

This Week Around the USAID Mission

Creating Jobs and Reconstructing Communities



Locally-hired day laborers work to clean mud and other debris from Sar-e-Pul canals.

Sayid Hamrah fled Pesta Mazar Village, Sar-e-Pul Province, to Iran to escape the Taliban. “They killed my brother in-law and looted my harvest, including 700 kg of wheat and barley,” Hamrah said.

Life in Iran was very difficult for Hamrah and other Afghan refugees, who worked hard to earn meager livings, and Hamra returned to Sar-e-Pul from Iran earlier this year. Yet, he feared it would not be long before he left again. This time, it wouldn’t be the Taliban he’d be fleeing but lack of work. Then he heard about a short-term job for unskilled workers.

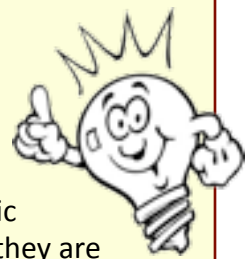
The job involved cleaning the Sar-e-Pul canal that provides irrigation and washing water for 20,000 families in Sar-e-Pul and surrounding villages. A devastating flood earlier in the year had blocked the canal with mud and debris. The flood damaged roads, bridges, culverts and houses. Since May, Sar-e-Pul municipality has been working hard to restore the damaged areas, and it reached out for international support.

A USAID-funded Regional Afghan Municipalities Program for Urban Populations (RAMP UP) team visited Sar-e-Pul and developed a plan to help the municipality rebuild. The municipality is working on several projects, including canal cleaning, road graveling, and building both pedestrian and vehicle bridges.

With USAID’s support of post-flood reconstruction projects in Sar-e-Pul, Hamrah was able to find work helping to protect his community.

DOC Tip of the Week

Greatest Hits does not publish stories about obscure bureaucratic initiatives; they are about the real people who benefited from tangible results.



The canal-cleaning project not only created short-term job opportunities for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees, but also has restored the gardens and farmlands destroyed by the flood, preventing farmers from becoming IDPs and migrant workers in Iran.

Hamrah is happy to have found employment in Afghanistan and is proud of the work that is being done. “We are cleaning it really thoroughly,” said Azam. “It has not been properly cleaned for the past 30 years!”

A Project with Newborn Legacy



A midwife practicing child life saving methods.

One of the most successful health projects in Afghanistan will end this week but its benefits are expected to continue.

When the USAID-funded Health Service Support Project (HSSP) began in 2006, Afghanistan’s maternal death rate was the second highest in the world. During the Taliban regime this country of 20 million had 467 midwives and only one province offered midwifery education. Less than 8 percent of pregnant women gave birth with the help of skilled providers. Since 2001, the number of Afghan midwives has more than tripled.

More than 3,000 new midwives have been graduated from a network of government-accredited schools, whose curriculums and competency-based training were developed under HSSP in collaboration with the Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) and other partners. HSSP supported 13 community-based midwifery education programs in Bamyan, Badakhshan, Ghor, Hirat, Jawzjan, Khost, Laghman, Logar, Nuristan, Paktika, Paktya, Takhar, and Wardak provinces and a hospital-based midwifery training programs in Hirat Province. The Afghanistan Mortality Study (AMS) released by the Afghan Government last year, showed a significant reduction in women dying in childbirth. The fact that more Afghan women are surviving childbirth is a testament to the newly educated midwives,

who are working in their communities to prevent the needless deaths of pregnant women. Through HSSP, USAID also provided technical assistance and capacity-building support to MoPH-contracted non-governmental organizations to improve the planning, management, implementation, and quality of Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) and the Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS) delivery in 21 provinces. USAID worked with the MoPH to improve the quality of services provided to women of reproductive age and children less than age five, and improve the capacity and willingness of communities to make informed decisions about their health. More than 17,000 health care workers, supervisors, faculty and health ministry staff have been trained in 28 areas of care, from emergency obstetric and newborn care to family planning and mental health.

Building a Home for Afghanistan’s Future Teachers

The first of four Provincial Teacher Training Colleges was completed in Faryab on Oct. 25. This beautiful building includes housing for 100 male and 100 female students, a dining facility, a guard house and an academic building. Three other teacher-training colleges, in Nangarhar, Wardak, and Parwan, should be completed by the end of the year. When the project reaches its full capacity next year, 800 future teachers will be studying in these classrooms, preparing to pass their knowledge to the future generations of Afghans.



The newly built Provincial Teacher Training College in Faryab.

Muqur Bazaar Shopkeepers Form Association in Southern Ghazni

The bazaars in Muqur and Qarabagh districts along Highway 1 in southern Ghanzi province have grown substantially in the past year. This growth helps create resilient communities in which GIROA is playing a central role.

As economic opportunities have grown, the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has turned its attention to encouraging development of a resilient network to represent the concerns of the growing constituency of shopkeepers. In the past weeks, OTI's team of local community-development professionals in Muqur district have engaged with district government officials and shopkeepers to help initiate discussions about the formation of a merchant association. One such group has been self-organized by bazaar businessmen, and it has several meetings involving district officials and the OTI local team. OTI will likely support the association with small capacity-building and economic-development grants and will try to foster a relationship between the association and the Provincial Chamber of Commerce.



A boy selling fruits in Muqur Bazaar.

PHOTO OF THE WEEK



Dr. Muzghan, one of women veterinarians in northern Afghanistan, treats a goat in a village near Mazar-e-Sharif City. The USAID has established 109 Field Veterinary Units in Balkh, Samangan, Jawzjan, Sar-e-Pul and Faryab provinces.

Project: Incentives Driving Economic Alternatives for the North, East, West (IDEA-NEW)

Location: Balkh, Afghanistan