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STABILIZATION IN KEY AREAS (SIKA) – WEST

QUARTERLY REPORT

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STABILIZATION IN KEY AREAS (SIKA) – WEST

QUARTERLY REPORT

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Disclaimer:

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ACRONYMS

ACOR	Alternate Contracting Officer Representative
AGE	Anti-Government Elements
AREDP	Afghan Rural Enterprise and Development Program
CBD	Capacity Building Department
CDC	Community Development Councils
COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contracting Officer Representative
DCC	District Community Council
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDP	District Development Plan
DPP	District Project Portfolio
DRRD	Directorate Rural Rehabilitation and Development
DSC	District Stabilization Committee
DSF	District Stability Framework
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IR	Intermediate Result
MISTI	Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Intervention
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National Area Based Development Program
NSP	National Solidarity Program
PG	Provincial Governor
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PST	Provincial Support Team
SAM	Stability Analysis Matrix
SIKA	Stability in Key Areas
SOI	Sources of Instability
SOW	Scope of Work
SPC	Service Provider Catalogue
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

BACKGROUND

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded AECOM International Development the Stabilization in Key Areas (SIKA) – West program on January 29, 2012. The SIKA-West 18-month contract (with an additional 18-month option period) is intended to increase stability and pave the way to transition in the western provinces of Herat, Farah, Badghis and Ghor. This program will be led by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) in partnership with USAID and AECOM.

The purpose of this quarterly report is to discuss progress towards indicators and intermediate results listed in the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) and outline how the contractual objectives have been achieved during the quarter. The report will be submitted to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) authorities at the provincial and district level and used for briefings for Governors and sub-national GIROA representatives.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Quarterly Report outlines SIKA-West activities toward achieving the indicators and Intermediate Results (IR) listed in the PMP¹. Due to a number of factors during the quarter—principally, the lack of a signed Implementation Letter –SIKA-West had to modify its focus to low-key roll-out activities in the selected district of Bala Baluk in Farah Province and the ongoing capacity building and training of SIKA-West staff.

Over the duration of the quarter, the SIKA-West team moved in to its Herat headquarters office and set up provincial offices in Farah and Badghis. The SIKA-West Human Resources Department successfully recruited 72 national positions and is in the process of recruiting an additional 20 positions. Further, in June 2012, there was a change in the senior management team, with the Chief of Party (CoP) and Deputy Chief of Party (DCoP) leaving the SIKA-West project. The Grants, Subcontracts and Compliance Manager also resigned his position around the same time due to personal reasons. Currently AECOM's SIKA-West Engagement Manager is Acting CoP and AECOM's SIKA Technical Director is Acting DCoP. SIKA-West is actively recruiting for these vacant key personnel positions. SIKA-West also built foundations on which the indicators and IRs listed in the PMP would be developed. The IR leads predominantly focused on training SIKA-West staff, setting up offices, and producing training materials and data collection templates. The IR1 team supported the first District Stabilization Committee (DSC) meeting in Bala Baluk District and received guidance from USAID to modify the composition of the DSC. The IR3 team held a number of communications training sessions for provincial entities and modified training materials following feedback from USAID. The Capacity Building Department (CBD) coordinated a two-week Orientation Training for all program and operations staff that also included representatives from the Farah and Badghis Directorate Rural Rehabilitation and Development (DRRD).

The main challenge experienced by SIKA-West during the third quarter was the continuing delay of a signed Implementation Letter (IL) between MRRD and USAID. This delayed the Provincial Support

¹ The PMP, submitted in June, has not yet been approved by USAID. At the time of writing the quarterly report, USAID was in the process of modifying the scope of work in AECOM's contract to match the Request for Proposal (RFP) which resulted in the award of the SIKA-W contract to AECOM. The language included in AECOM's contract did not incorporate changes requested by MRRD. Once USAID processes an amendment to the contract, AECOM will update the PMP and Work Plan to reflect the changes in the Scope of Work (SOW).

Teams (PSTs) in obtaining the necessary information from government counterparts for project implementation. The project submitted a Justification for Excusable Delay to USAID on July 12 and received concurrence on July 22, 2012. Deliverables submitted during the quarter included the SIKA-West Work Plan, Monthly Reports for May, June and July, ongoing Weekly Reports, updating the Afghan Info Database, and the first Quarterly Report.

INTERMEDIATE RESULT 1

District Entities understand sources of instability affecting communities across Districts.

