



German Cooperation with Afghanistan

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German and Dutch governments continue justice sector programme in Kunduz until 2017

Kabul, 16th February 2015 – Today, the German and Dutch governments signed an agreement to continue their joint programme to promote rule of law in Kunduz province until the end of 2017. On behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), parliamentary state secretary Mr. Thomas Silberhorn and, representing the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation (DGIS), the Dutch Ambassador to Afghanistan Mr. Hank Jan Bakker met in Kabul to announce the continued joint effort.

In the announcement, the Dutch government pledged a further €4.5 million (AFN 294 million) to fund justice sector activities together with German government in Kunduz province until the end of 2017. Germany and the Netherlands have been working together since 2011 to support promotion of rule of law in Kunduz. As part of the programme, the Dutch government also contributed a sum of €1.5 million (AFN 98 million) in 2014 to help improve justice for women in various other provinces in northern Afghanistan.

The renewed phase of cooperation between the German and Dutch governments will build on previous successes with a focus on empowering partner institutions in strategic issues. The projects in Kunduz include helping the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association (AIBA) reach self-sufficiency through strategic financial planning. The programme will also continue investing in the Legal Clinic at the Law Faculty in Kunduz University, which helps students gain practical experience of the legal sector. The aim is to help incorporate the Legal Clinic in the university's syllabus in the long term.

In addition, local mediators of the Ministry of Justice, the Huquq-officers, will receive further training for civil disputes and cases. With their own offices in all districts of the province, they can increase both their visibility towards the population as well as their independence towards the court system, meaning they can solve disputes on a legal basis for citizens without the means to consult lawyers. The new phase of cooperation will continue on-the-job mentoring and training measures for these local mediators, based on a comprehensive training strategy.

Previously the programme recently helped AIBA fund a new office building in the capital city Kunduz. During the course of the programme's activities, the number of registered lawyers has risen from 11 to more 80 since 2011, with more than 10 women now admitted as lawyers in court. Over 100 pro bono cases have received defence and representation. At the Legal Clinic, approximately 150 students have taken advantage of the opportunity to learn more about the legal sector in practical courses. Further activities include training for the Community Policing Unit of the Ministry of Interior, and the programme also cooperates with Integrity Watch Afghanistan in community-based monitoring of trials.

Since 2002, the German government has been supporting the Ministry of Justice of Afghanistan in its efforts to ensure access to justice for all citizens. In 2007, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Development (BMZ), the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH started working together with the Afghan Government to promote rule of law in Afghanistan. This is done through supporting better access to justice, as well as improving the professional capacity of justice sector staff. At the same time legal awareness of citizens is strengthened. In 2008, the project started activities in Kunduz province, and in 2011, the Dutch Government started co-funding projects together with German government in Kunduz.