FAQs on ESIA of CASA-1000

I. Technical Questions

A. When will the project start in my (province/municipality/region)?

The project implementation schedule will be finalized after selection of the contractor for the Project. As per the current schedule, work is expected to start in the beginning of year 2013. The transmission line work would start even later.

B. How much lead time will we get prior to installation of the line?

The transmission line would be constructed area by area in three stages. 1) Fixing the foundations for the Pylon or Towers, 2) Tower or Pylon erection, 3) installing wires on the line. The transmission line after completion would look like (Picture 1). The areas where work will start would be informed well in advance.

Picture 1: HVDC line after completion

C. How long is the construction period?

The three stages of construction will be done with approximate time cycle of:

1) Foundation of Pylon/ Towers: 2-4 weeks; 2) each Tower or Pylon erection: 2-4 weeks; 3) each wire installation: 3-8 weeks in each area (covering 4 to 5 towers/pylons at a time).

Picture 2: Transmission line construction - wiring

D. Where will the workers' camps be located? How many workers? Will there be foreign workers?

Workers' camps will be organized temporarily in towns/ cities at a distance of about maximum 10-15 km from the work area. The workers after finishing their work would move to the next location. In each location there might be 2-3 camps each with a work force of about 20 persons. There will be a mix of foreign and local workers.

E. Will they hire local people? How many?

The contractor would temporarily hire workers from the country, who have experience of such work. They may use some local unskilled labor temporarily.

F. How is the project expected to affect the tariffs and volume of electricity supply for domestic consumers?

For Pakistan and Afghanistan, the project will increase power supply and reduce power cuts. The Tariffs change would not be linked with this project.

For the Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan, the project will be only exporting electricity in summer. It will not affect current supplies in winter and would earn revenue for the country, which would help build power facilities to reduce winter shortfalls.

G. Will there be a lot of traffic? Will they use our local roads? Will they fix them?

There will be limited use of heavy machinery. Any damage to the road will be repaired by the contractor.

II. Environmental Questions

A. Will I (my children, goats, cattle) be safe under the wires? Can I continue farming/raising animals under the wires? Is it safe to let cattle, goats etc wander around the poles to graze? If not can you build a protective fencing? Will they be electrocuted?

The transmission line will meet all national and international safety requirements and therefore it is safe for animals and people under the wire. Most activities (agriculture, cattle rising) can be continued without any danger. However buildings and large trees may not be allowed directly under the lines.

B. Can I keep my trees under the wires?

Safety measures limit the height of trees under transmission lines to avoid the risk of electrical shocks. Tall trees will need to be cut down and planting new ones will be prohibited. However, cutting of fruit trees and other community trees will be duly compensated.

C. Will I get radiation from the wires? I live close to the future lines; is this safe?

Radiation from transmission lines have not been demonstrated to have any effect on health of people living near the lines. At a minimum distance from a transmission line radiation is similar to common household appliances. Minimum distances to the Right of Way need to be maintained mainly for safety reasons, for which the towers/ pylons are selected with appropriate height.

Picture 3: Construction in progress

D. How high are the environmental costs of the project and how fully its benefits are expected to cover those costs?

Because the project area is relatively small and with the moderate to low sensitivity, the environmental impacts and related costs are deemed low. The costs include the value of the affected environmental resources (e.g. land, vegetation, water resources, and loss of agricultural land) and the cost for reducing such impacts.

During the feasibility study the environmental cost / impact was assessed to be less than the potential benefits of the project.

E. What is the route of the transmission lines? And were the ecological risks of this route assessed?

The route generally follows existing roads and/or transmission lines. The impact on undisturbed areas will be minimal. The routing of the line also tries, to the extent possible, to avoid settlements and areas under productive agricultural use. The line routing is the result of a corridor study taking into account multiple criteria, such as land forms and landscape, biological environment, water resources, sensitive habitats, human land use and geological risk factors (e.g. erosion or landslide potential).

