Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction Project (CDRRP)

Master Trainers to Help Develop Provincial Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) and ECHO organized a Training of Trainers workshop from 12 to 16th of August 2007 in Kabul to train the ANDMA staff in the preparation of Provincial Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans (PDPRP).

The workshop was organized with the support of the UNDP Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction Project (CDRRP), with the objective to improve the ability of 21 ANDMA staff members to assume the role of Master Trainers on Disaster Risk Reduction in the country as a whole. The trained ANDMA staff are expected to coach ANDMA staff in the provinces, line ministries, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Shuras and other stakeholders to develop Provincial Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan in their respective provinces.

The five-day workshop focused in a comprehensive manner on the six principal areas of disaster risk management. These included building a conceptual understanding of hazards and disasters; linking disasters and development; natural hazards; disaster preparedness; disaster response, and disaster mitigation.

The CDRRP project is designed to support the achievement of the national development benchmarks for disaster risk reduction spelled out in Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS): “by end of 2010, an effective system of disaster preparedness and response will be in place.”

Earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides, sand storms, avalanches and cold winter epidemics and diseases are some of the serious natural and environmental hazards that affect Afghanistan regularly. The ANDS Disaster Risk Reduction strategy highlights a number of priorities: professional skills development for ANDMA staff; developing standard operating procedures for rapid assessment, quick response and monitoring; and resource mobilizations. The establishment of Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) at the provincial level, the design of disaster management inventory system databases and developing back-up communication systems for early warning and the improvement of coordination needs are some of the other key priorities identified under the ANDS-DRR strategy.

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The CDRRP is a five-year project (2007-2011) that is developed jointly by the ANDMA with assistance from UNDP. The project objective is to strengthen national capacity for disaster risk reduction, improved response, and recovery management. This will be done through capacity building and professional and organizational development; strengthening community capacity; strengthening risk information management system; and development of effective response systems.

In terms of strengthening community capacity, the project focuses on identifying and expanding indigenous coping strategies, strengthening traditional early warning systems, establishing community emergency response teams, developing community mitigation action plans, integrating disaster risk management in school curricula and promoting public awareness and education.

Other grey areas that need to be addressed include limited capacity of the key ministries to integrate disaster risk management practices within development planning, the information gap on hazards and vulnerability and limited public awareness on disaster risk management.

The workshop also exposed the participants to some of the challenges faced by the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA). These include lack of institutional and human capacity to coordinate disaster management interventions, early warning and emergency response management.

At the provincial level the project will seek to strengthen risk information management systems by establishing partnerships with institutions and universities in the regions by developing comprehensive early warning systems and strengthening regional information networks.

**Reflections from Participants**

"...This workshop has been very useful for me to build a holistic understanding of disaster management. I wish to develop my capacity and learn more so that I am able to better train local people in different provinces…"

"...this is a very complete workshop in terms of learning material and covers most of the issues about disaster management…"

"...availability of adequate resources is very important if we have to succeed in disaster management. The other important issue is capacity building of the involved staff members…"

"...The workshop has provided an opportunity to share experiences and build and clarify concepts of disaster management. The learning material provided is very useful…"

"...I liked the workshop design as it placed equal emphasis on theory and practice of disaster management. Both approaches will be useful to share in our trainings with stakeholders at the local level…"

"...the most important this is planning and management before and during disasters. The second issue is security since it can limit our access to the affected areas for providing assistance…"

"...We will be informed about our mission schedule after this workshop by UNDP and then we will visit different provinces to pass on the learnings we picked here to the local people …"
Question: How do workshops such as these help? Your impressions about the outcome of the workshop?

This UNDP and Government of Afghanistan supported workshop is addressing the practical, on-the-ground capacity development needs of the participants. The participants here are being trained as Master Trainers. They will form the core of our future capacity development effort once we start similar trainings at the provincial level, beginning with Kunduz next month.

I have seen to it that there has been high quality of participation in the workshop from my office. I have personally attended many sessions, together with my policy director and other senior officials. We will see how far we have succeeded in our efforts when we use the learnings gathered by the Master Trainers in the provincial workshops.

