

## **The Fifth National CDC Consultative Conference**

### **The Greatest Achievements of the MRRD**

The Fifth National CDC Consultative Conference took place in Loya Jirga Hall, Kabul from October 31 to November 02, 2015. Approximately, 900 participants 532 of which were representatives of the Community Development Councils (CDCs) established under the National Solidarity Programme of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD/NSP), participated in this national gathering. The number of female CDC members participated at this conference is amounted to 141, constituting almost 27% of the overall participants. The participants indeed represented 319 districts of 34 provinces of Afghanistan.

In the past, the MRRD/NSP has also conducted four National CDC Consultative Conferences that led towards considerable accomplishments in the CDCs' performances at village level across the country.

In addition to exchanging experiences acquired during projects' implementation, the CDC representatives could manage to learn from each other's approaches during the conference continued for three days and concluded successfully with creation news messages for rural development. Having identified and discussed their problems, the CDC representatives had an opportunity to share them with the Government Leadership. Moreover, they have also briefed their Excellencies the President and Chief Executive of Afghanistan on their proposals.

The launch of the conference has helped develop proper solutions how to alleviate poverty, efficiently optimize the existing resources, improve rural livelihoods and revoke harmful traditional practices. H.E the Afghan President has also clearly talked in support of certain hints raised during the conference.

“With due consideration to working groups' efforts, findings, in depth discussions and prioritization of priority needs – the CDC conference conducted this time in Loya Jirga Hall, was completely different from the ones previously launched by the MRRD/NSP. The motive behind the difference was that the CDC representatives have precisely elucidated the overviews undergone while proceeding with project works. On the first day of the conference, the participants mainly elaborated on public unity, optimism in interpersonal perspective, cooperation with the government and sustainability of CDCs' activities under the MRR/NSP”, said Eng. Nasir Ahmad Durrani the MRRD Minister.

Since its inception in mid 2003, the MRRD/NSP has been able to establish 34,956 CDCs as effectively reliable institutions ensuring local governance at community level as well as enabling villagers, particularly women, to participate in decision-making process and implement the priority projects that play an essential role in the betterment of social-welfare. With untiring

perseverance and consistent efforts, the programme could manage to cover more than 92% of the rural communities since its establishment.

Said, Ghulam Rasoul Rasouli, the NSP Acting Executive Director: “The Fifth National CDC Consultative Conference was an important event whereby we were able to directly become aware of the CDCs’ activities and accomplishments. In addition, the conference has helped us find out about the CDCs’ needs and demands and find ways to the solution of the challenges encountered by them.”

In preliminary session of the conference, the CDC representatives have performed a number of effective group tasks. On the first day of the conference, the outcomes of the working groups were presented to their Excellencies the President and the Chief Executive of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in the Presidential Palace by the CDC representatives.

In addition to indicating the community priority needs and difficulties, Haji Abdul Nabi the CDC representative, Camra village, Doshi district of Baghlan province pointed to the achievements their CDC has so far made. “We had a lot of difficulties in our village. We could not take our patients to the hospital quickly as our routes were disrupted. Thanks to Allah - we have been able to construct our roads and culverts in the first round of NSP block grants disbursement so as to connect our village with the Pul-e-Khumri Kabul Highway”, he said.

While delivering his speech in the conference, H.E Muhammad Ashraf Ghani, the President of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan revealed: “the Community Development Councils (CDCs) completely reflect the national unity of Afghanistan as well collectively raising their voice, saying that we are a single unified nation that can never be divided.”

“When we first discussed this program, people were saying that this kind of program cannot be executed at this larger scale that you want. They were saying how people would give counting for the money they receive for projects implementation. With God’s grace, the people of Afghanistan have been able to prove that hypothesis successfully, so the doubt about capacity of Afghans at village level should be eradicated”, he add.

