

# A4T Project Summary Report

## Project Code Assigned:

### \*General Project Information

\*Project Name: A4T Briquette Project - Head Office and A4T1, Kabul

\*Initiative: Briquette Production Pilot Programs

\*Department: Briquette Project

\*Acting Department Executive: Shaima Shahbaz

\*Point of Contact or Project Manager: Shaima Shahbaz

### Project Description:

Decades of political unrest and turbulence have left many Afghans impoverished and unable to meet their basic needs. Although the last several years have seen a maintained rate of economic growth, it has not managed to reduce extreme poverty and hunger. Nearly 7 million Afghans do not meet their minimum food requirements according to UN reports. Though humanitarian aid is necessary and helpful to counter this, it only serves to address issues in the short term. With the briquette project, Afghans4Tomorrow (A4T) aims to directly address the issue of poverty by providing a simple and sustainable business opportunity to the most disadvantaged populations of Afghanistan; one that will serve as an ongoing source of income to help people satisfy their basic needs, as well as provide an environmental fuel source to heat homes and cook food.

Much research has gone into developing briquettes as an alternative fuel source, and it has been successfully produced and used across Africa, Asia, and the US. Teams of 6 individuals can produce briquettes by decomposing commercial and agricultural residues such as paper, sawdust, and leaves with water, and utilizing a press to “press” the materials into briquettes. A family of 6 can produce up to 1000 briquettes per day directly out of their home (approximately 142.8 kg) with a potential profit of approximately \$150 a month, or save up to \$200 a year by using the briquettes for their own household needs. (The price of Briquettes is approximately 42-50Afg/84¢-\$1 per ser, versus approximately 55-70Afg/\$1.10-\$1.40 per ser of Wood).

At this point in time, the quickest and most efficient way for A4T to make this technology and training available to the Afghan people is through partnerships with fellow NGO’s working in Afghanistan. It is through such partnerships that A4T receives the funding necessary to train local groups of Afghans wanting to enter into briquette production. A typical training sequence provided by A4T includes location assessment and production viability, facility set up and requirements, material processing, book-keeping, business administration, and marketing strategies. A4T also offers its services for 1 year of follow up supervision and support. It is from such trainings and support services that A4T receives the money to cover its operational costs. A4T’s training fee is \$250 per person and there is a 15-20% overhead fee on equipment and set up costs.

### Activities:

A4T recently completed their first group training with a group of six individuals brought to it through The Global Partnership for Afghanistan. This group was trained to be “master trainers” and

will in turn train groups in the provinces of Guldara, Farza, and Paktiya (these subsequent trainings will occur at the end of October / beginning of November 2008).



In cooperation with Bernard Amadei and the Engineering for Developing Communities program at the University of Colorado, Engineers Without Borders, The Legacy Foundation, and the Foundation for Sustainable Technologies, A4T established two briquette production facilities in Kabul, one at its head office and one at its A4T1 school. Of the \$72,000 granted to the project by a private donor, \$19,031 has been used in the past three months to set up these briquette facilities, teams, and maintain overall production. Seven thousand and six dollars was paid out in personnel related expenses (salaries), \$5,223 went towards non-personnel related expenses such as raw materials and production supplies, and \$6,803 was spent on assets (IT, vehicles, equipment, etc.). The two sites were set up to be pilot programs for this project, and since their inception in July 2008 have successfully employed a total of 27 girls, 18 boys, 4 handicapped people, and 2 widows.

Part of the A4T Office Briquette Team:



The office team is comprised of 18 boys, with 4 handicapped men who are “master trainers” and manage production. Team employees of the A4T Office Team were found through the Ministry of the Handicapped, and on the streets of Ko-te-Sangi. They were all formerly unemployed and/or earning a poverty wage and lacking a supportive and encouraging environment. At A4T they receive the training and gain the experience that will enable them to build future briquette making enterprises for themselves. The boys and managers are currently learning every step of the briquette making process, earning a living wage, and involved in A4T’s “earn to learn” program. For two hours each day, the whole team is instructed in Dari (reading and writing), math, and drawing. Each boy receives a salary of 2,500A/month (\$50/month), while managers are paid 10,000A/month (\$200/month). Support staff (driver, guards, etc.) receive \$100-150/month.

A4T Office Team at work:



Professor with student and students in class:



The school team is comprised of 24 female students with 2 widows managing them. They attend class in the morning and work making briquettes in the afternoon. The girls work part time for 1250Afg/month (\$25), while the managers earn 2000Afg/month (\$200/month). This enables them to help support their families without interrupting or neglecting their studies. Thus far production has been subsidized, but contracts with local organizations for the continued sale of the briquettes will be signed in order to secure salaries and funding for the A4T schools.



