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STABILIZATION IN KEY AREAS (SIKA) – WEST

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STABILIZATION IN KEY AREAS (SIKA) – WEST

QUARTERLY REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the activities of the SIKA-West Program for the 1st Quarterly reporting period of January 29 through April 30, 2012 and details the progress made towards the achievement of program goals.

Upon the contract award, AECOM mobilized a dedicated Home Office Start-up Team to ensure a rapid, effective and efficient start-up of the SIKA-West Program. The Start-up Team worked closely with the Herat based team to ensure a successful launch of the program. The team included a Start-up Team Lead, an M&E Specialist, the SIKA-West Engagement Manager, two Start-up Recruiters and a Program Coordinator.

Key expat and Afghan staff were also quickly mobilized. Most of the permanent employees such as the Chief of Party; Deputy Chief of Party; Grants, Subcontracts and Compliance Manager; Finance Controller and IR 1, 3 and 4 Leads were mobilized to post during this reporting period.

Major achievements in this quarter included three critical SIKA-West Program meetings: the Home Office post-award meeting, the Subcontractors' Kick Off Meeting with AECOM consortium members on February 2nd; and the initial meeting with USAID held on February 12th, in which USAID and AECOM reviewed the requirements and expectations of the Contract. The Rapid Mobilization Plan, which outlined clear guidelines for smooth operations, was the program's first USAID deliverable.

On March 6th, USAID, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), and SIKA-West held the first tripartite meeting. The meeting focused on program implementation, with a strong focus on the critical role of MRRD as the lead implementing body. This initial meeting was followed a MRRD Directors' Program Overview workshop held on March 26-27 in Herat. The workshop introduced the SIKA-West program to the Directors' and included a discussion on effective means of implementing the program in the Western Region of Afghanistan, specifically in the provinces of Herat, Farah and Badghis.

During this quarter, SIKA-West reached significant milestones and submitted its required deliverables to USAID on time including: the Mobilization Plan; Work Plan; Baseline Collection Plan; Grants Manual; Public Relations, Communications and Social Outreach Plan; Branding and Marking Plan; Performance Management Plan; as well as the weekly and monthly reports.

The SIKA-West Team has been regularly meeting with MRRD, the Provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development (PRRDs) and USAID to lay the ground work towards successful program implementation. In this first quarter, the focus has been on building strong working relationships and the recruitment of a qualified team in order to support imminent rollout.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

USAID-SIKA-WEST POST-AWARD MEETING

USAID convened the SIKA-West program's kickoff meeting with AECOM in Kabul on February 12, 2012. The USAID team, led by the CO, provided a careful review of the contract, including requirements and expectations, and answered all of AECOM's initial questions in full. In addition, the USAID ACOR provided a technical overview stressing that MRRD will be at the front of SIKA-West planning and will be engaged at the national, provincial, and district level. USAID stated that Mr. Gulam Haider, the Deputy Policy Director at MRRD will be USAID's primary point of contact for SIKA-West. MRRD, USAID, and the SIKA-West team will work together to achieve the program's objectives whilst MRRD is at the forefront of implementation. During the first quarter, the SIKA-West Management Team has been building a productive relationship with MRRD. In this quarter, recruitment of the provincial level candidates and office set-up, with policies and procedures, has been focused mainly in Herat. Further, the SIKA-West team has taken several trips to the provinces of Badghis and Farah. The aim of the visits was to build networks and prepare for the provincial rollouts.

The MRRD Senior Policy Advisor met with USAID and SIKA-West in Kabul on March 6th. An MRRD SIKA Unit was proposed to bridge the PRRD offices and provide a constant flow of information to the MRRD that would be absorbed into the *tashkeel* at the end of the project. The Senior Policy Advisor suggested an MRRD workshop be held in Herat to kick off the program's implementation and said that the development of an Implementation Letter (IL) between MRRD and USAID was underway.

