



BRD JOURNAL

Newsletter of the Bureau for Reconstruction and Development

Kabul Afghanistan

2007

Issue 1

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A Message from the Programme Director

The founding of BRD and Launch of BRD Journal

THE Bureau for Reconstruction and Development (BRD) was founded in 2002 with the goal of contributing to Afghanistan's post-war reconstruction and development efforts. At that time, there were a large number of NGOs in Afghanistan but the quality of service delivery was limited due to poor capacity. Having worked as a development professional in Afghanistan for over 18 years, I knew there were a lot of expertise, knowledge and skills in the local Afghan development community. They could be better utilised to take advantage of their knowledge of local culture and traditions. This was why BRD was founded. Our vision was for local Afghans to deliver quality service in the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

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BRD has since established itself as a capacity building services provider and a human rights education and advocacy NGO. Recently, we included Poverty Reduction as one of our strategic focus. The vocational training project feature in this issue is our first initiative under our renewed strategy.

In recent times, we have expanded rapidly. We have been awarded several new projects and forged numerous partnerships with the local and international community. Our volunteer community is also expanding. It is during these exciting times that we are launching the very first issue of our newsletter.

It has been our long-time dream that we have a newsletter that we can share our efforts and activities with those who are interested and who have assisted us. In this first issue, I would like to take the opportunity to thank our donors, partners and volunteers who have enabled us to make a difference in our work. I would also like to thank our volunteers for their time and efforts in creating this newsletter, our local staff for preparing inputs for the projects featured and also a special thanks to Ms. Wong Yin Mei, BRD Volunteers Manager, for starting this initiative.

I hope you will enjoy reading our newsletter. We hope to both inform and provide insights into our development work and life in Afghanistan.



Sincerely yours
Mr. Khan Agha Dawoodzai
Programme Director BRD

Vocational Training to Create Job Opportunities and Self Sufficiency

Contributed by Jason Smith

In order to achieve self sufficiency and improve household income, the unemployed and unskilled in Afghanistan needs to develop marketable skills so as to improve their employment opportunities. These skills must respond to market needs and training must be made available to the most vulnerable in the society.

With that in mind, BRD established a Vocational Training Center (VTC) in District 8 of Kabul City in August 2006. The first course conducted was a Welding, Carpentry and Tinsmith training programme for 60 poor and unskilled Afghans. The goal of the program is to equip trainees with the skills that are in demand to improve their opportunities for employment in the developing market economy.



Students in one of the practical training lessons

The trainees were selected through consultations with local community leaders and the district government. When the trainees graduate, they will be provided with certification and given tool kits, so that they are able to start a business or offer their skills for employment.

The training was divided in 2 parts - practical and theoretical training in each trade. The course is for duration of 6 months.

The VTC was made possible by funding from the Canadian Embassy and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In January 2007, BRD hosted a project site visit by the sponsors.



Theory lessons in progress

The distinguished guests were the Canadian Foreign Minister Mr. Peter MacKay, Canadian Ambassador to Afghanistan Mr. Christopher Alexander and Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation and Development Minister H.E. Mohammed Ehsan Zia.



Canadian Foreign Minister Mr. Peter McKay (sitting in foreground) with trainees in the Tinsmith workshop

The guests were extremely happy with the quality of the project. CIDA has since extended further funding to BRD for another round of vocational training in the Kabul VTC. They are also providing the funding to BRD for the establishment of a VTC in Kandahar City.

In addition, BRD is currently exploring with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the possibility of providing microfinancing to graduates to enable them to establish private enterprises.

The Kabul Vocational Training Centre is a partnership between BRD and:



Canadian International Development Agency

NEWSFLASH

Canadian International Development Agency has awarded a project to BRD to set up a Vocational Training Centre (VTC) in Kandahar. The VTC was officially opened on 15 January 2007. 60 Afghans are currently being trained in Carpentry, Welding and Tinsmith.

BRD has been awarded a project by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to provide Basic Management Skills training to Bamyán district officials.