Question: Why Kunduz?

Because Kunduz is affected by several kinds of natural hazards throughout the year. Earthquakes, snow avalanches, floods in the Amu river, all of these happen in this province. So the province presents a good location to start our capacity development effort.

Question: How difficult is it to advocate for natural disaster risk management at the highest political level in Afghanistan, a country where addressing violent conflicts are a major priority?

It would be fair to say Afghanistan is affected by natural disasters as much as it is affected by man-made disasters. The sad part is the public awareness of the impact of natural disasters is largely missing. You will be surprised how little even educated people and top sections of the government by and large know about the importance of disaster risk management. It is a big challenge for us to build understanding of this subject among parliamentarians and top government officials. Once they see the importance of disaster management things will change for the better.

Question: So what are your three big priorities for the next year or so?

Priority number one is to strengthen the role of media in building public awareness and bridging the public information gap on disaster-related issues. And this work has already started.

There is a fully functional media section that is producing spots, jingles, public service announcements for people to understand the do’s and don’ts of search and rescue, first aid and other important areas that are crucial to handle during natural emergencies.

Simultaneously we are working on reforming the school curricula. Here my approach is to mainstream disaster management education in the regular course curriculum in science, physics, chemistry, engineering and others. We do not want to create a separate course on disaster management that later on not many students take up for learning.

Assuming that there is now at least one person in school from every family, we hope that this person will in turn make the other six members of the family aware about effective disaster management.

The curriculum will be devised in a consultative manner, together with my officers, experts from other ministries, and NGOs. I have also been in close contact with the relevant ministries in Iran and India, and agencies like UNESCO for this purpose.

My third and final big priority is to involve the shura at the village, district and provincial level in disaster management work so that we are able to have a real bottom-up approach to disaster management in Afghanistan.
I want to participate in this conference to raise awareness on youth issues because most of the people do not know about the situation of youth in Afghanistan. I will share learnings from this conference with my friends who have not been able to attend this conference.” This was stated by Shamim Vešal, a 17 years old, 12th grade student of Maryam High School from Kabul.

The National Youth Conference got off to a flying start with the participation of over 300 youth like representatives like Shamim from all the 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

The Conference was organized by the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs under the Ministry of Information and Culture, and supported by eight United Nations Agencies.

The three-day Conference is a part of the Afghanistan Joint National Joint Youth Programme (UNYP), led by the Ministry of Information and Culture, Office of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs, with the coordination support of UNDP. Other UN Agencies include UNICEF, UN-HABITAT, UNESCO, UNV, UNFPA, UNAMA and UNODC. Seven additional ministries are involved: the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

Additional support for the Conference came from the United States Agency for International Development – Afghanistan Livelihood Programme (ALP) for the eastern region, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), ARD, Flag International (FI), Bearing Point, with security provided by HART Security.

Mr. Khalili specified the importance of youth rebuilding Afghanistan and drew attention to the fact that the youth in the country were born into and raised in the conflict situation. Mr. Khalili invited youth “to work together with the Government to establish a new society and correct the mistakes of the past”.

Mr. Eshaq-zai noted that close to 70 per cent of the population of Afghanistan is under 25 years old. This segment of the population is generally disenfranchised, lacks education and employment opportunities, and rarely participates in decision-making at the community, provincial or national level. The situation of Afghan young women is of even more concern:

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early and forced marriages of women and incidents of self-immolation were on the rise. He said the youth had a big role to play in the social and political affairs of the nation. He informed the audience that Youth Shuras or councils had been established at the village, district and youth level and 2,400 representatives from these Shuras would create the National Youth Shura. Speaking on behalf of the United Nations in Afghanistan, the UNDP Country Director, Ms. Anita Nirody described the youth of Afghanistan as a vast resource of human capital with the potential to positively contribute towards development and reconciliation. She expressed the hope that the Conference would offer the youth an opportunity to share their aspirations for the future and contribute in a constructive way to development and peace in Afghanistan. Ms. Nirody identified education and skills development, closer government-youth interface, and greater participation of young women and men in the country’s socio-political process. Shamim felt that one of the most important problems facing Afghanistan was the poor quality of teaching in schools, which she attributes to low teacher salaries. "I hope the ministry of education gives due consideration to our teachers’ problems", Shamim adds.