MRRD PROVINCIAL DIRECTORS' KICK-OFF WORKSHOP

On March 26-27, the MRRD Provincial Directors met in Herat to kick off the SIKA-West program. The two-day workshop included an introduction to the SIKA-West program, the District Stability Framework (DSF) (which has since been reframed as the Stability Analysis Mechanism (SAM)), and how to develop an appropriate model for Afghanistan, recruitment of the provincial support teams and office space as well as discussion on how to move forward. Four Provincial RRD Directors and Deputies were in attendance along with MRRD's Senior Policy Advisor from Kabul. There was also representation from NSP, NADBP, and USAID to ensure joint coordination throughout MRRD and a clear understanding within the PRRD about the goals and objectives of both SIKA-West and stabilization in the Western region.

The MRRD Senior Policy Advisor concluded the workshop by providing an overview of agreements, including:

- MRRD agreed to work with USAID to finalize the selection criteria for targeted districts to be identified and included in the program.
- DSF was accepted in principle and a recommendation was made to develop an easier and simpler version through discussion and consensus with MRRD, PRRD, as well as other stakeholders.
- Stability Working Groups should be formed from existing District Development Assemblies (DDAs) with representatives of peace councils and other key community leaders as needed.

WORK PLAN

The submitted Work Plan was designed to provide an iterative plan that will be used as a starting point to incorporate future consultation with MRRD and other stakeholders. Personnel and other staffing decisions will be tied to the Work Plan to ensure maximum efficiency and cost savings. Results, constraints and successes will be communicated with MRRD and USAID in a timely manner with regular reporting and conferences between SIKA-West and USAID. To accomplish the goals set within the Work Plan, SIKA-West, along with MRRD and USAID concurrence, will employ a phased provincial roll-out which is currently planned for two districts in Herat, Farah, and Badghis. The suggested districts are Ghadiz, Muqur, Bala Bulak, Pushte-Rod, Kushke-Robat and Shindand. The criteria for selecting the districts were developed by MRRD and USAID with a focus on accessibility, economic advantage, functional governance, stability, and a viable presence of DDAs and Community Development Councils (CDCs). Pending approval from USAID and MRRD, further districts will be selected and program roll out will continue. The phased approach means that concentrated activities will commence from the very onset of the program, allowing for a more rapid dissemination of lessons learned. Additionally, the SIKA-West team will work with existing District Entities (DEs), such as DDAs and CDCs, as well as with MRRD, and other district and provincial GIRoA institutions.

PMP DEVELOPMENT

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan and Performance Management Plan (PMP) were submitted to USAID during the 1st Quarter. MRRD concurrence on all program activities is required for the PMP indicators. SIKA-West anticipates active participation and input by the MRRD on the PMP with the understanding that the PMP will evolve over time. As the Work Plan is further developed and revised, the PMP will also be adjusted to account for changes.

During a meeting on March 14th, SIKA-West and USAID's Stabilization Unit (STAB-U) discussed data collection in relation to STAB-U's new program: Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Intervention (MISTI). MISTI is a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation program which will, in addition to carrying out its own data collection and analysis, support activities associated with STAB-U programs, such as SIKA-West. Baseline data collection, reporting and database design are some of the initial proposed activities between MISTI and SIKA-West. The SIKA-West program will establish baseline data through direct data collection and secondary sources. USAID stated that MISTI's baseline data collection will help to evaluate the impact of stability in Afghanistan. MISTI is developing a large research study on stability, of which SIKA-West is a part. Thus, there will be collaboration between SIKA-West, the MISTI contractor, and USAID about information sharing and knowledge management.

METRICS

AECOM's PMP for SIKA-West must draw upon an array of stability programming indicators. The SIKA-West PMP will be aligned with the USAID Mission Performance Management Plan 2011-2015, Foreign Assistance Framework (FAF), and STAB-U indicators, creating a reporting framework whereby these mandating indicators are strategically linked with SIKA-West Program indicators. The SIKA-West monitoring and evaluation staff attended a training session on the Afghan Info System to comply with quarterly reporting requirements and also attended a meeting in Kabul with USAID, SIKA-East, and MISTI representation on April 23rd to review the specific baseline survey questions with MISTI and SIKA-East team members.

