Editorial

I am pleased to send you the first issue of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) newsletter “Switzerland’s Commitment to Afghanistan” presenting reports and articles on Switzerland’s activities and programs in Afghanistan. I firmly believe that this newsletter will allow the people of Afghanistan, partners, donors, and interested stakeholders to review and assess Switzerland’s aid and development work in Afghanistan.

This first issue will cover the topics that SDC invests worldwide, not only in Afghanistan. SDC focuses to improve living conditions for the population living in remote areas, elimination of violence against women and female protection of the environment through the cleaner production of industrial goods.

Our goal is to inform you about recent developments within the context of Afghanistan; what is new within SDC, our partners, and the comments you are making. Your comments are welcome.

Yours faithfully,
André Huber
Country Director

SDC supports cleaner brick production in Afghanistan

Switzerland’s Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) supports cleaner brick production in Afghanistan to introduce the Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln (VSBK) technology to the construction industry. VSBK technology is a cleaner production system that reduces fuel consumption by 50% and reduces air pollution by 90% as compared to traditional brick production. The design of the VSBK is different from ordinary brick kilns. It is wider and has a building-like structure with a life span of more than 15 years. Mr. Avi Bhatti, Technology Manager of VSBK, said: “VSBK technology is used to produce high-quality bricks in a more efficient and environmental-friendly manner. It aims at reducing stack emissions, enhancing energy efficiency and achieving a sustainable working environment.”

SDC grants half a million CHF to UNIFEM

Kabul, Nov 27, 2007 - The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has granted half a million Swiss francs (CHF) to the Special Fund for Elimination of Violence Against Women that is managed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The fund directly contributes to the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW) Special Fund. “The Special Fund is part of UNIFEM’s two-pronged approach to EVAW,” said Mr. Meemen Axen, UNIFEM’s Program Director in Afghanistan. “The first aim focuses on the development of proper legislation, policies, and awareness that will gradually lead to the eradication of violence against women whereas the second aim is to improve access to justice, in terms of reforms and protection services that young girls can use in case of violence and/or risk of violence.” Mr. André Huber, Country Director of SDC said: “Gender equality and women’s rights have the highest priority in our medium-term strategy in Afghanistan. We are very happy to contribute to such a program which aims at improving the living conditions of Afghan women.”

SDC supports cleaner brick production in Afghanistan—continued

And we face the climate change everyday. We have supported this program to improve our environment and our part in the struggle against the global warming.” During a Swiss/VFK conference in 2004 organized by Swiss Business Council and Consultancies for Development (Skat) in Kathmandu, the participants from Afghanistan expressed a strong interest to introduce the VSBK technology in Afghanistan. Based on the interest of entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, Skat conducted a feasibility study during the months of November and December 2005 which was supported by SDC. The study was based on the need for cleaner brick production technology and a potential for overall improvement of the brick manufacturing sector. In the year 2006, SDC mandated Skat to introduce the VSBK technology in Afghanistan. One pilot brick is already operational, because of the active initiative of private entrepreneurs. Two others are in the construction phase. At the opening ceremony of the first VSBK, owned by Johnson Asia Construction Company, representative of the company Mr. Abdul Hadi Loomay said: “we have achieved structural progress thank to the technical support of Skat and SDC who supported the transfer of this technology.” Another VSBK owner, Mr. Rameez Bhatti said: “the VSBK technology not only contributes to a better environment, but it is also profitable because of its energy efficiency.” Existing brick making technologies meets heavy environmental pollution, such as serious air pollution. Ongoing inefficient heating methods include the burning of trees and increasingly scarce wood. VSBK uses only coal as a source of energy.

SDC grants half a million CHF to UNIFEM—continued

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The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is Switzerland’s international cooperation agency within the Swiss Foreign Ministry. The Government of Switzerland established an office of SDC in Kabul called Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) in 2002; with a new approach to the processes of political reconstruction and reconciliation of the two warring sides, SDC’s Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) in Kabul is working on supporting a broad development and humanitarian program.

Switzerland’s Commitment to Afghanistan—continued

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Editorial

I am pleased to send you the first issue of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) newsletter “Switzerland’s Commitment to Afghanistan.” The newsletter presents an overview of Switzerland’s thinking and action in the conflict affected country.

Please let me know if you need any further information or if we can help you.

Yours faithfully,

Andre Huber
Country Director

SDC supports cleaner brick production in Kabul

Kabul, New Year 27, 2007 - The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has awarded a loan to a Swiss firm, Zenith GmbH, for the Special Fund for Economic Development (SVE) to support the Fund’s project on Briquette Production in Afghanistan. The project will focus on the creation of a new briquette production plant in Kabul, with a capacity of producing 9,000 tonnes a year. The plant will use the latest technology to produce briquettes for cooking and heating, and will be operated by a local company.

Sustainable development and poverty reduction are key priorities for Switzerland. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is committed to supporting sustainable development in Afghanistan.

The project will create jobs and generate income for local communities. It will also contribute to reducing deforestation and improving environmental conditions in the region. The briquettes produced will be sold to the local market, providing a source of income for the local population.

The project is part of the Special Fund for Economic Development (SVE) which supports small and medium-sized enterprises in developing countries. The SVE is financed by the Swiss Federal Office for Foreign Affairs (DFA) and operates through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

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SDC supports cleaner brick production in Afghanistan...continued

And we face the climate change everyday. We have supported this program in order to improve our environment and our part in the struggle against the global warming. During a six-year climate protection (2006-2012) organized by Swiss Biodiversity Center and Institute of Development and Consular Legislature for Food (ISRF), the participants from Afghanistan expressed a strong interest to introduce the VSBR technology in Afghanistan. Based on the interest of entrepreneurs from Afghanistan, VSBR conducted a feasibility study during the months of November and December 2005 which was supported by SDC. The study was based on the need for cleaner brick production and a potential for overall improvement of the brick manufacturing sector in the year 2006, SDC contacted to introduce the VSBR technology in Afghanistan. One pilot kiln is already operational, because of the active initiative of private entrepreneurs. Two others are in the construction phase. At the opening ceremony of the first VSBR, owned by Johnson Arma Construction Company, representative of the company Mr. Ahmad Hassan gave a speech. He said, “We have always operated in our factory to the technical support of Swiss and the VSBR who supported the transfer of this technology.” Another VSBR owner, Mr. Ahmad Hashemi said “The VSBR technology not only contributes to a better environment, but also profitably because of its energy efficiency.” Existing brick making technologies release heavy environmental pollution, such as serious air pollution. Ongoing efficient lime methods include the burning of lime and increasingly scarce wood. VSBR uses only coal as a source of energy.

Swiss Business Center, Switzerland’s Commitment to Afghanistan

Switzerland’s Commitment to Afghanistan

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

In Afghanistan, young agriculuture students are key to the country’s future.