Mayors Meet to Set Priorities for Municipal Action in Provinces

Mayors must find ways of ensuring public participation of citizens in municipal governance. Reactivating city councils and gathering constant feedback from people is very critical. You can succeed only if you learn to build a close working relationship with the people and harness their capacity”.

This was stated by the Minister of Interior, Mr. Zerar Ahmad Muqbil at the well-attended "Seminar for Provincial Administrative Heads and Municipal Mayors", in Kabul. Mayors, provincial administrative heads, federal officials, representatives from international development organizations and civil society organizations attended the seminar. Several senior ministers of the Government of Afghanistan addressed the conference that was jointly organized by the Ministry of Interior and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Mr. Muqbil said delivering quality basic public services is one of the primary mandates of municipalities. People who live in a city would extend their cooperation if they feel secure and comfortable in (Continued to Page 6)
working with the mayors. “You should inspire confidence in them that your administration has the capacity to run their city. You have the power and the responsibility to prepare and implement municipal plans in a way that makes good urban governance possible”, Mr. Muqbil said that people should see that provincial administrators have been able to put a stop to unauthorized constructions in urban areas and that everyone has equal and fair access to urban land. He called upon the participants to exchange experiences and discuss in detail the challenges they faced to make sure the efforts are made towards efficient urban governance systems in the future.

Emphasizing the need to focus on strengthening the revenue base of the municipalities, the Minister warned that neglecting revenue generation would lead to destruction of the cities. “We will have to make sure that revenues are regularly collected and properly utilized. We should be able to be accountable to the citizens. In certain provinces, pedestrian and public places have been illeg- ally rented by the municipalities or given away on lease – these are unplanned activities and mayors should make sure that the trend of new urban sprawls developing on agricultural land, the minister remarked that in certain provinces, ‘cities within cities’ were coming up. “We have to work closely with the Ministry of Urban Development to ensure that cities are not allowed to be constructed on prime agricultural land”. He said serious attention needed to be paid to the task of building transparency and efficiency in the system. “A city that has a good Mayor will see rapid development”, he said.

Describing the three-day seminar as a good start, the Minister of Urban Development, Mr. Yousuf Pashtun expressed the hope that such events are regularly organized so that those at the centre got to know the big issues confronting city gov-
ernance and remedial and practical measures are taken to address urban development. Mr. Pashtun said urban development of Afghanistan after 25 years of conflict would not be an easy task. Long-standing neglect of urban governance, coupled with large-scale migration from villages to cities has further complicated the problem. He stressed the Ministry of Urban Development was responsible for planning and strategy development. “Our role is to ensure that urban plans are rigorously implemented and this is very much in the hands of the mayors”, he noted.

Mr. Pashtun observed that one of the major problems faced by mayors was lack of municipal capacity. Except for some municipalities, most others face fundamental fiscal and technical constraints. No Mayor can ever succeed in his role unless people are fully involved. They have to know that they are the real actors and partners in urban development, he observed.

The minister said that close to 6.7 million people out of the total 24 million or 28 per cent of the population of Afghanistan live in small or big cities. Of these more than 50 per cent live in informal settlements or slums. From the point of view of service delivery, a major challenge is posed by the resettlement of the slum dwellers. He said if a city was unable to provide basic services such as clean water and transportation, it could only be described as a shelter and shelter we can have even in the mountains.

Speaking on the occasion, the head of the
Mr. Moshahid thanked UNDP for taking the lead in organizing the conference with far-reaching results. He identified three main issues as security, governance and development. He said the three concerns were interrelated. Without security, development and efficient governance is not possible and unless we have good governance we cannot have security and development. "If we have a strong and enabling governance, the enemy will not be able to misuse the unhappiness of the people", he noted.

