



Rebuilding Afghanistan

Weekly Activity Update for March 10 – March 16, 2004

Issue 50

United States Agency for International Development

STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT

Program Goals

- Support the Bonn process: the Constitutional, Human Rights, and Judicial Commissions; the elections scheduled for June 2004; and a free and independent media.
- Strengthen government budgeting, revenue generation (e.g., customs), monetary management, private-sector related legal and regulatory frameworks, and promote private enterprises.
- Build capacity to carry out other legitimate government functions and support reconstruction of health, judicial, education, economic, agricultural and transportation infrastructure.

Recent Progress:

- **Road Rehabilitation in the Northwest:** In July 2003, USAID initiated a pilot program to pave 10 streets in Maimana district, Faryab province—three of these streets were paved using stones cut by local community members. The streets were in extremely poor condition due to lack of maintenance and the recent increase in heavy traffic (i.e. trucks): For eight months of the year, they were a sea of mud, creating traffic and health problems, as the flooded roadways were the primary source of malaria bearing mosquitoes. In January 2004, all 10 of the streets were finished. Approximately 180,000 Maimana residents are benefiting from the project, with 50-100 trucks, 100-150 vans and over 10,000 pedestrians using the roads daily.
- **Advantages to Stone Paved Roads:** The pilot program in Maimana district demonstrated that stone roads may take longer to construct than gravel or asphalt roads, but are cheaper and more community-friendly because construction materials can be obtained locally. Also, stone roads last longer than gravel roads, and are more labor intensive, creating more jobs for both men and women: In the Maimana program, women accounted for 50% of the construction labor, as they were trained and employed to cut the stones used for pavement.
- **Western Union Reaches Afghanistan:** In order to provide international money transfers, Western Union has opened three facilities in Afghanistan, and will be employing the international electronic funds transfer mechanism, SWIFT, which was put into place in the Afghan Central Bank with the help of USAID technical assistance. This step represents movement toward a broader-gauged financial system for Afghanistan beyond reliance on commercial banks.
- **Customs Reforms:** USAID customs advisors accompanied the Deputy Minister of Finance during his recent travels in northern Afghanistan. The Deputy Minister visited and inspected regional customs houses, and advised local authorities and customs officers about reforms that will be enacted later this spring. The reforms include making Mazar-e-Sharif the regional headquarters for northern Afghanistan, and moving the actual clearance of goods and imports from city centers to the borders. Local authorities were receptive to the news and committed themselves to implement the reforms.



August 2003, a stone paved road under construction in Faryab province.



Cross section of a stone paved road in Faryab province. The cut in the road redirects rainwater, preventing it from pooling.



Completed stone paved road in Faryab province with a sign stating that the road was constructed by the US and Afghan governments. (All three photos taken by Ghotai Ghazialam—IOM)

REVITALIZING AGRICULTURE/CREATING JOBS

Program Goals

- Increased marketable output of \$250 million in agriculture
- More than 500,000 farm family beneficiaries
- A reliable source of water provided to more than 500,000 hectares of land through irrigation rehabilitation
- 1,000 km of improved village feeder roads rehabilitated.
- Construction of over 100 village agricultural market centers.

Recent Progress

USAID's Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program (RAMP) is a three-year program aimed at enhancing the food security and incomes of Afghanistan's rural population. It has two principal objectives, to increase agricultural productivity and output, and to facilitate effective linkages between producers, processors and markets. The program's budget is \$150 million.

- **Protecting Rural Roads from Erosion:** In March, USAID constructed a 775 meter (0.5 miles) diversion channel in northeastern Afghanistan to redirect a significant portion of the Kunar River away from one of the region's main roadways. Without the diversion, the river would have continued to erode its northern bank, resulting in the further collapse of the Kunar Road. Once protective gabions—stone-filled barriers—are constructed, USAID will repair over 600 meters (2,000 feet) of the erosion damaged Kunar roadway. In addition to protecting the road, the diversion channel and gabions will divert flood water away from more than 104 hectares (257 acres) of fertile farmland and 100 residential homes.



The Kunar Road (right) in danger of being washed out.



Diversion channel and gabions for the Kunar Road under construction.

EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Program Goals

- 1,000 schools and 17 provincial women's centers rehabilitated or constructed.
- 15 million textbooks printed & distributed for 2004 school year
- 30,000 classroom teachers trained.
- 80,000 students enrolled in accelerated learning programs to reach their appropriate grade level.

Recent Progress

Afghanistan Primary Education Program (APEP) is a three-year, USAID program designed to provide educational opportunities for communities that demonstrate a commitment to education. The program trains teachers, provides textbooks, implements accelerated learning programs, and provides advisers to the Ministry of Education. Primary education programs are underway in Nangarhar, Faryab, Baghlan and Kunduz provinces.

- **School Construction in the Northwest:** To date, USAID has rehabilitated/constructed over 200 schools, including daycare centers, primary and secondary schools, teacher training institutes and vocational centers. USAID is currently rehabilitating/constructing over 50 schools in Afghanistan, nine of which are in the northwest province of Faryab. Throughout the construction process, USAID has been training Faryabi contractors in order to increase local involvement and improve the community's construction standards and techniques, ensuring that future schools are resistant to seismic hazards.



Construction of concrete blocks for a school in Faryab province.



Pouring of concrete for Chaghatak school in Faryab province.

Note: Progress on the Afghanistan Ring Road is reported in USAID's bi-monthly Afghan Road Update.