

DEBRIEFING NOTE TO ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY, KABUL

Thursday 20th February 2014

Background:

Norway has provided bilateral support to MRRD for the project on Capacity Building and Institutional Cooperation in the field of Hydrogeology for Faryab Province. A grant of NOK 35 million has been approved

Norplan; the Norad financed partner, who are assisting MRRD ; are now well established on the Project, have offices within the MRRD compound in Kabul and are working very well with DACAAR (pre-selected partner) who are providing valuable assistance in implementation activities in Faryab Province.

COWI AS Norway, the Mid Term Review (MTR) Consultant, were awarded the Contract by Norad to undertake the MTR and commenced on 5th February 2014. The terms of reference (TOR) for the MTR assignment required collaboration with a national Consultant in Afghanistan and COWI signed a contract with Bawaar Consulting Group from Kabul.

The report in hand is the Debriefing Note that is a requirement of the TOR on completion of the field work component. Furthermore, there is an accompanying PowerPoint presentation with draft project action plan that was provided to the Royal Norwegian Embassy (RNE) in Kabul on 20th February 2014.

Purpose/ Objective

The objective of the MTR is to provide Norad and the RNE in Kabul with an overall assessment of the state of affairs of the Faryab Project. The MTR provides an independent, technical and professional assessment of the results achieved so far, in comparison with the earlier programme document and implementation schedule.

Methodology:

The MTR was divided into three phases with the following deliverables:

- Phase 1: Desk study: Archive research in MFA, study of project documents, interview in Oslo – Norplan/Norad and development of evaluation tools. - Main Output: Inception Report
- Phase 2: Field work: Interviews, observations, data collection - stakeholders and beneficiaries. Main Output: Debriefing Note to RNE Kabul and PowerPoint presentation
- Phase 3: Report: analysis, verification and report writing - Main Output: Draft MTR Report in time for Annual Meeting in early March 2014, followed by submission of the Final MTR Report

Scope of Work

The scope of the work for the MTR is in accordance with the issues outlined in the TOR, focusing on three key issues, namely: relevance, achievements and sustainability. The MTR also will have a number of recommendations covering; i) strategy, (objectives, outcome, outputs and activities); ii) assumptions and risks; iii) project organization; iv) monitoring (technical-, progress-, impact- and coordination); v) budgetary reallocations; and vi) exit strategy.:

Initial Assessment

The MTR Consultant below provides their initial comments to the issues that were provided in the scope of work in the TOR. A point of definition in the TOR is the term “hydrology”. The MTR Consultant believes this should be “Hydrogeology” in keeping with the Project title.

It must be stated that these comments are “initial thoughts” and may be subject to change or addition as the Draft Report on the MTR Report is prepared.

Relevance

Taken From Scope of Work in TOR	Initial Comments
<p>Assessment of the continued relevance of the project, in particular the project's strategy and objectives in respect of the local context and situation in Afghanistan;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The project remains very relevant in terms of its overall development goal and objectives.</i> • <i>Training and capacity building has and continues to be successfully achieved within MRRD and other institutions including the University, MEW, DACAAR etc.</i> • <i>General consensus from course participants is that remaining courses should focus on more practically orientated training.</i>
<p>Assessment – and update - of the continued relevance of the defined assumptions and risks associated with the project, as stated in the project document;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Security situation in Faryab has deteriorated markedly since Project commencement.</i> • <i>International consultants have not been able to visit the Province, with the exception of one short trip by the Team Leader to Maymana in May 2013</i> • <i>The lack of counterpart assignment in MRRD remains a cause for concern especially as the intention is to roll out the project to other provinces. Counterparts need to be in place to gain benefit/experience from the remaining time available from Norplan Consultant team.</i> • <i>There is a need for MRRD to confirm the provision of an acceptable drilling rig and pump testing unit(part of the MRRD contribution) in Faryab for the end Spring /Summer 2014. This is critical as this is the only window of opportunity remaining to enable the Project to achieve its objectives in Faryab Province.</i>
<p>Assessment of the relevance of the contribution the project is making towards the reconstruction of Afghanistan, in respect of rebuilding national capacity for hydrology and establishing national standards for the sub-sector ;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The project is definitely building capacity in MRRD/RuWatSip that will enable knowledge to be applied to improving the water supply situation in Faryab Province and elsewhere in Afghanistan.</i> • <i>The training is involving other stakeholders and the MTR Consultant is encouraged by the interest shown from all these participants such as MEW, AGS, DACAAR, AUWSSC and from the Kabul Universities.</i> • <i>The Project has also acted as a catalyst by going further in motivating Afghanistan to assess its national water quality standards and to press for national accreditation.</i> • <i>The preparation of hydrogeological maps and web based GIS maps continues and although delayed, appears to be making good progress and should enable the outreach of this component to other provinces. Indeed outreach to two other provinces has already commenced on the GIS/MIS.</i>