SAM PROCESS

The SIKA-West team attended a USAID DSF Summit designed to share lessons learned since the development of the DSF. SIKA-West further explored the model at the MRRD Directors' Workshop in Herat. It was emphasized that practical tools, methodologies, and approaches be appropriate to the Afghan context. The SIKA-East program has developed more appropriate approaches and SIKA-West has used these developments as a starting point to work with Provincial RRDs and other stakeholders to further develop the Stability Analysis Mechanism (SAM) for the Western Region. Training needs for PRRD and SIKA-West staff are being assessed and developed and will be used to identify sources of instability at the local level.

PROGRAM COORDINATION

The SIKA-West team met frequently with MRRD and USAID staff to coordinate program activities. Coordination between SIKA-West and other USAID implementing partners also took place. SIKA-West also met with other organizations including: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), National Solidarity Program (NSP), National Area Based Development Program (NABDP), and organizations to collect information and ensure collaboration.

IR 1 – STABILITY ANALYSIS

The District Stability Framework was presented to the Herat PRRD March 26-27. Twenty-six participants discussed what is needed for stabilization and the current tools that will be used in the Western provinces to begin the process of increasing stability. The meeting resulted in MRRD agreeing to work with USAID to finalize selection of districts. The DSF was accepted in principle, but the recommendation was made to develop an easier and simpler version of the DSF through consensus with MRRD and PRRD. Stability Working Groups (SWGs) were determined to be the most practical method of implementation and that existing DDAs should form the SWGs. Representatives of peace councils and other key community leaders will be added to the DDA/SWG as needed.



Herat PRRD Kick Off Meeting

HIGHLIGHTS:

- In response to recommendations from the Herat Provincial Director's Kick – Off Workshop and feedback received from MRRD in Kabul and SIKA- East, a Stability Analysis Mechanism (SAM)—a simplified version of DSF—is under development. A presentation on SAM is currently being revised and will be presented in upcoming meetings in the respective provinces. SAM will replace DSF as an Afghanized model. The development of SAM is an excellent example of the working relationship between the GIRoA and SIKA- West as the program develops in response to the needs of the PRRD.
- Preparation for the Provincial roll-outs is ongoing, including compilation and translation of materials and discussions, incorporating reviews of the PRRDs and USAID.

IR2 – SERVICE PROVIDER CATALOGUE

Following consultation with PRRD, IR2 has been actively collecting and collating information for the Service Provider Catalogue (SPC) as well as the initial research for the district profiles. The SPC is intended as a practical resource for district entities and other partners to enable both mapping and utilization of services that currently exist in the Western Region. PRRD Herat has assigned a staff member as a focal point, and IR2 will work in close cooperation with the PRRD in creating the SPC. They will utilize PRRD expertise and existing information sources to develop the capacity of PRRD staff in knowledge management and dissemination.

During this quarter 72 active organizations inclusive of NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies and some private sector companies operating at provincial and district level have been identified for the SPC including updated contact information. IR2 in cooperation with the PRRD has also started working on the formulation of templates for managing data about who is doing what, where, at the provincial and district levels of the Western region of Afghanistan.

IR 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

The IR 3 Lead arrived in Herat on March 2nd and began working on a Public Relations, Outreach and Communications Strategy plan which was submitted to USAID as a deliverable, on March 21, 2012.

IR3 conducted a series of orientation and networking meetings with the PRRD including NABDP. These meetings were followed by further meetings with the UN and various NGOs and INGOs. Initial meetings aimed to enlist support in recruitment of female candidates for SIKA-West staff positions. On April 16th, the team met with the PRRD Director to discuss communications capabilities and needs within the Directorate. The IR3 Team also met with the head of the Journalism faculty and the head of the Sobhan Foundation. The meetings helped gathered information about coverage of the provincial government, resources for journalists, and Herat's media landscape as well as an agreement for the Journalism faculty to post positions for recent graduates and to recommend qualified candidates. Meetings also served as an introduction to various Herat-based CSO organizations working in the province.

During this quarter, IR3 focused on the collection and analysis of material for communications profiles of the provinces. Material from the MRRD, Herat PRRD, NSP, NABDP Afghan NGOs and INGOs, the UN, Afghan Research Center, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), CSOs and other organizations has been collected and is being collated and analyzed. Profiles will include DDA structure, identification of appropriate members for communications and public outreach coordination/cooperation, contact information, media outlets (TV, radio, and print), and relevant information from research material. Profiles will be used in developing and implementing communications strategies and messaging.