During this quarter, the IR1 team focused on building foundations for future project activities and rolling out in to the identified districts. In consultation with USAID and MRRD, the IR1 team chose Bala Baluk as a pilot district, allowing tools and training materials to be designed, implemented and refined during a controlled roll-out process. In May, AECOM's Stability Expert, Richard Hill, joined the SIKA-West team in Herat for two weeks to provide assistance with developing and adapting stabilization training and materials. As part of this assistance, the Stability Analysis Mechanism (SAM) was further refined and incorporated in to the IR1 training program.

Also in May, the Bala Baluk Engagement Plan was submitted to USAID for feedback, and at the time of writing the quarterly report, the plan was in the modification process. In coordination with all four IR teams and other SIKA-West departments, the Engagement Plan is expected to be resubmitted during the month of August.

In late June, SIKA-West staff coordinated the first meeting of the Bala Baluk DSC. Following this initial meeting and subsequent USAID briefing, the Alternate Contracting Officer's Representative (ACOR) provided guidance that the size and scope of the DSC should be expanded to include a greater cross section of community members and not be limited to the District Development Assembly (DDA). A follow-up meeting is scheduled to take place towards the end of August.

From the initial meeting, three Sources of Instability (SOIs) were identified; namely: SOI#1, lack of respect for community religious elders from the Afghan Government and the international community; SOI#2, poverty and unemployment; and SOI#3, lack of a district *madarasa* and schools. Additional SOIs and mitigating activities will be identified in future DSC meetings and will be reported during the next quarter.

Table 1 below demonstrates the progress of the SIKA-West Performance Management Plan (PMP) targets. The delays in finalizing and signing the Implementation Letter (IL) between USAID and Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) and MRRD has resulted in AECOM's not being allowed to roll out to all but one of the six key districts identified by MRRD and USAID. SIKA-West is neither able to meet the targets set in the PMP nor implement the activities included in the work plan. Delays have been attributed partly to ongoing negotiations between the Chief of the Afghan Commission for Security Transition and the Minister of the MRRD regarding the IL. Despite these setbacks, the SIKA-West management staff are confident that the program, working closely with MRRD counterparts, will reach all proposed IR1 target indicators on schedule for year one provided the IL is signed.

Table 1 - IR1 Performance Management Plan Targets

IR #	IR Description	Target Year 1	Actual May - July 2012	Cumulative Total	% of Target
1.1	Number of stabilization work sessions conducted for district entities	88	0	1	1.13%
1.2	Increase in percentage of SIKA-West target districts where DEs demonstrate use of the SAM methodology to identify and address sources of instability.	90%	0	0	0%
1.3	Number of activities planned against sources of instability identified through SAM stabilization work sessions in SIKA-West districts.	9	0	0	0%
1.4	Number of people participating in SAM stabilization work sessions.	1,760	0	0	0%
1.5	Number of target districts with stabilization programming executed against identified sources of instability.	6	0	0	0%
1.6	Number of target districts in which SAM is utilized to develop programs.	6	0	0	0%

Note: these are proposed targets by SIKA-West in the PMP, which is yet to be approved by USAID

INTERMEDIATE RESULT 2

District Entities understand what organizations and provincial line departments work within their geographic areas what kind of services they provide, and how the District Entities can access those services.

The IR2 team spent the quarter laying the foundation for program implementation and producing the Service Provider Catalogue (SPC). The quarter was spent finalizing the SPC and District Profile (DP) information collection tools, training SIKA-West PST staff on data collection, and entering the data collected in identified districts. As the SPC and DP are important documents that will affect the decision-making process of district entities, all PST staff, regardless of which IR they support, were recruited to collect information from provincial and district government departments and NGOs operating in the area.

At this time it is estimated that a first draft SPC for Bala Baluk District will be produced in early August for review by the IR3 lead.

Table 2 below demonstrates the progress of the IR2 PMP targets. A delayed roll out in to the initial key districts has resulted in SIKA-West not meeting the majority of the PMP targets and unable to implement the activities included in the work plan. Delays, as noted above, have been due to USAID's ongoing negotiations over the IL with GIROA. Despite these setbacks, the SIKA-West management staff are confident that the program, working closely with MRRD counterparts, will reach all proposed IR2 target indicators on schedule for year one provided the IL is signed.