Within A4T's two production teams, there is at any given point four briquette presses producing briquettes. If we look at this as four production groups, in sum, these four groups produce approximately 480 kilos/day, enough for 48 family's daily ration of household fuel. This is output when employing children and handicapped. With an average, adult briquette team there is the potential to produce 600 kilos/day, enough to supply 60 households with their daily ration of fuel. Such a group would be 25% more efficient.

The establishment of an additional production site that will serve mainly as a training site at the A4T head office is currently under way due to the generous donation of a private donor\*\*\*. This facility will also employ widows, handicapped people and children, and will be available to train groups in three month phases. Trainees in this program will receive a salary for their work, and upon completion of the three month course, will be provided with the start up equipment necessary to start their own briquette production micro-enterprises.

Long term goals for this project include setting up A4T head training centers in the five largest/main provinces of Afghanistan, Kabul, Herat, Mazar, Jalalabad, and Kandahar. This will ensure that training is accessible to low income people from these and neighboring regions interested in going into briquette production, as well as make the actual product available in such local markets.

A4T attended the Kabul Agricultural Fair from August 19<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 and will be attending the Mazar Agricultural Fair on October 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. The purpose in participating in these fairs is not to sell our product but to survey the public's response to the Briquette Project, as well as set up partnerships with interested groups and organizations. A4T gained much exposure at the Kabul Agricultural Fair and received an overwhelmingly positive response from the general public. A4T hopes and expects to receive this same response in Mazar, and has already been contacted by organizations and individuals interested in briquette production in Mazar.

A press conference was held at the head office in Kabul on Oct. 8 to launch the product and develop relationships with prospective customers and partners. A video describing A4T's mission and work was shown, children speakers presented their experiences of working with briquettes, an informative power point presentation was given to further explain A4T's work and the briquette production process, a tour of the facilities was provided, and bread baked in tandoors and tea boiled in samawars with our briquettes for fuel were served and enjoyed by all. Several organizations showed much interest in partnering with us and have contacted us since then to begin the process.

Speakers at the First Briquette Conference in Kabul, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008:



Guests and members getting a tour of the facility and enjoying bread made in our tandoor ovens fueled by briquettes:



### Challenges:

- Finding reliable staff to maintain and expand operations
- Child Labor Law concerns
- Funding for long term projects

### \*Project Objective:

To provide Afghans throughout the country with a sustainable, income generating business opportunity in briquette production by offering them briquette production training and business start up assistance. Due to the simplicity of the technology used in the production process, this project is accessible to and aims to aid the most impoverished and disadvantaged groups in Afghanistan, namely women, widows, children, orphans, and the handicapped. This will not only serve to employ the disadvantaged, but will help counter deforestation by providing a fuel alternative to wood as well as improve sanitation conditions in cities by reducing air pollution and recycling certain waste materials needed for the briquette production process. We also hope that revenues from A4T's own briquette production teams will serve to provide funding to maintain A4T schools and other projects.

### \*Benefit to the People of Afghanistan:

The Briquette Project is designed to supply the population of Afghanistan with a cheaper fuel source for heating, cooking, baking, etc. and offer those who would otherwise have no employment job opportunities. This past winter's freezing temperatures in Afghanistan claimed over 1000 *reported* deaths. Below freezing temperatures paired with increased gas prices this winter will leave even more people incapable of heating their homes and feeding themselves. These environmental and economic factors are felt most harshly by Afghanistan's poor and young who do not have the resources to cope with such fluctuations. Briquette production is a simple and relatively inexpensive process that these groups can utilize to provide income and therefore security for themselves. Ninety eight percent of Afghanistan's rural population and seventy five percent of it's urban population use solids as fuels. It is to this that we can attribute the fact that 50% of Afghanistan's forest cover has been cut down since 1978. This lends itself to additional environmental problems such as decreased air quality, soil erosion, and flooding. The use of briquettes for fuel can ease the dependency on wood as well as decrease air pollution as they produce 40% less smoke than wood. Afghan urban centers also suffer from poor waste management practices, and the use of paper wastes in the briquette production process is the beginning of implementing an informal paper recycling program. Furthermore, by partnering with organizations to subsidize briquette production micro-enterprises, A4T is aiming to cultivate economic independence and stability for the Afghan people.

**\*Project Start Date: July, 2008**

**\*Project End Date: June 2009**

**\*Project Cost Quarterly: \$19,031**