Hamid [Last name withheld due to security concerns] lights up as he talks about his ambitions for a better and brighter future. “My parents value education more than anything for us. It is only through education that one can become what they want with dignity and pride,” said the 16-year-old. More parents in his community are dreaming big for their children, which would not be possible without the support of USAID.

Hamid is among 1.5 million youth who live in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, a region that borders Afghanistan and has experienced terrorism and insurgency for over a decade. This region has historically lagged behind the rest of the country in socio-economic development in general and education in particular.

Opportunity presented itself to Hamid in 2009 through the USAID-supported FATA Scholarship Program, which was designed to provide financial assistance to talented students from the region to pursue their education. Due to a lack of resources and opportunity, students in FATA commonly abandon their academic pursuits. The students in the program, which was initiated in 2008 and will end in August 2015, are studying for professional careers so they can secure a better economic future and help build a vibrant society. More than 1,300 students have been supported with scholarships since the inception of the program.

“Life would not have been the same without this opportunity," said Hamid.

He values this chance at a better life and takes his studies very seriously. Through his dedication and hard work, Hamid earned a distinction in his Matric examinations (final examinations for 9th and 10th graders) last year in 2013.

Hamid's parents are proud of his continued academic excellence. “We shall remain thankful to USAID for providing such a wonderful opportunity to our son. He is getting the education we always dreamt of for him.” said Hamid’s father. As USAID takes care of Hamid’s education, his parents are able to invest in his siblings' education.

“I love to learn new things. Gaining more and more knowledge makes me understand and appreciate life," said Hamid. "My dream is to be a doctor and serve humanity. Our region has been too underdeveloped for too long, but I no longer feel constrained.” His target is to gain admission to a leading medical institution in the country. He knows he can now hope and strive for what seemed like an impossible goal not very long ago.

“Education has opened up my vision," said Hamid. "I am working hard to be a successful doctor and I can never thank the people of America enough for infusing such hope in my life.”