From Fear to Political Success

Simple and traditional yet a committed woman politician, Rafaqat Begum finds her first political success in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

“I was not disappointed with the decision of my party and or with my own defeat in the elections 2013,” says Rafaqat Begum. “I had the courage and will to contest elections on my own. Even if I have lost the election, I will be remembered as independent contender.”

Rafaqat Begum contested general elections 2013 as an independent candidate from PK-23 Mardan-I, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Ms Rafaqat won local body elections twice, in 2002 and 2005, and served as woman councilor in Mardan. 50 years old Rafaqat Begum is a social worker and the district President of Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI). When party refused to give her a ticket this year, she decided to contest the general elections 2013 on her own.

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Search for Common Ground Pakistan works to transform the way communities and societies deal with disagreement – away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative problem solving. We work with local partners to find culturally appropriate means to strengthen societies’ capacity to deal with disputes and disagreements constructively: to understand the differences and act on the commonalities.

Rafaqat Begum began practicing consensus building on smaller issues and was ready to try overcoming her reluctance in talking to the opposite groups. Her optimism grew with the passage of time upon scoring small successes and soon she started getting positive results in response to her practice of the new techniques that she acquired from SFCG’s Common Ground Approach methodology.

As an elected Tehsil councilor, she had faced problems in communicating with people, and how to obtain agreements and solutions to their problems. “After the SFCG trainings, I realized that I needed to build my advocacy skills and that I must understand how advocacy sessions are commenced,” said Rafaqat Begum. “Since being trained, I have been forming groups of women, arranging meetings to identify their issues and encouraging them to pass these to the concerned authorities in their respective areas.”

Rafaqat participated in PTI’s party elections earlier this year and was elected as the party’s District President Mardan. “I persuaded women through my new advocacy skills that they should take part in elections by casting votes and I told them that it is their right that no one can deprive them of,” she says. “Earlier I did not know how to gain trust of these women, but now I can easily solve problems, without hurdles and each time when I score a success, I thank SFCG Pakistan in my heart. No one can stop me now!”