Table 2 – IR2 Performance Management Plan Targets

IR #	IR Description	Target Year 1	Actual May - July 2012	Cumulative Total	% of Target
2.1	Number of DE's using the Service Provider Catalog	18	0	0	0%
2.2	Number of Technical Assistance measures provided by SIKA-West using SPC	36	0	0	0%
2.3	Number of District Portfolio Project activities that address stability in district implemented in collaboration with providers identified in SPC	5	0	0	0%
2.4	Number of people who reported receipt of information provided by District Entities about services via: visits, radio, TV, e-mail (as available), letter	26,400	NTR	NTR	NTR
2.5	Number of training workshops held in Service Provider Catalog usage for District Entities.	9	0	0	0%

Note: these are targets put forward by SIKA-West in the PMP, which is yet to be approved by USAID

INTERMEDIATE RESULT 3

District Entities improve their capabilities to communicate and demonstrate a measurable improvement in how often their constituents or community based organizations come to them to request resolution of their problems.

In early May, the IR3 team developed a communications needs assessment, piloted the process with the Herat DRRD in late May, and rolled it out in Farah in mid-July. The assessment is ongoing across the provincial authorities and district entities, and aims to provide a clear picture of communication capabilities and needs. Assessments are being compiled and analyzed and will provide a basis for training and mentoring. Results from the initial assessment indicate that the main roadblocks toward effective communications are the lack of security and ineffective intra-governmental communications systems, including the lack of follow up. Training needs that participants specified include communications training and management and report-writing skills.

The IR3 department also prepared and delivered a number of “Introduction to Communications Basics” training sessions to provincial entities. The curriculum covered preliminary communications theories and practical ways to implement these in the workplace. To engage participants and enhance learning, the training involved the use of role-play and group work. Participants had various levels of prior knowledge and the workshop was structured to take this in to account. The DRRD was keen on additional trainings, so the first session was followed up at the beginning of June with an “Introduction to Internal Communications” training. The training covered the basics of internal and intra-governmental communications. Eleven participants, including three women, attended the training from various organizations such as the DRRD, National Solidarity Program (NSP), National Area Based Development Program (NABDP) and the Afghan Rural Enterprise Development Program (ARDEP). The workshop had three aims: understanding communications systems within the Provincial Authority; the development of suitable training modules; and revising intra-governmental systems in order to improve communications. Another communications skill-building workshop was held in mid-July for 20 Provincial Government officials in Farah Province, including the Provincial Governor’s spokesperson, six staff members from the Farah DRRD, as well as employees from the Departments of Water and Power, Health, Women’s Affairs, Public Works and Information and Culture.

As a follow-up to these training sessions, IR3 staff worked with the Farah DRRD during the last week of July to develop a draft communications plan for the province. The participants identified key DRRD audiences and effective means to reach each one.

The first draft of the Badghis Communications Profile was drafted and circulated in late May. The aim of the profile was to provide contextual information about the province, including simple situational analysis, while prioritizing communications infrastructure and local preferences. PST staff reported that information has been challenging to collect, and while the second quarterly report was being drafted, data collection was ongoing for all three provinces and the six targeted districts. The profile offers a snapshot of both the population’s involvement in media and the identities of the current media players in Badghis.

IR3 staff continued monitoring local media outlets related to Afghanistan and produced a weekly media monitoring report. The focus of the weekly report is to provide an overview of online publications and Herat newspapers while highlighting GIRoA initiatives in the Western region of the country. The distribution of the weekly report is internal.

At the start of the month of Ramadan, the IR3 team supported the preparation of a television promotion to convey greetings from the Farah DRRD to the people of Farah Province. The production quality video clip was shown on Afghan television to support DRRD’s efforts to become more visible to the Farah public. The 45-second message was aired twice each evening in late-July.

Table 3 below demonstrates the progress towards the SIKA-West PMP targets. A delayed roll out in to the initial key districts has resulted in SIKA-West not meeting the majority of the PMP targets and unable to implement the activities included in the work plan. Delays, as noted above, have been due to USAID’s ongoing negotiations over the IL with GIRoA. Despite these setbacks, SIKA-West management staff are confident that the program, working closely with MRRD counterparts, will reach all proposed IR3 target indicators on schedule for year one provided the IL is signed.

Table 3 – IR3 Performance Management Plan Targets

IR #	IR Description	Target Year 1	Actual May - July 2012	Cumulative Total	% of Target
3.1	Percent increase in the number of regular meetings held between Provincial authorities and District Entities	30%	NTR	NTR	NTR
3.2	Percent increase in the district residents’ reporting that District Entities listen to their grievances	15%	NTR	NTR	NTR
3.3	Number of DEs with a communication strategy in place	9	0	NTR	NTR
3.4	Number of DEs conducting public outreach/public consultation	9	0	NTR	NTR
3.5	Number of trainings conducted for DEs in communication	36	0	0	0%

Note: these are targets put forward by SIKA-West in the PMP, which is yet to be approved by USAID

INTERMEDIATE RESULT 4

District Entities are able to deliver better basic services to their communities in order to build confidence in the District Entities in a timely manner. (Grants under Contract for small community projects that are not available through other mechanisms)

The IR4 lead spent the quarter recruiting and training staff and producing various tracking forms and templates.

