

United Nations Development Programme
Afghanistan
Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature (SEAL)
Final Project Progress Report
22 February 2005 – 29 February 2008



[The first National Assembly of Afghanistan which has been inaugurated in 2005]

Project ID: 00043513

Duration: February 2005- February 2008

Strategic Plan Component: Fostering Democratic Governance (2.1)

CPAP Component: State Capacity enhanced to promote responsive governance and democratization

ANDS Component: Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights

Total Budget: USD 15.353 million

Responsible Agency: UNDP

[Project] DONORS



European Commission



France



Denmark



German Technical Cooperation



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Development Agency

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Acronyms

ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
CB	Capacity Building
CCTV	Close Circuit Television
CPAP	Country Programme Action Plan
DCN	Digital Congress Network
DEX	Direct Execution
DIPR	Department of Information and Public Relations
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
FM	Frequency Modulation
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for Technical Cooperation)
IACSC	Independent Afghan Civil Service Commission
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IPU	Inter Parliamentary Union
IT	Information Technologies
LAN	Local Area Network
LE	Legislative Environment
MP	Member of Parliament
MYFF	Multi-year funding framework
NA	National Assembly
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NPAD	National Programme for Action on Disability
PA	Preparatory Assistance
PO	Public Outreach
RFF	Results and Resources Framework
SEAL	Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VHF	Very High Frequency

Executive Summary

Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature (SEAL) project was directly implemented by UNDP from 22 February 2005 to 29 February 2008. The overall strategic vision of this project was to support the establishment of ever first directly elected parliament of Afghanistan; as well to strengthen the grounds for effectiveness of parliamentary functions and democratic legislation process in an appropriate manner within the constitutional framework of Afghanistan. SEAL project delivered significant services in the enhancement of organizational capacity for enabling a cohesive environment. SEAL also played effective roles in the capacity building of members of Parliament, staff of secretariats of both houses. Number of learning events workshops, seminars were convened national wide; while opportunities were enable for Afghan MPs participating in substantive parliamentary disciplined symposiums globally.

After contributing to the inauguration of the National Assembly of Afghanistan on 19 December 2005 the project sought to take a more measured approach to its work. The thrust of its activities was directed towards developing specific support for infrastructure, technology, human capital, and knowledge management in the Assembly, building on the solid groundwork laid in 2005. These activities are the foundation for building sustainable capacities within the Parliament's staff and, in turn, for ensuring progressively more success in the Assembly's core legislative and administrative business outputs.

The SEAL team demonstrated the ability to coordinate its activities well with the leadership of National Assembly, the Taskforce, and the wider donor community. SEAL's leading role in accomplishing this was evident in its successful implementation of the 'interlocutorship' approach to supporting the committees of the Assembly, regular hosting of donor stakeholder meetings, and the successful establishment of a Working Group which met frequently to discuss capacity building matters. Towards the second half of the year, SEAL successfully relinquished 'ownership' of the Taskforce and Working Group meetings to the National Assembly.

SEAL's support has resulted in a remarkable enhancement in the standards of security procedures and preparedness in the Assembly. This has been achieved through the deployment of modern security equipment, on-the-job exercises, and specialized training for security personnel. Security personnel who have benefited from these programmes have been able to train colleagues subsequently in Kabul.

The SEAL project delivered to parliament most of the material support and services planned in the Project Document. The third year of the project was a result of a one year no-cost funding

extension agreed by donors. It was also the second full year of the mandate of the re-established parliament of Afghanistan. While the year saw significant support to parliament, it also witnessed continuing challenges for parliament, and was marked by some challenges for the project as well.

The year 2007 was the bloodiest for Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001. The capital city, parliament, and the project were not exempt from this escalating violence. Six parliamentarians were killed while carrying out their duties (many bystanders were also killed in this brutal attack). Suicide bombers in Kabul threatened the security and the functioning of Parliament and the project. World attention to this escalating violence made recruiting international project staff more difficult than ever.

There were also substantive challenges within the Parliament itself. Parliament took over donor coordination through a Working Group, and despite the best of intentions, this Working Group experienced critical challenges and had difficulty functioning at the necessary level of effectiveness. Parliamentary practice, and particularly the development of parliamentary culture, improved but remained at an early development level. Parliament's financial administration services received considerable project attention in order to modernize, bring transparency, and assist Parliament on its necessary road to financial autonomy from government. But at the end of 2007, this work remained incomplete and essential financial autonomy remained a longer term goal.

The project supported a wide range of training for National Assembly staff and has funded substantial technical infrastructure and communications equipment for parliament. The project continued to fund and organize publications and public activities to raise awareness and understanding of parliament. These included a groundbreaking Youth Parliament to attract the involvement and attention of young Afghans.

After contributing to the inauguration of the National Assembly of Afghanistan in December 2005, the project provided significant material support, training, advice, public awareness, international exposure and other support to the parliament of Afghanistan. A formal Assessment of the project in mid year gave the project positive reviews, and an audit found no serious irregularities. In continuation of UNDP support to Parliament through SEAL, successor Project (SEAL II) in support of National Assembly was established in March 2008.

1. Context

Under the terms of the new constitution that was adopted by the *Constitutional Loya Jirga* (CLJ) in January 2004, parliamentary elections were held in Afghanistan on 18 September 2005 to elect Members to the National Assembly consisting of two houses: House of People (Wolesi Jirga) with 249 members and House of Elders (Meshrano Jirga) with approximately 100 members. The 249 members of the Wolesi Jirga are selected on the basis of a Single Non Transferable Vote (SNTV). In the Meshrano Jirga, 1/3rd are selected from Provincial Council Members, 1/3rd from District Council Members, and 1/3rd nominated by the President. Since the District Council elections have not yet been held, 2/3rd of the members to the Meshrano Jirga have been selected from Provincial Council members.

The National Assembly was successfully inaugurated on Dec 19, 2005 substantially supported by the SEAL project. The inauguration of the National Assembly of Afghanistan was the final milestone of the Bonn Agreement. The inauguration was a grand occasion attended by the President of Afghanistan, former King Zahir Shah, and many other national and international dignitaries. The President administered the Oath of Office to the members of the national assembly. Sittings commenced immediately and are continuing with the normalcy of an experienced parliament.

Under the constitution of Afghanistan, 25% of the seats in the lower house is reserved for women members. In the Upper House, one half of the 1/3rd of the members who are appointed by the President was women. This has enabled the Afghan parliament to be globally placed in the highest category of parliaments with regard to representation of women.

The objective of SEAL has been to ensure the timely establishment of the Afghan Parliament and support to its functioning. SEAL, which began in January 2005, contributed to putting in place stable democratic foundations for Afghanistan by assisting the Afghan authorities in the following areas:

- (1) Ensuring the setting-up of an effective coordination and programming mechanism for all activities related to the support to the Parliament.
- (2) Building the capacities of administrative and technical staff as well as members of the Parliament to ensure smoother and more efficient functioning of the Parliament.
- (3) Ensuring the establishment of the necessary legal environment to enable the first session of the Parliament.
- (4) Ensuring proper linkage and complementarities between physical infrastructure, information services and communication technologies (ICT) tools to provide assistance to members, staff, media and public.
- (5) Allowing for parliamentary outreach and the design of an effective public information and awareness strategy.
- (6) Ensuring that parliament is established and that the basic running costs were met during first year of activity.
- (7) Establishing an effective project management team able to provide and manage the assistance offered through SEAL project activities

The SEAL project aim was to strengthen its partnership with other UNDP initiatives, in particular the “Joint National Youth Programme,” (through collaboration on the establishment of a Youth Parliament), UNDP’s Accountability and Transparency Project (ACT), and UNDP’s Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP). SEAL has also worked in collaboration with United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to provide assistance to a Women’s Centre in the parliament. For the provision of specialised trainings, partnerships have also been established with Inter-Parliamentary Union and other bilateral institutions.

SEAL was intended to be implemented in two phases: I - 6 months up to the establishment of the Parliament; II -18 months, up to the end of 2006. Activities started in 2004 under a preparatory assistance (PA) grant. There has been substantial donor support for this project, which has implemented a total estimated budget of USD 15.5 million through cost-sharing arrangements.

During the implementation period, the expected results of the SEAL Project were in line with ANDS Objectives. The project supports the realization of the overall UNDAF outcome *[By 2008, transparent, effective and efficient legislative and policy frameworks and processes are established and implemented]*, the CPAP outcome *[State capacity enhanced to promote responsive governance and democratization]* and the CPAP output *[Democratic assemblies and electoral institutions strengthened at national and sub- national levels (Parliament operational, efficient and recognised by all the people; Provincial councils elected and functional; Village Chiefs elected and officially recognised; Independent Electoral Commission institutionalised and autonomous)].*

II. Performance review

1. Overall progress towards the ANDS benchmark(s)

Through the Bonn Process, the Afghan Government was required to take timely measures towards the establishment and functioning of the National Assembly, approval of the Secretariat structure, providing an appropriate Assembly budget, provision of a compound, and the recruitment of the core staff through the IARCSC. This was achieved in 2005 and 2006.

