

WEEKLY REPORT

Program Highlights

Stabilization Programming:

Preparations were ongoing for future District Stabilization Committee (DSC) meetings, including the important Bala Baluk meeting aimed at bolstering community support for the Bakhsh Abad Dam project.

Communications and Outreach:

Communications capacity building training was provided for senior officials in Shindand District. Focus group sessions were conducted in Herat Province aimed at refining the draft Bala Baluk Service Provider Catalogue (SPC). The first draft of the Moqur District Profile was prepared and is being translated.

Capacity Building:

Computer literacy and adult English literacy training proposals requested by the Farah DRRD were shared with MRRD for their concurrence with the intent to conduct the trainings post Eid.

Community Development:

Three DPP projects were approved for villages in Farah Province, five additional projects are undergoing final internal review and another six projects are in the pre-feasibility stage. Projects include literacy training, vocational training, and repairs/refurbishment on several important community buildings.

Administration:

To date, 101 employees (29 female and 72 male) have been hired and 50 positions are in the hiring process.

Farah Province

Summary of Achievements

As part of the grants process, the Community Development Department conducted a pre-feasibility assessment and preliminary budget for a proposed water intake project in Bala Baluk District. USAID approved three priority DPP projects; eleven other projects are in various stages of review and assessment. As part of resource development the Communications Department obtained positive feedback from a focus group testing the clarity of proposed illustrations for the SPC catalogue. This feedback will be used to redraft the Bala Baluk SPC, as well as for future SPCs in other districts. Women were recruited in Bala Baluk to act as volunteers to gather information on gender-focused concerns in the village. To date, 16 employees (2 female and 14 male) have been recruited by SIKA-West HR, and 16 proposed positions are still vacant.

Specific Milestones Achieved

- PST Communications and Public Outreach Officers conducted a focus group on October 22nd – 23rd to assess the clarity of the draft illustrations to be included in the Service Provider Catalogue (SPC), which are aimed at audiences with poor or no literacy skills. Five Bala Baluk elders, three members of the Bala Baluk DSC, and two representatives of the Farah DRRD were interviewed at the Farah DRRD.
- Communications staff also finalized a brochure entitled “Violence Against Women” for the Farah Department of Women’s Affairs (DoWA), which will be released for Elimination of Violence against Women’s Day on November 25th. The brochure will be used to educate women on what services DoWA may provide to women who suffer from violence at home.
- On October 20th-21st Bala Baluk District Stabilization (DST) staff conducted a pre-feasibility study of a proposed water intake shared by Tapa Sadat and Farah Rod, collecting the required measurements, photos, and local material costs for the Herat HQ Community Development Department to prepare a draft estimate.
- The Herat HQ Stabilization Programing Department conducted a mission to Farah to meet with the PST and guide coordination efforts to support the *Ulema’s* in getting 50 pro-Taliban *Mullahs* to the next Bala Baluk DSC meeting, scheduled for November 4th. During the mission, SIKA-West staff met with the *Ulema* and key *Mullahs* in Bala Baluk. The next DSC meeting will focus on a discussion with the *Ulema* on potential mitigation activities (e.g. speaking in support of the government).
- Farah PST staff met with the acting head of the Farah Irrigation Department, who was invited to attend a meeting on November 11th in Bala Baluk to discuss issues with completing the Bakhsh Abad Dam, and to obtain community support for the project.
- Interviews were conducted at the Farah DRRD offices on October 21st, in coordination with the DRRD Director, to recruit applicants for the positions of PST Community Development Technician, PST District Support Team (DST) Pusht Rod Team Leader, and DST Pusht Rod Community Development Technician. From a total of 21 applicants, three people were selected and offers will be sent post-*Eid*.
- The Community Development Department received consent from Farah DRRD Director for Bala Baluk District Project Portfolios 1 and 2 on October 24th.
- PST staff collected data to update the Bala Baluk District Profile, including information on tribes, political parties, and education. It is expected that the District Profile will be complete after this last installment of information.
- PST staff prepared a list of six new villages in Bala Baluk District proposed by the Bala Baluk DSC, including Pihu, Aminabad, Safarak, Nawabad, Mian Kuh, and Kal Qala. In these villages, three intake projects and three community center refurbishment projects have been proposed.
- SIKA-West, working with the DRRD, purchased 125 literacy training books for women for the five literacy courses in Shiwan, Ganjabad, Kanesk, Grani, and Dehzak villages on behalf of the Literacy Section of the Education Department.

- SAM training was presented to 14 people from the DRRD, Bala Baluk DST, and Farah PST staff.
- The Farah PST Gender Officer recruited 13 women to act as information gatherers focused on gender-specific concerns in Bala Baluk District. These women will coordinate their activities with SIKA-West, the DRRD, and DoWA.

