



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 11, 2013

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Afghan Technologists and Media Experts Explore New Technologies at Kabul Innovation Lab

Kabul, Afghanistan | February 11, 2013 — Technologists, media experts and entrepreneurs from across Afghanistan began a four-day forum and workshop today. This Innovation Lab will create new ways for the media to use digital and emerging technologies to reach new audiences and distribute content. The event aims to develop innovative technology-based systems to improve the media's reach, professional standards, and quality of content.

Also launched at today's event was a new innovation grant initiative (\$5 million over 4 years) funded by the World Bank. Innovation Lab participants were encouraged by AIMS (the grants administration agency) to develop commercially viable apps over the next four days that would then be eligible for consideration for seeding grants.

This year's lab builds on last year's inaugural Innovation Lab with a focus on Afghan technical experts, enhancing professional collaboration across two of Afghanistan's most successful and promising commercial sectors – Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and media.

USAID Mission Director Ken Yamashita stated "that the Innovation Lab has created a new model for Afghanistan. This year's Lab will explore ways in which technology can help the Afghan Media to reach new and wider audiences, providing greater access to information for all Afghans. USAID is very proud to be a participant and partner in this innovation lab."

The Lab was launched with a one-day forum in which media, business, government and ICT experts brainstormed how media and technology might support one another through innovative solutions. This opening forum will be followed by an intensive three-day workshop (February 12-14) during which young Afghan software engineers and ICT experts will work in small groups to create innovative technical solutions (apps, tools, or games) for leading Afghan media agencies.

Deputy Minister Mobarez Rashidi, Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC), in launching this event today, noted that there were "two great partners in the field of technology and access to information, USAID and Internews." Rashidi went on to note the opportunities offered by media and ICT convergence have also paved the way for enhanced collaboration between the two key ministries supporting sector growth in these fields – the Ministry of Information and Culture and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for nearly 50 years.



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Aimal Marjan, the Director for ICT at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MoCIT) said that "ICT has proved to be one of the tools that helps a nation to deal with some of its problems, so why not Afghanistan?" Marjan noted "great successes have been achieved in just ten years in both the ICT and media sectors, promising enormous potential for future innovation and economic growth for a country many often only associate with conflict".

This year's event follows last year's highly successful pilot Lab. The first Innovation Lab examined innovative ways of using technology for social impact. Outcomes of the 2012 Kabul Lab included the design of 6 sophisticated prototypes that used SMS, voice interactivity, online mapping and data management to promote social and economic development in Afghanistan.

The 2012 Lab kick-started a range of professional development networks across the nation, that will be enhanced further through this year's lab, expanding networks through Internews international i-hub professional networks.

To follow the progress of the 2013 Innovation visit <https://www.facebook.com/kabulinnovationlab>

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