



BI-WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

January 24, 2008

Nomination for Director of Foreign Assistance Memo

- On January 14 at approximately 6:30pm four attackers armed with Kalishnikovs and grenades attacked Kabul's Serena Hotel, a popular meeting place for international aid workers. Media are reporting that six people died and several were wounded in the attack for which the Taliban claims responsibility. Thor Hesla, a USAID contractor with Bearing Point working on the Capacity Development Program, was killed in the attack. USAID/Afghanistan sends our condolences to his family and the families of victims.

Security

- On January 5, a convoy including USAID contractor Advanced Engineering Associates International, Inc., traveling on the Kandahar to Kabul ring road, was attacked by an Anti-Government Element (AGE) group. The Guard Force fired back with machine guns and anti-tank rockets and drove the AGE away. There were no injuries but one of the escort vehicles sustained slight damage.

Office of Alternative Development and Agriculture



- Alternative Development Program/North (ADP/N) continues to facilitate the export of nuts and dried fruit from central Badakhshan. Total sales from the fruit and nut program in Baharak, Jurm, and Shohada are now \$253,870 for the season.
- The 134 beneficiaries of Alternative Development Program/East's Annual Horticulture Programs began selling snow peas, cabbage, beets, and broccoli at a rate of 40,000 per week worth \$14,000. Cumulative sales for the current season surpassed \$132,000. Current estimates suggest that sales have reached \$30,000 per week and are expected to climb until the end of the current harvest in February.
- USAID's Alternative Development Program/South (ADP/S) deployed two Afghan national cash-for-work project managers to the ISAF Forward Operating Base in Musa Quala. USAID is managing worker registration and overseeing payments for a cash-for-work program that is employing hundreds of Afghans every workday. USAID's technical expertise on cash-for-work



has allowed the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to demonstrate their authority in a post-kinetic environment.

- Formal factory operations have begun for the Alternative Livelihoods/East-sponsored Riyaz Packaging Factory, which has the production capacity of 5,000 corrugated and wooden boxes per day, utilizing 31 new full-time employees. These boxes will initially be used for fruit and vegetable exports under the “Pride of the Eastern Region” brand.

Office of Democracy and Governance

- The Asia Foundation signed a lease securing the new interim Media Center for use by the Office of the Presidential Spokesman on January 6. The Center will undergo renovations sponsored by the British before occupancy on or around March 2008. The Center will serve as the strategic communications center for President Karzai.
- USAID sponsored a National Core Curriculum Conference during January 5-8, in Kabul, resulting in an agreement on a core curriculum for law and Sharia law faculties. The conference was a culmination of curriculum discussions held in Kabul and at provincial law and Sharia law faculties in Afghanistan.
- Certificates of completion were issued on January 9 to sixteen government representatives who completed the USAID-sponsored Training Needs Assessment course. The Chairman of the Independent Administration Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), the Senior Advisor of IARCSC, and TV and radio journalists participated in a certificate distribution ceremony. The certified staff will be assigned to work in various ministries to conduct training needs assessments designed to assist ministries with developing training plans.

Office of Economic Growth

- The Baghlan Investment and Finance Cooperative (IFC), supported by the USAID ARIES credit program, recently completed its distribution of food items to survivors of the November suicide attack in Baghlan, which killed six parliamentarians and more than 50 residents of Baghlan province, including school teachers and students. The assistance, funded through the IFC’s Zakat (almsgiving) reserve account, was provided to 163 families who each received 10kg of cooking oil, 25kg of rice, 7kg of beans, 4kg of tomato paste, 7kg of sugar, and 1kg of tea. Additionally, education accounts were established for 99 children directly injured, and development accounts were established for 64 families who lost children. *Note:* IFCs are designed to be Sharia-compliant financial institutions. Zakat, as one of the five pillars of Islam, is an obligation for individuals and institutions. It is a charitable donation given annually to the disadvantaged and poor members of communities.
- USAID’s Afghanistan Small and Medium Enterprise Development (ASMED) project sponsored Afghanistan’s participation at the South Asian Countries Commodity Trade Fair that was held in Beijing, China from Dec. 28 – Dec 30, 2007. The show was the first of a planned series of such



trade shows and the Afghan booths made a great impression. Twenty Afghan traders from a variety of sectors such as carpets, pomegranates, and stone handicrafts attended the show. ASMED's efforts were coordinated with the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan.

