

Giving Women a Means to Earn a Living



Photo by Alejandro Chicheri

Afghan women at bakery preparing flatbreads as part of a program funded by USAID.

USAID is working with the UN World Food Program to provide women in Afghanistan with the means to earn a living while helping feed a quarter of Kabul's population. With USAID help, twenty-one such businesses, including a bakery located in a west Kabul neighborhood, are providing women with a reliable income.

From sunrise to sunset, widows bake well over 2,000 loaves of bread a day. Twelve women rotate functions in one room - weighing dough, kneading it, rolling it out, and shaping it into the long oval flatbreads that Afghans prefer. The inside of the bakery is dark, lit only by the orange glow of the oven's fire. The women press holes with their fingertips in the flattened loaves to let the steam escape, then place the dough on paddles and push them into the woodburning oven.

The women working here still count on wheat from America, but many bakeries are already financially self-sufficient. Despite their hardships and poverty, these women smile as they work in the bakery and explain their motivation to bake bread. "This is not a time to weep, but to work. If we continue to be sad or depressed, who is going to take care of us and our children? We have responsibilities."

Photo & Caption