



# BOND STREET THEATRE

peacebuilding, empowerment & healing through theatre

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Youth Speak Out for Justice in Afghanistan

Bond Street Theatre's youth-led justice project educates citizens and sparks dialogue through theatre.

NEW YORK, NY - January 2018 - Bond Street Theatre (BST), with support from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), is launching the next phase of its highly successful Youth Mobilization for Peace and Justice Project, which informs communities across Afghanistan about their legal rights and the means for accessing justice. The BST-trained youth leadership groups in five provinces will foster public awareness about rule of law and processes for countering corruption and bribery through entertaining and informative public performances, radio plays, and workshops designed to reach all segments of the community.

Afghanistan's efforts to build an effective, nationwide justice system have been curtailed by lack of access to accurate information about formal legal processes and protections in relation to local justice systems. Much of the country relies on traditional councils for dispute resolution, with outcomes that are often arbitrary, driven by personal relationships, discriminatory against vulnerable groups, and impose overly harsh sentences.

USIP has reported that up to 80% of legal disputes are resolved outside of the formal justice system.

To improve access to justice and the consistent application of laws, citizens need a clearer understanding of their rights under Islamic law versus customary law, and the resources available to uphold them, and education regarding effective strategies to secure their rights in daily interactions with formal and informal systems.

The 2018 program builds on BST's Provincial Youth Leader Mobilization for Peace and Justice Project, and responds to a need for locally-led programs that empower youth and promote civil society participation in government systems.

The provincial youth teams will present mobile theatre performances, media events, hands-on workshops, and other awareness-raising strategies, as well as dialogue with local authorities, police, justice officials and religious leaders, to promote justice sector reform that meets the requirements of the formal justice system while respecting local frameworks.

The mobile theatre performances directly involve the audience in role-play to catalyze discussions about local corruption, potential solutions and reporting mechanisms, while providing a level of comfort for participants in addressing sensitive topics.

Performances are conducted in public spaces, including markets, parks, mosques, and schools in order to ensure a wide reach.

BST's provincial youth teams have demonstrated their ability to encourage collective responsibility in promoting justice both locally and regionally. Their efforts have led to changes in hiring practices, arrests in cases of harassment, and the creation of community-based monitoring teams for construction projects, among other successes.

In total, the provincial youth leaders have reached over **80,000 Afghans** with their informative programs.

BST has been conducting arts-based educational programs in Afghanistan since 2003, working with some of the country's foremost activists, artists and leaders to initiate programming focused on women's rights, access to justice, peacebuilding and voter education. The company created four all-women's theatre troupes to reach women isolated by location, tradition or incarceration.

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**For further information on Bond Street Theatre and interview requests, please contact Joanna Sherman at (212) 254-4614 or [info@bondst.org](mailto:info@bondst.org), or Mariam Kosha at [mariam@bondst.org](mailto:mariam@bondst.org).**

**Bond Street Theatre** has been initiating arts-based projects for conflict resolution, education and empowerment in areas of conflict and poverty internationally since 1984, and working in Afghanistan since 2003. The company collaborates with local artists to enjoy the benefits of creative exchange and promotes the value of the arts in shaping a peaceful future. Recipient of a MacArthur Award, the company also receives support from the Trust for Mutual Understanding, Theatre Communications Group, Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, Open Society, Asian Cultural Council, US Institute for Peace, US Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs, and US Embassies.

***Bond Street Theatre is a non-profit organization and an NGO in association with the United Nations.***

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