- With support from the USAID's Land Titling and Economic Restructuring Activity program, three liquidation auctions were recently held; all three properties were sold at well above the starting price. There were seven bidders for both parcels, indicating that the divestiture program is attracting several investors from the private sector.
- USAID/BearingPoint Appeals and Litigation Team, advising the Afghanistan Customs Department (ACD) in the Ministry of Finance, has provided extensive training on customs law, developed and reviewed new customs procedures, and settled numerous customs cases. By the end of 2007, 320 custom officers were covering more than 20 border posts and entry points across Afghanistan (Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and Jalalabad). The Team also settled nearly 300 cases between traders and the ACD. The cases ranged from smuggling, corruption, and fraud to improper invoices, certificates of origin and customs storage issues.
- On December 26, the Afghanistan Rural Finance Center (ARFC) signed a loan contract for US\$228,000 with Saleh Marble Factory in Nangarhar Province. The loan funds will be used to purchase equipment and working capital. The factory will purchase a marble cutting machine and expand its current operation to provide additional employment opportunities for more than 120 individuals. As of September 2007, the USAID ARIES program had created more than 14,000 jobs through ARFC and other projects in the Nangarhar province.

Provincial Reconstruction Team

- On December 29, the Deputy Ministers of Mines & Industries and Public Works visited the Task Force Cincinnatus area of responsibility and met with the command to discuss the production of minerals in Jabul Siraj and road construction projects in Bamyan, Parwan, and Panjshir provinces.
- During the week of December 30, a conference was held in Jalalabad chaired by IRoA Education Minister and Task Force Bayonet Commander to discuss coordination on education programs for the Eastern region. Minister Haneef Atmar stated that his top priority was expanding teacher training and he asked for assistance with salary support for trainers at teacher training colleges.
- Six USAID-funded rapid response projects in Panjway are currently receiving local contractor bids through USAID implementing partner, DAI. Field Program Officers notified the DAI Program Coordinator that there is a need to identify projects in the Zhari district of Helmand province. Coordination with the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team and Task Force Kandahar is going well and all parties are pleased with the synchronization of efforts.



Office of Social Sector Development

- COMPRI-A, an USAID social marketing project, signed a national distribution agreement with Afghan National Distribution and Warehousing for improving access to and sales of its social marketing products (condoms, oral re-hydration solution, chorine) into more rural and less stable provinces and districts of the country.

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BI-WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

January 20-February 2, 2008

NOMINATION FOR DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE MEMO

- **Journalist Sentenced:** A journalist in Mazar-e-Sharif was recently sentenced to death for supposedly downloading and commenting on Quranic text. The journalist was a participant in a USAID-sponsored international journalism training program in July 2007. According to Tom Casey, Department of State Deputy Spokesman, on January 25: "We are concerned about this sentence that was handed down to a reporter for basically practicing his profession and we wouldn't want to see any actions taken that would limit his or anyone else's freedom of the press or freedom of expression. This is an issue that we are raising with the Afghan Government. I know our Ambassador, Bill Wood, intends to discuss this with officials there and it is something we are going to be watching closely. Now fortunately, I understand there is an appeal process that is underway and certainly, we are going to be looking at that very carefully and hopefully, there will be a different outcome to this than the one that's presently there."
- **Afghans Exhibit Carpets:** USAID's small and medium enterprise development project and the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan sent 28 Afghan carpet producers to the Domotex carpet trade show on January 12-15, 2008, in Hanover, Germany. Afghan producers filled much of one of the huge hangers at the fair, with 14 stands and one large tent containing 4,000 square meters of carpets, all of which were sold by the end of the show and generated more than \$5.2 million in export deals. The Best Modern Carpet Design award was presented to Mr. Haji Nabi, owner of Zinnat Carpets. The winning rug, dubbed "Bamiyan" style, is the first "Made in Afghanistan" carpet to reach one of the interior-design industry's center stages in many years. Also for the first time, many Afghan women, including the head of the Afghan Women Business Federation, were present among their country's purveyors.



