

PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Development Programme

Afghanistan Country Office, Shah Mahmood Ghazi Watt, Kabul



Senior Women in Management (SWIM) Programme Launched

September 20, 2004 Kabul – Today, the Senior Women in Management (SWIM) programme was officially launched by the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and UNDP. The first group of 19 female participants in the programme has recently commenced their management and leadership training.

SWIM is a jointly sponsored programme by the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. The total budget planned for the programme is approximately US\$100 000. Other partners of the SWIM programme include the Afghan Inkishafee Tarbiawee Markaz and the Afghan Institute of Learning.

The objective of SWIM is to increase the participation of Afghan women in decision-making roles in government by identifying qualified women to work at senior levels in selected ministries. Initially, the programme will be six months in duration, consisting of on-the-job and formal training in areas of management, computing, language and specialized skills.

During the launch, H.E. Mohammad Haneef Atmar, Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, was specifically recognized for his integral role in launching and supporting this programme. "If the success of our country in poverty reduction depends as much as on Afghan Women as men, then we must invest in women as our leaders and in equal opportunities for them based on our constitution", stated H.E. Mohammad Haneef Atmar.

The ultimate goal of SWIM is to strengthen the Afghan government by building capacity in senior management and providing equal opportunity in the public sector.

"One of the most important determinants of a nation's economic growth is the participation of women at all levels in the labor force," stated Karen Jorgensen, UNDP Deputy Country Director, "and this programme will add significant value to Afghanistan's development."

At the end of the SWIM programme, candidates are encouraged to apply for longer term employment within their respective ministries. Recruitment is being conducted by UNDP's Human Resources Department through a transparent process based on merit, qualifications, and successful performance on examinations. Women currently employed within the ministries and external female candidates were encouraged to apply for these positions.

Selection of female participants is made based on the following requirements: Strong leadership skills, organizational aptitude, the ability to gather and apply lessons learned, and a high degree of willingness to support and motivate other women to develop skills and succeed. What is most critical is that the participants have integrity and be eager and willing to help other Afghans reach the same goals. "This program is the first time that we have been approached as professionals and potential leaders in training", stated Ms. Rahima Hafizi, Head of Contracting at MRRD, and one of the several participants in SWIM.

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