



Waiz drew a winning picture for WHO's art contest on food safety

Kabul 7 April 2015 - World Health Day was celebrated today in Kabul under the slogan “from farm to plate, make food safe”, highlighting the challenges and opportunities associated with food safety. Unsafe food is known to be involved in more than 200 different diseases – from communicable diseases, such as cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases, to a range of noncommunicable diseases, including various forms of cancer.

WHO organized a regional art contest with the theme of food safety as part of this year's World Health Day campaign. Of the 22 countries in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region, Afghanistan had a winning entry: 12-year-old Waiz thought about the topic of food safety and drew a picture of a big, clean Afghan kitchen with fresh fruits and vegetables. “I chose to draw this because I want to make a kitchen like this for my mother one day,” Waiz said. “I cannot believe I actually won, I can't really explain how I feel, I am just so happy!”

When asked what food safety means to him, Waiz says: “it means that fruits and vegetables need to be always washed well, the kitchen needs to be clean and the person who is cooking needs to take care of hygiene.”

Waiz, along with three other children from a Kabul school, received his prize and a certificate merit at an event held at the Ministry of Public Health today. WHO Representative Dr Rik Peepkorn congratulated the children and commended their creativity in conveying messages about food safety. “The safety of our food is something that is fundamental to the health and well-being of every single one of us. Awareness-raising is crucial in order to make sure everyone knows how to make their food as safe as possible,” he said.

Speaking at the event, Minister of Public Health Dr Ferozuddin Feroz said: “We need to strengthen Afghanistan’s food safety program by launching campaigns to raise people’s awareness on food safety. All people need to make sure that the food of their plate is safe by checking food labels and adhering to good hygiene.”

New food law for Afghanistan is currently being processed by the Ministry of Justice in order to strengthen food safety and hygiene guidelines and regulations. WHO is supporting the Ministry of Public Health in establishing a Food and Drug Authority (FDA) for Afghanistan, with the goal of having the FDA operational within the next six years.

To strengthen food safety, WHO calls for multi-sectoral collaboration among public health, animal health, agriculture, commerce and other sectors for better communication and joint action. “Reforming food safety systems and enforcing food laws should be placed high on the public health agenda,” Dr Peepkorn said.

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