Achievements

Taken From Scope of Work in TOR	Initial Comments
<p>The degree to which the projects' planned outputs are achieved, including analysis of success, failure, efficiency and value for money in the Afghan context and reality;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Project outputs that were due have been achieved to date albeit delayed due to deferred approval of draft documents.</i> • <i>The Inception Report was finalised in December 2012 almost one year late</i> • <i>The planning report is still in draft form and to the MTR knowledge has not been approved by MRRD</i> • <i>Training courses are proceeding as planned and 20 out of 50 have been completed.</i>

Taken From Scope of Work in TOR	Initial Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Project is also promoting low cost technology interventions in Faryab through research and development involving</i> • <i>The preparation of the design for three selected towns in Faryab remains a cause for concern, as very little work has been undertaken on this issue to date. Some initial sites have been chosen, but the aquifer sustainability needs to be confirmed (through test drilling and pump testing) before the design can be finalised. Time is running out on this issue and there is a real chance that this component will not be completed before the end of the Project.</i>
<p>Comparison of actual beneficiaries with planned beneficiaries;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The planned beneficiaries were the staff from MRRD/ RuWatSip and Provincial RRD together with other concerned stakeholders. This has now been extended to include Kabul University and other Polytechnics</i> • <i>In addition there are the beneficiaries in Faryab province, on the assumption that sustainable water will be proven (see comment on three towns above).</i> • <i>A total of 409 course participants have attended courses representing 219 people. Some have attended more than ten courses. The total beneficiaries will probably increase in 2014-2015 as more courses are performed and more project implementation takes place in Farya. Hence the Project remains on track regarding the proposed number of 400 people benefiting from the training courses.</i>
<p>Sustainability of results on financial, technical, social and political dimensions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This point appears to be misplaced and is dealt with under the topic of “sustainability” below.</i>
<p>Institutional relationship between Norwegian partner and all relevant national authorities in Afghanistan involved in coordinating, planning, implementation or supervision of the project;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There are good working relations between Norplan and the key stakeholders on the project.</i> • <i>With MRRD and DACAAR involved, Norplan have established good relationships with Faryab Province including with the Governor.</i> • <i>There are cordial relations between Norplan and the other relevant national authorities and other stakeholders in Afghanistan,</i> • <i>During the MTR many stakeholders have applauded Norplan’s initiatives, including among others MEW and the Afghanistan National Standards Authority (ANSA).</i>
<p>Coordination with other projects and initiatives and the project’s cost-effectiveness in comparison with other projects within the sector;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>This is a pilot project for Faryab, which is intended to be rolled out to other provinces. Hence it is difficult to compare with other projects in terms of cost effectiveness.</i> • <i>No data yet on comparisons with other projects in the sector</i>
<p>Consider the project’s likely impact on women and children in particular, considering the envisaged positive impact of the project;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The project will certainly have a positive impact on women in Faryab province as long as sustainable water is located and provided.</i> • <i>Involvement of women in the training occurs, but not as many as expected. Only 14% of persons trained are women.</i> • <i>Promoting women in training remains a difficult issue especially for field based training.</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Norplan are managing the Project effectively from Kabul, but are very reliant upon DACAAR to interact with the community in Faryab. Norplan senior management have met with the Governor of Faryab</i>

