

BHF Newsletter

E-News for Friends of the BHF: December 2003

Honorary Co-Chairmen George F. Russell, Jr. The Honorable John C. Whitehead

The Business Humanitarian Forum brings the resources, energy and creativity of the private sector to bear on the world's most pressing humanitarian problems, promoting economic development, human security and well-being.

Note: BHForum e-mail site is back up and running.

We apologize for being so hard to reach by e-mail for about ten days starting in late November. A server crash (it died, basically) necessitated a transfer of our e-mail service to another provider, causing the delay. Those who sent us e-mails during this period are kindly requested to resend them since the originals were lost. We assure you that our e-mail service (bhforum.ch) is now fully up and running again. We apologize for the inconvenience.

HEADLINES

UN Chronicle Article on BHF's Innovative Projects in Afghanistan

A specially-invited article in the November edition of the UN Chronicle outlines the BHF's approach to development, and focusses on its public-private projects in Afghanistan. The BHF is pioneering in Afghanistan an effort to find new ways to involve the private sector positively in post-conflict reconstruction. To do this the BHF has developed a model that assembles partnerships based on an in-kind contribution from an international company, Afghan investors and international agency support, and results in locally-owned businesses, jobs and spinoffs. The UN Chronicle is the official quarterly of the UN. The article also highlights the BHF's on-going partnerships and cooperation with several UN agencies. The full article is annexed to this newsletter, and can also be found at www.bhforum.ch and at www.un.org/pubs/chronicle

BHF Projects in Finals of World Bank Competition

The BHF had two of its Afghan development projects selected to compete in the final round of the World Bank's Development Marketplace (DM) competition in Washington on December 3-4, and was the only organization among 180 finalists that had two projects in the final round. The DM competition seeks to identify the most innovative and effective public-private development projects, worldwide. The BHF received a certificate from the World Bank for its success in reaching the final round. From a pool of 7,000 applicants, less than 6% were chosen as finalists. The BHF was congratulated on the uniqueness of our private sector approach and encouraged to proceed with development of these and other such projects.

Visit to Ethan Allen Corporation

At the invitation of Mr. Farooq Kathwari, CEO of the Ethan Allen Corporation, a major American furniture manufacturer, the BHF arranged for Ms Sima Tabib, an Afghan woman, to visit the company's headquarters in Danbury, Connecticut on October 7. The purpose of the visit was to explore ways in which Ethan Allen might support Ms Tabib in her effort with the BHF to establish a furniture factory in Afghanistan. Ethan Allen committed itself to a free donation of production machinery and technical training for Afghan engineers. Domestic furniture is in great demand as a part of the reconstruction process in Afghanistan, and imported furniture is very expensive. A local manufacturing facility will offer an in-country source of furniture, will create much-needed skilled jobs for Afghans, and will be a stimulus to the local economy.

Harvard Presentation

Following the visit mentioned above, on October 8, the BHF's Managing Director, Eleonore Kopera, made a presentation on the BHF's projects in Afghanistan to a specially-convened seminar at the Kennedy School of Government of Harvard University. Ms Kopera was accompanied by Ms Sima Tabib, the BHF's Afghan partner in a project to build a furniture factory in Afghanistan. The seminar was organized in the context of the Kennedy School's Women and Public Policy program, led by former Ambassador Swanee Hunt. The program is especially interested in the situation of women in Afghanistan and how to help them. Ms Tabib's effort to open a business is a rare example of an Afghan woman leading a private sector business in the country.

Meeting in Geneva on Banking Sector in Afghanistan

On October 23 the BHF sponsored a meeting in Geneva to discuss plans of private investors to establish a bank in Afghanistan, tentatively called Bank International. Currently there is no bank in Afghanistan, which is an obstacle for business, as well as for all organizations conducting operations in the country. The BHF effort has been to identify Afghan investors who can support such a bank so that it is majority Afghan-owned, and to alert potential clients to the advantages of having a bank available for needed services in Afghanistan. Several foreign banks and organizations have applied for licenses to open banking operations in Afghanistan.

Workshop on Joint BHF-Swiss Red Cross Project for HIV/AIDS Clinics in Swaziland

On November 20 the BHF held a Follow-on Workshop on its joint project with the Swiss Red Cross (SRC) for the establishment of clinics in Swaziland for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus. The meeting, with representatives of UN agencies, foundations and the private sector, was to discuss ways in which the private sector could assist the SRC and its Swaziland counterpart organization in the rapid establishment of such clinics. The meeting opened with remarks by Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, former President of the International Committee of the Red Cross and one

of the Founders of the BHF. Dr. Martin Weber and Ms Lilly Pulver of the SRC briefed the group on the status of the project, which foresees establishment of three specialized clinics. Swaziland has the world's highest infection rate for HIV/AIDS, and also suffers from the highest rate of HIV transmission to infants. The BHF-SRC project foresees the clinics operating by mid-2004 with a capacity to treat up to 2000 patients per year. The SRC said that the exchange with the private sector was very useful and led to concrete partnership possibilities. Therefore, the BHF will hold another such workshop in the coming months.

AFRICA INVEST Article on BHF Business Model

As a member of the NEPAD Business Group, the BHF was asked to contribute an article to the special publication AFRICA INVEST, with the purpose of encouraging investment in the continent. The BHF article outlines the model BHF has developed in Afghanistan for engaging the private sector in support of businesses in unattractive investment environments, and indicates that this model can be replicated in other areas where investment is needed for economic development, but is difficult to attract because of the business climate. AFRICA INVEST will be available in late fall, 2003. It is intended to stimulate investment in Africa, one of the key objectives of the NEPAD program.

Afghan Satellite Communications Project Advances

The BHF's project for satellite communications links to provide telephone connections to remote regions of Afghanistan is advancing well. BHF's two partners -- MTNSat Communications and PanamSat -- are participating actively in promoting the project. Joint meetings including representatives of the BHF and the partner companies were held in Washington in September at the World Bank, OPIC, and USAID. The World Bank welcomed this project and confirmed that it is complimentary to their plan to connect all provinces to the satellite system, since the World Bank's plan focuses only on providing access to the telecommunications system for local government. The BHF's project foresees giving access to telecom services specifically to civil society, especially Afghan businesses, in order to promote economic development. The World Bank said that this was badly needed and that the BHF's project was a necessary addition to their plan.

BHF President Speaks in California

BHF President John Maresca was invited to address the World Affairs Council of Los Angeles - Ventura County, California, on November 19. Maresca described the BHF's projects in Afghanistan and met with a number of California-based companies interested in working with the BHF on public-private partnership projects.

International Alert Cites BHF Afghanistan Model

A new publication of the International Alert organization cites the BHF business model in Afghanistan as a useful example of how the private sector can be positively involved in post-conflict reconstruction.

Annex (UN Chronicle article)

<http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2003/issue3/0303p14.asp>

Contact BHF

BHF personnel are available for speaking assignments on subjects related to the work of the BHF, on a mutually-convenient basis.

For further information on the BHF, please visit our website, at www.bhforum.ch

For inquiries and comments please contact the BHF at bhinfo@bhforum.ch or by mail at:

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The Business Humanitarian Forum is a non-profit association registered under the laws of Switzerland. We welcome your support, which will help us to continue our work.

The Business Humanitarian Forum was established in 1999. Founders: Peter Bell, Jean Freymond, John Imle, John Maresca, Sadako Ogata, Vladimir Petrovsky, Jane and George Russell, Cornelio Sommaruga, John Whitehead and Robert Zoellick.