Mr. Moshahid said the priority was to make available quality infrastructure that people need. We hope the new programme will prove useful for efficient public administration.

Capacity building opportunities should be expanded to provinces and not just be limited to the centre, Mr. Moshahid opined.

He said Balkh provided an example where tasks have been organized and job descriptions prepared for competitive recruitment process. This has been carried out with the cooperation of the government of Balkh.

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"We as Afghans are obliged to make use of this opportunity to re-construct our country and to build a strong government. If the external world will see better development, their commitment will be more serious. On the other hand, if they see that despite their best efforts, the problem of terrorism and narcotics persists, they will show their backs to us. A good student is someone who can do tomorrow’s work today", Mr. Moshahid felt.

Setting the agenda for the seminar, the Deputy Minister of Interior, Mr. Abdul Malik Sideqi said after the London Conference and in accordance with the Interim Afghanistan Development Strategy (I-ANDS), the Government of Afghanistan was committed to take measures on human development and good governance. We need to focus on establishment of systems for the safety and security of our people; adopt measures in order to register populations and provide them with identity cards; enforce rule of law should in the provinces; reform laws in accordance with the social needs of the country; streamline processes for coordination of donor support; strengthen evaluation and assessment systems in civic bodies, and hear view of citizens to ensure civic bodies fulfill their role in a good way.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Fernando da Cruz, Programme Manager of the Urban Development Group for UNDP Afghanistan, said the seminar was a recognition that more needed to be done at the local level in the said municipalities represented the lowest arm of government and they are closest to the people. They represent for many communities the public face of Government at local level. Citing lack of resources and physical distance among the reasons why municipalities had suffered neglect, he said the quality of life of ordinary citizens in Afghanistan will largely depend on the ability of municipalities to organize and deliver effective services to citizens. A well administered municipality brings about a better economy in both urban and linked rural areas. This will be important to achieve Afghanistan’s priority development agenda which is the Afghanistan Compact and the ANDS to achieve prosperity for all.

The seminar was a recognition that more needed to be done at the local level in the provinces to assist the municipalities. It is important to direct efforts to strengthen the capacity of municipalities and give them the support they need to become sub-national government authorities capable of delivering municipal services. UNDP support to the development of municipal capabilities will lead to the municipalities emerging as the model for democratic governance at the sub-national level. "We would like to see the emergence of strong, well-managed municipalities that are able to generate enough revenues for the improvement of the welfare of their constituents", he said.
Sharak-turkmania is one of the villages of Nahr-e-shahi District in Balkh Province with a population of about 900 families. Two years ago the people of Sharak never thought that the face of their village would ever change.

More than 80 families in this community are returnees – who had hopes that when they returned to Afghanistan life would be better at home. Years have gone by, if there was any change it was unnoticeable, very slow and life was proving to be difficult on the contrary. And during those hard years quite a number of farmers were involved in poppy cultivation.

"As a returnee you tend to have almost nothing upon returning home and your farm land." as noted by Aminullah, the head of Sharak village.

"You have no seeds to sow; the land requires a lot of preparation; agreements on water distribution with other communities and community members prove difficult and some times turn violent. And when one does not have money the work is very labour intensive and unimaginable to do before you get caught up by the planting season. Once you miss the season, you face a lot of hardships in finding for your family for the whole year ahead of you. In such desperate situation many farmers usually resort to cultivating poppy and other deal-ings." The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) selected Sharak due to the big number of returnees and widespread poverty. FAO introduced UNDP representatives to the shura of Sharak-Turkmania.

When UNDP initiated work in Sharak village at the beginning of 2006, the project representatives held a meeting with Shura and community members to assess farmers’ infrastructural needs that they could support. The Sharak dwellers were initially sceptical of the people who came to their village and claimed were working for development organisations. They had seen enough of the development workers who had little to show and almost never fulfilled any of their promises.

