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RAMP UP-North Holds Successful Mayors' Conference

Mayors and their Finance Managers attended the RU-N Mayors' Conference, where topics such as budget preparation and business registration were discussed.



“...the environment [in the North] is safe and [we welcome] development work...”

—Yunus Moqim, Mayor of Mazar-e-Sharif

Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

The RAMP UP-North Mayors' Conference was, for most northern mayors, the first chance for mayors to meet each other, as well as the first time General Directorate of Municipal Affairs (GDMA) and Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) officials addressed northern mayors exclusively. The conference was a rare opportunity for these mayors to speak openly and directly with their leaders from Kabul and to develop relationships with their counterparts across the North.

Mr. Popal, the Head of the GDMA, pointed out that municipal revenue increased by 70% this year, and that with increased revenue, mayors had an increased obligation to provide improved services. He added that, in the future, Afghan mayors will be elected officials, and that they must work with RU-N to improve the quality of services to gain the support of the electorate. He wholeheartedly supported the efforts of RU-N in assisting mayors to do their jobs and instructed mayors to cooperate with RU-N staff.

The conference was also an opportunity for the mayors to discuss challenges directly with Mr. Popal. Some of the main challenges they face are related to budget preparation and their relationship with other sub-national structures such as the *Moustoufiat* (the provincial-level branch of the Ministry of Finance).

The second day of the conference focused on two key RU-N program initiatives -- municipal budget preparation and business registration and licensing.

During the budget session, GDMA and RU-N covered topics including the GDMA budget calendar, the recently completed budget Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), as well as all relevant forms and checklists. Mayors had the opportunity to ask questions and clarify the process of budget formulation.

RU-N also provided informative sessions on business registration and licensing. Though some northern municipalities have already implemented business registration with the help of other donors, RU-N will launch a full-service, business registration and licensing program in five municipalities—Aybak, Faizabad, Pul-e-Khumri, Sar-e-Pul, and Taloqan. Temporary staff will be hired to register small businesses, compile data, and deliver license payment forms. At the same time, municipal staff will be trained to maintain the system.

The Mayor of Mazar-e-Sharif, in his opening speech stated, “...the environment [in the North] is safe and [we welcome] development work. I hope this conference is the beginning [of] more attention [for the North]...” Indeed RU-N plans to hold future Mayors' Conferences on a quarterly basis.