During the quarter, IR4 staff continued working on developing templates such as:

- The District Project Portfolios (DPP);
- Agreement on Prioritization of Stabilization Activities;
- Responsibilities of MRRD, DDA, CDC and SIKA-West to Promote Stability;
- Authorization of Financial Representative;
- Selection of CDC / Working Group Responsible for Project Implementation;
- Project Handover and Maintenance Forms;
- Labor Attendance Sheet;
- Other tracking, inspection and data collection forms related to grant implementation and SOI mitigation.

Also during the quarter, the IR4 team also started the process of stakeholder mapping – i.e., identifying the main stakeholders in Bala Baluk District. These included officials from District Entities, members of the District Development Assemblies, CDC members, teachers and other community figures. This list will be used to allow the DSC to be more representative of Bala Baluk community members.

The IR4 team also worked on producing a draft ethnic composition map of Bala Baluk District, enabling the Farah PST to identify Shewan, Dahzak and Grani Villages as potential locations for the implementation of SIKA-West service delivery options.

Table 4 below demonstrates the progress of the SIKA-West Performance Management Plan (PMP) targets. A delayed roll out in to the initial key districts has resulted in SIKA-West not meeting the majority of the PMP targets and unable to implement the activities included in the work plan. Delays, as noted above, have been due to USAID’s ongoing negotiations over the IL with GIROA. Despite these setbacks, SIKA-West management staff are confident that the program, working closely with MRRD counterparts, will reach all proposed IR4 target indicators on schedule for year one provided the IL is signed.

Table 4 – IR4 Performance Management Plan Targets

IR #	IR Description	Target Year 1	Actual May - July 2012	Cumulative Total	% of Target
4.1	Number of grants activities implemented against SOIs	72	0	0	0%
4.2	Percentage of population in targeted districts reporting increased satisfaction with GIROA basic services	15%	NTR	NTR	NTR
4.3	Percent increase of district residents reporting	25%	NTR	NTR	NTR

IR #	IR Description	Target Year 1	Actual May - July 2012	Cumulative Total	% of Target
	basic services in target districts are delivered in a fair and transparent manner				
4.4	Number of person days of employment created through SIKA-West interventions	9,000	0	0	0%
4.5a	Number of grants activities with community contribution	72	0	0	0%
4.5b	Dollar value of community contribution	\$216,000	0	0	0%
4.6	Number of trainings implemented through grants	1	0	0	0%
4.7	Number of person-days of trainings implemented through grants	40	0	0	0%

Note: These are targets proposed by SIKA-West in the PMP, which is yet to be approved by USAID

CAPACITY BUILDING & GENDER

In May, the Capacity Building & Gender Lead joined the SIKA-West team and was tasked with ensuring that the program meets all contractual gender requirements. As part of capacity building and staff understanding of SIKA-West’s objectives and administrative procedures, the Capacity Building Department (CBD) organized an Orientation Training for all 22 program staff from Herat, Farah and Badghis in mid-June. Four staff from the Farah and Badghis DRRD also attended the training, during which time all participants were addressed by the USAID COR and ACOR. Operations staff received a condensed version of the training in mid-July.

During the orientation training, the provincial support teams received instruction from all IRs, Gender and Capacity Building, and Monitoring & Evaluation.

In addition, the CBD team continued to develop Gender Mainstreaming materials for DST and PST trainings and provided ongoing support to all departments. To date, a total of 33 Training Modules covering all the IRs, M&E and Gender have been completed and translated in to Dari and Pashto.

The CBD also conducted a needs assessment on required skills and trainings for DRRD staff integrated with the Farah PST. To support capacity building, the CBD plans to mirror the existing DRRD organizational structure with the relevant SIKA-West staff.

In order to track internal training, the CBD worked closely with M&E staff to develop an Excel based SIKA-West Training Tracker, to ensure that all staff receives relevant training in a timely manner. This tracker is for internal use only and is designed to help managers build and monitor staff capacity. A training calendar has also been developed that will track all trainings per month, both internal and external, in order to guide resource allocation.

Table 5 below demonstrates the progress of the SIKA-West Performance Management Plan (PMP) targets. A delayed roll out in to the initial key districts has resulted in SIKA-West not meeting the majority of the PMP targets and unable to implement the activities included in the work plan. Delays, as noted above, have been due to USAID’s ongoing negotiations over the IL with GIROA. Despite these setbacks, SIKA-West management staff are confident that the program, working closely with MRRD counterparts, will reach all proposed Gender target indicators on schedule for year one provided the IL is signed.