Afghan traders generated more than \$5.2 million in export deals at the Domotex carpet trade show recently held in Germany.
PHOTO: USAID/ASMED/DAI

SECURITY

- No significant incidents to report



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OFFICE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

- **Postal Services Expand:** The Afghan Postal Commission issued its seventh license to a private company for the provision of ground parcel post and high-speed international courier services. AES Cargo (a subsidiary of the United Parcel Service/UPS) and Dubai-based Transit Co., Ltd. will initially provide deliveries to the top six urban areas of Afghanistan as part of a USAID-sponsored project to accelerate the development and creation of a competitive playing field for postal services in Afghanistan.



A customer with a copy of his digitized title deed. PHOTO: USAID/LTERA/Emerging Markets Group

- **Land Records Computerized:** Land records in Afghanistan, including property and transfer deeds, were severely damaged during two decades of war. Starting in late 2004, the USAID land titling project began refurbishing the provincial registration courts (Makhzans) and archives of ministries and municipalities in the country. In close coordination with the Kabul Makhzan, the USAID land titling project recently inaugurated the newly reorganized and computerized central land records office which houses a database containing all land records of Makhzans rehabilitated by USAID. The Chief Justice of the Kabul Appeals Court and Supreme Court Justice Baha both

expressed their gratitude for USAID support to land administration in Afghanistan and said they found the assistance to be extremely important.

- **Loan Creates Jobs:** On January 18, the Board of Directors of the Afghanistan Rural Finance Center approved a \$500,000 loan to Surat Zadah Flour Mill in Balkh province. This loan will create more than 160 employment opportunities in the northern region, contribute to regional economic development, and encourage farmers to grow licit crops. Contract farmers in Baghlan, Kunduz, Faryab, Samangan, Balkh, and Jawzjan provinces will use the advance payments to grow wheat to sell to the mill. As of September 2007, USAID's economic growth program has created more than 25,000 jobs through various lending vehicles in the northern region of Afghanistan.



The Surat Zadah Flour Mill in Balkh province will generate 160 employment opportunities due to a \$500,000 loan from the USAID-assisted Afghanistan Rural Finance Center. PHOTO: USAID/ARIES/AED



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January 20-February 2, 2008

- **Financial Services Declared Sharia-compliant:** The eighth Investment and Finance Cooperative (IFC) in Afghanistan was opened in January in Faryab Province. The cooperative has 60 members who have purchased shares and will benefit from a range of financial services. Additionally, four IFCs recently received letters from provincial religious authorities confirming their financial services, including group loans, savings accounts, equipment leasing, debt consolidation loans, and deposits, as legitimate and Sharia-compliant products, strengthening trust between IFCs and their members and adding value to the USAID credit program's effectiveness.
- **Customs Facility Opens:** The customs facility in Torkham, Nangarhar province has been handed over to the Afghan Customs Department thanks to the facilitation of the



Border Facility in December 2005
PHOTO: USAID/BearingPoint



Border Facility in December 2007
PHOTO: USAID/BearingPoint

USAID/Bearing Point customs advisor. The modern European Commission-funded facility is a critical element for instituting

international customs best practices in Afghanistan, generating revenue, and connecting the port of Karachi, Pakistan with the Central Asian Republics.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS (PRTS)

- **Regaining Bala Baluk:** USAID's local governance and community development program is working with military partners in Farah province following ISAF operations in Bala Baluk and Delaram districts to clear the area last fall. The program is making tangible progress on three reconstruction and development projects in the area, including bazaar construction in the insecure area of Shewan in Bala Baluk district and two road projects. The entire area was heavily influenced by Taliban and other insurgents and for over a year was closed to ISAF forces. Since increased security enabled initiation of the project, locals are more open and willing to work with USAID and the PRT on reconstruction and development projects.
- **Reconstruction in Musa Qaleh:** The USAID representative in Helmand spent much of the week of January 13 in Musa Qaleh assessing the post-conflict situation and laying the groundwork for USAID programming in the contested district. USAID has committed \$2 million in program funding towards efforts in Musa Qaleh and has pledged \$1.5 million in funding to support the Ministry for Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) efforts in the district.



