University Support and Workforce Development Program

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Biomedical Equipment Technology
Associate Degree Faculty Participate in Professional Exchange

Associate Degree Faculty Prepared for Better Teaching and Student Engagement in Classroom

From September 16 to 29, 2018, nine faculty and staff members from Kabul University of Medical Sciences (KUMS) and Kabul Polytechnic University (KPU) participated in a professional exchange program with the Netaji Subhash Engineering College (NSEC) in Kolkata, India. Supported by the USAID-funded University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP), this exchange focused on training faculty in the Biomedical Equipment Technology (BMET) Associate Degree. BMET is a university-level degree program for students aspiring to become medical equipment technicians and meet the ever-growing demand of the medical equipment industry.

NSEC faculty members and technicians and a faculty member from Community College of Spokane (CCS) facilitated the two-week training. The participants received both theoretical and practical training in three areas: 1) managing and operating a Digital Electronics Laboratory, including laboratory experiment familiarization, construction, evaluation, and troubleshooting; 2) equipment identification, patient application, the equipment lifespan, operation, and performance evaluation; and 3) developing management standards, mechanisms, and implementation processes.

The delegation interacted extensively with the faculty, staff, and students of another Indian partner, the JIS College of Engineering. The JIS College visit was beneficial in understanding how the institution created an effective learning process by applying the flipped learning methodology and practical laboratory projects. Additionally, the delegation conducted site visits to classrooms, labs, and hospitals. To gain industry experience on the medical equipment, the participants visited the United Healthcare Products factory in Kolkata. During the visit, the participants learned about the Anesthesia System, Orthopedic patient beds, and Medical Gas.

Participant feedback was very positive; all the sessions were well-organized, and the trainers were sufficiently experienced to conduct both high quality lectures and experiments. “The newly acquired skills and knowledge will be of great value to the Afghan faculty and will significantly contribute to improving the overall quality of the BMET program at KUMS,” said Dr. Karimullah Shahpar, Dean of Faculty of Allied Health Sciences.

Faculty of Associate Degrees from Two Public Universities Attend an Exchange Visit in India

Afghan Faculty Visit Netaji Subhash Engineering College in India
Developing a Research Culture in Afghanistan

Afghan Public Universities’ Faculty Receive Basic and Advanced Research Training

The USAID-funded University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP) developed an initiative to cultivate and promote a culture of research in Afghanistan especially within the faculty of public universities targeted by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). In an effort to make research more common in the Afghan university community, USWDP conducted research workshops in Afghanistan and in India and awarded research grants to several Afghan faculty.

The first round of research grants started in July 2016. USWDP received 39 research proposals from eight USWDP-supported public universities. The grant review committee awarded research grants to 11 professors (including two female). By November 2018, all the professors completed their projects and submitted their research to USWDP.

The second round of research grants started in August 2017. USWDP received 46 research proposals from 10 USWDP-supported public universities. Among the 46 applications, the committee awarded a research grant to 11 professors (including one female).

The professors will present their final research in March 2019.

In September 2018, USWDP also conducted a research capacity workshop in New Delhi, India. The research workshop focused on data analysis, in-depth research discussions, and practical experience. USWDP held another five-day research workshop in Kabul in December 2018, for 35 Afghan public university faculty. The university professors were divided into two groups during the workshop, a basic research group and an advanced research group. The 17 faculty who participated in the basic research workshop focused on the research process: planning, implementation, analysis, and dissemination. The 18 faculty members in the advanced group learned STATA, a common research software used in the academic community.

USWDP worked with the MOHE and target public universities to train their faculty in the area of research. And in a way, started a culture of research in Afghanistan, especially in the higher education community.
Career Centers Boost Employability in Afghan Universities

Career Centers Provide Skilled Labor to Afghan Market

A significant part of the USAID-funded University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP) focuses on developing the capacity of the Afghan workforce. To meet that requirement, USWDP established university degree programs that are in response to market demand in the Afghan job market. Additionally, and more importantly, USWDP established career centers at targeted public universities to boost employment opportunities for senior students and recent graduates.