Aminullah reveals that what the villagers found encouraging was that the UNDP project team engaged them in discussions and invited their contributions. “The only contribution that we could afford was our labour and time as we had nothing else to offer. Anything to do with construction materials requires cash that we could not afford”

Normally it cost 1800 Afghanis (or USD 40) to hire a tractor, the only means that could provide transport to Mazar out of Sharak; other ‘normal’ vehicle owners would not dare risk their vehicles getting stuck in the deep sticky slush of Sharak road.

For the poor and deprived people $40 is simply unaffordable and this meant no journeys for them. Their sick could never be taken out of Sharak for treatment.

The main source of livelihood in Sharak is wheat and livestock (sheep and cattle), followed by carpet weaving, mainly done by women. Being mainly a farming community they experience challenges with water for irrigation since they are located downstream and this makes the farmers more vulnerable not only to very harsh dry spells but also to floods during heavy rains.

During the dry season, on many occasions, the farmers in that village did not get water because the communities upstream just cut the water off.

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As a result, the Sharak farmers are not able to farm all the year round like farmers elsewhere.

A few times the water flows down and sometimes during heavy rains, when it is in excess in the upstream villages their crops and gardens are destroyed – resulting in heavy losses.

The road into the village was dangerously slippery, extremely narrow in some places and became unfit for use during the rainy season. For the villagers it would be difficult to transport their crop and livestock products to Mazar city where they get better prices. This meant reduced incomes for the households.

During their discussions with UNDP the villagers pointed out a number of issues affecting their livelihoods in their community. The issues listed were prioritised. Almost everyone wanted to have the road culverts fixed across the feeder road and upgrading the road by gravel.

A month after the meetings and discussions, the people of Sharak witnessed trucks with construction materials entering their village. A Shura was convened to identify the most vulnerable people in the community to work as labourers on the UNDP project.

Soon, a group together with the team of engineers started marking out and excavating culvert positions, from the end of the village while others were involved in making the slabs for the culverts. The community worked very hard to see that they completed the work before the rains and winter set in.

The construction work on the culverts and road provided over 1,000 paid labour days for the community members including the most vulnerable ones. And it is worth noting here that the community provided several labour days that were not paid as their contribution to their project that they supervised themselves in addition to providing storage facilities and work space.

The community also ensured safety of UNDP staff and visitors to the village. By the end of the project, the villagers had fixed 40 culverts and gravelled four kilometres of the feeder road.

Upgrading the feeder road into Sharak village has taken away the worries of the people of Sharak. They will no longer need to cut and fill the road everyday of the crop season; water will be distributed fairly to farms on both sides of the road in the village. They will have more time to work on other activities.

“There was the first time that members of our community worked together for the benefit of the whole community. I believe we will be able to do much more together in our community.”

There are a number of transporters now driving into our village; this may reduce the high fares that we have been paying. We plan to improve on our farming and transportation jointly because it makes work much easier and in a shorter time than working individually.

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There are a number of transporters now driving into our village; this may reduce the high fares that we have been paying. We plan to improve on our farming and transportation jointly because it makes work much easier and in a shorter time than working individually.

We hope for more development since we have a new road that is now all weather and can be accessed all year round.

The people in Sharak have more hopes: they wish to have safe water, a milk collecting centre and upgrade another road that connects to the nearest neighbouring village of Langha Khana, in addition to improving on the drainage canals in the village in order to reduce risks of flooding. They are proud to say that they do not depend on growing poppy anymore.

(By Eva Kintu, Regional Manager, UNDP-Urban Development Group (UDG)

UNDP – UDG collaborates with FAO and UN-MACA in implementing the Regional Initiative for Sustainable Economy (RISE) Programme that is funded by the Government of Japan. RISE is implemented in three provinces including Balkh, Kandahar and Nangahar)
The setting was idyllic for the two-day annual reunion of the International UN Volunteers (I-UNVs) on 16-17 August – a heritage hotel in downtown Kabul, just by the side of the tony Wazir Akbar Khan area, with an enthralling view of the neighboring Hindukush peaks. It was a hard-earned and much deserved celebration of the I-UN Volunteer world that’s in the frontlines of the many-layered development effort in Afghanistan.

