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PRESS RELEASE

Kunar Construction Center Celebrates Second Graduating Class

Asadabad, Kunar, Afghanistan | September 23, 2008 — On September 15, 2008, a new class of 138 skilled craftsmen graduated from the Kunar Construction Center. For three months the members of the class trained in one of six basic construction skills areas and today were certified to join the workforce in masonry, carpentry, plumbing, electricity, rebar bending or placement or painting.

This graduating class represents a significant milestone in building a skilled workforce and providing qualified tradespeople for the construction industry, one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the country. The Kunar Construction Center provides the region's construction industry with training in basic skills and construction management. It maintains close ties with the local construction community who look to the center as a source of qualified workers, and their support is one of the keys to the high rate of job creation for the Center's graduates.

According to Kunar Governor Wahidi, "The Kunar Construction Center supports the reconstruction of the country and is critical for the future of Kunar and Afghanistan. I am sure that the graduates of this center will play a key role in the reconstruction of the province and with experience, will become the most skilled people of the country."

Approximately 350 people, including graduates and their families as well as government and construction company representatives, were present at the graduation. Keynote speakers at the ceremony included Kunar Governor H.E. Fazlulah Wahidi, USAID Representative Jill Kelley, and Major John Barfels, Acting Commander of the Kunar Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT).

The Kunar Construction Training Center was launched on March 13, 2008, and is a testimony to the determination and vision of local, provincial, and international communities committed to working together to rebuild Afghanistan. The government and the local community donated the land, the PRT provided the buildings and testing laboratory, and USAID is supporting the management of the Center.

"The Center was established with remarkable support from the local community. Its rapid growth into a regional industry asset is a credit to the active role the local government and area construction companies have played in promoting and sustaining it," said Ms. Kelley, in her address to the students.

Following the graduation, the Center held a Jobs Fair where the construction companies were invited to examine the students' work and meet them face to face to talk about upcoming projects and their immediate needs for skilled workers.

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