F. What is the likelihood that the project may increase the risks of natural disasters given the fragility of mountainous ecosystem in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan?

In principle the primary measure is to avoid or minimize impacts by appropriate routing of the corridor, and optimizing tower locations. The main impact of the transmission line on sensitive habitats and fragile environments is expected to occur during construction, and here especially due to the required road access to tower foundations. The Contractors will be required to employ a range of measures to minimize and mitigate these impacts and to completely restore the environment to stable, sustainable conditions, by erosion control measures, slope stabilization and re-vegetation.

III. Social Questions

A. How extensive will land acquisition be for the transmission line?

First, the scale of land acquisition will be determined by the Social Assessment which will also provide resettlement policy framework to be followed by each country. Next, a household survey will be conducted along the right of way of the transmission line to determine the extent of impact on all affected households, and to determine the compensation for the losses to be incurred. In the process, both men and women in the communities will be consulted. The land acquisition is expected to be small, much smaller compared to a Road or a hydro power project.

B. The line passes through my land: how much will I be paid for this? How will compensation values be calculated? Will there be any appeal possibilities?

A framework of how affected people will be compensated will be developed by, and compensation will be issued in accordance with the seriousness of impact. At this moment, it is not possible to specify the exact amount of compensation for any category of impact.

Compensation values will be based on prevailing market rates and appeals can be channeled through the project Grievance Redress Mechanism.

C. Will there be compensation if the land and pylons are in community land such as our grazing land? Will customary land claims be recognized?

All kinds of impacts will be assessed for both private lands and communal lands through consultation. Compensation will be issued accordingly. However, impact on grazing land will be very limited, as the pylons do only require limited area, and land could still be used for grazing even when a transmission line passes over it.

Afghanistan: Customary claims will be recognized when they can be convincingly established through a community verification process and other locally recognized procedures.

D. If they cut my fruit/timber/ trees, how much I will be paid?

A survey will be undertaken. All the losses of each affected household will be registered. In each country, compensation standards will be set up for losses of structures/timber/trees and other crops, according to market value.

E. Will there be compensation for standing crop damaged during installation of line (not necessary at the site of the line but when the cranes etc have to access the specific sites and damage crop en route.)

In case of damages to crop during construction, compensation will be paid in proportion to the damages suffered.

F. When will affected people receive compensation?

Compensations will be paid before relocation and before any construction starts in that location.

G. Will I have electricity connected to my house?

In areas where there already is a nearby low voltage substation, communities may be able to get access, but for the other areas it will not be technically possible. However, an assessment will be conducted to determine where it would be possible to provide electricity to the communities. The households would have to pay a fee for obtaining access to power.

Picture 4: Convertor substation

H. Will I be able to sell anything at the camps?

Contractors will be encouraged to buy local products for camps. The project will promote local hire. However, at each construction site the camps will only stay for a very short period of time.

I. To whom can I address my grievances? Where / how far away from my village will that person / office be located?

A locally accessible grievance redress mechanism will be established enabling grievances to be submitted through various media such as through a dedicated telephone line, in writing or verbally at a dedicated office in districts centers and on-line at the ministry website.

J. To whom can I turn with further questions before construction starts?

The project owner and the project manager will, indicate persons to address questions and clarification requirements, as well as the appropriate channels to reach them.

K. How will my grievances be followed up once construction has started?

The Engineer will be required to have a unit with officers present at the project site to receive communication and grievances related to the project. The officers and the ways to contact them

will be introduced to the community leadership. The contact points established during the design phase will remain functional to facilitate relaying and answering questions and grievances.

L. How will the project ensure transparency in contracting and avoid corrupt practices in contracting? Will an independent supervision body be set up to monitor/audit the project revenues?

The main contracts will be selected through international competitive bidding following the World Bank transparent rules for procurement. There will be announcements of the bidding process, bids will be opened in presence of all the participants and results would be declared at the Internet. The contracting process will be reviewed at different stages by the World Bank also. The project expenditures and revenues would be audited independently.