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OFFICE OF ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE

- **Poultry Industry Expands:** In late December, 23,000 chicks hatched from fertile eggs imported from Avian Technology in the U.S. state of Georgia. These chicks were distributed to 23 men and women farmers in Afghanistan's eastern region by the Spin Ghar Poultry Farms Association. A second hatchery is due to become operational mid-January and orders for more breeders and hatching eggs are expected to arrive during the next few months, laying the foundation for the revival of the poultry industry in eastern Afghanistan.



23,000 chicks hatched in December, laying the foundation for a poultry industry revival in eastern Afghanistan. PHOTO: USAID/ADP-E/DAI

- **Harvest Profits:** Beneficiaries of USAID's alternative development program in the eastern region sold over \$8,200 of cauliflower, cabbage, carrots, and eggplants as well as over \$13,500 in fruit in December. Over 1,000 farmers participated in training on topics such as garden layout, seedling production, harvesting, marketing, and consecutive planting as a means to reduce market risks. One training session hosted by the fruit marketing program in Kunar was covered by local media in order to raise awareness about the impact of the program on farmers' livelihoods.



Training at the Kunar Directorate of Agriculture for new text messaging system distributing market price information. PHOTO: USAID/ADP-E/DAI

- **Texting for Market Prices:** TAMAS, a text messaging system for distributing market price information, was launched in Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar provinces. USAID's alternative development team traveled extensively throughout the eastern region raising awareness and providing training on the system; 630 people in eleven districts were trained.
- **Women's Eid Market:** USAID, through its alternative development program, funded and organized a Women's Eid Market with the Department of Women's Affairs during the week before the Eid holiday. This event provided female producers from Faizabad City, Badakshan province, with improved marketing opportunities at



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one of the year's peak sales times. Reported sales for the six participating enterprises exceeded \$1,100, up to 67% more than they would have made in a typical week working from their homes.

- **Saplings Distributed:** USAID's alternative development program distributed over 2,700 saplings to 31 commercial orchard and nursery farmers in the Kishem district of Badakshan. The peach, plum, apricot, and cherry saplings are the first trees planted through the orchard development program in this district and will take 3-5 years to mature.



80% of greenhouse plants survived the recent snow in Herat province. PHOTO: USAID/ADP

- **Plants Survive Snowstorm:** 80% of greenhouse plants survived the recent snow and low temperatures in Herat province, according to a recent survey completed by USAID's agro-enterprise alliance program. USAID is helping farmers to effectively orient their crops to allow sunlight to heat the greenhouses and plants.
- **Public Parks Open in Helmand:** Two public parks in Lashkar Gah recently opened due to the efforts of USAID's alternative development program in Helmand province. Mirwais Nika Park is a leisure riverside park that is next to the new

sports field, Ahmad Shah Baba Park. USAID is scheduled to build three more parks in Lashkar Gah; the Malalai Park designated for women is named after the female Mujahadeen martyr.

- **Road Completed in Helmand:** To facilitate transportation between Afghan Highway 1 and economic clusters in Lashkar Gah, Helmand province, USAID's alternative development program completed a 1.8 km link road connecting the future AgPark and the Bost Airfield.

OFFICE OF DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

- **Ministries Submit Budgets:** Many months of mentoring, technical support, and training by USAID's capacity development program resulted in the submission of seven ministerial budgets for Afghan fiscal year 1387 based on the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's (IRoA) new program budgeting guidelines. For the first time, program



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budgeting will allow the IRoA to compare financial inputs with results achieved on each program of the participating ministries. USAID advisors have also been instrumental in helping ministries increase the rate of budget execution. For example, at the Ministry of Agriculture the execution rate of the development budget this year has improved by over 50% from \$16 million USD spent in 1385 to \$25 million USD in 1386.