The United Colors of the World that is the United Nations Volunteers were all there. Asia, Europe, Americas. But well over half of the 70 I-UNVs doing duty as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and in leading UN agencies, come from the African continent.

The retreat became an occasion to know that the I-UNVs volunteers are a part of the solution. Their presence cannot be missed. An array of the UN agencies have deployed them in strength. Medical doctors, civil engineers, community development specialists, finance and asset management experts, operations, admin and logistics handlers, transport and fuel supply managers, public information workers and yes, stress counsellors. These and a few other talents constitute the staggering diversity of the UNV professionals doing duty across the country and making sure that the massively funded international peace and security efforts are well utilized in the country.

Anita Nirody, the UNDP Country Director in Afghanistan who attended the opening session of the retreat paid glowing tributes to the role and efficacy of the I-UNVs. She recalled that during one of her recent field visits to the Northern Afghan province of Mazar-e-Sharief how a senior provincial administrator had thanked her for the presence of the I-UNV who was so ably helping to bridge the distance between the local government and the communities.

Distributing food in regions where chronic hunger is a norm, disarming illegally armed brigands, protecting refugees, returnees and internally displaced people, building local markets, roads and canals, guiding local democracy and public participation in civic affairs, restoring hope and smiles back to children and youth by helping train teachers and re-opening schools, involving communities in leading the charge to save environment. The presentations made by participants at the Retreat reaffirmed the critical gaps in reconstruction and development that the I-UNVs are helping bridge. Participants from Bamiyan, Kandahar, Mazar, Gardez, Jalalabad and Kabul share the joy and travails of their work and life in the outposts.

Large parts of Afghanistan still present an on-the-edge scenario. In the south and east there is no let-up in uncertainty and insurgency as armed groups continue to mock at state authority; elsewhere, the landscape is dotted by ever-urgent survival and development needs of ordinary Afghan children, women and men.

Physical infrastructure is well-nigh mutilated. These are issues that need the patience of a long-haul runner to resolve. In this scenario, the I-UNVs sincerely believe they are making a difference.
Overview of UNDP in Afghanistan

UNDP has been present in Afghanistan since 1956, providing development assistance to the country and helping build the capacity of national institutions. During the Taliban regime, UNDP continued to provide assistance to communities throughout the country from its relocated offices in Islamabad. During that decade, UNDP delivered US$200 million of assistance to Afghanistan. In early 2002, UNDP inaugurated its new office in Kabul.

The human development challenge for Afghanistan is enormous. According to Afghanistan’s National Human Development Report (NHDR) 2004, the Human Development Index ranks Afghanistan at 173 out of 178 countries worldwide and its MDG indicators place it below the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries. The depth of poverty in Afghanistan is reflected consistently in all human development indicators, revealing a mosaic of a nation in need of sustained assistance. Not surprisingly, therefore, Afghanistan has been identified as a global priority for addressing the Millennium Development Goals.

UNDP operates within the framework of the integrated United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In December 2005, UNDP signed a three-year Country Programme Action Plan with the Government of Afghanistan focusing on three development areas: state-building, democracy and civil society empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. UNDP new Country Programme focuses on capacity development, national ownership and policy dialogue. UNDP aims to enhance government institutional capacity to deliver public services in an equitable and sustainable manner and to create an enabling environment for legitimate livelihoods.

The expected results are pursued in line with the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) objectives and benchmarks. In particular, UNDP supports the Government in achieving a number of development benchmarks in the field of security and the rule of law, administrative reform, transparency and accountability, local governance, political processes (elections and parliament), civil society empowerment, gender equality, human rights, environment and rural energy, the reintegration of former combatants into society, the implementation of the national counter-narcotics strategy, as well as rural development planning and private sector development.

All UNDP activities are undertaken in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, sister UN agencies and other development stakeholders.

UNDP has built strategic partnerships with a number of government institutions such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Interior, the Civil Service Commission, the Independent Election Commission, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. UNDP’s top ten donor partners in Afghanistan are the US, the EC, Japan, CIDA, UK, Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Norway and the World Bank.

UNDP is thankful for the support and confidence lent by its national and international development partners.

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