In addition, having discussed the future of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), H.E the President said: “The national unity government has decided to replace the National Solidarity Programm (NSP) with the National Citizen Charter Program. What does it mean? Firstly, it means that the NSP will sustainably continue. Do not doubt that NSP has any priority in terms of funding amongst government’s other programs. The funds have been allocated for the programme in next year’s budget. However, what is the difference? On the one hand, you have made proactive measures by establishing committees that were supposed to be proposed from our side. Our objective is to execute overall government programs at village level through a single mechanism that is called NSP / National Citizen Charter Program. Our objective is to provide overall Afghan rural communities with equal essential services in upcoming four years. We do not want to make pledges that cannot be carried out. Therefore, the implementation of this

program as observed previously in NSP needs deep consideration and contemplation. However, to assure you, the new program will cover overall Afghanistan, particularly the most deprived communities at first stage as NSP did in the beginning of its operations.”

“The linkage between the city and the village is among the issues already discussed. In few coming weeks, the NSP will be converted from a rural program into a real extensive national program. The Urban Solidarity Program will simultaneously begin. Why Urban Solidarity Program? First of all, we should connect villages with the cities from production viewpoints. The exchange of productivities produced both in cities and villages should be ensured. Therefore, our initial objective is to become self-reliant in terms of agriculture in upcoming four years. To achieve this goal, we will invest multilaterally in the villages of Afghanistan”, he added.

One of the major achievements of the Fifth National CDC Consultative Conference was the conversion of the NSP to National Citizen Charter Program that would proceed with the development process with a different design and objectives. Under the National Citizen Charter Program, the CDCs would be the only development institutions whereby the services will be delivered at country level. On a broader scale, the National Citizen Charter Program reflecting a bilateral mandate and commitment between people and the government, will entrust the existing CDCs with responsibility to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of projects funded by other sectoral ministries besides the projects executed through the MRRD.

One of the objectives of the National Citizen Charter Program is to provide overall provinces with equitable services, however; the most deprived and underdeveloped provinces would be given top priority. The main focus in this program is to establish a linkage between cities and the villages. Indeed, the NSP will be converted into a real extensive national program in this context.

While expressing his admiration for the launch of the Fifth National CDC Consultative Conference, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah the Chief Executive of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan said: “I feel a great sense of pride as I am participating in a gathering that on one hand demonstrates unity, solidarity and conformity of nation - while on the other hand it reflects the commitment of the National Unity Government to ensuring stability, development, poverty alleviation, provision of services to public by the people with a sense of accountability and counting.

Mr. Abdul Rahman Rahmani, the CDC Head, Satiwi village, Parun the center of Nuristan province revealed: “Following the formation of the CDC, we have been able to implement micro hydro power and irrigation canal projects in our village. Currently, we have access to electricity during night and around 200 girabs of our agricultural lands have been provided with water. The increase in crops and showing thrift in purchase of kindling including firewood and fuel during winter have led to a considerable improvement in our economy as every family in the past had to spend 20,000 to 30,000 Afghanis buying firewood. Currently, the villagers warm up their houses with power as their expenditures have fallen by half.”

Miss Rohina, the Deputy CDC Head, Shakiban Tajiki village, Zandajan district of Herat province recounted: “The economic status of women has considerably changed once our community was covered by the NSP. The motive behind certain change is the capacity enhancement of women. The women have been able to undertake economic activities including utilization, process and sale of raw materials and generate good income sources soon after they were included in the CDCs.

Said, Miss Masoma, Deputy CDC Head, Itifaq Yak-wa-Du village, Nahar Shahi district of Balkh province: “Taking its name into consideration, the NSP has created cohesion and empathy amongst people. Through generation educational opportunities, the capacity of people developed and harmful traditional practices have gradually been replaced with the unity. Now, girls can go to school and most of the disputes are being resolved within the communities.”

“In the past, we had a lot of difficulties accessing safe drinking water. The use of unhealthy water usually caused diseases in children and the elderly. Fortunately, our lives were prevented when the NSP excavated healthy drinking wells for us”, said Mr. Sardar Muhammad, Deputy Head, Kamilroi village, Arghistan district of Kandahar province.

On the third and final day of the Fifth National CDC Consultative Conference, the CDC representatives issued a 16-item resolution, prepared following considerable discussions and exchange of opinions, held during the three consecutive days of the gathering.

