



WEEKLY ACTIVITY UPDATE

September 18 – October 1, 2005



Afghan women show their registration cards as they wait to vote.

Afghan voters go to the polls – On September 18, 2005, Afghans voted to elect representatives to the country's Parliament and Provincial Councils. The elections are the last step in the December 2001 Bonn Agreement, which ushered in the post-Taliban government.

During a mostly peaceful election day, voters in Afghanistan's 34 provinces were able to use approximately 26,000 polling stations. In preparation for the elections, USAID provided training and support to the candidates, political parties, the election commission and media.

As voters went to the polls, USAID helped

make sure the elections went smoothly, assisting with logistics, operations and security. Of the 6.8 million Afghans who voted, 43 percent were women. Almost 5,800 candidates competed, including 582 women. Provisional results are expected on October 10, with the final results due on October 22.

Afghanistan begins work on its first industrial park – Bagrami Industrial Park, located in southeast Kabul, will employ approximately 2,000 people and generate over \$15 million in private investment. On August 25, 34 business people received certificates of ownership, allowing them to begin construction on their new businesses in the park. Three of those certificates were given to women who will provide dry cleaning, tailoring and product packaging services.

The Bagrami Industrial Park is one of three such ventures that USAID funds in Afghanistan. The others are in Kandahar and Mazar-i-Sherif. Once all three are fully operational, the parks will employ about 10,000 people.



Ms. Malika Qanih, an Afghan business owner, receives a certificate of ownership during the opening ceremony at Bagrami Industrial Park.



Modern telecommunications help provide a foundation for Afghanistan's development –

AfghanTel held the first meeting of its board of directors this month. The former department within the Ministry of Communications is now a state-owned corporation. With assistance from USAID, the fledgling corporation has appointed its key officers, developed a budget and written a human resource plan. It is now ready to begin the important job of building a telecommunications network stretching from Kabul out to the districts and connecting internationally.



A technician shows the new communications equipment that will soon bring internet and telephone service to more than 300 district centers across the country with USAID's assistance.

In addition, Afghanistan's cellular bid review committee announced the winning bidders for two new national cellular phone licenses. The winners were selected through a fair and transparent process in which five companies competed. While the financial offers were kept locked in a vault in the Central Bank, the bids were examined for technical eligibility. These accomplishments are the result of two years of hard work on the part of the Government of Afghanistan and USAID.

SECURITY INCIDENTS

During this reporting period, there were twelve hostile attacks, all of which indirectly affected USAID operations. There were nine persons killed and twelve injured.

One of the attacks occurred on September 27, in Mazar City, Balkh Province, when a candidate in the Wolesi Jirga was shot and killed. The candidate, Ashaf Rammadan (also spelled Ramazan), was believed to have a substantial number of votes in his favor. On Sunday October 2, more than 1000 people peacefully protested against those involved in the killing.