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<p>Consider the project implementation structure established by Norplan, in respect of partners, organizational set-up, capacity, follow-up, etc. and Norplan's capacity to establish a sound relation to local communities, local and central government authorities in Afghanistan, and capacity building these;</p>	<p><i>Province and with other key persons in Faryab.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The PCU that was supposed to be established by MRRD on Project Commencement does not appear to be very active. There is a MRRD Project Coordinator, but the MTR Consultant would like to have seen a proper PCU structure with counterparts "shadowing" key Norplan personnel in their duties. This is considered important especially as the intention is to extend the pilot to other provinces and the counterpart experiences gained in the current project would be invaluable. There is less than 1.5 years remaining to try and redress this issue.</i> • <i>Norplan have extended their outreach in the training courses to other stakeholders including universities in Kabul.</i> • <i>The recent initiative with ANSA to work towards setting up a national standard is also a very positive development.</i>
<p>Consider the institutional absorption capacity of the partnering local and national authorities;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Time and the security situation did not allow a visit to Faryab so we cannot comment on the local institutions.. However contact was made to the PRRD Director at the Training Workshop in Kabul who was positive that there was the personnel to continue in Faryab as long as adequate training was provided.</i> • <i>At the national level there is absorption capacity within MRRD /RuWatSip to work on development issues, indeed with planned projects to be funded by UNICEF and World Bank. More staff are being recruited by MRRD/RuWatSip, hence the earlier point about the importance of counterparts being in place.</i> • <i>There is capacity within universities to undertake the training at national level which (with training of trainers) and this could be rolled out to local level</i>
<p>Consider the role of human resource development strategies(HR) in partner institutions and HR's role in retaining (and attracting) qualified staff;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>MRRD have recently taken on more staff under WASH program funded by UNICEF</i> • <i>Work in Afghanistan is highly sought after, there are high unemployment rates, and hence employees are keen to keep their jobs.</i>

Sustainability

Taken From Scope of Work in TOR	Initial Comments
<p>Financial capacity</p>	
<p>Sustainability of activities, in institutional and financial terms;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The MRRD have substantial personnel available to continue development of the project components.</i> • <i>The majority of qualified MRRD RuWatSip staff are receiving the training.</i> • <i>UNICEF has shown an interest in continuing the training and extending the geological mapping to the other districts where they are working. UNICEF Contribute about USD 5 million / year to WASH MRRD, the remainder going to Public Health and Education.</i> • <i>UNICEF also would be open to consider establishment of public health engineering course at Kabul University for the future</i> • <i>World Bank are considering a project with MRRD (WASH) with a value of 100 m USD together with USAID another USD 50 million. He Project Concept Note shows that the water and sanitation sector will be supported in 19 provinces in the north of Afghanistan</i>

