

## Afghanistan signs MoU on local governance

Afghanistan has signed a near-identical MoU with three institutions in India: Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and Institute of Social Sciences (ISS) for collaboration to promote the cause of local government. The Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) of Afghanistan and the three organisations will address the needs of local government practitioners through three broad core functions: serving as a clearing house for information and resources on the practice of local governance, providing policy and programme assistance and encouraging practitioners to develop an interest and expertise in local governance.

The MoUs, signed during the visit of a nine-member Afghanistan delegation, seek to create a mutually beneficial partnership with a view to improving governance and deepen democracy at the grassroots. The envisaged Plan of Action consists of the following:

- Building a network of Indian and Afghan practitioners and experts on local governance, maintaining relations and promoting exchanges with this network;
- Designing and conducting joint training and capacity building programmes in local governance and related areas for elected representatives of local government bodies;
- Holding joint seminars and workshops and developing information sharing initiatives on issues of mutual interest;
- Facilitating exchange visits, internships and field placements and sharing of experiences by local government

representatives, experts, IDLG staff and officials from Afghanistan to India and vice versa;

- Developing initiatives that support the empowerment of women, youth and other marginalised groups in local governance;
- Undertaking joint policy-relevant research projects in local governance to inform policy and practice;
- Supporting the participation of Afghan institutions in international local governance networks and comparative research and reflection on democratic governance practice;
- Jointly contributing to the development of methods and tools for monitoring the state of local governance in India and Afghanistan;
- Developing joint funding proposals to funding organisations and aid agencies for agreed activities.

The MoUs were signed by the Director General of IDLG and Minister, Government of Afghanistan Jelani Popal on the one hand and Bhartendra Singh Baswan (Director, IIPA), Manoj Rai (Director, PRIA) and Ash Narain Roy (Associate Director, ISS) on 23 July in the presence of Panchayati Raj Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar.

India and Afghanistan have also agreed to a 15 point programme of collaboration under which a workshop will be organised in Afghanistan in September, which will focus on the training need analysis, framework for capacity building, training of trainers, developing resource centres and exposure visits by elected local government representatives.