The objectives of SEAL and that of ANDS for the National Assembly are distinct. ANDS states that ‘The National Assembly will be provided with technical and administrative support by mid-2006 to fulfil effectively its constitutionally mandated roles.’ The more ambitious Project document seeks the ‘establishment of [a] fully operational and efficient parliament, recognized by the people of Afghanistan as their representative institution, functioning on an accountable basis, and in a transparent manner.’ SEAL predates ANDS by a year and was therefore well placed to prepare the ground for the more limited Government ANDS benchmark which was largely achieved before 2007

In spite of these major achievements, challenges remained. It would be overly optimistic to characterize today’s Afghan National Assembly as a ‘fully’ operational, efficient and transparent legislature, able to ‘fulfill effectively’ its key functions. But considering that the starting point was a baseline of virtually no relevant modern Afghan parliamentary experience, and considering that all of the work that has taken place has been in the face of continuing and escalating security uncertainties, it is impressive that so much progress has been made.

2. Overall progress towards the UNDAF outcome

The SEAL project was established in January 2005 for a period of two years to facilitate the emergence of a fully operational and efficient Assembly with a mandate to strengthen and reinforce its legislative environment and build capacities among its staff. These general achievements and, in particular, the legislative environment, have a direct link to the UNDAF, which identified the need to strengthen the rule of law and implement measures that enhance the confidence of Afghans in the Government. The SEAL Project has achieved a comprehensive approach to aid coordination in the evolution of the institutional, legal and administrative capacity of the National Assembly of Afghanistan and has therefore made a major contribution to the UNDAF outcome.

3. Overall progress towards the CPAP outcome and output

The establishment of SEAL Project and its mandate demonstrates the commitment of the UN to the process of deepening democracy. By creating capacities in the areas of legislative environment and public outreach, the objectives articulated in the CPAP for creating an accountable and efficient legislature have been fulfilled, with tangible achievement towards Outcome 1, "State's capacity enhanced to promote responsive governance and democratization." The first in-country mission facilitated by SEAL for the committees under the initiative 'Taking Parliament to the People' has generally had a favorable impact on the parliamentarians and civil society, as demonstrated in the provinces visited. It has helped to demonstrate the emergence of a responsible National Assembly dedicated to improving citizenship participation and awareness. The Assembly's range of vigorous activities, especially in its committee work, has meant that the potential for access to justice, and information on human and constitutional rights for the people of Afghanistan as envisioned in the CPAP outcomes has been increased.

Implementation strategy review

1. Participatory/consultative processes

Direct consultation with beneficiaries has been carried out throughout the life of the project, both formally and informally. On a formal level, through the Project Board meetings, regular updates were provided to main stakeholders and feedbacks have been received for quarterly as well as annual planning. The key interlocutors were Deputy Presidents/Speakers and the Secretaries-General of the Houses and their senior Deputies. The Presidents were consulted from time to time, as were Commission chairs and other members of the parliament on day-to-day business.

2. Quality of partnerships

The project has practiced different modalities of partnering with external agencies, other agencies and projects of the UN family, and to the greatest extent possible, with the relevant Afghan institutions. UNIFEM, UNOPS, and the UNDP National Programme for Action on Disability (NPAD) from the UN family; FES, Heinrich Boll, GTZ; NDI and USAID and its contractors; and the British Council, are examples of SEAL partners. SEAL also worked closely with Kabul University, the Esteqlal and Habibia High schools, the Afghan Radio & Television, and a wide variety of NGOs. Without exception, these partnerships have proven mutually beneficial.

3. National ownership

A key philosophy of the SEAL project has been to work towards increasing the involvement of the National Assembly in defining priorities and project implementation in order to reach the point at which the Assembly is fully enabled to take charge of its own development. This was a constant theme within the relationship SEAL has with its Assembly partner. There were practical limits of expertise in involving Afghan partner in the process of project resource allocation and reporting.

4. Sustainability

The key to long term sustainability is the support to parliament by the government/Ministry of Finance coupled with the increasing real autonomy and financial independence of parliament. An important strategic goal will help move parliament further on the path for such autonomy and modern, transparent financial self management. Trainings provided aimed to secure sustainability through the long term development of a professional parliamentary staff in all areas of the Secretariats. SEAL's material resource support also aimed to provide sustainable technology and services to MPs and staff.

Management effectiveness review

1. Quality of monitoring

In 2006 two independent external UNDP evaluation missions indicated that the project was making a key positive impact. The first of these was led by an international consultant and including a distinguished Afghan constitutional academic of national stature and the coordinator of UNDP's Regional Governance Programme in Asia. The team interviewed a broad collection of stakeholders from the National Assembly, the government, the broader Afghan community, and donors. The major insight was that international support will be required by the Assembly for some years to come. A successor project was proposed by the evaluators.

Responding to that recommendation, independent consultants undertook a further review of the SEAL projection mid 2007, came to the same recommendation, and prepared a draft Project Document for SEAL 2. The SEAL 2 Project Document (2008- 2012) was reviewed by UNDP, donors,

Assembly leadership and other partners and officially approved at a Local Project Appraisal Committee meeting in December 2007.

Internal day-to-day control and monitoring was carried out through staff meetings and completing Annual and Quarterly Work Plans

The UNDP Country Office Programme Unit also provided regular oversight over the project activities and carried out systematic monitoring of project implementation.

In accordance with UNDP corporate regulations, an audit of the project was conducted at the end of 2007, to ensure that UNDP resources are being managed in accordance with the financial regulations, rules and practices and procedures, the project document and project work plans. The audit was carried out by an external firm.

2. Timely delivery of outputs

The project delivered all of its key outputs on time. There were some delays in specific planned activities due to events in the parliament, challenges in internal planning within the Parliament, staff shortages within the project, and factors such as security challenges and lack of physical

infrastructure (e.g. the lack of a space to house the SEAL-purchased printing press). In spite of these challenges, however, the project has managed through great effort to keep delivery of key outputs on track.

3. Resources allocation

The total support costs including the salaries for international staff amounted to less than 30% of the total project cost. 70% of the project's resources were utilized for development activities.

4. Cost-effective use of inputs

As in 2006, a significant portion of financial resources was spent on technology and equipment. This was necessary in order to build an appropriate base on which capacities could be sustained in the long run.

Travel expenses and study tours were a significant expenditure, constituting almost half of the money spent on capacity building activities. However in last year, effort has been made on international travels to be funded only as a carefully targeted part of an overall plan, where it is directly related to capacity building and policy issues.

The expenditure support for the 'establishment and running costs of the parliament' has been kept low.

Implementation Progress

Output 1:

Establishing an effective coordination and programming mechanism to support the Assembly

The SEAL project envisages the achievement of this objective in two ways, at the policy level and at the technical level. For policy level coordination, a taskforce has been established jointly chaired by the Secretary General of the Parliament, the Resident Representative of UNDP and the Ambassador for France, Lead Nation on Parliamentary Support. Members include Ministers of the various Ministries connected with the Parliament such as Finance representative of the President's Office, Ambassadors of donor countries, and UNIFEM. The Taskforce met quarterly.

The Working Group included technical officers from the donor countries¹ to the SEAL project, USAID, and UNIFEM. The Working Group was meeting once a week to discuss issues of implementation.

The strategic coordination mechanism for all Assembly support was the Taskforce established in 2005, its TOR was developed and its meetings were convened regularly. The Taskforce met twice as convened by the President of the Wolesi Jirga. In addition, updating the matrix reflecting all Assembly support activities was continued under SEAL direction. Over the course of the year 2006 however the ownership of this task was successfully transferred to the Assembly. In 2007, the Taskforce was reconstituted as a UNDP 'Project Board'.

The second mechanism of Assembly support coordination - the Working Group - which SEAL representatives attend and to which they report on training activities, was chaired by SEAL for a part of the year 2006. This, too, was successfully passed to the National Assembly.

SEAL hosted a new occasional intra-agency meeting of the donors and implementers of Assembly

support. This informal forum has been designed to provide more clarity about the activities of each organization. The coordination efforts undertaken in that forum entailed the creation of the 'interlocutorship' mechanism put in place to satisfy the request of the National Assembly in provision of support to Assembly committees by major partners. SEAL has had a recognized lead role in that.

After a SEAL review in 2007 which found the Working Group needed stronger focus, SEAL offered to assist the chair the Working Group, allocating a dedicated SEAL staff member to assist with agenda consultations, meeting preparation, document collection, minutes and reports.

SEAL's financial and administrative work with parliament was steered by a group consisting of representatives from Parliament's HR, ICT and Finance Departments, who met regularly for briefings, brainstorming and to plan training activities to help ensure parliamentary ownership of new systems. Towards the end of the 2007, a new working group was formed to steer the Electronic Attendance System.

SEAL has continued its commitment to coordinating with others through periodic working meetings for public information activities and planning, evaluation and monitoring of the I-ANDS (Interim Afghan National Development Strategy), and capacity building activities in budget and other areas.

SEAL has assisted Assembly Secretariat staff in drafting and updating the Development Strategy of the National Assembly, which assesses the Assembly's achievement of benchmarks. The Lower House Secretariat drafted a detailed strategic paper and a work plan, with a similar paper expected from the Upper House.

