

PRESS RELEASE

WORLD HABITAT DAY 2009

“PLANNING OUR URBAN FUTURE”

5 OCTOBER 2009

STATEMENT BY UN-HABITAT’S COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE, AFGHANISTAN

UN-HABITAT has been working in Afghanistan for the past 17 years and has offices in twenty Provinces. UN-HABITAT works directly with communities to support them to meet their basic needs – access to shelter and basic services, an improved living environment, health and education. UN-HABITAT provides support to the Ministry of Urban Development and local governments to improve their urban planning processes so that they can plan for environmentally sustainable urban development that encourages economic growth and meets the needs of urban poor and returnee families. The outcomes of this support have been improvements in social cohesion, community empowerment, the strengthening of local government institutions and the widening of opportunities for especially young people and women to engage in socially meaningful and economically productive activities.

UN-HABITAT is implementing projects funded by the World Bank, Canadian CIDA, USAID, UNICEF, the European Commission, the Government of Japan, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Government of Afghanistan.

UN-HABITAT is currently engaged in supporting the Municipalities of Kandahar and Spin Boldak through strengthening their capacity to plan for the future and to deliver services to their citizens. The project is funded by Canadian CIDA. The project has included the preparation of a Kandahar City Profile involving a wide range of stakeholders to identify its constraints and potentials and direct support for improvements in water supply, footpaths, roads and parks. Community Development Councils have been established and projects implemented through them that meet their specific priorities.

With the support of the Mayor of Kandahar, there has been a major break through in improving the security of tenure of families living in “informal” settlements. 6,000 families now have their housing plots “registered” with the local government and are paying annual taxes. This process of plot registration results in a substantial income to the Municipality and the improvement in security of tenure encourages house owners to invest in improving their own dwellings. It is hoped that the initiative supported by Kandahar Municipality will encourage other cities in the country to appreciate the positive benefits of recognizing informal settlements.

In Lashkar Gah, UN-HABITAT is implementing a project with funds from UK’s DFID. This aims at building capacity of the Municipality to plan, develop and implement development projects together with its citizens and to meet the needs of people at the community and city level in a sustainable manner.

This project will provide improved water supply to 19,000 people, improvements in solid waste management, new municipality buildings, the construction of public parks and improvements in footpaths and drains as well as the formation and support to Community Development Council initiated activities.

With funding from the Government of Japan, UN-HABITAT is implementing a Community Empowerment and Development for Peace Building project in Jalalabad and surrounding Districts. This includes support for returnees including the provision of materials and technical advice on housing, the upgrading of the water supply system, support to Community Development Committees including vocational training and the construction of a clinic.

In Kabul City and Jalalabad Municipality UN-HABITAT is implementing the Reintegration of Returnees and IDPs through Policy, Planning and Targeted Assistance project funded by the European Union which includes support for the upgrading of informal settlements and housing as well as technical assistance to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Urban Development and the Municipality of Kabul.

UN-HABITAT is one of the main Facilitating Partners in the implementation of MRRD's National Solidarity Programme in nine Provinces. It is working in twenty Provinces to implement the USAID funded Learning for Community Empowerment Programme, providing literacy training and support for community banking and the development of livelihoods skills.

With support from UNICEF, UN-HABITAT is one of the implementing partners for a pilot Behaviour Change and Communication project which provides support for women and the youth to improve hygiene and child rearing practices and to understand the importance of immunisation and maternal health care.

UN-HABITAT is piloting an Inter-Communal Rural Development project with funding from the Government of Japan which provides support to clusters of communities to implement development projects for their mutual benefit, such as mini hydro power, irrigation and agricultural improvement projects.

Should there be any queries please contact the following.

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