OFFICE OF SOCIAL SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

- **Safe Water Solutions:** The USAID-funded social marketing project recently received quality control equipment to ensure reliable production of safe water solutions at Khalid Irshad Pharmaceuticals. This sophisticated quality testing and purification equipment will allow testing of safe water solutions locally under established laboratory standards reviewed and endorsed by the Center for Disease Control and ensures the production of effective chlorine solutions for drinking water and food preparation.
- **Increased Marketing of Health Products:** In early January, the project signed a national distribution agreement for pharmaceutical and contraceptive products with Afghanpharma Distribution Group, who has agreed to promote a line of quality, affordable socially marketed health products as a sign of support to the goals of the Ministry of Public Health. This additional distribution partner will increase the impact of the project's ability to reach more of the underserved and rural communities and thereby increase access to important health products.



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February 3-February 17, 2008

NOMINATION FOR DIRECTOR OF FOREIGN ASSISTANCE MEMO

Supporting Afghanistan's Accession to the South Asia Free Trade Agreement:

On March 3rd, Afghanistan will sign the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), an organization representing six other regional countries. The Minister of Commerce & Industries, Amin Farhang, will sign the agreement on behalf of the country. After obtaining membership to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in April 2007, a prerequisite for joining SAFTA, Afghanistan began providing the SAARC Secretariat with data and information for SAFTA accession. The Ministry of Commerce and Industries Foreign Trade Directorate, with USAID assistance, provided the Secretariat with a sensitive list of products that Afghanistan seeks to protect, a list of Afghanistan's service-sector businesses, and letters on technical trade topics for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs responses to SAARC.

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Afghan Carpets Take Las Vegas by Storm:

USAID organized Afghan participation in a trade show held at the World Market Center in Las Vegas, Nevada from January 28-February 1. Four businesses from the carpet sector were participated and sold \$350,000 worth of carpets at the show itself and signed contracts for at least another \$1.25 million. The U.S. Department of Commerce was an active partner in the show, as was the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan. The purpose of the Afghan traders' participation at the exhibition was to attract international buyers to the Afghan handcrafts. Last month, USAID and the Export Promotion Agency of Afghanistan sent 28 Afghan carpet producers to the Domotex carpet trade show in Hanover, Germany. The show generated more than \$5.2 million in export deals and Mr. Haji Nabi, owner of Zinnat Carpets, took home the award for Best Modern Carpet Design.



Domotex carpet trade show, Hanover, Germany.

PHOTO: USAID/ASMED/DAI

Young Afghans Gain Important Business Skills: At a ceremony at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul on Sunday, February 3rd, 63 interns received certificates of completion from USAID & Washington State University. Thirty-five of the 63 graduates received permanent job offers from their sponsors including Roshan Telecom, Coca Cola, & Brac Afghanistan Bank. All interns were 4th year economics, science, and agriculture students at Kabul University. They successfully completed a three month pre-placement training in accounting & management at the Afghan Institute of Business Management. The objective of internship training is to develop students' business acumen to enable them to work in government and



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non-government agencies. In 2008, the program will seek to double the number of participants to 120 student interns. Through this program, 50% of the students have found employment. "I've studied a lot in administration, accounting, and other fields that will help me find a job" said Imamudean Sabeer, one of the participants of this program.

First Private Insurance Firm Opens: USAID, through a Global Development Alliance, is supporting the creation of the country's first private insurance provider, the Insurance Corporation of Afghanistan (ICA). USAID will work with ICA owners and managers to develop a system that packages information in ways that are complete and universally acceptable to international underwriters and re-insurers. This will result in a clearer understanding of the local insurance market on the part of international underwriters, more rapid issuance of policies, more appropriate pricing of insurance products and substantially improved investor confidence in many sectors of the economy. The Global Development Alliance partnership will assist in the development of an ICA marketing plan, as well as the due diligence process for applicants and claimants.



Religious leaders sign letters confirming that financial services are legitimate and Sharia compliant.

PHOTO: USAID/ASMED

Religious Leaders' Endorsement: The USAID supported Investment and Finance Cooperatives in Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh, and Baghlan received letters from the religious authorities of the related provinces confirming the financial services, designed by the World Council of Credit Unions, as legitimate and Sharia compliant. To date, all of the nine USAID supported Cooperatives have received similar letters from their respective communities. Financial services include: small business and cooperative group loans (Murabaha); individual and business development savings accounts; agriculture equipment leasing (Ijara); debt consolidation loans (Qard Hasana); and deposits (Alwadiah and Mudaraba). Letters from the religious local authorities strengthen the trust built between the Cooperatives and their members and adds value to the effectiveness of the USAID economic growth activities in the field.



