



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

February 1 – February 15, 2011



Distribution of safety equipment for trained DoEW personnel. Photo: USAID/LGCD

### STABILIZATION

**Keeping the Lights on in Khost:** The Khost Department of Energy and Water (DoEW) operates two power stations that could provide eleven hours of daily power for an estimated 75 percent of Khost City residents. Consistent electricity shortfalls create a significant grievance for city residents. Beginning in early 2010, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) project worked closely with DoEW on a series of activities to build capacity to provide a more regular supply of electricity to Khost City citizens. In early February, LGCD concluded activities supporting rehabilitation of two diesel powerhouses and training to improve safety, operations, and maintenance skills of personnel. Previous support included a revenue stream assessment, as well as

financial management, and budgeting training. All four activities served to increase the DoEW's efficiency in maintaining and operating power stations.

### Pipe Culvert Increases Access to Abu Al Fatah Bosti School:

The largest school compound in Gereshk District, Abu Al Fatah Bosti School, provides education to approximately 3,500 students from elementary through high school. Previously, the community relied on an unstable and narrow pedestrian bridge over a canal to access the school. The bridge was a longstanding community grievance. Parents and teachers lobbied for school improvements to the Department of Education (DoE). The DoE and local parents raised the issue with the district governor, who in turn communicated the concern to USAID. In response, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) project worked with the DoE to construct a pipe culvert crossing to provide safe access to the school for parents, children, and vehicles delivering supplies. The activity follows LGCD's recent funding of a boundary wall refurbishment, toilet construction, and sports facility for the school. Through these activities and the district governor's active involvement, the Afghan government is visibly demonstrating the ability to provide a viable educational infrastructure in Gereshk District.



Community members use the new crossing, just before completion. Photo: USAID/LGCD



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The furnished meeting space in the Hirat Provincial Conference Hall. Photo: USAID/LGCD

**Furnishings Handed Over for the Hirat Provincial Conference Hall:** In support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's continued efforts to provide increased service delivery in Hirat Province, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) project provided necessary furnishing for the Hirat Provincial Government's training and conference hall. Constructed last year by the Italian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team, it was intended as a public space for training, meeting, and holding community events. Due to funding restrictions, the facility was not fully furnished. On January 31, USAID's LGCD handed over furnishings including chairs, tables, a dining facility, carpets, and sofa sets for the hall. Support from multiple international

donors has increased the capacity of GIRoA institutions to organize public events in a culturally appropriate location and to increase engagement with constituents in the province. Mohammad Dawod Ahmadi, the provincial governor's logistics officer stated, "The furnished conference hall will host training and outreach events for all 15 districts of Hirat Province and offer abundant opportunities for community, district, and provincial leaders to interact and increase collaboration."

### **Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL) Supports Livestock Training in Logar Province:**

In early 2010, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) project conducted a survey on agricultural practices, at the request of the PRT. The survey uncovered a need for agriculture and livestock training for rural areas of Logar Province. In response, USAID's LGCD coordinated with DAIL to implement four-month training workshops on basic livestock management in Mohammad Agham, Puli Alam, and Charkh districts. Forty beneficiaries from each district – 120 in total – received training in basic nutrition, livestock hygiene, animal reproductive systems, livestock facilities, calving best practices, and basic animal-disease diagnosis and prevention. During a closing ceremony on February 2, trainees received toolkits and completion certificates.



The closing ceremony for the livestock management training in Logar Province. Photo: USAID/LGCD

"I am pleased that I received livestock management training and now I can treat my animals and can help other villagers with animal treatment," said Pacha, a trainee.



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Representatives of the Paktika Department of Education receive the tents for eventual distribution. Photo: USAID/ LGCD

### Tents for Temporary Classrooms Arrive in Paktika Province:

Field reports from the LGCD technical advisor for the Paktika Department of Education (DoE) indicated that children attend classes in mosques, private residences, or under trees, as 61 percent of schools in the province lack buildings to hold classes. Inclement weather often disrupts lessons and parents are discouraged from sending their children, especially females, to school. To address this situation, USAID's Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD) project delivered 277 tents to the U.S. Military at Forward Operating Base Sharana for eventual distribution to schools across Paktika Province. To provide culturally appropriate and structurally sound temporary classrooms, the U.S. Military will coordinate

with the Paktika DoE to distribute the tents to selected schools in the districts of Sharana, Mata Khan, Khair Kot, Jani Khel, Waza Khwa, Yusef Khel, Sar Howza, and Khoshamand.

