Dehdadi District, Balkh, 17th October 2018 – Yesterday, the ground-breaking ceremony for the reconstruction of a road linking Mazar-e Sharif – Sholgara Highway and Firqa – Pul-e-Babu Road took place in the district Dehdadi, Balkh. Provincial government officials and representatives of the Afghan-German Cooperation’s Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) attended the event. Improved traffic conditions will benefit more than 28,000 citizens. Balkh’s Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (DRRD) implements the project and monitors construction works. The Afghan-German Cooperation finances the activity at a total cost of about AFN 68 million.

At the ground-breaking ceremony, Balkh’s Deputy Governor, Mr Shojauddin Shoja, emphasised: “I wholeheartedly appreciate the German government’s support in implementing such beneficial projects in our province. Once the road is reconstructed, it is the residents’ job to make sure that it is properly maintained.”

Currently, the 1.5 kilometres long road linking two important main roads in Balkh is in poor condition. During winter, mud hinders traffic significantly and causes severe inconveniences for residents. The road passes through agricultural, commercial and residential areas and is crucial for local economy. More than 4,000 vehicles use the road every day.

Once reconstruction works are done, 28,000 citizens will benefit from improved access to markets, schools and health centres as well as to Balkh’s provincial capital Mazar-e Sharif. This shall facilitate economic activity in the area, creating additional income opportunities. Shop owners can expect increased sales and farmers will profit from easier market access. The road will further be safer and more comfortable to use, also reducing vehicle maintenance costs and noise pollution. Reconstruction works are estimated to last for 17 months. They will create job opportunities for many locals throughout the process.

During the project’s implementation, the Afghan-German Cooperation’s Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) will offer on-the-job training, coaching and mentoring sessions for engineers and managers working at Balkh’s Department of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. These activities aim at improving the department’s capacities for designing, constructing and maintaining urban roads independently in the future.

The Regional Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) is being implemented by KfW Development Bank on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The programme aims at improving economic and social infrastructure in Northern Afghanistan while enabling provincial administrations to plan and implement development programmes independently. Since 2011, the programme has funded and constructed or rehabilitated more than 160 kilometres of roads, 50 kilometres of irrigation canals and 11 protection dams against flooding or erosion in the provinces Balkh, Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan. In Samangan, RIDF is currently implementing two school rehabilitation projects. At the same time, the programme has organised about 900 job-specific on-the-job training, coaching and seminars for more than 3,000 engineers and governmental employees, facilitating independent realisation of future infrastructure projects.