Media lists have been collected from various sources for Badghis, Farah and Herat. They were cross-referenced and updated. A list of media sources – newspaper, websites, and others (Dari and English) has been compiled.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Preparation of a one-page document summarizing SIKA-W and the SAM. Pending PRRD and USAID approval, the factsheet provides a simple guide to stabilization processes. Translated into Dari, the factsheet will be distributed to participants once the provincial roll out starts. The factsheet provides participants a reference point for future interaction.
- An initial media monitoring report for April was prepared and internally distributed. Media monitoring is a key activity for SIKA-West and will eventually be prepared at the district and provincial levels. Media monitoring indicates limited reporting on the government in the Western region, but for April, shows generally positive attitudes within the media to government activities.
- A general Western Region fact sheet providing context for the stabilization process, an overview of provincial and district structures, communications overview and a comprehensive bibliography was drafted. The backgrounder will be used internally within SIKA-West to help the ongoing framing of communications messaging.

IR 4 – SERVICE DELIVERY

IR4 has been focusing on developing a strong relationship with the PRRD emphasizing the importance of collecting and analyzing district information. At the same time IR4 has been developing the tools necessary to enable efficient support mechanisms to mitigate the sources of instability.

In collaboration with the Herat PRRD, information has been collected from NABDP and NSP on DDAs. This includes District Development Plans (DDPs) for the Western region including the six targeted districts and contact details for members of DDAs in the targeted districts. This research is currently being updated and will be the basis for understanding district politics and players. In addition, the information will aid in the development of district profiles which will facilitate SIKA-West in implementing district specific programs. It will also be used to identify service delivery projects and provide an orientation for SIKA-West staff on targeted districts.

The IR 4 Lead arrived in Herat on April 20th. On April 22nd the IR4 Lead met with PRRD directors from Herat, Farah, Ghor and Badghis to discuss the embedding of the Provincial Support Teams (PST) within the PRRD, PSTs' recruitment, as well as the expected roles and benefits to the PRRDs. Working with the PRRDs on the establishment and structure of the PSTs is key to the delivery of a functional stabilization program. IR4 has focused on developing strong networks with the PRRDs in Herat, Farah and Badghis. This meeting was followed up by a mission to the Badghis PRRD to discuss program implementation. During the meeting the Badghis Directorate of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (DRRD) agreed to provide office space for PST staff.



PST Applicants in Badghis

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The list of DDA members of Bala Baluk and Pushte-Rod districts of Farah province, Ghadis and Muqur district of Badghis province, Kushke-Robat and Shindand districts of Herat province was compiled to develop a better understanding of the composition of members. The list, compiled in collaboration with the NABDP and includes the names of female members, was translated into English.
- A draft grants manual was submitted to USAID. USAID provided input and the revised manual will incorporate existing MRRD approaches to grants and be in line with GIRoA policies. It uses NABDP's 'Kandahar model' to decentralize procurement and financial procedures through district entities and focuses on community-driven service delivery.

GENDER

In line with the Congressional mandate that USAID programs address the needs and protect the rights of Afghan women and girls, the SIKA-West PMP was aligned with the USAID/Afghanistan PMP and will measure the specific impact of the program on women and girls. SIKA-West will collect data on women's and girls' participation in the program from the onset, and will be equipped to disaggregate and report on the program's impact using the approved indicators. A gender component will be included in all reporting.

Recognizing that the involvement of women is vital to good governance, SIKA-West will continue to promote GIRoA's National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA). The Program will build on the successful efforts of other programs such as MRRD's NABDP, which promotes women's participation in DDAs, or the women's centers established in some provinces where women can socialize, receive vocational training, and hold events. SIKA-West will work to integrate gender across all four IRs by targeting awareness initiatives and training programs, improving women's access to DEs and identifying opportunities to support grant activities for women.

A Gender Officer has been hired to ensure that gender will be mainstreamed across all program activities, including training materials, guidelines for grants proposals, monitoring, operations, policies, and procedures. SIKA-West will incorporate gender components into the Service Providers Catalog and develop realistic targets for women's participation in training with DEs.

