HAVE FOUND WORK, RECEIVED PROMOTIONS AND/OR INCREASED THEIR WAGES

AFGHANISTAN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FILLING THE URGENT NEED FOR SKILLED LABOR

Three decades of conflict in Afghanistan have affected every person in the country. One group that is vital to Afghanistan—a professionally trained labor force—has received little attention. An underinvestment in all levels of education has resulted in a workforce that is ill prepared for the needs of a developing country.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the gap between the number of workers who possess mid-level technical and business management skills and the market demand for these talents. To fill the gap, companies typically import labor from neighboring Iran or Pakistan, taking jobs away from Afghans and driving up unemployment.

Creative Associates International’s Afghanistan Workforce Development Program seeks to increase job placements and wages for 25,000 Afghans through access to quality technical and business training, as well as job placement support services. It is funded by USAID.

SHIFTING THE JOB TRAINING PARADIGM

In its 2012 study, the International Labor Organization recognized that the “training initiatives…tend to exclusively focus on direct and visible outputs (e.g., participation in training), without taking into account longer term employment outcomes.”

Afghanistan Workforce Development Program is an exception to this unsuccessful pattern of training with no direct focus on employment. Instead of the traditional model, Afghanistan Workforce Development Program invites employers to customize programs based on their actual needs.

The result: a market-driven system that provides unemployed people, as well as mid-level employees, with the training that aligns with the company’s demands.

Through its network of grantee organizations, Afghanistan Workforce Development Program follows a four-step process: assessing the needs of employers; creating
relevant curricula; conducting training for qualified applicants; and providing employment services to ensure graduates find jobs or improve their employment status.

The focus on job placement rather than just training requires disciplined execution. Each step of the program approach is necessary, with the demand assessment as one of the most critical.

Understanding the needs of employers with precision and involving employers early in the design of training programs is critical to successful placement at the end.

Afghanistan Workforce Development Program offers training courses in business communication, project management, construction, financial management, ICT and other sectors. Its private sector partners include communication companies, banks, construction and other companies throughout Afghanistan.

BUILDING A NETWORK OF CAPABLE PARTNERS

Ingrained in the program’s model is a cycle of capacity building: trainees gain capacity through competency-based courses, while grantee organizations grow through Afghanistan Workforce Development Program’s robust application process and grant implementation.

The program also provides technical assistance to Afghanistan’s Ministry of Education, particularly the Technical and Vocational Education and Training office.

In fact, beginning with Option Period 1 of the four-year Afghanistan Workforce Development Program, the results will be substantially supported by the Technical and Vocational Education and Training office – with Creative providing technical assistance.

Termed “on-budget,” this phase pushes Afghan government to learn how to manage international donor money and implement programs, with the ultimate goal of becoming self-sufficient.

Afghanistan Workforce Development Program employer-driven model is already changing lives. More than 9,000 Afghans have been trained through the private sector supported centers, and more than 4,000 graduates have found work, received promotions and/or increased their wages during the base period of 18 months.

One grantee advertised a special certified accounting class for women only. Another grantee was working with construction companies – a male-dominated industry – and found a home for women in administrative and financial management roles.

And it’s working. In the first phase of the program, the 25 percent goal was exceeded: 34 percent of trainees and 30 percent of those placed or promoted were women.

Creative’s mission is TO SUPPORT PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD TO REALIZE THE POSITIVE CHANGE THEY SEEK.