Output 2:

Building the capacities of Secretariat staff and Assembly Members

With support from SEAL, the Directors of the Secretariat have been trained in the National Assembly of France. During June 2005, 120 members of the secretariat staff were trained in Kabul in basic parliamentary affairs by experts from the legislature of France. Intensive in house job training for the concerned Directors and staff of the Secretariat was given, covering the areas of legislative process, public finance policy, and budget and development programmes, Information and Public Relations and Parliamentary Protocol including inter-Parliamentary Relations. During August to October 2005, 152 staff of the Secretariat, in groups of 15-20 persons, has visited the parliaments of India, France, Italy, Sri Lanka, Netherlands, Germany, Indonesia, Morocco, Turkey and Australia to observe the practical aspects of the matters that they were trained on by the experts from France. To share the lessons learnt in the various parliaments, and to select what is most suitable for Afghanistan, the Directors and staff have also organized a national seminar for all 250 staff, and participated in the organization of the Orientation Seminar.

The project supported the Orientation Seminar for the Members was organized from Dec 10 to Dec 17, 2005 by USAID. On the first day, 334 of the 350 members participated. While this number stabilized at an average of 315 in the days to follow, the Seminar was a great success. The Members showed a high level of interest and enthusiasm. UNDP/SEAL also supported the participation of 5 experienced Members of Parliament from South Africa, India and Bangladesh. The Seminar covered subjects such as the oversight, legislative and representational role; Code of Conduct; Committee System; and Rules of Procedure.

A training need assessment for the Secretariat support staff was made with reference to the job charts ("Position Descriptions") of various Secretariat Departments and the job descriptions of individual functionaries. On the basis of this assessment, training modules

were prepared. Further taking into account the framework of the civil, criminal and commercial laws of Afghanistan, curricula and course modules were prepared on Legislative Drafting, apart from presentations on Legislative Analysis and Drafting. Training modules for meeting the long term training needs of members of the National Assembly were also prepared.

Using the Rules of Procedure of previous parliaments of Afghanistan as a guideline, SEAL has provided advisory services by international experts to draft Rules of Procedure to assist the members to develop Rules to suit the Afghan parliament. SEAL also assisted the Secretariat to draft Staff Rules, Code of Conduct and Security Guidelines through on the job training. SEAL has conducted programmes to increase awareness about democracy, legislature, and separation of powers.

SEAL has created a modern ICT environment at the Parliament through installation of a state of the art audio-visual system throughout the complex, a Local Area Network (LAN), computers and related equipment, and other modern office equipment. SEAL has arranged training for selected staff of the Secretariat on maintenance of these systems.

With the arrival of the members of parliament in December 2005, SEAL has started an aggressive capacity building during the first six weeks of 2006. A training programme for the Private Secretaries of Members was conducted in December. This has been followed by a training programme for secretariat support on support to committees, and the international relations department of the Meshrano Jirga. An expert from the parliament of Belgium commenced training on record keeping for the staff of the Hansard Department.

A 'Top Management' course was initiated by sending two senior members of the Secretariat to the Bureau of Training of the Lower House of the Indian Parliament on a month-long fellowship. This provided the officials with an excellent view of all aspects of the Indian Parliament and because the course was attended by representatives from many countries an international perspective was gained also.

The Secretary-General of the Meshrano Jirga and senior members of the Secretariat attended a series of informal and highly successful seminars on parliamentary procedure held by a SEAL senior consultant.

The consideration of the National Budget is a key role of both Houses. SEAL has been closely engaged with officials of the assembly in seeking to form a Budget Unit to assist parliamentarians generally with their budget responsibilities.

SEAL continued providing English trainings to members and conducted many workshops for the members in during 2006 on different matters as: (Workshop on the narcotics problem, Workshop on anti-corruption efforts, Workshop on the Socio-Economic Status of Afghanistan and so on). These workshops were fully interactive and were usually provided in response to requests from individual Members or committees.

In addition, various Seminars were organized and delivered for the staff of both Secretariats as Parliamentary Committee System, Scrutiny of State Budget and Development Plans and the like. Besides, a large number of documents were drafted for the use of members and committees. There is no space to list all of those but a few might be noted to provide some idea of the scope of the material produced: (Citizens' Guide to Presenting Submissions and Assembly - Code of Conduct for Members of the Wolesi Jirga, Draft of Revised Mandate - Committee on Gender and Civil Society)

SEAL has been working to strengthen the capacity of Parliament through technical training and study tours for Members and staff in the Secretariat, Departments of Security, Information & Public Relations, Finance, Administration, Management, ICT, and Legal Services.

In 2007, SEAL worked to ensure exposure to the norms of parliamentary practice, to support the legislation and policy making work of Commissions (including in-country public hearings) and targeted support to some women parliamentarians and to citizen engagement.

SEAL provided support which enabled MPs and staff to communicate better through ICT training and provided the latest information technology and security support.

SECURITY

In order to mitigate security risks, SEAL has assisted the National Assembly security department in developing, organizing and conducting a range of security training courses (in-country and overseas).

In order to increase the knowledge and skills of parliamentary security staff, around one hundred officers of the National Assembly were trained by French police trainers. Those officers subsequently trained all soldiers of the National Assembly's security department. SEAL's Security staff worked closely with the National Assembly's Security Department, and in 2007 SEAL and the Security Department conducted joint small arms shooting exercises to enhance troops' confidence while dealing with the weapons. SEAL also supported training in explosives detection, which took place in Bulgaria.

SUPPORT to MEMBERS

SEAL continued to support committee capacity by conducting in-country and international study visits, giving committee members and support staff the opportunity to learn practical lessons, gather input from key stakeholders in Afghanistan, experience first-hand the parliamentary procedures of other countries, and share Afghan Parliament success stories with local and international audiences.

As a consequence of SEAL's national committee outreach programme, committees were more familiar with their representative and oversight roles. The 'Bringing Parliament to the People' programme supported committee visits to ten remote Afghan provinces this year, providing vital input to and exposure for the commissions. During these visits, the commissions conducted public hearings at provincial levels, gathered information from local communities, conducted local consultations, and engaged communities and civil society organizations in the lawmaking process.

MPs have been enabled to take direct action to support Afghan nationals and refugees living abroad, following diplomatic visits to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Sweden. Following the SEAL sponsored visits, the Committee of International Affairs of the Upper House committed to building two schools for Afghan refugee children in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The Committee on Justice, Administrative Reform and Anti-Corruption gained practical knowledge on Ombudsman procedures as an efficient oversight tool, as well as anti-corruption measures, in a study tour to Sweden. As a result of this visit, a draft Ombudsman bill was produced with assistance from SEAL.

Supporting parliament's goal of better assisting the women of Afghanistan, SEAL facilitated a delegation of both Houses to participate in the 'Violence Against the Girl Child' conference in New York in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW).

In a study tour to the Parliament of India, 26 Senators gained practical knowledge in the design and management of committees, and the role of committees in parliamentary affairs, plenary sessions, law drafting and approval process. The delegation also observed the working process of Committees on Legislation, Complaints & Petitions; Budget and Finance; Privileges & Immunities; and Foreign Affairs.

MPs were better informed of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and how they apply to Afghan development following a SEAL supported delegation to a United Nations conference on MDGs in Thailand. MPs learned the responsibilities of parliaments in overseeing the implementation of MDGs.

Improving the capacity of the committees, SEAL sponsored a two week training course for 12 Committee Assistants to the French Parliament in 2007. Topics covered in the training included: drafting a member's bill; incorporating amendments in a draft bill; reporting to the president; the legislative role of the commission in the law-making process; familiarization with the rules of Procedure; conducting a commission meeting; and dealing with the public. Following this training, 64 Committee Assistants received similar in-country training by an expert consultant provided by SEAL. Committee Assistants now better understand their roles and responsibilities, and are more skilled in report writing. Committee assistants can provide notably improved administrative services, including substantive support to the day-to-day tasks of their respective commission members.

SEAL also supported delegations from Afghanistan to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly in Iceland and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS Member Nations in Moscow.

FINANCE and ADMINISTRATION

SEAL's work in 2007 with Parliament's Finance, Administration, ICT and HR Departments has greatly reduced duplication and errors, and has increased the speed and accountability with which transactions are processed. This work has contributed to the operational capacity and efficiency of the Parliament secretariat.

Because of the integrated nature of the work involved in the modernization of the secretariat function, active participation from various departments and groups at staff and management levels was of prime importance. Because the new systems affected the way people work, many of these initiatives were achieved successfully by the formation of working groups.

In early 2007, SEAL completed a thorough study and documentation of the current workflow processes in the Finance and Administration Departments of the Houses. The study produced thirteen major recommendations for progressive implementation. The recommendations were rolled into SEAL's capacity building work, focusing on the implementation of the computerized payroll system, banking system, information management system, cash management system, and training programmes.

COMPUTERIZED PAYROLL SYSTEM:

After six months of data computerization, validation, training and customization of software, a computerized payroll system for more than 300 staff members was inaugurated for the Upper House. The initiative has subsequently been extended to cover the more than 600 staff members of the Lower House.

Several constraints delayed the implementation of the computerized payroll system. Errors in data entry and data loss at the Ministry of Finance required validation workshops and re-registration activities, delaying implementation. Additionally, limited availability of members of the interdisciplinary working group from the Parliament delayed completion of the programme. Implementation of the payroll for Lower House was delayed due to difficulty in identifying appropriate software to accommodate the payroll for the security staff.