Taken From Scope of Work in TOR	Initial Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The above potential projects indicate that there is a real possibility to maintain sustainability in institutional and financial terms.
<p>Financial management systems and processes established being in line with Norad's requirements;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Norplan have shown full transparency for the procurements undertaken on the Project. A list of all procurements on the Project is shown on their Project website www.norplan.af Norplan have organised an internal audit on their own volition which has generally been labelled as "satisfactory" by the selected auditor. The Bilateral Agreement states that an annual audit is required on the Project; however the TOR for Norplan states that this should be undertaken at the end of the Project.
Specific issues	
<p>Designed strategy for project's support to development of national capacity for hydrology is adequate and in accordance to international best practice and standards;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydrology in this instance implies hydrogeology. Training has been undertaken in accordance with international best practice and standards. The recent Training Workshop has indicated that the remaining courses should be more practically orientated.
<p>Designed strategy for hydrology is or is likely to being adopted by national and local authorities and well-coordinated with other initiatives supporting the sector;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The setting up of a Web Page for the project www.norplan.af is extremely useful. This should be considered for all future projects containing similar capacity building and training elements The site needs to be progressively translated into local languages (Dari and Pashtun) MRRD are now setting up their own web site, the intention being that this will be fully operational when the outreach to other provinces under new projects becomes operational.
<p>Current approach's contribution to improved water quality, accessibility and improved and adequate volumes of water resources for consumption (drinking and irrigation);</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The initiative by Norplan to push for a meeting with ANSA and the WQ Laboratory is excellent. The ANSA meeting on 19th February also set a date for the first consultative committee towards a national water quality standard for Afghanistan. The issue on accessibility and adequate volumes of water is still not proven until the exploration drilling and test pumping planned for the middle of this year occurs.
<p>Assessment of how this project matches and fit other activities being implemented by Norplan's local partner (DACAAR)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DACAAR will still remain in Afghanistan after project completion The capacity building component has very good prospects for success and DACAAR have the relevant expertise to continue on selected courses. The planned fieldwork for 2014 required confirmation from MRRD that rigs and test pumping equipment are available. There needs to be a "PLAN B" in case this does not materialise, such as hiring local contractors and using their equipment to demonstrate practical training

Recommendations

Taken From Scope of Work in TOR	Initial Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After a slow start up due to elements beyond the control of Norplan the momentum now exists for the project to move forward expeditiously. The MTR Consultant

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Strategy, objectives, outcome, outputs and activities;	<p><i>therefore believes that the project should continue.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Norplan have requested an extension of 6 months to complete the training courses and to have all training materials in a suitable format and in the necessary Dari and Pashtun languages. The MTR Consultant believes this should be accepted as it is not putting</i>
Assumptions and risk – with associated potential impact and likelihood of event occurring;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The security situation is hindering progress. DACAAR have restricted some activities in districts</i> • <i>This could get worse building up to the impending election and there is concern of what will happen afterwards if there are power struggle between different political parties or if the election proves inconclusive and it needs to be re-run.</i>
Organization of project;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The PCU has not really materialised and this has implied that Norplan have to undertake a lot more management and administrative tasks than originally envisaged.</i> • <i>MRRD/RuWatSip should really try to assign more counterparts to Norplan staff to enable better overall coordination. This is in their own interests as the Faryab Pilot project will be extended to the other provinces and they need to have well experience staff to undertake the management.</i>
Monitoring system (technical-, progress-, impact- and coordination);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The monitoring of the training programs have been very good and the MTR training workshop during the time of the MTR was an excellent example of gaining consensus on the training in the remaining time available on the project-</i> • <i>The general consensus is that the training courses should be more practically orientated if possible</i> • <i>The involvement of</i>
Budgetary reallocations;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Budget reallocations have been made in the draft Planning report submitted in September2013, but as far as the MTR Consultant is aware these have not yet been approved by MRRD.</i> • <i>The budget is still below the Grant allocation of NOK 35 million and Norplan have confirmed that this grant allocation would not be exceeded even with the requested 6 months extension.</i> • <i>The MTR Consultant therefore recommends that the inferred reallocation of budget and the requested extension of time should be accepted by MRRD.</i>
Exit strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Discussions with UNICEF and with the World Bank, have shown that there is scope for continuation of the training and capacity building elements to continue with further support from these donor organisation</i> • <i>It is therefore recommended that Norad take these matters into consideration when considering their exit strategy for the Project.</i> • <i>Due to the time lag in organising further potential funding of similar project activities in other provinces, discussion should start immediately so that there is a structure in place for continuity.</i> • <i>Consequently it is important for MRRD/RuWatSip as the principal lead in this Project to start the process of dialogue with interested parties expeditiously.</i>

Debriefing Note prepared in Kabul 20th February 2014 by:

David Heywood – COWI AS – Team Leader of the MTR

With support from:

Mr Hamayuon Paikar - Bawaar Consulting Group

Mr Muhammad Ajmal Samim – Bawaar Consulting Group