The career centers managed by USWDP opened their doors in early 2015 and offered a wide-range of services and opportunities. The career centers offered career counseling, student information exchange sessions, as well as internship and job placement prospects at these career centers. While the prime focus of the career centers was providing Soft Skills Training (SST) and Computer Management and Office Automation (CMOA) training, USWDP also developed a program for Mobile Soft Skills Training (MSST). MSST assists applicants who cannot attend SST classes in person.

The 36-hour long SST course equips applicants with personal development and pre-employability skills, including communications, report writing, entrepreneurship, time management skills, resume and cover letter writing, job searching, networking, and interviewing. While these are necessary skills needed in the 21st century workplace, computer management and office automation training is also a must to excel in a professional setting. USWDP increased the employability chances of students and recent graduates with a two-month CMOA training. USWDP, from early 2015 until late 2018, provided SST to 5,130 applicants (including 1,856 female), and facilitated MSST to 3,916 applicants (including 936 female). USWDP also provided CMOA to 3,452 applicants (including 1,193 female) and internship/placement opportunities to 1,307 beneficiaries (including 462 female). USWDP also provided career counseling nearly 4,500 applicants, half of which were female.
USWDP Builds Science Lab at Jawzjan University
USWDP Enables Students to Practice What They Learn in Classes

The USAID-funded University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP) worked with Jawzjan University to construct a General Science Lab. The lab contains all modern tools and equipment that will help students conduct a wide-range of experiments related to the Faculty of Education’s Biology and Chemistry classes. Imported from the United States, the high-quality equipment will have a long operational life.

USWDP conducted a needs assessment where it identified the need for a General Science Lab. USWDP renovated the physical lab space and hired a professional trainer to train faculty and two lab technicians from Jawzjan University as well as 10 other public universities.

Students will now be able to practice in the General Science Lab what they learn in the classrooms at Jawzjan University. Graduates of public and private universities in Afghanistan usually do not have access to a science lab and the ability to practice, which is a leading reason why they cannot find employment within the Afghan job market. USWDP made sure that students at Jawzjan University have the opportunity to learn theoretical and practical science skills to improve their chances at finding employment.

USWDP is working with the Ministry of Higher Education and 11 public universities to build the staff’s professional and academic capacities to provide better educational environments and public services.

USWDP Improves Learning Environment for Students
The Online Resource Center Provides Students Access to Research Material

On October 24, 2018, Kandahar University leadership inaugurated a state-of-the-art online resource center (ORC) at Allama Habibi Library. The ORC contains 40 Internet connected computers, a photocopier, scanner, printer, projector, and laptop computers. The center also contains security cameras, an electromagnetic security gate, a desensitizer machine, and security stripes for all library books. This security system prevents unauthorized book and library resource removal. USWDP also installed a solar energy system to provide uninterrupted electrical power.

By providing this center, USWDP allows Kandahar University students and faculty access to online resources and prepare for their classes. USWDP supported the Ministry of Higher Education and 11 public universities to build their academic and professional capacities. USWDP is working to improve the higher education system in Afghanistan.
Making Public Health Strides in Afghanistan

The MPH Program at Kandahar University is the Second MPH Program in Afghanistan

The USAID-funded University Support and Workforce Development Program (USWDP) officiated a graduation ceremony for the Master of Public Health (MPH) graduate cohort at Kandahar University. USWDP and Johns Hopkins University extended its technical support and expertise to Kandahar University by creating the first MPH program in Afghanistan’s southwest region and the second of its kind in the whole country (the first MPH program was created at Kabul University of Medical Sciences). USWDP honors these public health graduates on their achievement.

The MPH graduates will now be able to design health policies and improve health services for the people of Afghanistan. The graduates now have the knowledge and skills to tackle health challenges, conduct research and health assessments, and design and implement healthy living campaigns that improve the health and medical services to Afghans. Fifteen students, including two women, began in January 2017 and are the first program graduates.

Kandahar University recruited and enrolled the second cohort of MPH students with USWDP guidance. While USWDP support ended in November 2018, the degree continues to be sustainable and will continue to teach students the much-desired knowledge of public health. The Kandahar University MPH program is the only USWDP-supported master degree health program that will significantly contribute to the public health sector in southwest Afghanistan.
USWDP in Pictures

For any questions or more information about USWDP, contact us at uswdp-info@uswdp.org