SNAPSHOT

Promote Women’s Leadership Development: The Return to Education

Some say that the Taliban regime brought Afghanistan’s development back 100 years, and one of the most critical areas that it affected was women’s rights. Under the Taliban, women were not allowed to work outside of the home, interact with men, or even pursue education. This damage is still being rectified today.

Hakima Fayez remembers the rule of the Taliban very clearly, which for her began just after she had completed her sixth grade classes in Bamiyan. "But when the Taliban regime started," she explains, "I had to quit school. It wasn't until after their fall, when we moved to Kabul, was I able to finish my education at the Zarghona Girls High School." However, she adds, she was lucky - "my father and brother have always been very supportive."

Hungry for education, she didn't stop there. She now has a bachelors degree in Sociology from Kabul University, and has big plans for her future. "I'm looking forward to getting a job where I can be the support for my family. I also want to pursue further education," Hakima says. Eventually, she wants to get a masters degree and use that to be a high-level advisor for the Afghan government.

She joined the Promote Women's Leadership Development program's Jawana Women's Leadership and Empowerment course to get better leadership and management skills to facilitate her pursuit of her goals. In the Jawana courses, Hakima enjoys learning about gender roles and how to work within the system, while changing opinions about a "woman's place" in Afghanistan. She takes her classes with other dedicated students at the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

And her confidence is growing every day. As she explains, "by joining this course and feeling the full support of our facilitator, now I feel the positive points about myself. My self-confidence is at an all-time high, and this course has really made me realize that I should be respectful of other's opinions in my daily interaction." She even credits the course with helping her deal with street harassment and finding economic opportunities.

Hakima highly recommends the courses to other young women in Afghanistan, looking to create change in their country, and she has a consistent message to them: "Come. Learn the skills of reading, writing, critical thinking, and asking questions. With the Jawana course, you will become empowered."