BRD and Atos Consulting UK are collaborating in 2 consultancy projects - Civil Service Reforms and the Afghanistan Stabilisation Programme.

BRD is hosting a 6-day National Non-Violent Communication (NVC) Training Workshop in Kabul in April/May 2007. International NVC certified trainers and facilitator, as well as BRD's Program Director shall be conducting the workshop. To register your interest to participate in this workshop, please contact us.

**GRADUATION CEREMONY
OF FIRST BATCH OF
KABUL VOCATIONAL
TRAINING CENTRE
TRAINEES**

DATE: 1 FEB 2007

**COMMUNICATIONS
TRAINING FOR THE OFFICE
OF ADMINISTRATIVE
AFFAIRS**

DATE: 7 – 13 JAN 2007

**OFFICIAL START OF BASIC MANAGEMENT TRAINING
FOR BAMYAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS**

DATE: 10 MARCH 2007

**TRAINING FOR PARWAN, KAPISA
& PUNJSHER PROVINCES**

**PROJECT PLANNING &
PROPOSAL WRITING COURSE**

**MONITORING, EVALUATION &
SUPERVISION COURSE**

DATE: MARCH 2007

**OPENING OF
KANDAHAR
VOCATIONAL
TRAINING
CENTRE**

DATE: 15 JAN 2007

NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP

VENUE: KABUL

DATE: APRIL/MAY (TO BE CONFIRMED)

Building Information Management Capabilities at Kapisa Province

Contributed by Alison Winward

SURVEY techniques, use of new technology such as GPS (Global Positioning System), computing and Basic English are some of the subjects covered by staff of the Governor of Kapisa province on a capacity building programme organised by BRD and its partners.

The aim of the initiative is to improve the staff's information management skills, thereby enabling them to more effectively plan, coordinate, monitor and analyse development and reconstruction activities in the province.

The project, which is on-going, is a joint initiative between BRD, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA); PRT Bagram (Provincial Reconstruction Team Bagram), Afghanistan Information Management Services (AIMS) and the office of the Governor of Kapisa.



Kapisa government officials learning computer skills

Participants are now on the third and final level of their English course. Having completed computer training in Microsoft Windows and Word, they are moving on to training in Excel.

In addition, 24 officials have attended a technology awareness workshop in Kabul, familiarising themselves with new technology on information management and understanding the impacts on the reconstruction work of their province.

The next step is to train half-a-dozen staff members in survey techniques and the use of equipment such as GPS and data collection, so that they can survey the districts of the province. At the same time, two participants will be trained to input data from the

survey into a new reconstruction and development database, which is being built according to a template developed by AIMS. The database is designed to capture information on project activities at the district and village level, thereby enabling government officials to monitor development work in their province.

In order to enhance the communication of on-going development activities in Kapisa, the project will produce a Provincial Handbook/Profile. 500 copies shall be printed and distributed to government officials, NGOs and UN agencies, clinics and schools in the province.

The implementation of the project is being supervised by BRD's senior management and staff in the project office. BRD carried out regular reviews of the computer training and have assessed English classes at least once a week.

The project team encountered a few challenges along the way. Low attendance was an issue, resulting in delays to the completion of the course by around three months. To encourage greater participation, the Governor's Office and BRD jointly supervised the performance and attendance of the participants. Attendance have since picked up.

The fully functional computers provided by BRD through PRT funding have fallen foul of the unreliable electricity generator; sometimes this has not worked at all, at other times it has produced a power surge which has damaged the computers. Despite there being no funds in the budget for repairing the computers, BRD has done its best to repair them.

In a recent survey, 95 per cent of students said they were happy with the English language training. The English Language teacher was encouraged to make lessons as enjoyable as possible, by using flipcharts, flash cards and simple story books. One participant said, "I have benefited from the project as a whole, as I am now able to read English and write on a computer. I am looking forward to being able to read English-language newspapers and write letters and emails in English by the end of the course!"

Kapisa is a relatively small province with a population of around 363,400. 90 per cent of the population relies on agriculture for its income. This is the first time such training has been provided to staff at the provincial level, although it has been available to national Government ministries for some time. Kapisa was chosen to pilot the programme because of the enthusiastic support of the Governor, HE Abdul Sattar Murad.