Table 5 – Gender PMP Program Objectives

IR#	IR Description	Target Year 1	Actual May – July 2012	Cumulative Total	#% of Target
#6	Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources and basic services. (assets, credit, income or employment)	2%	0	0	0%
#7	Number of interventions that increased participation of women in district entities activities	27	0	0	0%

Note: these are targets proposed by SIKA-West in the PMP, which is yet to be approved by USAID

CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

As mentioned above, the major challenge to the implementation of the SIKA-West program during the quarter was the lack of a signed IL, which delayed the roll-out to the districts and caused some setbacks on the collection of information for the SPC and District Profiles. The change in senior management had limited impact on activities, and IR and PST managers are continuing to follow the Work Plan under the guidance of the Acting COP. USAID was supportive of the SIKA-West program during this transition.

One lesson learned by SIKA-West came as a result of guidance provided by the ACOR regarding the composition of the Bala Baluk DSC. Thus far, the IR1 team has been collaborating with members of the Bala Baluk DDA. However, USAID requested that SIKA-West expand the composition of the DSC in order to include other members and leaders of the community. SIKA-West is cognizant that such an approach must be conducted in a manner sensitive to the needs of the existing members of the DSC. Further, USAID has stated that SIKA-West staff needs to be able to effectively and efficiently communicate the program objectives when presenting the program to MRRD counterparts, District Entities and the general community. Consequently, SIKA-West focused staff training on the program throughout the quarter.

MONITORING & EVALUATION

The M&E Lead joined the SIKA-West team in Herat in late May, and by the end of the quarter, five out of the proposed six M&E Officers had been recruited. During the quarter, the M&E department continued working on developing reporting templates, the M&E database, and an M&E training handbook. The M&E team was also responsible for producing the deliverable weekly and monthly reports to USAID as well as collecting and uploading information to the Afghan Info Database and working with the DCOP to produce the SIKA-West Work Plan.

Ongoing training for SIKA-West staff provided by the M&E Department included photography training, reporting training, and SIKA-West Indicator training. In June, the M&E Manager also met with the Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Intervention (MISTI) COP to receive an update on the progress of data collection as well as determine any gaps in baseline survey collection that would need to be filled by SIKA-West.

HR & RECRUITMENT

By the end of the quarter, 72 national staff had been recruited (27 female and 45 male). Twenty positions are currently vacant and being recruited.

Table 6 – SIKA-West Local National Recruitment

SIKA-West Recruitment				
Staff	Herat Office	Herat PST	Farah PST	Badghis PST
Hired	52	6	9	5
In Process	11	2	3	4
Females	22	2	2	1
Males	30	4	7	4

Near the end of June, there was a change in the management team, as the Chief of Party (COP) and Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP) left SIKA-West. The Grants Manager also resigned his position around the same time citing personal reasons. On July 11th, it was announced that the AECOM SIKA-West Engagement Manager would fill the role of Acting COP for a six month period. AECOM is actively recruiting for a new DCoP. As AECOM proposed, two DCoPs will be engaged, one expatriate and one Afghan national. USAID has requested that the expatriate DCOP mentor the Afghan national for a period of six months and then phase out, transitioning to only one Afghan national DCOP position.

In mid-June, a hiring freeze was placed by USAID on the program until an internal audit of all recruitment related files could be conducted. Following the audit of the project in July, the freeze was lifted. The critical Senior Program Officer position is also being recruited, and qualified candidates are being short listed. In order to obtain the best possible candidates for this position, SIKA-West will be casting its recruiting net nationwide rather than limiting applications to the western provinces. In the interim, the Capacity Building Officer has been fulfilling the role of the Senior Program Officer position.

In mid-July, the AECOM Regional HR Compliance Manager and Knowledge Management Specialist arrived at the Herat Office to provide support, training and guidance in recruitment and HR policy implementation.

DELIVERABLES

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

- Quarterly Report
- May, June and July 2012 Monthly Reports
- Weekly reports
- Updated Afghan Info Database
- SIKA-West Work Plan

SECURITY

During the quarter, SIKA-West was operating at amber status and had zero incidents that affected the program to report. The Western Region is considered to be a medium threat to international operations. The West remains largely calm, with activity focused in Farah Province and north of the Kohsan-Maymana Road. The majority of Anti Government Elements (AGE) continues to target fuel supply convoys along Highway 1. This pattern is expected to remain constant.