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# PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE CIVIC EDUCATION FINAL CONSULTANCY REPORT

AFGHANISTAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSISTANCE PROJECT  
(ALGAP)

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#### Acknowledgment

This report is based on field work and a working draft prepared by Nelika Little in Afghanistan in May 2006.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE CIVIC EDUCATION FINAL CONSULTANCY

REPORT

# AFGHANISTAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSISTANCE PROJECT (ALGAP)

## **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

As stated in the Terms of Reference for the Civic Education Specialist, the purpose of my assignment was to *“ensure that the civic education program gets off to a solid start; that its messages are clear and well targeted and that the technical implementation is done well. In addition, (my) assignment will develop the civic education capacities of the ALGAP staff, enabling them to implement future civic education programs.”*

The following objectives were presented to further clarify the purpose of the assignment:

### Objectives

1. *Ensure the timely implementation of an effective civic education program that focuses on sub national governance and strengthens the level of public awareness of participation with the newly formed provincial councils as well as the roles and responsibilities of the provincial administration, including the governors and the representatives of the line ministries.*
2. *Develop abilities of project staff to management, develop and monitor civic education programs, with particular emphasis on the sub national level within Afghanistan.*

### I. Tasks

Various tasks were assigned so as to achieve the assignment objectives. Below I have listed the tasks followed by my comments on achievement.

- *Evaluate, with the ALGAP staff, proposals received for sub national civic education program(s) and advise COP and ALGAP on the selection of the proposals;*

In addition to personally reviewing each proposal submitted to ALGAP, I structured the review process (by panel) so as to allow in-depth and thorough evaluation. This included creating a review guideline or form, organizing review sessions and guiding a decision process. I worked with Civic Education staff members in negotiations with organizations to retrieve additional information or corrections. I gave advice and guidance when staff members presented their suggested civic education program selection. Due to my previous experience with both civic education activities in Afghanistan as well as the implementing partners I was able to add this insight and observation to the selection process.

- *Advise and guide the project staff in the selection and modification of proposed civic education programs and ensure that the selected programs are technically sound with clearly defined goals and relevant activities*  
Upon selection of civic education activities, I worked with Civic Education staff in the refinement of project proposals and the adjustment of activities. This required considerable dialogue and explanation with the intended civic education implementing partners. Budgets were extensively revised as well as project scope and goals. This endeavor took significantly longer than necessary due to the lack of information regarding available ALGAP funds for civic education.. Further explanation is provided in section IV.

- *Supervise, with the ALGAP staff, the implementation of the contracts of the service providers to ensure they are carried out in a timely manner;*  
 Due to the late start of activities (to date, one activity has begun but is awaiting official contract agreement), I was unable to fully achieve this task. The one activity which has begun (understanding that they do so at their own risk) is a short study on perceptions of provincial governance and pertinent civic education messages. I worked with the COP and civic education staff member Ma-hboobullah in refining the content and approach of this study. This study will be of primary importance to the civic education program but it is expected to have impact on other ALGAP provincial council activities
- *Assist the ALGAP staff in identifying areas in which the Civic Education programs can be coordinated with related programs being undertaken or proposed by other USAID projects, eg the APAP, Civil Society.*  
 I met with another USAID funded organization in order to determine coordination possibilities. I prepared a number of documents on ALGAP's proposed civic education plan for circulation by COP.
- *Review with the ALGAP staff the implementation of the initial activities and develop written recommendations for modifications*  
 Due to late start of activities I have not been able to achieve this activity. In my handover notes, I have offered recommendations and comments regarding each proposed activity.
- *Conduct a review of the content of the respective CE program components with the respective stakeholders to ensure message consistency. Stakeholders to include provincial council members and provincial administration as well as representatives from line ministries in the provinces.*  
 I was unable to achieve this component due to the late start of activities.

## II. Deliverables

- *Written assessment of the Civic Educational proposals submitted. The assessment should include comments regarding the relevance of the proposals for achieving the goals specified by the contractors and the extent to which the proposals are targeted toward clearly specified relevant audiences.*  
 Thorough written assessment of each proposal received was completed and is filed in the shared drive project folder (file name within Civic Education file is "Review and Acceptance").
- *Written observations and recommendation regarding each component of the civic education programs*  
 Refer to handover notes for written recommendations and observation for components (once initiated).
- *Written weekly report of the progress of each component of the civic education program with recommendations, as needed, for immediate actions or adjustments and comments regarding possible difficulties being encountered by the contractors that may affect the effective implementation of the contracts.*  
 Weekly progress reports sent to Douglas and Michael. Format for these reports was agreed upon as brief weekly emails.

- *Written recommendations with respect to future civic education activities and programs.*  
Refer to my Handover Notes under “Activity Specifics” and “Newsletter”.
- *Written documentation of the process of reviewing and selecting civic education programs, evaluating content, the relevance and effectiveness of the civic education program proposals. The documentation and reports should provide specific guidance for staff for future activities.*  
Refer to Proposal Evaluation Guideline, Handover Notes and file labeled “Review and Acceptance”.
- *Written mentoring report that specifies progress made by the staff and additional capacity building areas that would be beneficial for both the project and the staff.*  
Refer to section III below.