### Sub-District 9 Manager Facilitates Expansion of Community Stabilization Grant (CSG) Project in Kandahar City:

Kandahar City's Sub-District 9 Manager, Rahmatullah, invited USAID to present the (CSG) process to the Sub-District 9 wakils and community leaders at a weekly Shura meeting. This meeting was a forward step in USAID's expansion into Sub-District 9. Moreover, the meeting builds on past successes working with municipal officials in Sub-Districts 2, 6, and 7 of Kandahar City to implement small, community-driven development activities in support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA)-led initiative, Hamkari de Kandahar Lepara. Sub-District 9 is inhabited by displaced families from Kandahar Province. Manager Ramatullah believes the



The Shura meeting at the office of municipality in Sub-District 9 of Kandahar City. Photo: USAID/ LGCD

CSGs can be a community engagement tool, which will build the relationships between communities, wakils, and GIROA. The wakils were pleased with the CSG presentation and they said they would use this process to engage their communities and gather petitions to submit to the sub-district manager. Following the meeting, initial site visits were conducted to assess three petitions in Sub-District 9 for drainage construction in two villages and a family housing scheme.



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Head of Religious Brotherhood Shura addressing the audience. Photo: USAID/CBSG

**Peace Jirga:** On February 13, the inauguration ceremony for the Baghlan Province Religious Leaders' Peace Promotion Jirga took place in Tapa-e-Farhat Community Center, Pol-e-Khomri City, Baghlan Province. The ceremony was attended by Abdul Hadi Rafyee, the deputy provincial governor, members of the Provincial Council, heads of different government line departments, Baghlan Religious Brotherhood Shura, tribal and religious leaders from Baghlan-e-Jadid, Dehna-e-Ghori, Pol-e-Khomri, Tala wa Barfak, and Doshi districts.

In his address, the deputy provincial governor stressed the importance of the Religious Leaders' Peace Promotion Jirga and called it a distinctive opportunity for religious leaders to get together and try to find appropriate solutions to the current problems facing Baghlan Province. Members of the Provincial Council and several religious leaders spoke about the importance of the Jirga and called it an outstanding opportunity to strengthen stability in the Baghlan Province. They promised that they will work effectively amongst themselves, with the local authorities and the community, to prevent the intrusion of insurgent groups into the province making further efforts toward strengthening stability. Baghlan is one of the most insecure provinces in the country where anti-government elements are actively creating problems for national and international security forces. Stabilization efforts are important in the province for ensuring security and preventing the spread of insurgency to other neighboring provinces. This Jirga, funded by USAID's Community Based Stabilization Grants project, will bring the government and the communities closer together and encourage religious leaders to take initiatives to improve the livelihood of their communities through stabilization initiatives.

**CoAR/CBSG Holds Coordination Meeting:** On February 10, The Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR) and USAID Community Based Stabilization Grant (CBSG) teams held a coordination meeting to share updates on the status of CBSG's activities in four northern provinces, and to discuss security problems, as well as threats being faced while implementing projects in different districts. The meeting was a good opportunity for regional managers to share their activities, progress, challenges, and barriers to the implementation of the projects and seek out appropriate ways to tackle problems and work closely together with the local government to achieve project goals and objectives. One of the main challenges addressed in the meeting was lack of security and insurgent activity in most districts in the northern region. Most particularly in Sayad and Kohistanat districts of Sari Pul Province, which has slowed down program activities and created obstacles for the monitoring teams to visit the ongoing projects. Due to the lack of security and limited



Coordination meeting between CBSG and CoAR. Photo: USAID/CBSG



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government outreach to these districts, most of the grievances of communities have remained unaddressed, creating a gap between the government and local communities. To bridge the gap, USAID’s CBSG project is implementing various stabilization projects in the north with the aim of addressing some of the basic grievances of the communities, allowing them to work together with their local governments and therefore bring them closer together. These coordination meetings are necessary to assist the CBSG team in addressing how to tackle working in challenging areas where insurgent presence stands as an obstacle to achieving CBSG goals.

### USAID Meets with Provincial Department of Women Affairs:

On February 12, the Community Based Stabilization Grants (CBSG) team in Kunduz Province met with the Provincial Line Department of Women Affairs to present a briefing on USAID’s CBSG project. The officials at the Provincial Line Department of Women Affairs appreciated CBSG’s activities in Kunduz Province and promised to work together with the CBSG team toward the successful implementation of the program.



Meeting at Kunduz Department of Women’s Affairs.  
Photo: USAID/CBSG

Kunduz is a province where anti-government elements are active and posing a serious threat to the activities of the local government as well as those of the international community. Due to limited outreach of the central government, the Provincial Line Department of Women Affairs has remained unable to reach out to the various needs of women, mainly literacy and other capacity-building training programs. This lack of resources has left the women of Kunduz Province illiterate and incapable of earning a living and taking part in social services which are available. Many Kunduz women lost breadwinners in their families during the years of the civil war, which left them the responsibility to care for themselves and their children. The community, together with the local authorities and CBSG, have therefore identified this as an opportunity to take part in capacity building for these women in order to enable them to run their own lives, raise and educate their children, and actively take part in government and social services.



AUAF students question panelists at the February 10 discussion on political upheaval in Egypt. Photo: AIIAF Communication Office

### EDUCATION

#### American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) holds panel discussion on Egypt and Democracy:

On February 10, AUAF political science professors held a panel discussion on Egypt, focusing on the driving factors behind the protests that eventually led to President Hosni Mubarak’s removal from office. The panel, entitled “Grassroots Democracy in the Middle East,” answered basic questions about the democratic process in Egypt, the role and reactions of neighbor countries and what the protests meant for the region and for the world. Dr.