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ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

India Buys Afghan Pomegranates: The Horticulture Marketing team, working with the Subhan Traders of Mazar-i-Sharif, sold 6,000 kg of end-of-season pomegranates to India. These were produced by the Khulm Growers Association. The buyers are Big Bazaar (part of the Pantaloons Retail Company) and a fruit wholesaler named Suri AgroFresh. The Reliance Fresh Supermarket Company in India and Makro Supermarkets in Karachi, Pakistan also made offers on the same goods, thus providing a sales fall-back should the first deals fall through.



Packing pomegranates in Kandahar.

PHOTO: USAID

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

New Court Administration System Improves Case Management:

The newly developed, USAID-funded Afghanistan Court Administration System is now active in all 36 courts in Parwan and Kabul provinces, including the Supreme Court. The system was approved by the Supreme Court in September and is designed to offer a simpler, more open and consistent process of case management. These 36 courts handle approximately 25 percent of the active court cases in Afghanistan and employ 320 judges. Thus far, approximately 62 judges (including four female judges) and 131 court administrators (including 13 women) have been trained to operate the new case management system. By the end of August 2008, the Afghanistan Court Administration System rolls out to all 392 courts in the country.



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February 18-March 2, 2008

HIGHLIGHT

International Women's Day 2008, "Investing in Women and Shaping Progress":

International Women's Day on March 8 commemorates the struggles and honors the achievements of women around the world. To help support women in Afghanistan, the United States Congress, representing the American people, passed legislation to allocate \$75 million for programs that directly benefit the female population of Afghanistan. This investment improves health care, increases opportunities for education and economic development, and strengthens legal rights for the women of Afghanistan.



Journalist covering the opening of the Balkh Dairy Plant in Mazar-e-Sharif, September 2007.

PHOTO: USAID

Over the past seven years, Afghanistan has seen an increase in the empowerment of women as active members of their communities. The United States has helped facilitate the growth of nearly 200 democratically-elected Community Development Councils for women and supported the development of 180 female youth committees whose members engage in community development and service projects. Women make up 30% of the student body of the American University of Afghanistan, and 35% of the five million students enrolled in primary and secondary schools are girls. Through USAID programs, 76 female judges have been trained and given the tools necessary to officiate over the courts, manage cases, and provide due process in the courts, leading to more effective and transparent rule of law. Additionally, USAID has provided professional media training for 185 female journalists.

To improve the economic status of women, assistance from the American people helps Afghan women succeed in business – 39 women's enterprises participated at the Badakshan Agricultural Fair in October 2007, 185 women entrepreneurs collaborated to establish the Eastern Region Handicraft Center, and more than 500 widows have established home-based businesses throughout the country. USAID has fostered the growth of over 400 self-help savings and investment groups for women. The Afghan Women's Business Federation has 20,000 members nationwide who are learning to run businesses, market products, and improve the quality of their goods.



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Rangina Hamidi of Kandahar Treasure, which received start-up funding from USAID, was named one of this year's recipients of the CNN Heroes award for her efforts in fighting for justice and advancing the cause of women's rights in Afghanistan. Kandahar Treasure is the largest woman-owned Kamak embroidery business in the country and employs 400 home-based embroiderers to support a rapidly growing international market of high-end women's clothing. According to Hamidi, "The other women and I dedicated to this project know that working is the only real alternative to insecurity... We women have taken it upon ourselves to stitch the future of peace for our children. Embroidery is the skill we have, and love and patience is what we can give to our families and our country. We will work to help rebuild this war-torn nation."

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Kabul Develops New Municipal Master Plan: With USAID assistance, the Kabul Municipality has developed a new Master Plan for Southwest Kabul. The Kabul Master Plan has not been revised since 1978 and has a major impact on land tenure, security, human well-being and the livelihoods of the residents of Kabul, a city which has seen a population growth of approximately three and one-half million since 1978. The plan lays out an improved public infrastructure and land usage scheme that will guarantee better access to public facilities for the vast majority of inhabitants, and the minimization of the number of informal parcels that can lead to forced evictions or household relocation. More information is available at: http://www.ltera.org/USAID_LTERA_LAND_TENURE.html#Master_Plan.

