USWDP is supporting the Ministry of Higher Education and Shaheed Ostad Rabbani Education University to build systems, draft forms/materials, and conduct trainings for successful implementation of the MoHE Nondiscrimination and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy for higher education institutions.

Shaheed Ostad Rabbani Education University (SREU) is quickly moving ahead in its operationalization of the new Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) Nondiscrimination and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy. An organizational structure including a Gender Manager position and committees to process cases of discrimination and harassment on campus has been established.

In April, USWDP’s Gender team, in collaboration with SREU’s interim Gender Manager conducted two trainings—one for the Policy Implementation Committee (PIC) and another for the Complaint Review Committee (CRC). These newly formed committees, each with six members, are composed of male and female faculty members and students nominated by the SREU Chancellor to assist in processing discrimination and sexual harassment cases filed by SREU students, faculty, and staff members. At the trainings, committee members discussed the terminology and implications of the Nondiscrimination and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy and drafted procedures and forms that will be used to implement it at SREU.

USWDP’s Gender team is also continuing to support SREU in defining the Gender Manager role at SREU. The person selected for that position will receive any formal complaints, investigate complaints, and convene the PIC and CRC to resolve each case of discrimination or harassment.

It is anticipated that in August 2017, there will be a campus-wide orientation on the new MoHE policy to familiarize students, faculty, and staff members on how to access resources and receive support following incidents of discrimination and harassment at SREU. USWDP is working with SREU to develop materials for that upcoming orientation.
First Cohort Graduates from the Information Technology Associate Degree Program at Kabul Polytechnic University

An important milestone was marked on May 22, 2017: the graduation of the first cohort of associate degree students in the history of Afghanistan’s higher education system. Twenty-eight students, including eight women, successfully met the graduation requirements of Kabul Polytechnic University’s (KPU) Information Technology (IT) Associate degree program, a two and one-half year degree, developed in collaboration with partner university Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC).

Senior staff from the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), KPU, the University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP) as well as family members and friends of the graduates attended the graduation ceremony and gave congratulatory remarks.

Attendees included Abdul Tawab Balakarzai, Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs at the MoHE, Prof. Mohammad Sayed Kakar, Chancellor of KPU, Dr. Wahid Omar, the USWDP Chief of Party, and Dr. Joseph Berger, Director of the Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) – Amherst, an institution which also supported the establishment of the IT Associate degree program. Deputy Minister Balakarzai noted in his speech that the new IT graduates are now fully prepared to enter the labor market and ready to take on the important responsibility of bringing innovation to the field of information technology in Afghanistan.

The IT Associate degree program equips students with technical skills to meet the needs of the Afghan technology sector. Its curriculum blends courses on computer applications, networking, software development, web design, and English language and is followed by an internship program.

New graduates from Kabul Polytechnic University’s IT Associate degree program pose for a group photo with USWDP Chief of Party, Dr. Wahid Omar and Deputy Minister for Academic Affairs, Abdul Tawab Balakarzai.

IT Associate degree graduate, Sara Qaderi addresses the audience at the IT graduation ceremony.

Sara Qaderi, one of the new graduates, also expressed her appreciation during the ceremony for the support provided by USAID, USWDP, CGTC, and UMass - Amherst for the IT Associate degree program. Speaking on behalf of her classmates, she said they are entering the job market ready because of the tools they gained through the IT program.
Graduates Prepare to Enter Afghanistan’s Environment Management Sector

Kabul Polytechnic University established the Master’s in Hydraulics and Hydro-technical Structures degree program in March 2011. The USWDP has supported the renovation of classrooms, purchase of equipment, and facilitated a partnership with University of Nebraska – Omaha.

The third cohort of Kabul Polytechnic University’s (KPU) Master in Hydraulics and Hydro-technical Structures (MHHS) degree program graduated on April 26. This brings the total number of MHHS graduates to 64. The MHHS is a two-year degree program housed within the Faculty of Environmental and Water Resources Engineering at KPU and focuses on urban and rural environmental and water resource management. It has received technical support from the University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP) since December 2015 including a partnership with the University of Nebraska - Omaha (UNO) established in September 2016.

Speakers at the MHHS graduation ceremony were unanimous in their message that the hydraulics sector in Afghanistan has a very strong need for qualified operators and managers and that graduates from the MHHS program provide a solution to that need.

Prof. Nasim Nasimi, Dean of the MHHS program, encouraged graduates to use their training to strengthen the management of Afghanistan’s water resources and Dr. Habibullah Wajidi, Deputy Chief of Party of USWDP challenged graduates to use their new capabilities to set standards in the hydraulics sector in support of national economic development.