### **III. Civic Education Staff Mentoring Report**

At the beginning of my contract I was assigned two civic education staff members, one of whom was to be involved more or less full time with civic education. Due to the demands of other projects it was not feasible for this staff member to devote all of his time to civic education. The other staff member was occupied with his other duties so much of the time that he was unable to devote any time to civic education. He was taken off civic education (and eventually off all ALGAP projects).

I was able to spend some time with the first staff member, Mahboobullah, however. I found that Mahboobullah already exhibited much of the analytical and critical skills needed for civic education program management and simply needed a structure or framework to work within. Proposal evaluation guidelines and guidance when requesting revisions with possible partners offered this framework. We met with the possible implementing partners together and mutually determined a suggested ALGAP civic education program. Mahboobullah was also absent much of the time as he had other responsibilities with provincial council activities. It was decided that he would not continue with civic education but would focus 100% on his other duties. A job offer has been circulated for the civic education Program Associate.

I would like to propose that if a suitable candidate for the civic education post is not found, considerations be made for Mahboobullah to take on the post 100% and that someone else assume the PC activities he is involved with now. Mahboobullah has both the technical skills as well as the English skills to be able to perform the job well. He is also familiar with the current civic education program.

Following are some recommendations for capacity building for the civic education staff.

1. Staff should be assigned to civic education full time so as to build up experience and knowledge
2. Even though staff will not be involved with the actual contracting of a project, I do feel that it is extremely important that they understand how the process works. USAID and ALGAP contract regulations, budget terminology and established practices should be explained in full. This will help the staff member recognize when regulations are not being met as well as help him or her when corresponding with the implementing partners. In addition, this information will further the capacity of the staff, enabling larger assumed responsibilities in future tasks.
3. Staff should occasionally take part in message testing done by implementing partners. This will help him or her gauge the appropriateness and effectiveness of various messages and will encourage message and activity ideas for other ALGAP supported projects.
4. A candidate for the position of Civic Education Program Associate must be able to travel.

#### IV. Analysis of achievement of objects and further comments and suggestions.

##### *Objective 1*

Although able to initiate and structure a civic education program plan, I was unable to assist with the actual civic education implementation. This was largely due to civic education contracts awaiting finalization before the end date of my contract. I have outlined a number of guidelines for ALGAP staff and have drafted updates for stakeholders. However, the core component of civic education, the actual messages, was not begun under my contract period. This significantly limited the extent of impact I was able to have on the overall ALGAP civic education program.

There are a number of causes for this late start. The most significant reason was a lack of clarity regarding ALGAP's intended budget for the civic education program. Lengthy correspondence and subsequent series of revisions was conducted on each of the selected civic education proposals, before a decision (or notification of a decision) regarding available ALGAP budget for civic education was made. If this information had been available from the start of the evaluation each proposal, revisions would have been drastically fewer. For example, upon selection of an activity by the review panel, technical revisions were asked of the proposing organization. This process would require a few revised proposals until technical aspects were agreed upon. Then the panel was to look at the budgets and request them of the organization. (Budget revisions requests were *solely* based on reasonable costs per activity component rather than a requested budget limit.) This would result in revised budgets as well as certain revised technical aspects of the proposal. Once this process was near complete, we were informed of the actual available funds for proposed projects which resulted in further drastic budget revisions as well as entirely new or revised technical aspects. At this point one organization turned down the offered budget limit. When organizations completed this third or fourth set of revisions the budget was subject to a final set of revisions by the Director Administration/Finance. To date, revisions are not yet complete.

Although the reasons for separating technical and budget are persuasive, they are not practical in implementation. Had a budget scope been set at the beginning, organizations could be given a request for both technical and budget revisions from the beginning. The budget revisions could have immediately gone through review by the Director Administration/Finance if the technical aspects were agreed upon. Clearly the technical aspects of a project are very dependant on the available funds to them and the relationship is not usually proportional (i.e.: extent of budget does not automatically imply more or less activities, considerations such as start up costs and travel costs need to be taken into consideration). In the case of the BBC turn down, had they known that the maximum ALGAP could have provided for the project was "X" amount, they could have made the decision immediately, allowing the ALGAP civic education staff to begin negotiations with another partner on proposed activities. As it was, we met with BBC repeatedly to refine the project before they withdrew when we told them how much was available for their project.

I believe that it is also crucial for the Director Administration/Finance to be involved with the negotiations with the implementing partners from the very beginning of the process. If civic education staff is unaware of the various rules and regulations that pertain to ALGAP contracts, they are unable to request revisions on proposals and budgets in an informed manner, which can often lead to confusion, duplication or, worse, contradiction. In addition to speeding the process up, the involvement of the Director Administration/Finance also furthers the capacity of the national civic education staff.

##### *Objective 2*

The second objective was difficult to achieve given the absence of civic education staff during the greater part of my contract duration. Despite the limited time I had with staff I was able to offer guidance and mentoring. Refer to section III for more information.

## **V. Conclusion**

Overall my time in the ALGAP program has been enjoyable and rewarding. Staff are friendly, professional and keen to interact. The COP, Douglas Grube, and the Head of Finance, Michael Kidd, were supportive and pleasant to work with. I hope that a qualified candidate can be found for the civic education program and that the results of my work at ALGAP will help this staff member transition smoothly into civic education management.

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