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SUCCESS STORY

English for Engineers in Afghanistan

Employees learn language and computer skills to enhance performance



Photo Credit: USAID

A USAID program made it possible for engineers from DABS to learn English to improve their job performance.

Now the trainees understand the need for English to be able to use the computers that will be controlling the Naghlu Power Plant, which they had manually controlled for many years.

Imagine trying to learn to use a computer with an English keyboard, having never seen the English alphabet. Add to that the fact that you've never seen a computer in your life and you're in middle age. That's the challenge for employees of the national electric company Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) who work at hydro power stations in Afghanistan. Many of them have worked at the same power station for more than 15 years.

Rehabilitation of the Naghlu Hydro Power Plant in Kabul began recently, which includes adding a computer control system that will improve plant functioning and conserve the amount of water used to generate that power.

To facilitate DABS' plan to maximize hydro power generation to the Afghan grid using computers, USAID's Afghanistan Energy Capacity Building (AECB) program anticipated the need for English training at existing hydro sites to be able to use the computers. DABS employees at Naghlu plant are studying like they've never studied before. They now understand how these foreign language skills will help them use the computers that will be controlling the hydro power plant they had manually controlled for so many years.

And although they may not realize it, their intelligent use and understanding of the enhanced computer control systems on the hydro power plants saves precious water, thus minimizing the need for imported power or expensive diesel generated power required to satisfy the power needs of Kabul customers, which continue to grow daily.

But there is also another incentive—the eight engineers with the best English and computer skills will be sent abroad for specialized hydro power plant training.

Even before the Naghlu plan was computerized, the Sarobi Hydro Power Plant, also in Kabul, went through a similar upgrade. The Sarobi operators faced the same challenges, but now all can read the English prompt messages on the computer control screen and go about their operational duties much more comfortably. The Sarobi staff continually tells the AECB instructors to thank USAID for providing this training and allowing them to be more valuable DABS employees.

Telling Our Story

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Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>