About the Information Management Training Programme

The course aims to strengthen the capacity of the civil service in the planning and monitoring of development activities. The curriculum includes Basic English, basic computer skills, survey techniques, data collection, project management and report generation.

Assessment techniques such as Participatory Rural Assessment methods are taught so that government officials involve the community in prioritizing the needs and issues of the local community. Technology awareness sessions are conducted for senior government staff. Trainees are taught how to use GPS and survey techniques in the field to enable them to collect and analyze data to develop simple database of development and reconstruction activities in the province.

The course is expected to facilitate better information sharing to improve coordination of reconstruction activities in the province, prevent duplication and enable the provincial government to measure development progress.

Participatory Rural Assessment

A qualitative participatory assessment approach that incorporates local level conditions and local people perspectives for project development, appraisal, implementation and evaluation.



The Kapisa project was a partnership between BRD and:

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Provincial Reconstruction Team Bagram

Afghanistan Information Management Services

Office of the Governor of Kapisa

Visit Our Website
www.brd.org.af

Building the Capacity of the staff of the President Office and Office of the Administrative Affairs in Communication Skills

Contributed by Joy Anne Icayan

EFFECTIVE communication in the work place plays a key role in improving service delivery and client satisfaction in the civil service. It is especially important for staff of higher government offices such as the President Office and the Office of Administrative Affairs.

As a result of the identification of this capacity training need by the Office of the President, BRD and Asia Foundation developed a six-day communication skills training course, to equip the officials of the President Office with the skills and knowledge of the different types of communication required to improve service delivery and coordination between various departments.

16 med-senior level officials of the Office of President and 20 officials from the Office of Administrative Affairs attended the training.



Participants of the Office of the President and BRD's trainers

Through the use of presentations, group discussions, role-play, brainstorming, case studies, games, the use of inspiring stories and other creative techniques, the participants learnt about the essentials of the communication process and barriers to effective communication. They enhanced their letter and email writing skills, face-to-face communication and telephone skills.

The participants also learnt about ways of conducting effective meetings and interviews, how to provide feedback to staff and understand the influence of culture on communication. Through group work and case studies, they explored ethics and the importance

of an ethical code of conduct in the workplace.

The training was conducted by BRD's experienced trainers. Mr. Abdullah Noori was the Lead Trainer, Dr. Nasir Ahmad and Ms. Yasamin were the Co-Trainers.



Mr. Noori (standing) looks on as class is in progress

To make the participants comfortable with each other, and to enhance facilitation of ideas, the trainers made use of methods such as self-introspection, sharing of stories, experiences and case studies. The schedule and progression of topics were aimed to increase the knowledge of the participants in a way that would provide them with a holistic understanding of communication. The pace of the training was modulated according to the needs and the level of understanding of the participants.



BRD's Ms. Yasamin conducting group discussions

The effectiveness of the trainers' methods was apparent as participants provided a range of positive feedback. In particular, the participants liked the use of case studies, group exercises, role play and games in the training as it helped to enrich their understanding of the presented topics and

stimulated their interest to learn. On the trainers, the participants commented *“How the simple language they used motivated the participants to speak openly.”* One participant said, *“Teaching methods were excellent and all the participatory methods used were effective for adult learning.”*

The relevance of the course to the participants’ work was also important to the success of the program. One participant provided the following feedback - *“The training was not only relevant to our official work but it was also necessary in all parts of life and we have learnt many effective methods of communication.”* Another said, *“The content of the course was completely relevant to official work and also to our personal life!”*



Participants engrossed in the training session

Post Training Recommendations

To reinforce the results of the training programme, BRD recommended the following to the Office of the President.

- Participants be asked to summarise what they have learnt and formulate action plans for improvement to their reporting officers. This may be done 10-15 days after the end of the training.
- It is felt that the six day programme is not sufficient to improve the overall capacity of participants to deliver quality service. Participants’ learning could be reinforced at work.
- Participants would also benefit from extended capacity training such as basic management skills, office administration management, leadership, performance management, HR management, record keeping and report writing, secretarial skills training, supervision, monitoring and evaluation, basic human rights, ethics and values courses.

