



## SUCCESS STORY

### Qala-e-Naw Municipal Advisory Board: Speaking Out on Behalf of Children’s Health

**“We are the municipality’s eyes and citizens’ voice” says Sediqa Rafat**



Sediqa Rafat (second from left) participating in the second Public Budget Hearing meeting (1392)



Photo: RAMIP UP West

Sediqa Rafat and children in the kindergarten singing a song

**“Without the MAB, there was no way to convey the problem to the Municipality”**

**- Sediqa Rafat**

In 2012, USAID, through its Regional Afghan Municipalities Program for Urban Populations (RU-W) project, supported Qala-e-Naw to establish a municipal advisory board. These boards play the role of a municipal council until Afghanistan can hold municipal elections. The Board has 25 members, including 4 women, and meets monthly to discuss important issues, engage in municipal decision-making and provide the municipality citizen perspectives.

From the beginning the Qala-e-Naw Municipal Advisory Board (MAB) played an important role by voicing citizen demands and representing community needs in municipal decision-making. The Municipality regularly updates the advisory board on its activities and solicits MAB advice when making important decisions.

Recently, the MAB helped the municipality resolve a long term issue: children exposed to dangerous diseases like malaria and leishmaniasis. The city slaughterhouse sits next to the only kindergarten in Qala-e-Naw and, due to poor sewage, its waste mixed with standing water, leading to greater prevalence of insect-borne diseases and other health hazards.

Sediqa Rafat, an active member of the MAB, works full time as the Director of Qala-e-Naw kindergarten. Many children at the kindergarten became sick and their mothers spoke to her about the risk to their children’s health. Sediqa raised this issue with the MAB, which asked the Mayor to take immediate action. The Mayor agreed and, in less than three months, the municipality found a new temporary venue and closed the old slaughterhouse while the municipality looks for an appropriate permanent venue away from businesses, schools or residents. The MAB monitored this process and received regular updates from municipal staff.

This situation existed for years and the municipality simply did not see it as a priority. The establishment of the MAB and its strong relationship with the municipality allowed them to make this issue a priority and seek a solution. Sediqa recognized this change and emphasized the increased importance of women’s voices in the community, saying; “Men cannot see the world as we do and I am happy that I am here to represent Qala-e-Naw women and children.”

As a result, she now takes pride in seeing children educated in a safe and hygienic environment because “the sewage of the Qala-e-Naw slaughterhouse does not flow around the only kindergarten of the city anymore.”

“We are the municipality’s eyes and citizens’ voice” says Sediqa. She added that the MAB enables the municipality to hear the voices of citizens and provides a reliable way for the municipality to understand citizen priorities and concerns.

**Telling Our Story**