Business Directory Connects Vendors with Consumers:

On February 4, 2008, the National Union of Craftsmen and Classes, with USAID support, published the first Afghanistan Business Directory of Jalalabad City Businesses, based on the Yellow Pages model. This directory contains a listing of 10,700 businesses divided by classification. Of the 900 copies, 200 will be distributed at no cost to non-governmental and governmental organizations in Jalalabad. The remaining 700 will be sold for \$2 each. The directory will expand the cooperation between and opportunities for businesses in Jalalabad.



Jalalabad City Business Directory

PHOTO: USAID

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Afghan Laws Searchable Online for First Time: On February 21, Afghanistan's laws were made available to the public when the Ministry of Justice launched its full-text searchable online database, <http://www.moj-research.gov.af>. For over three years, the Ministry of Justice, in conjunction with the USAID-funded Afghanistan Rule of Law Project, has collected, digitized, and uploaded more than 20,000



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pages of laws from the Official Gazette. The Official Gazette is Afghanistan's complete set of laws, regulations, decrees, and orders passed since 1964. Prior to the online database, these laws were available only by visiting a location that housed a hard copy of the 86-volume set or via DVDs.

1,300 Students Sit for 2008 Judicial Training Entrance Exam: On Friday, February 22, 1,300 graduates from *madrassas*, law faculties and Sharia faculties from all over Afghanistan were tested to become Afghanistan's next generation of judges. The entrance examination to the 2008 Stage Judicial Training Program—a Supreme Court-mandated, 36-week course for all future judges—was held at Kabul University with financial and technical assistance from USAID. Compared to last year's exam, more than double the number of students sat for the exam, an indication that more and more of Afghanistan's students are interested in judicial careers. Another important development for this year's Stage entrance exam includes new questions on constitutional and commercial law—drafted with USAID assistance—that better test applicants' understanding of these subjects and analytical capabilities. Once exam results are collected, the 200 highest-scoring applicants will be admitted as judicial candidates to the 2008 Stage Judicial Training Program.

AGRICULTURE AND ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Southern Chili Network Program Resumes as Rains

Subside: Work has returned to normal as a lull in the rain has allowed soil to dry. As a result, transportation of river sand to Bolan Farm for use in the 760 new chili seedbeds has resumed. The seedbeds will hold 40 million seedlings to satisfy requirements of 4,000 jeribs¹ of commercial chili production by contract farmers. At this point in time, USAID has identified almost 900 farmers who want to produce chili on 3,350 jeribs of land.



Chili seedbeds at the Bolan Farm.

PHOTO: USAID/Chemonics

Severe Weather Receives Rapid Response:

The severe winter continues to be of primary concern.

USAID's Office of Food for Peace made a rapid response to a request from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for additional food aid. Approximately 30,000 metric tons (\$20 million) of United States Government wheat are pre-positioned in World Food Program's (WFP) hubs in Quetta (11,000 metric tons) and Peshawar (19,000 metric tons) in response to WFP's appeal for 89,000 metric tons worth \$77 million. Dispatches from these hubs into

¹ Jerib is an Afghan unit of land measurement; one jerib equals one fifth of hectare.



USAID | **AFGHANISTAN**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

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Afghanistan are taking place. As of mid February, 4,330 metric tons have been dispatched to Mazar, Jalalabad, and Faizabad.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAMS

USAID Local Governance Program Successfully Supporting PRT Community

Development Objectives: On February 8, at the Commander Assessment Brief hosted at Bagram Air Base, the success of USAID's governance capacity building training for district governors was highlighted by Task Force Fury Commander, Colonel Schweitzer, as being "outstanding" from top to bottom with feedback from all participants being extremely positive. The local governance program improves the provincial population access to – and partnerships with – district, provincial and national governance entities and is implemented in both coalition- and ISAF-commanded PRTs.



BI-WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

August 1-August 15, 2008

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Record Number of Women in Supreme Court Training: There are currently 84 female judges working in Afghanistan, out of a total 1,447. That number will increase by nearly a third within the next year when the latest group of female judicial candidates finishes their training with the Supreme Court. A total of 29 women—hailing from 13 provinces—are in Kabul for the USAID-supported 2008 Judicial Training Program, which will be completed in early spring 2009.

