

## German Cooperation with Afghanistan

# Improving the Public Water Supply



### Context

Most people in Afghanistan still lack access to a regular supply of quality drinking water. Only 10% of Kabul’s residents and 20% of residents in Afghanistan’s provincial capitals live in a household connected to the water supply, which is in poor condition. Rural communities have to rely on wells, rivers or streams, or water tankers. Afghanistan’s scarce water resources are becoming increasingly contaminated and overexploited, with adverse impacts on people’s health, as well as economic and political developments. None of the water pipelines are new, and up to 40% of the piped water is lost due to leakages in the existing network. In addition to inadequate legislation and institutions, there is a lack of skilled workers in the water management sector.

### Objective

Institutional, organisational and legal reforms in the water sector will improve the frameworks for sustainable water resources management in Afghanistan. This will contribute to a permanent, clean and reliable public water supply and sanitation system. The programme also assists water authorities to manage these resources sustainably and protect them for the long term.

Overview	
Programme	Water Sector Improvement Programme (WSIP)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Partner	Afghan Ministry of Economy (MoEc)
Implementing organisation	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Provinces	Balkh, Herat, Kunduz and Kabul
Programme objective	To improve the institutional, organisational and legal frameworks for sustainable urban water resources management in Afghanistan

### Measures and Results

Since 2002, Germany has assisted the Afghan government to develop the urban water infrastructure through the construction of wells, pumping stations, mains, water tanks and supply networks. In parallel, the Afghan partners are planning a sustainable water supply and wastewater disposal in urban centres. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH provides training and advice to Afghan institutions, building their capacities to develop and operate a water supply and sanitation system that meets the country’s needs.

#### New skills for people and public authorities

The advisory services provided by the programme have given the ministries responsible for the water supply the knowledge they need to take key policy decisions; as a result, major progress has been achieved. The Afghan Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) has revised its drinking water quality standards and agreed on them with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Ministry of Public Health and the Afghanistan National Standards Authority.

Technical and commercial training was introduced for Afghan Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Corporation (AUWSSC) employees in 2008. Around 1,570 staff from various water sector bodies have acquired new skills and knowledge through their attendance at management training.



Management support for the Afghan water utility (AUWSSC)

In Herat, farmers have received training in the safe use of residues from the wastewater plants. Information campaigns are raising public awareness of the importance of clean water and hygiene in protecting health.



A government employee who received training by WSIP presents the new water management plan for a housing complex in Kabul | © GIZ

### Operating surpluses for Afghan water suppliers

GIZ supports the provision of in-service training for management staff working for the AUWSSC's local water utilities in Herat, Kunduz, Mazar-e Sharif and Kabul. Together with the water suppliers, key tools such as customer databases, improved reporting formats and water production and storage databases are being developed and introduced, boosting water supply efficiency and enhancing the utilities' economic performance – a key prerequisite if they are to maintain and expand the infrastructure independently over the long term. Notable successes have already been achieved by the water suppliers in Herat and Kunduz. In addition to more efficient management of the AUWSSC utilities, the water tariff reform adopted by the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers in 2012 has had a positive impact on all the utilities' performance. However, there is still much to be done if the water utilities are to achieve full cost coverage, manage the facilities sustainably and undertake infrastructural expansion from their own resources.

### Water sector reforms

The programme has assisted the Afghan partners to plan and implement a range of key reforms in the water sector:

- national and regional water sector framework plans
- a standardised approach to the monitoring of groundwater levels
- approval procedures for groundwater abstraction
- designation of water protection areas
- a national policy framework on sustainable and environmentally compatible management of the water supply and sanitation.

### Forward planning

With support from the Water Sector Improvement Programme (WSIP), the Afghan Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) and the Afghan water supplier have developed national policy guidelines and strategies for urban wastewater management and private suppliers. Key legislative reforms have been adopted by the Afghan parliament.



Groundwater samples allow measuring the water's quality | © GIZ

In cooperation with KfW, the project is assisting the AUWSSC and the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) to devise a general wastewater and drainage scheme for the city of Kabul. Six decentralised pilot wastewater management plants had been built in the cities of Herat, Kunduz and Mazar-e Sharif by late 2013. The experience gained from building these pilot plants has been fed back into the wastewater management policy.

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