



**USAID** | FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**AFGHANISTAN**

# Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI)

## SUCCESS STORY

# Poetry Speaks Louder Than Words

**USAID empowers youth in Spin Boldak to engage and discuss their concerns with GIRoA representatives.**



A GIRoA representative expresses his support of the poetry competition, strengthening the link between GIRoA and youth.

***The poetry contest provided the District Governor with the chance to connect with youth in his community, demonstrating the potential that social and cultural events have to enable GIRoA engage with communities and their interests.***

Most youth in Spin Boldak, a border district in Kandahar Province, feel disenfranchised and disillusioned with GIRoA and are vulnerable to insurgent influence due a lack of educational and employment opportunities. In order to promote greater youth-GIRoA linkages and support a popular cultural activity that allows for youth to express their concerns in a creative and productive way, USAID/OTI's Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) funded a one-day poetry contest.

The poetry contest was held at Ghazi Abdullah High Khan High School on 10 September 2012 and engaged youth from communities across Spin Boldak District. GIRoA representatives, poets, teachers and students attended the event, bringing the total turnout to over 160 participants. The high turnout allowed for the District Governor (DG) and district-level GIRoA representatives to engage with their previously neglected youth constituency. Prior to this event, the DG was reluctant to engage and meet with communities; his participation signals a shift towards an increased GIRoA presence in community events in the district.

The Director of the District Department of Education opened the event with a speech which underlined the need for more events where youth from different communities come together to discuss their views and concerns with their GIRoA representation. Twenty-two participants recited poetry centered on the importance of peace, national unity and community cooperation. The winning poem, "Kandahar", was selected by a popular vote; the poem spoke of Kandahar's former glory and its many heroes. During his closing speech, the District Revenue Director encouraged participants to continue their education and work within their communities and with GIRoA.

"The poetry contest served as an opportunity for us to meet the District Governor, whom we had never met in person. Now that I know the District Governor, I will meet with him to discuss my community's problems and concerns," stated Haji Walid Kamran, the poetry contest winner. The poetry contest successfully provided youth in Spin Boldak District with a linkage to their district-level GIRoA representatives.