BANKING SYSTEM:

In 2007, staff of the Upper House began receiving their salaries through the bank for the first time. The computerized payroll system is linked with a banking system and on-site banking facility. SEAL has negotiated and facilitated an agreement between the partner bank and the Parliament to build a dedicated and fully operational bank on the premises.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM:

To meet the information needs of senior management of the Finance Departments of both Houses, an interim semi-automated budget and expenditure tool was developed by SEAL for both Secretariats. This tool is designed to track the aggregate budget and expenditures of both Houses pending implementation of a modern financial system in the future. The information management system was further customized to Parliament's needs as requirements were redefined and staff members were trained in its use.

IMPROVED CASH MANAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY:

To move beyond Parliament's existing inefficient and risky manual cash system, SEAL helped to develop a formal cash scheduling system for disbursing salaries in the Upper House, endorsed by the Secretary-General and to be followed by all Departments. This system is complemented by the establishment of cash offices with safes for storage and distribution; the creation of cash register books for the cashiers to improve controls over money; and the development of an audit plan for the Audit Offices to ensure that the cash-offices are properly controlled and to enable regular reconciliation of physical cash against the balances indicated in the cash-register. SEAL has supported the Secretaries-General in drafting official advisory circulars about the initiatives outlined above.

Modernization and transparency of Members' payments has been introduced by SEAL, and operationalized. Supporting transparency of the Finance Departments, SEAL has developed a tool to produce pay slips for Members of both Houses. The 102 senators and 348 members of the Lower House now receive pay slips on a monthly basis with full details of entitlements and deductions.

The system of recording attendance of staff and members was manual. In order to reform the inefficient, slow and unreliable system, SEAL has completed a detailed study on the feasibility of modernizing the attendance recording system and providing greater transparency through use of fingerprint technology. This plan has been implemented in early 2008.

TRAINING PROGRAMS:

Over the year 2007, SEAL has supported training for staff both in-country and abroad. These initiatives included:

All staff of the Finance Departments of both House improved their IT skills in the workplace through a month-long, intermediate-level course on MS EXCEL. Auditors from the Meshrano Jirga and Lower House were better skilled in modern procedures in planning and conducting audits and risk management, following training with the Controller & Auditor General of India. Key Assembly managers were performing at a higher level following a SEAL-supported one-week training course for the Assembly senior staff on improvement of the financial & administrative systems.

SEAL supported a delegation of secretariat staff from both houses in budget and finance training in the German Bundestag, focusing on budget procedures, mechanisms for independence of parliament from the Ministry of Finance, budget and expenditure management systems, and financial management software.

In conjunction with the payroll initiative, SEAL conducted intensive training on the computerized payroll software for key staff from HR, ICT and Finance Departments of the Upper and Lower Houses. Changes in government laws regarding calculation of salaries and grades necessitated customization of software, adding to the complexity of the learning process for staff.

Output 3:

Necessary Legal and Institutional Environment in Place

The main outcome of this activity was to achieve the 'necessary legal and institutional environment in place for the first session'. This meant assisting the Assembly in drafting its rules of procedure, the internal 'constitution' of the two Houses; and providing the Houses with the necessary legal advisory services to implement those Rules on a continuing basis.

Using the Rules of Procedure of previous parliaments of Afghanistan as a guideline, SEAL has provided advisory services by international experts to draft Rules of Procedure to assist the members to develop Rules to suit the Afghan parliament. The SEAL Project also facilitated the consolidation of good practices on standard rules of procedures from across the world. The Rules of Procedures were approved by the Upper House with minor modifications, and adopted by the Lower House to conduct its business pending discussion and approval within three months of the inauguration.

In close consultation with the Secretariat, a draft Staff Regulations was submitted to the Secretariat for adoption. The Staff Regulations address the organisational structure, staff management and development aspects in accordance with the requirements of the Afghan National Assembly.

To share the lessons learnt in the various parliaments, and to determine what is most suitable for Afghanistan, the National Assembly Secretariat in close cooperation with the SEAL project and the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) organized a national seminar for its 250 staff (The seminar was the first of its kind in Afghanistan. In effect, it was an excellent way of allowing staff who had not attended the study tours to learn from their colleagues. This is especially important in a society where tradition is essentially oral and not necessarily written. The seminar was a major step towards organizational development of the Secretariat with an aim to build the capacity of the staffers to support the elected Members of the National Assembly better. It also initiated the process of drafting a Code of Conduct for the Parliamentary staffers. The seminar also discussed in depth the process of legislative drafting and required capacity building

The SEAL Project facilitated inauguration rehearsal to ensure smooth functioning of the historic Inaugural Session (19 December 2005) of the National Assembly in accordance with parliamentary practices and traditions (through inaugural rehearsal). The SEAL Project also provided a detailed outline of a model inauguration session for better understanding of the key secretariat staff.

In collaboration with CB staff a number of documents were drafted and submitted to the Houses for the purpose of strengthening the legislative capacities and of the Commissions. Amongst these were:

- Proposed Uniform Rules of Procedure of the Commissions
- Proposed Rules of Procedure governing Investigation of Government Actions

- Proposed Rules of Procedure governing Oversight
- Proposed Rules Governing the Questioning of Ministers
- Staff Regulations of the National Assembly
- Glossary of Parliamentary Terms for Afghan Parliamentarians
- Draft of the Revised Mandate for the Meshrano Jirga Commission on Gender and Civil Society
- Draft Resolution on Counter Corruption for the proposed National Conference on the subject
- Background paper on Legislature-Executive Relations for the proposed International Conference
- Citizens' Guide to Presenting Submissions and "Petitions and Complaints" to the National Assembly

Furthermore, training sessions were conducted on:

- Legislative Drafting for the staff of the Meshrano Jirga
- Legislative Analysis for the staff of the Meshrano Jirga
- Workshops on Legislative Process for the staff of the Meshrano Jirga

- Training session on lawmaking for the Committee Assistants of the Meshrano Jirga

With the creation of the basic documents of the internal constitution of the Assembly, the fundamental task of the Legislative Environment team was completed.

In 2007, the SEAL project continued to strengthen the skills of staff, and offer legal, procedural and other advice and services to the Members of Parliament. Through a variety of SEAL activities, MPs now better understand their constitutional rights, their responsibilities, and the legislative process. Promoting better understanding by these MPs of the role of MPs in governance, the budget process, and oversight is an important goal for the SEAL project.

In 2007, this advice and assistance included assisting with preparation of Member's bills, personalized training for MPs in committee work, and seminars for Commissions on rule making, legislation, oversight, the constitution and the budgetary process.

The budget Commissions of both Houses are better prepared for the process of budget approval following specific budget training programmes during the reporting period. SEAL's assistance in this area also included a dedicated parliamentary and budgetary expert assigned by SEAL to Commission work, and creation of a Budget Research Unit. Through SEAL's advisory and technical support, the research capability of the National Assembly's Legal and Professional Studies Department was improved.

The SEAL team also worked with a range of Committees to provide policy, legal, procedural and other advice. This included advice on the creation of an Ombudsman bill and office, advice on oversight of foreign policy, advice on the out-of-country refugee situation, and expert advice in judicial, administrative and anti corruption affairs. The purpose and desired result of these activities is better informed and better functioning Committees, including the strengthening of the legal environment.

In the first quarter of 2008, SEAL continued to support a wide range of parliamentary travel by Members and Senators. Travel included a high profile and intensively prepared trip to Washington, D.C. by Senate President H. E Mojaddedi and others for which SEAL worked closely with the Senator, his staff, the embassy in Washington and others. Preparations included speech writing for an address to the U.S Institute of Peace, media preparation and organizing an event in support of reconciliation themes in New York. SEAL engaged the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a first-time ever briefing by the Ministry for travelling parliamentarians. The Ministry has agreed to make this a regular support activity for future SEAL sponsored travel.

Output 4:

Information services and ICT set up to provide timely assistance to those who use the Assembly

The SEAL Project has created a modern ICT environment at the Parliament. A state of the art audio-visual system was installed within the National Assembly complex, including both the Upper and Lower Houses of the Afghanistan Parliament. A Local Area Network (LAN) has been laid out through all the buildings of the Parliament and the Secretariat buildings. Upgrade in the cabling system was done simultaneously supported by a modern PABX digital telephone system. A Satellite provides instant VSAT communication facilities. Over 200 computers and related

peripheral equipment, other modern office equipment and furniture have been provided for efficient operations of the internal information exchange systems.

SEAL Project started the implementation of its extensive ICT training programmes with the implementation of basic computer skills and practical network administration - LAN courses. One week extensive trainings on the Audio-Visual and LAN systems were provided by the foreign experts and these trainings continue with on-the-job daily training and practical exercises.