Following the graduation, eight KPU faculty members from the MHHS program traveled to Dubai, in May for a week of professional development facilitated by UNO colleagues on laboratory design and academic research including how to: form research hypotheses, collect and analyze data, and write up and publish findings. Participants also observed a class the American University in Dubai (AUD), interacted with AUD instructors and students, and spent time reflecting on and revising their MHHS degree program policy document, curriculum, and teaching methodology to better match the Afghan context.
Master’s Degree in Public Policy and Administration Transferred to Kabul University Following Graduation of Third Cohort

Following the graduation ceremony of Kabul University’s third cohort of students from the Master’s in Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) degree program on May 17, there was a handover ceremony that marked Kabul University’s acceptance of full administration of the MPPA program. Since 2011, the MPPA program has received USAID support, first through the Higher Education Program (HEP) and then through the University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP). Over that period, 64 Afghan students have graduated, 24 of whom are women. The most recent cohort had 22 students including six women.

The graduation and handover ceremonies were attended by key stakeholders including Abdul Tawab Balakarzai, Deputy Minister of Higher Education for Academic Affairs, Dr. Mohammad Naiem Azimi, Vice Chancellor of Kabul University, Prof. Abdul Iqar Wasel, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, and Dr. Wahid Omar, USWDP Chief of Party. At the graduation, Deputy Minister Balakarzai remarked that the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) considers it a huge success for Kabul University to have launched and maintained the MPPA degree program, one of such magnitude and national importance. He said the MPPA program will remain a high priority for the MoHE and they will continue to provide their support. When Dr. Azimi addressed the graduates, he emphasized their responsibility to share the knowledge they have gained with the next generation to ensure every Afghan youth has the chance to participate in the reforms and governance of their nation.

The MPPA degree program has paved the way for students to become professionals and specialists in the field of policy making and administration.”

Prof. Abdul Iqar Wasel, Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, Kabul University

Representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education, Kabul University, and USWDP celebrate the graduation of the third cohort of Master of Public Policy and Administration students.
Ninth and Tenth University Career Centers Inaugurated

In April, Jawzjan University and Sheikh Zayed University (Khost) both celebrated the opening of their campus Career Centers that were renovated and staffed with support from the University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP). Career Centers provide a space on campus where students and recent graduates can attend extracurricular trainings, such as soft skill and computer trainings to prepare them for their transition to the labor market. USWDP has been supporting extracurricular trainings at both universities since 2016. However, having a physical location on campus enables each university to institutionalize and expand its career support services.

Sheikh Zayed University (Khost) Career Center

The inauguration of the Career Center at Sheikh Zayed University (Khost) on April 3 brought together a diverse range of stakeholders including Hokam Khan Habibi, Governor of Khost province, parliament members, members of the private business sector, university leaders, students, and USWDP staff members. At the ribbon cutting ceremony, the Governor stated that the establishment of the Career Center at Sheikh Zayed University is a great example of effective use of development funds to bridge training and capacity gaps. Prof. Mujiburahman Karimi, Chancellor of Sheikh Zayed University, briefed attendees about the facilities and functions of the Career Center which is fully powered by solar panels provided by USWDP. Prof. Karimi pointed out that the Career Center is not only a place where students can strengthen soft skills, but a mechanism for the university to forge linkages with industries in which graduates will be employed. Fifteen members of the Sheikh Zayed University Industry Advisory Council (UIAC), local business owners who attended the ceremony presented stationary and other items to the Career Center to demonstrate their commitment to provide ongoing support. Following the inauguration, students attended an orientation about upcoming activities at the Career Center.
Jawzjan University Career Center

The Career Center inauguration at Jawzjan University was on April 11 and attended by local government officials, members of the University Industry Advisory Council (UIAC), representatives from the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), university administration, faculty members, and students, and USWDP leadership. Prof. Mohammad Hashem Seddiqui, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs remarked at the inauguration how the Career Center is an essential form of support for students as they search for desirable jobs. Jawzjan University demonstrated its steady enthusiasm for the establishment of a Career Center. During the renovation of the Career Center space, Suhaila Haidari, Senior Teaching Assistant in the Faculty of Education, Law, and Social Science closely followed its progress. At the inauguration, she was one of the ribbon cutters. Jawzjan University is now preparing for 2018 when it will take over full management of the Career Center including its staffing and activities from USWDP.

Career Centers Serve University Students at Ten Universities

The purpose of university Career Centers, established with the support of the University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP) is to prepare soon-to-be and recent university graduates with tools to find employment, soft skills necessary to survive and flourish in their jobs, and connect them with opportunities to utilize those competencies through completion of internships. Career Centers also function as a hub to link universities and employers. Over 2,600 students who have completed extracurricular trainings and internships through Career Center support in the past two years are an indication of the potential of these centers. The graph below summarizes the number of male and female students and recent graduates who have completed extracurricular trainings through USWDP support at the 10 Career Centers.

Summary of Students Who Have Completed Extracurricular Trainings
September 2015 – March 2017

Since 2015, more than 2,600 students at 10 universities have completed extracurricular trainings.