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Seamus O'Sullivan chaired the panel, and 40 students, staff, and faculty were in attendance. Each panelist addressed a different aspect of the protests, from the specific demands of youth to the role of Facebook and social media in fermenting change. Mohammed Isaqzadeh discussed the implications for Afghanistan and noted the differences in the political structures. "One of the failings of the Egyptian political system was that it allowed no room for opposing politics," Isaqzadeh noted. "The likelihood of seeing similar protests here in Afghanistan that result in mass resignations, led by disenfranchised political parties, is minimal. This is because the current system, while not without complications, does allow for competing political parties to gain seats and voice their opinions." While debates emerged among the students on the specifics of Afghan democracy, all expressed their strong interest in having more panel discussions on world affairs and current events on a regular basis.

### ECONOMIC GROWTH

**Inaugural Meeting of APTTCA:** From February 11 through 12, the Afghanistan Pakistan Transit Trade Coordinating Authority (APTTCA) held its first meeting in Islamabad, Pakistan. The meeting focused on the implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), and the resolution of a number of trade and transit barriers imposed by both countries in recent months.



APTTCA delegation leaders. Photo: USAID/TAFA

Both parties confirmed the establishment of APTTCA and agreed upon the primary elements of its structure and composition on the basis of the proposal prepared by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA). Pakistan identified the development of APTTCA business rules as the next priority, and requested Afghanistan to take the lead in this process. A draft has been prepared by GIROA and will be finalized and submitted to Pakistan within one month. The Pakistan Ministry of Commerce requested that an expert, currently working on these rules at the Afghan Ministry of Commerce, visit Islamabad as soon as possible to understand their internal government processes so that these may be reflected in the business rules. Key APTTA implementation activities were discussed, including Customs-to-Customs information sharing, tracking devices, biometrics, bank guarantees for trucks, and customs security/financial guarantees for transit goods. The issues and discussions related to Customs-to-Customs information and sealed trucks produced no areas of disagreement. Concerning biometrics, both countries agreed that, until this system is in place, the Pakistan Investigation Agency (PIA)'s immigration authorities will issue multiple transit permits, as per the existing system, to the drivers of the vehicles and to persons engaged in transit trade. These permits will be valid for a period of six months. Afghanistan will reciprocate. Despite these areas of agreement, the parties failed to agree on appropriate instruments for implementing APTTA's provisions concerning bank guarantees for trucks and customs security/financial guarantees for cargo. As a result, both parties agreed to extend the date of implementation of APTTA by four months (from the original date of February 12) or earlier if the parties agree on resolutions of the aforementioned issues.



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Brainstorming group during Economic Trade and Press Club meeting. Photo: USAID/Afghanistan

**Trade and Economic Press Club:** Twenty-nine Afghan journalists attended the Second Trade and Economic Press Club Meeting on February 2. Jan Forester, an award-winning Australian journalist, outlined why press clubs are important, showed examples of regional and international press clubs and their functions, and discussed the usefulness of specialization. Her presentation was followed by thoughtful questions about the difference between press clubs and press unions, a brief history of Afghan press clubs, and an open discussion on sustainability. The head of the BBC Persian Service, Daoud Azami, gave a presentation on the press club's chief purpose — generating trade and economic stories. There was a lively discussion about how political and economic stories differ and the purpose

of a business press. Journalists filled out a questionnaire on the key topics they would like to see covered in the press club including: the oil pipeline; banking; how free trade works; the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, and other trade agreements; smuggling and the illegal economy; water, energy, and electricity.

**USAID Facilitates a Skills Building Workshop for Interns in the Women in Government Internship Program:** On February 1, the Gender Mainstreaming Team from USAID's Economic Growth and Governance Initiative (EGGI) project facilitated a workshop for 15 interns currently participating in EGGI's Women in Government Internship Program. The objective of the workshop was to engage the interns in interactive capacity-building exercises such as group presentations, working as a team, and networking strategies.

### DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

**U.S. and Afghan Government Officials Celebrate Human Rights Day:** On February 9, in Kabul, the USAID-funded Rule of Law Stabilization Program – Formal Component hosted a “Human Rights Law Day” celebration. Guest of Honor and Keynote Speaker Dr. Sima Samar, the Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, provided opening remarks. After the opening ceremony, students of the program gave presentations about emerging political rights, human rights, and civil issues facing Afghanistan. The event culminated in a feature gallery presentation of original student artwork promoting public awareness of these legal rights. USAID's formal rule of law project is designed to develop the human and institutional capacity of the justice sector, increase the public's access to justice, particularly women, and promote the public's demand for rule of law in Afghanistan.



Advisory committee workshop participants brainstorming roles and responsibilities. Photo: USAID/L-PACS II