That number is up 59% from the 17 women who graduated from the 2007 course. The increase is "a good and positive step," says one of the female judicial candidates, Najeeba Hussein, speaking about her role as a future female judge.



Female judicial candidates attend classes at the Stage in Kabul. The number of women attending the stage has increased nearly 60 percent over last year.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan



Study tables on the library's first floor.

PHOTO:
USAID/Afghanistan

Afghanistan's Largest Law Library Opened: On August 27th, the doors of the new law library at the Independent National Legal Training Center opened. For the first time, Afghanistan's legal community has access to the most comprehensive collection of legal literature in the country. With the new resources available, Afghanistan's lawyers, judges and government officials will have the information they need to support their country's growing justice sector.

Designed and developed by the USAID-funded Afghanistan Rule of Law Project, the new Law Library houses a full collection of Afghanistan's laws in Dari and Pashto languages, including 3,100 hardcopy volumes and a variety of newspapers and journals published by government institutions. The library also provides 11 computer terminals which allow users to search all of Afghanistan's laws electronically.



BI-WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

August 1-August 15, 2008

ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Opium Cultivation Falls by 19%: USAID efforts to improve the availability of alternative livelihoods for farmers are paying off in the war against poppy production. On August 26, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) reported that the number of poppy-free provinces increased from 13 in 2007 to 18 provinces today and opium cultivation has fallen by 19% nationwide to its lowest level since 2006.

USAID alternative development programs supported a dramatic shift away from poppy production in the formerly poppy-rich northern and eastern provinces of Badakshan, Takhar, Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, and Nuristan. USAID provided access to short-term employment as well as development focused on the longer-term needs of these agriculturally-rich and strategic provinces. Efforts included repairing roads, irrigation, canals and distributing high-quality seed and fertilizer to promote licit activities.

3rd Annual Kabul AgFair Draws Investment: On August 20-22, over 40,000 businessmen, women, entrepreneurs and people from the general public flocked to the 3rd annual Kabul AgFair. The USAID-supported event was designed to attract investment and promote Afghan products at home and abroad. More than 170 vendors showcased Afghanistan's fruits and nuts, vegetables, dairy products, carpets, and crafts. Delegates from businesses in China, Germany, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey and the United States attended and forged deals, cutting inroads for Afghan products into hard-to-penetrate foreign markets. The fair featured six roundtable discussions and 55 business-to-business meetings, resulting in \$3.8 million in international deals and \$1.4 million in domestic deals, with an additional \$22 million deals prospected over the next year.

In addition to facilitating new business transactions and relationships, the AgFair showcased contemporary agriculture technology and techniques at the Knowledge Center and of the 41-hectare Badam Bagh Demonstration Farm. Local producers gained information on agricultural technologies and farming techniques geared toward increasing food production and improving irrigation technologies, greenhouses, grape trellises, and new crop varieties.



A vendor from the Pride of Eastern Region displays his vegetables at the Kabul AgFair.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan



BI-WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

August 1-August 15, 2008

ECONOMIC GROWTH

FINCA Loans Total US\$24.2 Million: On August 11, the USAID-funded Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA) reported that it had disbursed a total of US\$24.2 million in loans to nearly 35,000 active borrowers. Started in September 2006, the program's Shariah-compliant loans have resulted in strong economic growth throughout the country. These loans enable Afghan entrepreneurs, farmers and businesses to expand their operations and empower them to rise out of poverty.



Afghan entrepreneurs open new shops with the help of FINCA loans.

PHOTO: USAID/Afghanistan

New Internship at Nangarhar University: To help address Afghanistan's need for strong management and business skills, USAID has initiated a new internship program for students at Nangarhar University. In this program, 70 students, including 30 females, attend a 3-month intensive business training course taught by Afghan CNN. Interns with professional backgrounds receive additional training in management, supervision, marketing, and accounting. After students graduate from the program, USAID helps place them in private firms or government institutions, giving them the opportunity to practice their new skills and help build strong organizations.