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## SUCCESS STORY

### Ending Violence Against Women One Musharikat Advocate at a Time

#### *Implementing Afghanistan’s Law on the Eliminations of Violence Against Women in Daikundi*



*Advocacy campaign on child and forced marriage in Band-e-Burlan village, Sharistan District in Daikundi province.*

*Photo by LSO*

“Now I lead meetings and events, coordinate efforts, design and implement my own advocacy plans [to end violence against women]”

Ms. Malika, Coalition member

Enacting the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Law at the national level is an important step in the process to end child marriage. But to change long-held cultural beliefs towards marriage and actually prevent child marriages in smaller communities takes more than words in a book stored in the capital city. It takes women like Ms. Malika (not her real name) who are part of a civil society organization (CSO) like Labor Spring Organization (LSO) engaging to meet with community members, gather information for evidence-based advocacy, raise awareness with the wider community, meet with local key stakeholders, and gain their commitment to support meaningful and lasting change. This is not easy work, but through its members like Ms. Malika, LSO launched this effort with the support of a grant from Promote Musharikat.

LSO is a well-established CSO in Daikundi, and along with other Musharikat Violence Against Women (VAW) Coalition members, it held important awareness-raising and advocacy training workshops and classes with interested activists. Ms. Malika attended these meetings and classes and she notes,

*“Now I lead meetings and events, coordinate efforts, design and implement my own advocacy plan, meetings, and campaigns, involving provincial partners, and increasing awareness of community members in Daikundi province.”*

An important part of her and her colleagues’ advocacy efforts were meetings with local religious and judicial officials. Members of the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs were very supportive of LSO’s efforts to end child marriage. A concrete example of ministry support was an official Assurance Letter sent out to all religious leaders banning child marriage. This ministry letter was enthusiastically supported by 34 imams who work closely with the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs. These imams gave Friday sermons condemning child marriage and, going even further, they personally committed to stopping child marriages in their communities. The imams were true to their word, and during the grant activity stopped four child marriages by referring them to the police and judicial system.

LSO, through advocates like Ms. Malika, was able to establish trust and foster cooperation among civil society, the Department of Hajj and Religious Affairs, and the judiciary. LSO, like other Musharikat grantees, is particularly proud of the “linkages,” or communication channels, they were able to establish. It is through these linkages at the district level that the national ERAW Law is more fully implemented on the ground and thus makes a real impact on the lives of women and girls.

To ensure this work continues, LSO established a monthly women’s advocacy meeting to discuss women’s issues. In attendance at these meetings were representatives from the imams, judiciary, CSOs, other provincial government directorates, and coalition members. Through these regular meetings, women’s issues have remained in the forefront of public discussions. To this day, these new partners still meet regularly and continue to evolve to better meet the needs of Daikundi’s women and girls.