The following systems were delivered and installed in the Afghanistan National Assembly in 2005:

- Audio-Video System – Bosch
 - o 110 audio microphone sets for the Upper Chamber (Meshrano Jirga)
 - o 267 audio microphone sets for the Lower Chamber (Wollesi Jirga)
 - o 2 House Speakers Units for both chambers
 - o 2 Translation Booths with full equipment Bosch
 - o 5 Bosch AutoDome Video Cameras for indoor pendent video systems – both chambers.
 - o 2 LCD Projector - Hitachi, CPX12W/CP-1250W
 - o 6 Plasma Display Monitors –Hitachi 55PMA550E
 - o Video Amplifier/Distributor – Extron Electronics DA 12V/6V Dual EQ
- Local Area Network (LAN) 375 data cabling nodes
- Digital Telephone Switchboard – Private Automated Branch Exchange /PABX/
 - o Panasonic KX/TD 500 Digital Telephone System
 - o Digital Panasonic telephone sets = 150pcs.
 - o Call Monitoring Software
 - o VoiceMail and GSM Gateways.
- Computer Systems
 - o 200 branded DELL computers with Flat 17" LCD Monitors
 - o Laptop Computers – 10pcs.
- Office Equipment
 - o Colour Laser Jet Printers HP – 10pcs.
 - o B/W Laser Jet Printers HP2420N – 50pcs.
 - o B/W Photo Copier Machine Ricoh – 10pcs.
 - o Colour Scanners HP2400 – 10pcs.
 - o Multimedia Projectors – 5pcs.
 - o Digital Senders HP9200C – 2pcs.
 - o ID Corporate Card Printer – 3pcs.
 - o UPS systems APC 1KVA – 200pcs.
- Network Servers - DELL Branded
 - o DELL Power Edge 2850 Server – 10pcs.
 - o UPS Power COM 30KVA – 1pcs.
- Network Equipment
 - o Cisco Switches – 12pcs.
 - o Cisco routers (3600 series) – 2pcs.
 - o Backbone Switch Catalyst 45000 – 1pcs.
 - o Wireless Access Points – 2pcs.
 - o Wireless NIC cards – 50pcs.
- VSAT Satellite Internet
 - o 2.4M C-Band Dish, 512Mbs/1Mb (uplink/downlink) – 1pcs.
 - o Satellite Modem – 1pcs.
 - o Cisco Router 2500 – 1pcs.
 - o VUIP ATA and Handset – 1pcs.
- Software
 - o 2003 DotNet Servers – 8pcs.

- o Microsoft Exchange Servers 2003
- o Microsoft ISA Server
- o Microsoft Operations Management Server – MOS
- o WebSense Enterprise addition – 300 client licenses
- o Microsoft Office 2003 Professional Edition – 10 client licenses
- o Norton AntiVirus 2005 Corporate Addition = 300 client licenses.
- VHF Radio Security System plus antenna and personal radio stations.

All the equipment has been provided with at least one year warranty and hardware and Software maintenance support.

Delivery of ICT equipment continued into 2006, however, a factor which is explained by the splitting of Secretariat Departments between the Houses after inauguration.

In addition, there were two major undertakings in 2006: first, the provision of training and daily technical advice and assistance to the ICT Department of the Assembly and; second, the development of long-term policies for the use and maintenance of ICT facilities. Work was also initiated on improving the Assembly web site.

Provision of Training and Daily Technical Advice and Support

The ICT Department of the National Assembly benefited from different learning opportunities offered by study tours and in-house training:

The first training opportunity took place during the 2nd quarter of 2006 when 2 staffers accompanied by the SEAL project ICT officer to the Netherlands and UK to receive training on Digital Congress Network (DCN), followed by a visit to the British Parliament. Sonus Westminster, the SEAL contractor which had installed the system in the National Assembly Chambers, maintains a similar system in the UK Parliament.

The second training was at the e-Governance Academy in Estonia for a joint delegation of parliamentarians and staff of both the House.

SEAL subsequently organized specialized training for the ICT Department staff in the IT Department of the Lower House of the Indian Parliament. Ten participants, including two SEAL staff, undertook this training during the 3rd quarter 2006.

During the last quarter of the year 2006, the achievements of the ICT component of the SEAL Project, in particular its progress towards e-Parliament systems, were presented at the annual regional UNDP meeting on e-Governance practice groups for the Bureaus of Europe and Asia-Pacific. The meeting was held in Tallinn, Estonia. The Afghan case presented by the SEAL representative attracted very considerable interest.

General ICT training sessions were organized for the Members during the last two quarters. The following topics were covered: modules on basic computer literacy, use of Internet and e-mail facilities, managing Information through Internet.

The ICT unit of SEAL implemented the Star-Diva software and trained the Hansard staff on its efficient use. The positive result of this installation is enhanced accuracy in the production of Official Gazettes of the Houses.

Development of long-term policies for the use and maintenance of ICT facilities; improving the parliamentary web site

The Project completed installation of a 'state of the art' audio-video congress system and all the other necessary computer and multimedia components of the Parliament. The priority has become since then to put in place and maintain a well conceived and effectively managed policy for the use of all ICT and multimedia equipment.

Therefore, during the last two quarters of 2006, the ICT team has been developing comprehensive policies for the use of different and various ICT facilities by Members and staff: e-mailing including the use and management of the official e-mail addresses, Intranet, internal e-mailing services and servers, and promotion of effective use of Internet for research. These policies will be integrated into the future Parliament ICT Strategy.

The ICT and Public Outreach also worked to replace the pilot web site of National Assembly by a custom built web site. The upgraded version, when rolled out, will consolidate both Afghan suggestions and the best practices of developed parliaments.

Finally, throughout the year 2006, the ITC unit provided essential services to the Assembly in facilitating the day-to-day work of the staff and parliamentarians.

Throughout the year 2007, SEAL's ICT Unit has provided essential services and technical support to the Assembly, facilitating the day-to-day work of the staff and parliamentarians. Further, the ICT Department of the National Assembly has in 2007 undertaken various training courses, study tours, and in-house training. SEAL has supported ICT technical training; specialized Hansard training in Belgium and Germany; and Project Management and technical Cisco training in Malaysia.

In 2007, SEAL's ICT Unit developed a strategy for the use of ICT facilities by Members of Parliament and staff. The strategy includes comprehensive policies on the use of email, Intranet, internal servers, and promotion of effective use of the Internet for research. The strategy was approved by the National Assembly and implemented.

The Project completed the installation of a state-of-the-art audio/video congress system and all the other necessary computer and multimedia components of parliament. Since installation of this system, SEAL's priority has been to put in place and maintain a well conceived and effectively managed policy for the use of all ICT and multimedia equipment.

SEAL's ICT staff, together with SEAL Public Outreach, upgraded the pilot website of the National Assembly. This pilot website was developed by combining Afghan input with the best practices of parliaments of other countries. This website enables parliament to communicate news and parliamentary business effectively with national and international audiences.

Provision of IT Equipment

The supply of all the needed ICT equipment to the Assembly continued during the year 2006. The only exceptional purchase for the Assembly was, during the 1st quarter of the year, provision of a powerful electricity generator in order to allow the Assembly to function regardless of the intermittent Kabul City power supply.

The second wave of supply was justified by the new needs arising from the separation of the previously common Departments of the two Secretariats and was confirmed by the needs assessments completed by the SEAL ICT team. 300 personal computers and 10 laptops with supporting office equipment was purchased and delivered.

Besides the regular supply of IT equipment, SEAL substantively contributed to the operation of the UNIFEM Resource Centre for Women Parliamentarians. The Internet connection and all necessary IT equipment including computers, printers, scanners, and multimedia facilities were provided by SEAL.

SEAL has assessed the ICT needs of the Assembly throughout the year 2007, and built Parliament's infrastructure and services accordingly. SEAL connected the Afghan Parliament with the 34 provinces of Afghanistan using video conferencing technology, enabling Members of parliament to conduct meetings with provincial elders, and governors of different provinces.

The project has, over the year 2007, developed Parliament's ICT infrastructure, providing 300 Desktop computers and 300 UPS. Printers and photocopy machines were also provided for different departments of Upper and Lower houses. SEAL also equipped Parliament's annex with IT

equipment, including installation of communication technology and computers.

This first quarter of 2008 saw the near-completion of the renovation of Annex buildings to provide new additional working space for MPs and their staff. Official renovation work for the Wolesi Jirga started in August 2007, involving a major SEAL supported ICT component. The Annex consists of three buildings, which will provide office space for 600 people (MPs and assistants).

SEAL has provided the IT equipment and furnishings for the Annex buildings including installation of Local Area Network (LAN), which includes 600 data points and installation of the PABX (telephone exchange system), which includes 300 voice points and all the related needed equipment such as Cisco Routers, Cisco Switches, Cisco Firewall, Servers and Wireless Access points. The expected results of this significant commitment to equip the Annex building with communications technology include state of the art communications systems for all Wolesi Jirga MPs and their staff, with the subsequent ability to communicate with others including fellow parliamentarians, citizens, government, NGOs.

SEAL also provided furnishing for more than 200 offices including carpeting, desks and chairs and reception seating. The result is to provide all Wolesi Jirga members with modern, functional, and equitable offices that can meet their needs as law makers and representatives.

Output 5:

Promoting Assembly Outreach and Designing an Effective Public Information and Awareness Strategy

The Public Outreach staff of the SEAL project worked to strengthen parliamentary outreach to citizens and the provinces, while helping to build sustainable capacity of the Departments of Information and Public Relations of both the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament. SEAL continued to assist the National Assembly's Information and Public Relations Departments to disseminate information to the people of Afghanistan. These activities included the production of publications, broadcasting, the parliament-media forum, and parliament-civil society meetings. Together these activities have helped to significantly raise public awareness and understanding of parliament.