Challenges/Action

- The Farah SIKA-West PST office received a signed letter from 45 Bala Baluk *Shura* members recommending a local candidate as the Team Leader of the Pusht Rod District Support Team. In response, they were told by the PST Manager that recruitment of candidates was based solely on qualifications and previous work experience.
- Accommodation for Afghan colleagues travelling to Farah is still a challenge, and the Operations Department is still working on locating a secure guesthouse.
- Working space in the Farah DRRD is an issue and the PST Manager met with the Farah DRRD Director to discuss solutions, including the proposal of three CONNEX units. Herat HQ is now obtaining cost estimates for the units.
- The Farah Gender Officer is finding it difficult to re-establish contact with the original female members of the Bala Baluk District Development Assembly (DDA) in order to include them in DSC discussions. The Gender Officer will continue working with existing DSC members and DoWA to locate these women.
- The 15 vocational and literacy programs identified for 550 people in Bala Baluk and Pusht-e Rod Districts have been delayed pending MRRD input and USAID approval. SIKA-West is in a holding pattern until after the *Eid* period.
- Security concerns in Bala Baluk District continue to be a major concern for SIKA-West national staff traveling by road to and through the district center. For example, on October 21st, the Taliban stopped a bus in Bala Baluk District traveling from Herat City to Farah City and killed two people on the bus.
- Badghis Province DRRD and PST eagerly await instruction from MRRD to initiate the SIKA-West program in key districts. The Badghis DRRD Director is communicating with his headquarters in order to expedite the process.

Forward Looking

- National staff will be on *Eid* public holidays for most of next week

Badghis Province

Summary of Achievements

During the week, all SPC data collected from governmental and non-governmental organizations was compiled and sent to the Herat HQ Resource Development Department. The Stabilization Programming Department also conducted a number of trainings covering SAM, DSM, and DSC formation for the Badghis PST. To date, 11 employees (1 female and 10 male) have been recruited by SIKA-West HR, and 12 proposed positions are still vacant.

Specific Milestones Achieved

- Three comprehensive trainings, including DSC Orientation, Stabilization Analysis Matrix (SAM), and District Stabilization Matrix (DSM), were conducted by HQ Stability Program Officer at the PST/DRRD office. The presenter gave clear examples of lessons learned in Farah Province districts in order to better explain the stability program.
- The Communications Department completed the first draft of the Moqur District Profile. The profile is prepared in Dari language and was sent for translation. The first draft of the Muqur District Profile will be shared with all departments by mid-November.

Challenges/Action

- A shortage of electricity is causing issues at the Badghis PST. Currently, the Badghis DRRD and NABDP turn on the generator at 8:30 and turn it off by the end of their work at 3:30; therefore, the PST does not have any electricity before and after this time.

Forward Looking

- National staff will be on *Eid* public holidays for most of next week

Herat Province

Summary of Achievements

During the week the Communications Department conducted its first two training sessions in Shindand District for 41 people from the District Governor's Office. As well the department conducted two focus groups in Shindand to test the clarity of illustrations proposed for the SPC. PST staff were formally introduced to DRRD staff, and counterparts were identified for future capacity building efforts. To date, 10 employees (2 female and 8 male) have been recruited by SIKA-West HR, and 12 proposed positions are still vacant.

Specific Milestones Achieved

- PST Communications and Public Outreach Officers conducted two focus groups on October 20th in Herat and Shindand to assess the clarity of the draft illustrations to be included in the Service Provider Catalogue (SPC), which are aimed at audiences with poor or no literacy skills. Eleven female customers with differing literacy levels were interviewed in the Herat market place, and seven males were interviewed at the Shindand District Governor's Office.
- The Communications Department also conducted two full-day trainings on building communications skills for senior managers and staff at the Shindand District Government Offices. On October 21st, 20 high ranking managers attended the training, including the district mayor, members of DDA, and the Radio Tanin Manager. On October 21st, 21 lower-level officials participated. Both trainings covered the main elements of communication, messaging, and why communication matters in the daily work of district government. The Director of the Haj Department found the training so helpful on the first day that he needed to be persuaded not to return on the second day and to instead send another staff member.

- During training, the Communications Department also took the opportunity to conduct a needs assessment to determine existing communications protocols, the quantity and quality of communications efforts, and gaps in the existing communications system at the district level.

Challenges/Action

- The Shindand District Governor's compound came under attack the night of October 20th, while SIKA-West staff were staying there during the communications training described above. An hour long gun battle, including an RPG landing in an adjoining room, did not deter the communications team from continuing their training the next morning.

Forward Looking

- National staff will be on *Eid* public holidays for most of next week

Images



SIKA-West PST member conducts training for officials and managers of Shindand District Government



SIKA-West PST member conducts training for officials and managers of Shindand District Government