

## A Success Story

### **Local Community Stands Up To Taliban for the Sake of Peace**

The Faryab province of Afghanistan is notorious for its instable security situation and in May 2012 the establishment of a CPAU Peace Council took place in the village of Momen Abad Khisht Pul. During the second of five days of conflict resolution training provided by CPAU for 25 elected members of the Peace Council, one of the trainers, who had been sent to the field by a USAid contractor; was approached by the local Taliban who threatened to close the training sessions down.

In 2012 USAid initiated the Rule of Law Stabilization – an informal program that includes a peace-building component designed to establish local conflict resolution institutions. CPAU, as part of this project, is able to establish Peace Councils wherein 25 individuals elected by the community undergo training in conflict management, legal awareness, mediation, grievance resolution, and women’s rights so that they can then effectively adjudicate on local disputes. These Peace Councils are established in a culturally sensitive way and the concept of informal justice institutions are historically and culturally important in the Afghan justice system.

The individuals from the Taliban who approached the trainer, as well as the members of the Peace Council, asked questions regarding the type of training, materials and background of the trainers. They were looking for reasons to be able to, either directly or indirectly, or by force, prevent the trainings from being conducted. The establishment of a Peace Council facilitated a legitimate and alternative way for the population of Momen Abad Khisht Pul to resolve disputes without having to involve the Taliban or other local powerholders. These other actors have over the years been able to take part in dispute resolution and justice mechanisms due to the lack of legitimate and functioning formal and informal justice institutions. Therefore, any kind of legitimate informal justice institution is seen as a threat to their control over a village, furthermore any kind of outside political or foreign involvement is seen as a direct threat due to the current hostile situation between international/national actors and anti-governmental actors, such as the Taliban.

What transpired, was that the elected head of the Peace Council, Mr. Mohammad Naeem, as well as the other members of the Peace Council and locals of Momen Abad Khisht Pul joined forces to ensure that the five day training could be conducted. The village members expressed that: “we will provide the trainings security so that the Peace Council can be fully established” and, “thanks to these trainings the ground is prepared for a peaceful future of our village”. For the last three days of the planned training sessions the venue was collectively protected by the local police and armed village members, and the Peace Council members were able to safely conclude the full five-day training workshop.

Because of the provision of conflict resolution training and the establishment of the Peace Council, enabled by the support of USAid, as well as the joint efforts and support from the village members of Momen Abad Khisht Pul there is today a functioning Peace Council present, able to resolve disputes and offer an alternative way of delivering acceptable justice. It has created the space to enable the village to minimize Taliban control and influence over the village, and potentially has laid the foundations for a more peaceful future for all the community members of Momen Abad Khisht Pul.



**Peace Council Members and ANA officer**



**Villagers and Peace Council Members of Momen Abad Khist Pul**