The Acting Senior Program Officer, Gender Officer, and IR 2 Resource Development Officer met with the Herat PRRD Director on April 23 to discuss gender, service provider capabilities, and needs within the Department.

DELIVERABLES

As per SIKA-West contractual deliverables, the following documents were submitted to USAID:

- Mobilization Plan
- Baseline Collection Plan
- Work Plan
- Public Relations, Communications and Outreach Plan
- Branding and Marketing Plan
- Performance Monitoring Plan
- February, March and April 2012 Monthly Reports
- Grants Manual

ADMINISTRATION

SIKA-WEST HERAT OFFICE AND RESIDENCES

In addition to program activities, SIKA-West had selected a location for the Herat office and expatriate residences, with a move-in date scheduled upon completion of compound security upgrades. However, due to the Qur'an book rioting that took place in mid-February, the landlord of the office and residence decided to cancel the agreement. Accordingly, SIKA-West worked to secure another location for the office and expatriate residence. During the Quarter, SIKA-West's temporary location has been the Nazary Hotel in Herat. In March, SIKA-West selected another location for its office and expatriate residences. The new move-in date is scheduled for May 19, 2012 and the property is highly secure, requiring minimal security improvements.

A number of key internal documents necessary for SIKA-West smooth program delivery were completed including:

- Local Employment Manual
- Ethics and Code of Conduct Policy
- Procurement Manual
- IT Technical Manual
- Budget tracking tool

RECRUITMENT

In this quarter, thirty-one employees (11 female and 20 male) have been hired and twenty-six positions, including PSTs, are under process. Eight TORs for the PST positions were drafted, with input provided by the Herat PRRD. As SIKA-West rolls out its programming, ongoing consultation with the PRRDs will facilitate recruitment in Farah and Badghis.

This approach will also apply to MRRD for the PST Manager position. The COP, IR4 Community Development Manager, and Acting Senior Program Officer met with the Directors of the Herat, Farah, Badghis, and Ghor PRRDs on April 22 to discuss PST recruitment.

USAID requested that SIKA-West strive to recruit technical and operations staff from the Western Region and to take active steps to recruit women. SIKA-West contacted local organizations including



women’s organizations and universities in an effort to ensure qualified local (both male and female) candidates are identified. Meetings were held with:

- Director, Rehabilitation and Welfare Organization for Afghanistan (RWDOA) (March 6)
- Professor, Education Faculty at Herat University, The Peace Institute (March 6)
- Chair, English Literature Faculty at Herat University (March 6)
- I-PACS Manager, Women’s Activities and Social Services Assoc. (WASSA) (March 14)
- Herat Regional Manager, Afghan Women’s Educational Center (AWEC) (March 15)

SIKA-West Recruitment Quarterly Report (1 Jan 12 - 31 April 12)				
Staff	Herat Office	Herat Province	Farah Province	Badghis Province
Hired	31	0	0	0
Females hired	11	0	0	0
Males hired	20	0	0	0

SECURITY

On February 19, AECOM’s Engagement Manager, Start-up Team Leader, and USAID’s SIKA-West COR, Program Officer, and Development Advisor met with the U.S. Mission’s Herat-based Regional Security Officer (RSO). The RSO provided an overview of the security situation and emphasized that RSO authority did not extend to USAID contractor personnel. He shared his contact information of his staff with SIKA-West and SIKA-West reciprocated by sharing their expatriate contact list.

The Qur’an burning incident at the Bagram Military base had spillover effects in Herat. Protestors marched peacefully through Herat following Friday prayers and congregated at the Governor’s palace. Inaccurate media reports circulated suggesting that protestors had been shot outside the new U.S. Consulate building in Herat. The U.S. Mission circulated a press release in response to inaccurate reports.

In February the shift to standing up the APPF workforce was underway. At the end of April the full security workforce was hired and trained and were ready for the move to the new compound. Many discussions were required with the APPF in regards to contract negotiations and procedures for payment; the transition process is ongoing.

A SIKA-West Evacuation Plan was also developed during the quarter. Herat city has been fairly quiet throughout the quarter; however in April, vehicle bombers detonated their device against the Guzara Governor’s compound, resulting in ANP deaths and injuries.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The APPF transition is ongoing.
- Security preparations for the new compound.