About the Communications Training Programme

The Communication Skills Training Program is a new program designed by BRD with the support, encouragement and cooperation of Asia Foundation.

The training programme aims to enhance participants’ knowledge and skills in concepts of communication, understand barriers to effective communication and overcoming strategies.

At the end of the course, participants are able to identify and explain organizational communication and its pattern. They acquire business writing and oral communication skills to improve their capacity to perform, develop professional skills and attitudes in managing relations, increase their capacity in negotiating and marketing and identify the qualities of a good communicator for better performance.

The project is a partnership between BRD and:



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Launch of BRD's Volunteering Community

I am pleased to launch **eVolunteers@BRD**, a new name for the Volunteering Community at BRD. Online volunteers have been a great source of expertise and assistance to BRD in the past years. As BRD continues to grow, it will need more volunteers to help achieve its development goals. I am happy to say that in recent times; quite a few volunteers with varied talents have joined us, expanding the community and increasing our depth of expertise. We are still growing and are seeking expertise in the following areas:

- Project design in human rights and income generation
- Project proposal development
- Website design, development and maintenance
- Instructional design – training materials development and design
- Public communications – communications and material development

If you have friends or colleagues who might be interested in what BRD is doing and would like to lend their expertise, please ask them to write to me.

Recent Contributions

BRD would like to thank Mr. Brian Wei for assisting with the development of our strategic plans. As a development professional in the areas of poverty reduction and capacity building, Brian has contributed invaluable insights and expertise to the formulation of the strategic plans. He is currently continuing to assist us with implementation. Brian has also kindly accepted our invitation to join our Volunteer Consultant Team – a panel of volunteer consultants who provide advice and expertise to the Management and Board of BRD.

We would also like to welcome Ms. Filipina Santos to the Volunteer Consultant Team. Filipina is a development professional in the area of population and health advocacy and shall be providing expert advice on project design and implementation. She has helped to design the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Human Rights Advocacy Project - an exciting new project on formation of a network of CSOs in human rights advocacy in Afghanistan.

I would also like to congratulate Ms. Stephanie Lee for successfully completing her first assignment with BRD. Stephanie designed the brochure for BRD's Profile, an important publication that is given to potential sponsors, international aid agencies, government ministries, our partners and our volunteers. The Profile shall be available for download on BRD's website and shall also be available in print soon. Stephanie's expertise has been invaluable. She has agreed to stay on the team to develop public communications for BRD.

There is so much going on, it is difficult to say it all or introduce everyone in this newsletter. Please look out for our future issues and development updates. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all volunteers for their contributions.



Ms. Wong Yin Mei
Volunteers Manager
eVolunteers@BRD

Interested to Volunteer?

Join **eVolunteers@BRD**
Email wong_yin_mei@brd.org.af

eVolunteers@BRD | **commitment** for results



Flora Leanita Lachica
Philippines
Design and maintain BRD's website



Cathleen Brown
USA
Instructional and curriculum design of human rights advocacy training materials



Photo Not Available

Brian Wei
USA
Develop strategic plans
Develop project performance metrics and donor feedback metrics



Dr. Elena Denisova-Schmidt
Germany
Curriculum design of human rights advocacy training materials



Filipina Santos
Philippines
Develop human rights advocacy project proposal
Consultant for development of training materials



Charlene Chew
Singapore
Curriculum design of human rights advocacy training materials



Nirav Khichadia
India, Maharashtra
Develop human rights advocacy network database and directory



Joy Anne Icayan
Philippines
Write newsletter features



Jason Smith
USA, Vermont
Write newsletter features



Photo Not Available

Alison Winward
United Kingdom
Write newsletter features



Stephanie Lee
USA, Philadelphia
Design BRD Profile brochure



Aldrin Pelicano
Philippines
Design BRD's Annual Report