



Paris, 18 September

AFD and GERES working together for rural development in Afghanistan

18 September 2013 - The French Development Agency (AFD), represented by Grégory Clemente, and the NGO GERES, represented by Alain Guinebault, signed a funding agreement on 18 September with Jean-Michel Marlaud, the French ambassador in Afghanistan, in the amount of €10 million, to carry out a four-year rural development programme in central Afghanistan.

This programme should help to improve living conditions in one of the poorest areas of Afghanistan (Bamyan and Wardak provinces), targeting farming practices, housing, energy efficiency and community natural resource management.

The local authorities in Bamyan and Wardak will chair the project's steering committee, while the planned activities will be co-ordinated and implemented by the French NGOs GERES, MADERA and SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL. The project's approach will therefore balance supervision by the Afghan government authorities with application of the know-how and field knowledge of the French NGOs which have been operating in the country for many years.

A study phase based on a methodology developed by GERES to analyse vulnerability to climate change should produce a common reading of the various themes tackled by the programme.

The isolated mountainous regions of central Afghanistan have a harsh climate and face an ecological crisis affecting the natural resources which are key to the survival and reproduction of the farming economy. This crisis arises from accentuated climate variability as well as human practices leading to over-exploitation of scarce, shared resources such as high-altitude grazing and water. The livelihoods of communities in these regions, which are amongst the most vulnerable in the country, depend on finding solutions for the frequent land-use conflicts and mitigating natural resource degradation.

About the French Development Agency

The French Development Agency (AFD) is a public body which has been working for more than seventy years to combat poverty and foster development in the South and the French overseas departments and territories (DOM-TOM). It implements the policy set out by the French government. With a presence in four continents, where it has a network of 70 agencies and representative offices, including nine in the DOM-TOM and one in Brussels, AFD funds and supports projects to improve community living conditions, promote economic growth and protect the planet, which include schooling, maternal health, support for farmers and small enterprises, water supply, preserving the tropical forest, combating global warming and promoting stability in countries that are fragile or facing crisis. In 2012, AFD devoted more than €6.9 billion to funding activities in developing countries and the DOM-TOM. These will contribute, for example, to providing primary schooling for 10 million children and secondary schooling for 3 million; and improving drinking water supply for 1.79 million people. Energy efficiency projects in the same year should save around 3.6 million tonnes CO₂ equivalent per year. www.afd.fr

About GERES

Set up in 1976, GERES – Group For the Environment, Renewable Energy and Solidarity – is a development NGO specializing in sustainable energy and environmental protection, which has worked completely independently for around 40 years to improve living conditions and preserve natural resources. With a team of more than 230 professionals, GERES is developing

technologies and services to build sustainable supply chains, taking account of the human, social, cultural and economic dimensions of the areas where it works. Currently, GERES is running some 62 innovative sustainable development projects in France and 13 countries in the South.

Since 2002, GERES has been taking part in the reconstruction of Afghanistan through the introduction of energy-efficient techniques for use in renovating public buildings (schools, hospitals and government offices). In 2004, GERES began to transfer technology and experience, setting up vocational training centres to improve rural housing conditions. In this country where less than 10% of the population has access to electricity, energy demand is primarily for heating. Up to 40% of household income can be spent on fuel, but comfort is extremely limited and living conditions are unhealthy. Having become a point of reference for bioclimatic building in Afghanistan, GERES has been able, in its 10 years of work and partnership with supportive local authorities, to consolidate energy programmes appropriate to local needs. www.geres.eu

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