SEAL, working together with the Public Information Department of the Secretariat, USAID, and the UNDP ICT project established a website for the National Assembly of Afghanistan.

In addition to the specific tasks of Public Outreach, the component organized many capacity building events and facilitated provision of equipment required (after assessment of the real needs of the two Information and Public Relations Departments) within the Secretariats in 2006.

The following events were organized by the Public Outreach team:

- Three-day seminar in parliamentary reporting for staff of the DIPRs of both Houses and journalists accredited to the National Assembly
- In the framework of the "Outreach to the Provinces" project, implemented in co-operation with FES- training sessions to local journalists and locally elected MPs/Senators respectively on parliamentary reporting and on increased media competence.
- Specialized training to video and still-photo photographers at the National Assembly - Seminar on political, electoral and conflict reporting for the staff of the DIPRs of both houses and journalists accredited to the National Assembly
- Workshop in parliamentary reporting for provincial journalists conducted in cooperation with FES - Study tour going to Scandinavia - Oslo and Copenhagen - focusing on "openness in governance" including Members and staff of both Houses. In addition to study visits the

programme included a two day seminar on "right to information" undertaken by the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre.

As direct support to the Information and Public Relations Departments, the component undertook printing of the following public information material:

- Directory of MPs and Senators in Dari and Pashto; informative calendars for both the Meshrano and Wolesi Jirgas; Assembly 'diary' featuring all the female parliamentarians, information materials directed at school children (and supporting the National Assembly's programme for regular school visits); Meshrano and Wolesi Jirga Magazines and Official Gazettes (primarily in Dari and Pashto) - A comprehensive 'folder' or pamphlet explaining the role and resources of SEAL to Assembly Members, the Secretariat, students at seminars, classes, and lectures, and the general public

Six public information radio programmes were produced and broadcasted, both on satellite radio and by traditional FM stations.

Additionally, a substantive number of books were provided to the National Assembly library related to parliamentary studies and assistance provided to the DIPR of the Wolesi Jirga to set up a data base of journalists representative of the media community interested in parliamentary coverage.

To engage the Assembly with civil society, the Public Outreach team worked for the institutionalization of the regular meetings between the National Assembly and Afghan civil society representatives.

The major success of the component was the series of public outreach events it organized jointly with its partners from the civil society during the summer recess of the National Assembly. During these events, Members met their constituents, local journalists, and other participants, in their constituencies.

Pursuing the same goal of facilitating parliamentarians' interactions with their constituencies, the Public Outreach team supported the initiative of the Project Capacity builders to launch the programme of 'bringing parliament to the people'.

Jointly with the Legislative Environment-capacity building team, a guide for oral and written submissions was produced and forwarded to the Assembly.

In cooperation with that Department the team also drafted and forwarded to the National Assembly the following a policy papers: the institutional communications of the Assembly; duties and responsibilities, values, mission, and policies of the Department of Public Information of the Wolesi Jirga has been developed.

There have been some problems however including the disappearance of two staff members from the study tour to UNDP Governance Center in Oslo. This was the first time in the Project that this had happened.

The other constraints affecting generally the conception and implementation of an effective public information and awareness strategy were: the lack of mature and qualified media actors, modest level of minimum awareness about their rights and duties by major partners concerned by the parliamentary life.

Public Information and Awareness:

In order to minimize gaps and duplication in the National Assembly's communication and public information strategy, and to increase awareness of Parliament and other partner's roles and responsibilities, SEAL together with Parliament's Department of Information and Public Relations (DIPR), in coordination with other partners, began the development of the National Assembly's long-term communication and public information strategy in 2007. To ensure DIPR staff can effectively and efficiently implement the Parliament's communication and public information strategy and projects, SEAL provided resources and regular training to the DIPR staff members.

This training has included: a two-week on-the-job photo-journalism training course for cameramen and photographers of the National Assembly; a two-week course in Effective Oral Communication and Pashto Conversation for DIPR staff; media relations courses for DIPR and parliamentary journalists; and planning for a training (to be held on the future) for the Parliament's librarians. All training activities were successfully completed within the specified budget and in close coordination of the National Assembly.

In addition to training, SEAL has been working to ensure Parliament is equipped in a sustainable way to report back to citizens, through the provision of a radio studio and printing press has been operationalised in 2008.

In 2007, SEAL supported the production of numerous publications and periodicals to raise awareness of and understanding of parliament, Committees, the legislative process, and Legislative-Executive relations. A school parliamentary guide was disseminated for children, as well as a publication on the history of assemblies in Afghanistan.

In order to provide the public and development partners with information about Afghanistan's Parliamentarians, SEAL has produced the 'Who is Who' book covering the backgrounds, education, achievements and professional lives of the members of the National Assembly. This book has been disseminated in Pashto, Dari and English languages. The 'Who is Who' book increased public awareness of the National Assembly and the background of Parliamentarians. It also contributed to National Assembly transparency and accountability to constituents, and address public uncertainty about the role of the Legislature and the Parliamentarians. SEAL/UNDP has also produced a booklet outlining SEAL's responsibilities, activities and achievements in Pashto, Dari and English languages.

Utilizing the most accessible and commonly used media in Afghanistan, SEAL has targeted radio for various public outreach activities. For many people living in the provinces and mountainous valleys, radio is the only medium to access news and information on events, security, and national development. SEAL has led the production of eight Pashto and Dari radio programmes which were broadcast through satellite radio stations to all provinces of Afghanistan. Following these radio broadcasts, focus group discussions garnered public feedback in various provinces; this feedback was discussed with Members of the Lower House in a one-day communications seminar.

Engaging Citizens:

SEAL has been working to ensure the public of Afghanistan are not only better informed about the legislative process of the National Assembly, but also able to better engage with parliament and its members.

To encourage public participation in the legislative process, SEAL supported two public hearings on the proposed Election Law. The hearings were conducted in coordination with members of the Youth Parliament and the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Lower House of Parliament.

Preparatory work has been done towards a pilot programme establishing a Provincial Resource Center in one Afghan province. The Resource Centre will provide access to information and resources to Members of Parliament, civil society, and media, through a library, communication tools such as computers, internet, and telephones, and a meeting space. The Parliamentary Resource Center is aimed at incorporating an electronic link with the Assembly for the use of visitors. The centre will support the Parliament's provincial outreach aims, enhancing effective parliament-constituency relationships.

Civil Society Relations:

SEAL Public Outreach Unit in 2007, organized and hosted six meetings of the Civil Society Parliament Relations Forum, engaging civil society organizations with the Gender & Civil Society Committee of the National Assembly.

Youth Outreach:

SEAL has been working to support the engagement of high school children with Afghanistan's parliamentary life. Working towards this goal, in June 2007 SEAL inaugurated Afghanistan's Youth Parliament in partnership with the National Assembly, UNDP's Joint National Youth Programme (JNYP), and the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs.

The National Assembly has hosted three sessions of the Youth Parliament, bringing together representatives of Parliament, the Parliament's Youth Caucus, civil society organizations and Ministries to help young people understand what goes on in Parliament, and provide a forum to express their concerns and views to parliament and the public. The young representatives report back to their school peers on the work of the National Assembly and parliamentary processes. Further, Members of Parliament have an opportunity to gather input and feedback from the young representatives

The Youth Parliament was made up of 101 young participants selected through a carefully-managed secret ballot process conducted by the Independent Election Commission (IEC). The Youth Parliamentarians selected, 52 girls and 49 boys from more than 80 high schools, represent a total of more than 50,000 young adults.

During Youth Parliament plenary sessions, members have been coached and subsequently participated in parliamentary debate and committee discussions. Marking the United Nations International Volunteer Day, SEAL, together with UNV, supported Youth Parliament members' volunteer engagement with a children's hospital in Kabul, where Youth Parliamentarians met with children and parents to distribute donated food and hygiene items.

Output 6:

Parliament Set-Up and Operational Costs Met

Since March 2005, SEAL project has worked closely with the Secretary General and the Directors to help establish a parliament secretariat. The project has assisted in developing organization charts and job descriptions. 350 staff was hired for the Secretariat between June and August who received training as discussed under Output 2.

Due to the delay in the construction of the parliament building, three houses were rented for the Secretariat to house the staff. The houses were provided with equipment, furniture and internet facilities. To address the transportation requirements of the Secretariat four temporary vehicles were supplied. Towards the end of the year 2005, 16 new vehicles, and 50 used vehicles from the Elections Project were provided.

In addition to the ICT and office equipment that was provided, the project also provided all furniture requirements of the new parliament building. The selection of furniture was done in a participator manner with the staff of the secretariat, and thereby the staff gained an insight in to good practices followed by UNDP with regard to procurement.

The tightness of the National Assembly budget justified continuation of the operational support by the Project.

In addition, the Secretariat of the Assembly was split between the two Houses during the 2nd quarter of 2006. This entailed the division of resources used previously in common by both the Secretariats. Consequently, essential new office environment needs emerged. After rigorous assessment of the actual needs, the Project met the essential requirements. The annual fee for the Internet facility to the Parliament continued to be met by the Project and it also envisaged to extend this support to the buildings rented for them outside the main premises.

