



## GENERAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

June 2007 • Issue 3

### NEW STUDY REVEALS SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN HEALTH

Improvements in women's access to medical care have led to a marked decrease in Afghanistan's infant mortality rate — 40,000 fewer infant deaths a year — according to a new study. According to preliminary results of a Johns Hopkins University study, the infant mortality rate has declined to about 135 per 1,000 live births in 2006, from an estimated 165 per 1,000 in 2001. USAID has contributed to this success by training over 7,860 health workers including doctors, midwives and nurses, a major intervention in reducing infant and maternal mortality.

"Despite many challenges, there are clear signs of health sector recovery and progress throughout the country," said Public Health Minister Mohammad Amin Fatimi. "But there is a long way to go to provide access to basic health services for Afghans in far remote, underserved and marginalized areas across the country."

USAID is working in thirteen Afghan provinces that are among the most under-served regions in the country due to security threats, geographic, cultural and economic inaccessibility.

The central Bamyan Province has historically been one of the most difficult areas for the local population to access health services. However, health care in three key areas has improved: vaccination of children under one years old against DPT (diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus), vaccination of child bearing-age women with TT (tetanus toxoid), and detection of new pulmonary tuberculosis (TB) patients.



*A trained doctor vaccinates an Afghan woman. Roughly 390,000 patients receive services monthly at USAID-funded health clinics.*

Photo: USAID

### HEALTH PROGRESS TO DATE:

- 7.2 million people have improved access to basic health services
- Over 8,350 health workers including doctors, midwives and nurses trained
- 7.3 million children vaccinated against polio
- Roughly 390,000 patients receive services monthly at USAID-funded health clinics.
- Over 670 health clinics have been constructed or refurbished.

*Sayed Nazir (right) advises the benefit of oral rehydration solutions for the treatment of diarrhea and dehydration to the father of a child with diarrhea.*

Photo: USAID



### COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A proactive community health worker in Ghaza village in the Shakardara district in Kabul province, Sayed Nazir provides health education to the community. He has referred many children and women for vaccinations and other services to Ghaza Basic Health Center. Nazir's efforts to raise community awareness about sanitation and to promote medicine given by the health facility have gradually improved the health conditions of his community.

The Ghaza Basic Health Center is run by the MOVE Welfare Organization and funded by USAID. USAID's REACH program has also trained 230 community health workers through the Care of Afghan Families.



## GENERAL UPDATE (continued)

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### LAGHMAN PROVINCIAL COUNCIL REDUCES VIOLENCE AND OPIUM FARMING

In mid-2006, the Laghman Provincial Council decided to take action as extensive violence in the eastern province had stalled much-needed rebuilding work. Supported by the Local Governance Assistance Project, Provincial Councils work with government and nongovernment organizations to solve local problems. The Laghman Provincial Council called for a *grand jirga*, a traditional Afghan gathering of representatives to resolve important issues. Villages sent hundreds of representatives who met in committees over two days, passing resolutions to stop opium cultivation, turn in weapons, and to form protection committees for public buildings.

Six months later, the Council head estimated that opium cultivation has dramatically decreased by nearly 80%. There has been no school violence since the jirga and 109 weapons and 4,487 rounds of ammunition were turned in without fee. "It's getting better day by day," reported Malek Fakir, a village elder from Kargai District. "People respect the jirga's decisions, and we respect the Provincial Council. We have voted for them."



***"We told people, if we want roads, if we want schools, we must have this jirga."***

***-Laghman Provincial Council***

Photo: USAID/Douglas Wilhelm  
Council head Jamal (left) records the concerns of village farmers Mohammad Rafik (center) and Mohammad Amin

### Provincial Reconstruction Team News

#### Kandahar - COMMUNITY BUILDING THROUGH GRAVELLING ROADS

In the southern province of Kandahar, a USAID project to repair and gravel a 50 km road is working to strengthen community support. The road connecting the District Center with fourteen villages is a result of effective conflict resolution with village representatives and encouraging local leaders to agree on priorities, support community contributions towards securing the project, and the number of laborers to be hired.

Approximately 1,500 young men from these villages are currently working on labor-intensive road repair activities, receiving a meal and cash payments for their services. This large-scale infrastructure improvement project has not only engaged large numbers of young, unemployed men vulnerable to insurgency recruitment, but also shows the effective delivery of Afghan government support to community needs.

#### SEVERE FLOODING IN CENTRAL PROVINCES

Villagers stand by flood walls as the river rises due to heavy rainfall in Panjshir province in June (below). The U.S. Government mobilized to provide support and assistance in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan. Additionally, the United States provided blankets, tents, food, and extra fuel to the central provinces.



**USAID/Afghanistan is pleased to announce the launch of its new public website.** This website was created to publicize and provide up-to-date information on the work of USAID in Afghanistan. The site includes key information such as activity descriptions, budget information, provincial overviews, and press releases.

<http://afghanistan.usaid.gov>