters a district, CCI often utilizes a "Community Cohesion Jirga" as an introductory and assessment tool. The jirga, a large meeting of influential community representatives, serves to acquaint communities and GIRoA with CCI's programming goals, give local leaders the opportunity to initiate a dialogue on district cohesion and stability, and identify common goals.

In early September, the CCI Sarkani district team facilitated a three-day jirga, beginning with an introduction to CCI followed by a summation and discussion of GIRoA's roles and responsibilities. As a part of this introduction, the District Governor pledged his continued support of community-GIRoA cooperation: "I would like to call on GIRoA officials; wherever we implement projects or provide services, we should give equal opportunity to each part of the district and will work hard for and with each community."

During the second and third days of the jirga, with CCI's further facilitation, the community representatives discussed their grievances and identified the root causes of their grievances to be corruption, a lack of economic opportunities, and inter-community conflicts. The attendees then worked to identify and nominate community and GIRoA stakeholders, who would be well-suited to help monitor and resolve their issues.

At the end of the jirga, the 90 participants produced a list of four priority projects that the communities could implement with contributions from CCI. The prioritized projects target road connections to the district center and agricultural improvements, including; road improvement and canal rehabilitation projects. The jirga in Sarkani successfully provided a solid foundation for future CCI initiatives and demonstrated that GIRoA continues to play an increasingly positive, supportive role in communities.