During the 1st quarter of 2006, SEAL facilitated the communication and easy transfer of some vehicle and security equipment from the Chinese Government for use by the Assembly.

While parliament's initial set-up costs have been successfully met, the SEAL project continued to provide support to basic running costs, including building rental, security operation costs, transport, and logistics. In 2007, SEAL made significant technical and communications support contributions to the new Annex Building and to new offices for the Senate.

Output 7:

Management Team Fully Operational

The full project team has been recruited in 2005 except for the Public Outreach Technical Advisor and Programme Officer. Although many efforts were made to complete this recruitment, the project failed to attract the correct person. However, Public Outreach officer has been recruited in early 2006.

A fully functional project office with modern ICT equipment has been established with office space for the staff and meeting space where up to 20 persons can meet in comfort. 2 vehicles have been purchased for use by staff.

The Management team was operational fully one year after the start of the Project in February 2005 with arrival of the Technical Adviser (Public Outreach) in February 2006. This difficulty of recruitment in the first year brought problems of delivery in its wake and has had a lag effect on delivery in 2006.

In addition, during 2006, the following positions had to be filled or were renewed: international Chief Technical Adviser and Project Manager; international Technical Adviser (Capacity Building); three short term international consultants; National Deputy Project Manager; National Consultant ICT; Technical Adviser (Security); international Technical Adviser (Finance). This represents a certain amount of upheaval and need for adjustment.

Working in tandem the international technical advisers and the national programme officers have achieved a degree of knowledge transfer. SEAL policy was to ensure that national staff capacity is built as part of the overall objective of building sustainability and national ownership. This was largely achieved by close pairing. On occasion SEAL staff members accompanied Members or Assembly staff on overseas visits. The Project had a policy of encouraging National Officers to undertake the full range of work done by internationals if they are qualified. For example, the National Programme Officer (Legislative Environment) in addition the Deputy Technical Advisor (Capacity Building) was also 'interlocutor' for two major committees of the Wolesi Jirga.

During the 4th quarter of 2006, SEAL office was able to accommodate 5 staff has been embedded in the Secretariat of the Wolesi Jirga with the full support and encouragement of the Secretaries General of both Houses. This office had proved a boon being a base from which to work closely with the Assembly partners. The office was manned constantly when the Assembly was in Session on a rota basis, and the weekly staff meeting was normally held there on Thursday morning.

A number of mandatory project protocols have been issued to ensure good communication and clear lines of command, for example, relations with National Assembly staff, official correspondence, Project security, work in the SEAL Assembly office.

It has been a major concern that there were two women only in the project (the cleaners and dinner ladies). Fortunately the Project has recruited its first female senior consultant, an exDutch Member of Parliament of Iranian origin and she joined in January 2007.

In 2007, the SEAL Project faced a serious staff shortage. A number of key international staff including the Project Manager departed. National staff were promoted or played acting roles to fill these gaps, but there were resulting challenges in the area of project capacity. Meanwhile, the expectations and demands of parliamentary partners continued, and even increased during the course of the year.

In Finance, two unsuccessful attempts were made to recruit a qualified and skilled Procurement Associate. Inability to recruit a Procurement Associate and the departure of the Administrative Associate delayed the implementation of some improved workflow processes and internal controls in the project.

As part of UNDP's planned activities, an external audit firm conducted an audit of the SEAL project. Project staff, with UNDP Country Office colleagues, gathered the requested information to meet audit requirements and responded to the draft Audit Report. The final response report was also prepared. The SEAL project received an unqualified audit opinion on statements of expenditure and cash position, and a qualified opinion on the statement of inventory of non-expendable equipment.

During 1st quarter of 2008, significant progress in addressing the critical staff shortage evident from mid year 2007. Several key positions were filled including Procurement Officer, Administrative Associate (by contract), and Project Officer Capacity Building (assigned to be responsible for official parliamentary travel). A researcher was hired on a short contract and 2 interns were engaged to support research in aid to Committees (three recruits were women). Recruitment of international staff continued with the successful recruitment of a contract expert to head Research Development for parliament (also a woman).

Several national staff were promoted to new responsibilities including Head of Communications and Outreach (acting) and Deputy Project Manager (acting). Postings for international expert advisors in Capacity Building (2), and national Staff Translators (3) were also successful.

Challenges

The general security situation has not always been favourable and this has been an obstacle to the implementation of some project activities. For instance, organization of an international conference on effective executive-legislative relations had to be cancelled for this reason.

The uncertain quality of some Assembly staff has meant that SEAL personnel have frequently been called on to 'plug the gap'. This was particularly true in the fields of travel and ICT where the International Departments of the Houses were not able to manage the necessary travel arrangements independently on 2006.

A 'brain-drain' within the staff of the National Assembly Secretariats has been a matter of concern. Some trained staff were hired by international agencies, while some others fled the country.

The attendance of parliamentarians has attracted attention due to some striking absences in training events provided by other stakeholders. SEAL has attempted to work co-operatively with the committees in particular by fitting into a pre-arranged work-based timetable rather than suggest additional training slots. This cannot always be done of course, but it has assured attendance has been high at SEAL/Members meetings.

Risks

Deteriorating security environment:

Insecurity in the capital included the threats to the premises and precincts of the National Assembly (including the nearby SEAL office) and the challenge of providing a secure environment for MPs, Assembly staff, SEAL staff, visitors, and parliamentary work. To help address security risks, SEAL assisted the National Assembly Security Department in developing, organizing, and conducting a range of security trainings, and has provided and installed security equipment.

Resistance to coordination:

Relations with other implementers of projects that support parliament have improved over the course of late 2007. Earlier in the year, there was a poor level of information sharing from implementing partners at the regular bi-weekly Working Group meetings. The Working Group meetings themselves were poorly prepared, poorly run, unproductive and do little to generate the discussions necessary for implementer coordination. In order to address the issue, SEAL has offered a dedicated secretary to assist the Secretaries-General in overall management and coordination of the Working Group meetings. SEAL has also taken the initiative in reaching out to partner organizations also working with Parliament, reducing duplication of activities and enhancing coordination. By late 2007 the SEAL public outreach team had established a close working relationship with other implementers.

Participation of women:

Advancing toward UN and other norms of women's participation and gender equality are challenges for both parliament and for the SEAL Project itself. Parliamentary delegations for trips abroad formed earlier in the year included no women participants. One aspect of women's participation was addressed at the end of 2007 with requests to parliamentary leadership to ensure the participation of women in delegations abroad. In late 2007, specific requests were made for the inclusion of women to the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Geneva, the delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Association, and for a study visit to India.

Issues

Retention of staff has been a challenge throughout the project, due in part to competition and poaching within the international community. Difficulties in recruiting key administrative staff have resulted in gaps in implementation. Some progress in 2007 has been made through proactive efforts to find international and national staff for vacant positions, while other positions remained vacant and recruiting efforts were on-going.

Low attendance of parliamentarians at training events generally was a challenge for parliamentary development. SEAL had, in spite of this, managed to ensure consistently high attendance at SEAL/Members meetings.

Relatively low parliamentary staff salaries, compared to the open market, continued to limit the hiring and retention of parliamentary staff.

Parliament had low research and policy analysis capacities, and limited local-based materials and experts necessary for comprehensive understanding of the legislative environment and policy issues in Afghanistan.

Lessons Learned

The SEAL Project was designed to help ensure the establishment of parliament after a 30 year absence of a functioning legislature in this country. This was accomplished at the end of 2005. During 2006 and 2007, the SEAL project's donors contributed to enlarging technical capacities (e.g. phone and internet systems, audio visual and electronic records systems, security screening systems), to start-up training for staff (among them: finance and administration, legal, human

resources, security officers, public relations, Hansard and committee clerks) and to a wide range of study trips and international conferences attended by parliamentarians and staff to familiarize the National Assembly with other parliaments and to raise the international visibility of this parliament. Some attention was paid to the particular needs of women MPs, the National Assembly joined the International Parliamentary Union as a full fee-paying member, and a Youth Parliament was established to help widen interest in and knowledge of parliamentary government.

Openness, transparency and mutual trust proved a cardinal virtue in working within a multi-stakeholder environment in Afghanistan.

Promoting personal self confidence and encouraging personal initiatives and creativity on the part of project staff is an important aspect of project management and should be encouraged. However, it does not replace but complements the need for vigilant oversight and ensuring that the project's internal controls are sound.

SEAL accompanying overseas visits by Members (other than the leaderships of the Houses) should always be carefully considered. The accompanying officials when from the Assembly are unlikely to be experienced, and the fact that many of the travel arrangements were made by the project means that they may lack full preparation. Careful pre-briefing will be needed if a SEAL staff member does not accompany.

Where there proves to be an inadequacy in the Assembly delivery it must be addressed in the same way as would be normal for a similar situation in the project itself, courteously but firmly. The project has an obligation to apply the same standards in its relation with the Assembly as it does internally.

There is much more advantage in having a relatively long term capacity builder in place (if he/she has something positive to offer) than one who stays only a few months. The Assembly gets to know the trainer and vice versa. This leads to a much more fruitful personal interaction than would otherwise be the case. Regional staffs are likely to have cultural advantages over international staff from further afield, or with no experience of the Region. Use Afghan trainers whenever available.

