



STATEMENT OF DR. JAMES BOOMGARD
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DAI

FEBRUARY 2, 2010

Madame Chairman:

On behalf of DAI, let me first thank the Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight for this opportunity to share some of our insight into one of the most pressing issues in U.S. foreign policy and security: the social and economic development of Afghanistan. I would also like to invite members of the Committee or their staffs to visit our projects in Afghanistan. Our employees are working with U.S. Government and Afghan partners in one of the most challenging environments on earth to create a more stable, more prosperous, and more democratic Afghanistan. We'd be delighted to show you that work.

DAI is a development company—an independent, employee-owned, mission-driven development company. Our mission is to make a difference in the world, by helping developing nations become more prosperous, fairer and more just, cleaner, safer, healthier, more stable, more efficient, and better governed. We have been pursuing that mission as an implementing partner of USAID and other development agencies for 40 years, in 150 developing countries. We currently run more than 100 projects in 65 countries, from earthquake transition assistance in Haiti and urban gardens programs for HIV/AIDS-affected women and children in Ethiopia to fiscal reform in Jordan and forest conservation in Indonesia. We work in many of the world's most challenging environments, from sensitive post-conflict countries such as Sri Lanka and the Democratic Republic of Congo to current hotspots such as Iraq, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

DAI's first engagement in Afghanistan dates back to 1976, with the design for an integrated rural development project in Mohammed Agha District. Since then, we have carried out more than 20 assignments there, including a dozen major, long-term projects. From 1989 to 1993, we implemented the Agricultural Sector Support Project, which employed nearly 1,000 Afghans while providing agricultural support and improved infrastructure for tens of thousands more; and the Narcotics Awareness and Control Project, which provided seed, fertilizer, high-value crops, farm machinery, training, and small-scale irrigation and farm-to-market road repair to farming communities that reduced or eliminated poppy cultivation.

Since 2002 we have been managing projects continuously in Afghanistan for USAID and other donors, projects such as Assisting Afghanistan to Revitalize Irrigated Agriculture (2002–2004), the Microfinance Investment and Support Facility (2003–2005), and the World Bank/IBRD's National Solidarity Program (2003–2006), which took a participatory planning approach to develop local social and economic infrastructure through the provision of grants to Community Development Councils. Beginning in 2004, we implemented the Afghanistan Immediate Needs Project (2004–2006), working with 70,000 families in Nangarhar province on income-generating, labor-intensive subprojects that created livelihood alternatives beyond the poppy economy.

This project laid the groundwork for similar work under the highly successful Alternative Development Program, Eastern Region (ADP/E, 2005–2009), a project that won the following accolade from USAID in its end-of-project Contractor Performance Report: “The contractor has performed in an outstanding manner. It has been a singular performance well in excess of requirements to achieve success. The manner of attainment of stated goals and objectives has been commendable and serves as an example to others. The contractor has demonstrated almost prescient problem solving skills that have contributed materially to strengthening working relationships with counterparts. Job well done.”

We currently manage four USAID projects—ADP/E’s successor, the Incentives Driving Economic Alternatives for the North, East, and West cooperative agreement (IDEA-NEW); the Afghanistan Small and Medium Enterprise Development activity (ASMED); the Local Governance and Community Development program (LGCD); and the Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI). In these projects, our teams work hand-in-hand with Afghan counterparts on efforts that range from strengthening local governance in the most dangerous provinces to improving livelihoods and supporting enterprise development nationwide. All told, these programs employ some 1,100 people, of whom more than 1,000 are local, host-country nationals. We have established a permanent DAI office in Kabul to provide back-office and technical support to these projects.

On the basis of this extensive experience in Afghanistan and in the development arena generally, we are delighted to bring our perspective to this roundtable discussion. The work of the civilian development community in Afghanistan is difficult and dangerous. The deaths of five DAI project staff in a bombing in Gardez brought that home to all of us in December. But our commitment to this mission remains firm, because the work to be done is so important, for Americans and Afghans alike. I come here today not to claim unqualified success in Afghanistan, nor to suggest a single or simple path to its development—far from it. But I hope our participation in today’s roundtable can advance the discussion about what is working in Afghanistan and what it will take to succeed in our ultimate mission there.

I thank you once again for the chance to address this distinguished panel.