

# UNAMA NEWS

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan  
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## UN chief congratulates Afghan President on inauguration

**19 November 2009 - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today reaffirmed the commitment of the United Nations to support Afghanistan's progress towards peace, stability and development, as he congratulated Hamid Karzai on his inauguration as President for a second term.**

"He welcomes the commitment of President Karzai to serve all Afghans, to fight corruption and to bring increased good governance, security and services to the country," Mr. Ban's spokesperson said in a statement.

"In pursuance of realizing these goals concretely, the United Nations looks forward to working with President Karzai and his Government, the people of Afghanistan, and Afghanistan's international partners," the statement added.

Mr. Ban sent his best wishes to the President and to the people of Afghanistan at this "critical juncture in their history" and reaffirmed the UN's determination to support the country's peace and development efforts.

Mr. Karzai was re-elected after his opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, withdrew from the presidential run-off that had been planned for 7 November.

On a visit to Afghanistan earlier this month, Mr. Ban urged Mr. Karzai to ensure good governance, "including the eradication of corruptive practices prevalent in Afghanistan, controlling drug trafficking and forming a unity government with experienced ministers and government officials."

In addition, he has pledged that last month's attack on a guest house in the capital, Kabul, which killed five UN staff and injured nine others, will not deter the world body from its mission to help the Afghan people build a better future.

The Secretary-General was represented at today's inauguration ceremony by his Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), Kai Eide.

## Afghanistan sees strong private sector growth despite poor governance: World Bank

**24 November 2009 - A latest World Bank survey has found that a strong private sector growth, albeit from a small base, is taking place in Afghanistan.**

The report entitled: The Afghanistan Investment Climate in 2008, is based on the findings of a survey conducted in 2008 that covered more than 1,000 firms in 10 key Afghan cities, including Kabul, Herat, Mazar, and Kandahar.

According to the report, Afghanistan's private sector is "growing fast" with the industrial and service sector doubling in size since the last similar survey in 2005.

It further states the average revenue growth in the surveyed firms is very high – 220 per cent – because of some strong performers.

The survey suggests that this rate of growth will continue, as 77 per cent of the surveyed firms plan to expand in the near future.

However, it's not all good news: despite this growth, the country suffers from a number of problems including poor governance, weak factor markets, and lack of firm-level innovation which affect industry.

The survey also finds that weak policy enforcement, crime and theft, corruption, and access to land and finance are some of the constraints that were found to be dominant across businesses country-wide.

Interestingly, crime and theft increased dramatically since 2005, while corruption was rated as a problem by 44 per cent of respondents and that it touched "virtually every aspect of a firm's dealings with government."

Another problem identified by the report was the low levels of foreign direct investment (FDI) into the country, as less than two per cent of the firms surveyed in 2008 were foreign owned.

"The report does not aim to identify areas of concern for the Bank. The report aims, however, to find out business environment in Afghanistan. And the 2008 survey aimed to compare the business environment between last survey (2005) and find out whether there have been improvements since then," said the World Bank's External Relations Officer Abdul Raouf Zia.

Since April 2002, the World Bank has committed over US\$ 1.89 billion for development and emergency reconstruction projects and budget support operations in Afghanistan.

Currently, the Bank has 26 active projects in Afghanistan with net commitments of over US\$ 1 billion.

By Aditya Mehta, UNAMA



10 December 2009

## Elimination of Violence Against Women Day in Afghanistan

**25 November 2009 - An event to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women has been held in Afghanistan's Kunar province.**

"Around 200 participants including women, officials, civil society members, the Provincial Reconstruction Team, the provincial council, tribal elders, religious scholars and school students participated in a gathering in Asad Abad City, the capital of Kunar province to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women," said Marhaba Karimi, the Director of Women's Affairs of Kunar province.

On 11 November a major campaign started in several districts of Kunar province with up to 30 to 60 women participated in each of the gatherings held in the districts.

Ms Tawraj, a female member of the Kunar provincial council and one of the participants said that "during the last four to five years, we launched several awareness campaigns on women's rights in different parts of Kunar province."

"All these campaigns have been playing a vital role in the decrease of the number of cases of violence against women," she added.

Wagma Safay, the Head of the Women's section of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission in the Eastern Region praised the role of the prosecutor's office of Kunar in providing full support to the Commission and Department of Women's Affairs in protecting women's rights and eliminating violence against women.

"So far, we are not satisfied with the work of the court and police of Kunar towards the protection of women's rights and elimination of violence against women. We would like to highly encourage the court and police of Kunar to demonstrate their ability to support women activists, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and Women's Department to ensure the women rights," added Wagma.

During the campaign, many women from Kunar actively participated in several media round tables and held interviews.

In Nangarhar province, the Human Rights Unit of the Eastern Regional Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan organized several round tables Nangarhar's radio and television on "Threats to Women in Public Life" and "Rape and Sexual Violence", with the participation of Human Rights Commission staff members, female activists, civil society representatives, elders and scholars.

In Laghman province, the Department of Women's Affairs organized a gathering in Alingar district where a number of cases of violence against women have taken place.

Tribal elders and the district governor of Alingar signed an agreement to play a vital role in preventing violence against women.

By Shafiqullah Waak, UNAMA

## Rebuilding Afghanistan with the women of Samangan

**23 November 2009 - Tirelessly, the sound of hammers keep echoing in the valley in Samangan province, northern Afghanistan.**

It is a rainy day, as the climate suddenly changed in the middle of November. Soon winter will be here. Sitting around a huge heap of stones, 20 women wearing Iranian-style veils and helmets are patiently gravelling those stones with small hammers.

"Hurry up, there's not much time left for today," said Adela, the head of the shura community that employs these women.

Since December 2007, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has supported the Government of Afghanistan in implementing the Swedish-funded Rural Accessibility Improvement Project, in order to supplement rural accessibility in the two northern provinces of Sar-i-Pul and Samangan.

As a part of this project, with the aim to build 50 kilometres of road with gravel surface and structures in Samangan province, women started to be employed in June 2009.

So far, 52 women are involved in gravelling-producing activities, in three different gravelling sites of the province.

Many of them are householders who work eight hours a day for three months on these gravelling sites.

Sometimes their small salary is the only income for their whole family.

"I do this job because of poverty," said Bibi Haji, one of the women working in Samangan. "This money is a vital need for my family. My husband is too old to work and I have six children, all of them under the age of 16. I am the only person able to work in this family."

Like the other women working on the site, Bibi Haji earns four dollars a day, the minimum salary they can get in Afghanistan.

"I encourage the women of the province to do this work," said Adela. "Although the income is small and the working conditions difficult, this project is an opportunity for these women to contribute to the development of Afghanistan's infrastructure and to play an active role in their community," she added.

"We tried to improve their working conditions by providing them with helmets and gloves," said Ramin a UNOPS staff member in charge of this sector. "We would like to continue to work with women and to train them in order to employ them for other projects."

Since the beginning of this project, more than 150m<sup>3</sup> of gravel has been produced by the women of Samangan. Working on these types of projects is very difficult for women but many of them consider this activity as an opportunity with the number of volunteers to participate in this project growing all the time.

At the end of the working day night slowly falls across the valley. One by one, the women go home, sometimes accompanied by their children. From the neighbouring houses comes the smell of boiled vegetables.

"Tomorrow we'll continue our work, and the day after also, until the first colds of the winter arrive. It is difficult, but this is life. We are happy to do this," said Bibi Haji before leaving.

By Alexandre Brecher-Dolivet, UNAMA

