

## COVID-19 Response, Women's Justice and Other News Highlights

### **German Government Commits over AFN 5.77 Billion to Immediate COVID-19 Response and Continued Bilateral Cooperation**

On 11<sup>th</sup> June, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) pledged AFN 5.77 billion (EUR 69.8 million) to Afghanistan. The funds are for immediate and direct response to challenges of the Afghan public sector and the private economy to help mitigate the social and economic consequences of COVID-19. These funds are provided as a part of up to AFN 20.7 billion (EUR 250 million) that Germany intends to make available in 2020 for further bilateral cooperation. The German State Secretary Mr Martin Jaeger of the BMZ informed the Afghan Acting Minister of Finance Mr Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal and Deputy Finance Minister Mr Abdul Habib Zadran about these commitments during a video conference call.

Mr Jaeger stated, 'Germany will continue to be a reliable partner for Afghanistan in these challenging times... [and] will continue to support Afghanistan on its path towards sustainable and inclusive development.'

The multi-donor Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) will receive AFN 3.3 billion (EUR 40 million). The fund supports development measures implemented by the government of Afghanistan, which include promoting a functioning civil service, supporting basic social services and reducing poverty. The Afghan Credit Guarantee Foundation (ACGF), the Water Sector Improvement Programme (WSIP), and the Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Programme (SEDEP) will also receive funding.

Mr Arghandiwal said, 'Germany has been a key and reliable partner in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We are very much looking forward to our continued and mutually beneficial relationship.'

While Germany supports the country's COVID-19 response, further government-to-government negotiations on development cooperation are due to take place later this year, with intended additional commitments to Afghanistan.



## New Flood Protection Wall and Irrigation Channel Benefits Almost 20,000 Takhar Citizens

On 15<sup>th</sup> June, provincial authorities together with the director of Taloqan River Basin Agency (TRBA) inaugurated a flood protection wall in the city of Taloqan, Takhar Province. Due to COVID-19 safety regulations, a limited number of about 15 participants attended the handover ceremony. The 1.5-kilometre-long wall will protect two villages as well as infrastructure along the Taloqan River, and 2,000 *jeribs* (400 hectares) of land from floods, benefitting almost 20,000 local citizens. The Afghan-German Cooperation's Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) financed the project at a total cost of about AFN 122 million.

Takhar's Provincial Governor, Mr Abdul Haq Shafaq stated, 'Safeguarding the right bank of Taloqan River in Haji Rashid area was a vital project. It protects Haji Rashid and Zargari areas from flooding and provided employment for more than 2,400 people. We ask the residents and relevant departments to now pay serious attention in the operation and maintenance of the project.'

In recent years, heavy floods severely damaged houses in the two densely populated villages of Haji Rashid and Zargari. The flood damaged infrastructure in the surrounding areas and a bridge built by the Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. The Nurullah Irrigation Intake, which supplies water to 400 ha of farmland and to a micro-hydropower plant, was also affected. Takhar's Provincial Development Committee prioritised the construction of a new flood protection wall and the rehabilitation of one irrigation channel based on the development priorities set for the province. Construction works started in December 2018 and lasted for 16 months.

The new protection wall will safeguard the two villages, the local irrigation systems and farmlands. It will help increase agricultural productivity and stimulate economic growth.



## Women's Access to Justice Training Takes Place with Social Distancing

Last month, a three-day capacity building training took place for 11 Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in Pul-e Khumri City, Baghlan. GFPs are women who volunteer as access points to justice for women. They raise awareness on legal issues, women's rights and gender equality in their respective districts. As most of the participants were new focal points, they learned about the roles and responsibilities for their new position. For example, they learned how to refer women's cases to relevant justice institutions and were given an introduction to legal institutions and the anti-harassment law. The training took place with social distancing enforced.

The Afghan-German Cooperation's Promotion of the Rule of Law Programme supported this training.



## Bringing Reliable Electricity to 140,000 Residents in Kunduz

On 26 June 2020, the Ministry of Energy & Water (MEW), the Kunduz Provincial Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS) Department and Turkish company AK-AY ELEKTRIK signed a contract for the installation of a transformer at a substation in Kunduz. The 20-megavolt ampere transformer at Sedarak substation will improve the power supply for around 140,000 residents in three districts within Kunduz province. The Afghan-German Cooperation's Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) will finance the project with a total amount of around AFN 87 million.

The regional director of DABS in Kunduz, Eng. Haji Mohammad Momand stated, 'With this construction, we will be able to fulfill the needs for power distribution in downtown Kunduz and the areas of Khanabad, Aliabad and Chardara Districts. It will modernise our system and enable us to effectively calculate and prevent power losses.'

The residents of Aliabad, Khanabad and Chardara districts are currently supplied with power through Sedarak and Asqalan substations. The supply suffers from long distances and a low transmission voltage (35kV). The new transformer will be supplied by a 110 kV transmission line, which reduces losses in the transmission. The project will improve power quality, bringing reliable electricity to homes, businesses and community services, and fostering economic security and growth within the area.

## Communicating with Value Chains Through Lockdown

The Sustainable Economic Development and Employment Promotion (SEDEP) project has encouraged all value chain related associations on the provincial level to establish WhatsApp groups as a way of communicating with their members. The aim is to collect and address the problems occurring during the COVID-19 outbreak and the lockdown period. All heads of

associations identify, prioritise and articulate the problems in order to raise them on the virtual platform, where the identified problems are discussed. The problems related to the national level are then raised in a national business working group to feed into the national level discussions. This communication is important so that value chain actors can address any problems with their respective association. It enables the concerned associations to get a structured and coordinated overview of all problems in different provinces, and it fosters a good relationship between the public and private sector.

Province:

Landesweit

Image:

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