The regular and numerous presence of Members in all capacity building activities should never be taken for granted. Recourse to the leadership of the Houses for publicizing training events and encouraging the participation of Members may be required.

There is an urgent need to do more to deepen the capacities of MPs and staff and provide first class research and analysis services. Activities involving international travel should be designed and conducted with better results in mind and broaden consultation with MPs (and staff at the working level). There should be greater attention to facilitating MP peer-to-peer learning, and opportunities for South-South knowledge sharing. Strengthening parliament's budget oversight skills needs to be a top priority.

The ultimate goal of Project exit should be kept firmly in mind, and the government must become better aware that international support for parliament will end at some point in the not distant future. Parliament, especially the Secretariats, should be better aware that they must move boldly to take responsibility, including financial responsibility, for a wide range of services and activities.

The transfer of travel arrangements to the Assembly should be a priority. It is an essential skill for a modern parliament, is highly time consuming for the project, and often generates undeserved travel agency service complaints. SEAL 2 needs to work closely with MPs and working level staff to hand over this function, helping them to understand and manage the logistical challenges involved in setting up visits, or arranging training.

SEAL 2 must continue to promote a culture of discipline about procurement, budgeting and administration.

It is vital to the success of the Assembly that the two Houses work co-operatively together. SEAL should encourage this strongly.

Parliaments cannot function effectively in legislation and policy responsibilities in the absence of caucuses or party groups. As a result of this absence, debate and decision-making are unpredictable. The absence of groups that can prepare for debate and negotiate coherent positions and responses to legislation will hamper the overall development of parliament. The project should examine this need carefully in SEAL 2 and consult others.

Financial Section

Table 1. Funding Overview

Donor	Commitment	Received (Currency of the Agreement)	Received (USD)	UNORE	Balance (Currency of the Agreement)
EC	3,000,000.00	3,000,000.00	3,841,427	1.28	-
France	2,678,668.34	2,678,668.34	2,884,941	1.08	-
Germany/GTZ	2,250,000.00	2,050,000.00	2,466,236	1.20	200,000.00
Denmark	2,000,000.00	2,000,000.00	2,000,000.00	1.00	-
SIDA	10,000,000.00	10,000,000.00	1,277,139	0.13	-
Italy	1,000,000.00	1,000,000.00	1,204,819	1.20	-
Canada	1,200,000.00	1,200,000.00	1,052,632	0.88	-
UNDP	643,267.00	643,267.00	643,267	1	-
Total	22,771,935.34	22,571,935.34	15,370,461.00		200,000.00

Table 2: Expenditure Status (by activity)

Activity	Donor	Expenditure By Year				Total Expenditure
		2005	2006	2007	2008	
Cap. Building & Institution Support	Canada			(349)	26,593	26,244
	Denmark				72,602	72,602
	France	775,321	942,639	263,625	9,911	1,991,495
	Germany		24	670,135	118,163	788,322
	GTZ			4,548		4,548
	SIDA		7		20,259	20,266
	UNDP Core	(0)	(800)			(800)
Cap. Building & Instit. Support Total		775,321	941,870	937,960	247,529	2,902,679
Establishment & Run Cost of Parliament	Denmark		46,278	31,063	(35)	77,306
	EC	88,422	44,042			132,464
	Germany		1,352	93,037	148,390	242,779
	SIDA	410	89,758	19,648	(492)	109,324
	UNDP Core	535,772	-	(487)		535,286
Estblmnt & Run Cost of Parlmnt Total						

		624,605	181,429	143,261	147,863	1,097,158
ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems	Canada		54,000	623,174	4,457	681,631
	Denmark		65,574	16,923	123,870	206,366
	EC	1,334,127	1,425,953	(164,128)	(67,002)	2,528,951
	France	46	(3,065)	(0)	204,932	201,913
	Germany			146,718	(60,863)	85,854
	Italy	1,031,978	(15,388)	136,582		1,153,173
	SIDA	31,205	479	8	74,375	106,067
	UNDP Core	4,299		-		4,299
ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems Total		2,401,655	1,527,552	759,277	279,769	4,968,253
Legal Environment for the first Parliament	France	184,029	332,758	24,187	3,449	544,424
	Germany			61,874	5,887	67,761
	SIDA				208,235	208,235
Legal Envmt 4 the 1 ses Parli Total		184,029	332,758	86,061	217,571	820,419
Parliament Outreach	Canada				19,560	19,560
	Denmark		564,316	425,106	25,700	1,015,122
	EC					

		38,796	5,293			44,089
	France		(840)	-	4,323	3,483
	Germany		31,998	182,031	77,109	291,138
	SIDA		13,826		272,807	286,633
	UNDP Core		113			113
Parliament Outreach Total		38,796	614,707	607,137	399,500	1,660,139
	Australia			(25)		(25)
	Canada			255,033	22,931	277,964
	Denmark		104,080	334,343	44,284	482,707
	EC		-		(486)	(486)
	France	0	(0)	23	9,342	9,365
	Germany		221,205	498,803	143,646	863,653
	GTZ			(4,548)		(4,548)
	Italy		-		834	834
	SIDA	146,396	312,738	58,519	-	517,653
	UNDP Core	103,686			723	104,409
Programme Support Total						

		250,081	638,023	1,142,148	221,273	2,251,525
Realized Gain/Loss	Canada			38	82	120
	Denmark		54	(2)	10	63
	EC		674			674
	France	(96)	9	93		6
	Germany		(2)	299	23	320
	SIDA		17	(1)		16
	UNDP Core	(1)				(1)
Realized Gain/Loss Total		(98)	753	427	115	1,197
GMS		174,959	210,096	194,985	80,854	660,893
Grant Total		4,449,348	4,447,188	3,871,254	1,594,472	14,362,263

Table 3: Expenditure Status (by donor)

Activity	Donor	Expenditure By Year				Total Expenditure
		2005	2006	2007	2008	
Australia	Programme Support			(25)		(25)
Australia Total				(25)		(25)
Canada	Cap. Building & Institution Support			(349)	26,593	26,244
	ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems		54,000	623,174	4,457	681,631
	Parliament Outreach				19,560	19,560
	Programme Support			255,033	22,931	277,964
	Realized Gain/Loss			38	82	120
Canada Total			54,000	877,897	73,622	1,005,518
Denmark	Cap. Building & Institution Support				72,602	72,602
	Establishment & Run Cost of Parliament		46,278	31,063	(35)	77,306
	ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems		65,574	16,923	123,870	206,366
	Parliament Outreach		564,316	425,106	25,700	1,015,122
	Programme Support					

			104,080	334,343	44,284	482,707
	Realized Gain/Loss		54	(2)	10	63
Denmark Total			780,302	807,433	266,431	1,854,166
EC	Establishment & Run Cost of Parliament	88,422	44,042			132,464
	ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems	1,334,127	1,425,953	(164,128)	(67,002)	2,528,951
	Parliament Outreach	38,796	5,293			44,089
	Programme Support		-		(486)	(486)
	Realized Gain/Loss		674			674
EC Total		1,461,345	1,475,963	(164,128)	(67,488)	2,705,692
France	Cap. Building & Institution Support	775,321	942,639	263,625	9,911	1,991,495
	ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems	46	(3,065)	(0)	204,932	201,913
	Legal Environment for the first Parliament	184,029	332,758	24,187	3,449	544,424
	Parliament Outreach		(840)	-	4,323	3,483
	Programme Support	0	(0)	23	9,342	9,365
	Realized Gain/Loss	(96)	9	93		6
France Total		959,299	1,271,501	287,928	231,957	2,750,685
Germany	Cap. Building & Institution					

	Support		24	670,135	118,163	788,322
	Establishment & Run Cost of Parliament		1,352	93,037	148,390	242,779
	ICT, Equipmnt, Servcs & Systems			146,718	(60,863)	85,854
	Legal Environment for the first Parliament			61,874	5,887	67,761
	Parliament Outreach		31,998	182,031	77,109	291,138
	Programme Support		221,205	498,803	143,646	863,653
	Realized Gain/Loss		(2)	299	23	320
Germany Total			254,577	1,652,895	432,355	2,339,828
GTZ	Cap. Building & Institution Support			4,548		4,548
	Programme Support			(4,548)		(4,548)
	ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems	1,031,978	(15,388)	136,582		1,153,173
	Programme Support		-		834	834
Italy Total		1,031,978	(15,388)	136,582	834	1,154,007
SIDA	Cap. Building & Institution Support		7		20,259	20,266
	Establishment & Run Cost of Parliament	410	89,758	19,648	(492)	109,324
	ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems	31,205	479	8	74,375	106,067
	Legal Environment for the first					

	Parliament				208,235	208,235
	Parliament Outreach		13,826		272,807	286,633
	Programme Support	146,396	312,738	58,519	-	517,653
	Realized Gain/Loss		17	(1)		16
SIDA Total		178,011	416,825	78,174	575,184	1,248,194
UNDP Core	Cap. Building & Institution Support	(0)	(800)			(800)
	Establishment & Run Cost of Parliament	535,772	-	(487)		535,286
	ICT, Equipment, Services & Systems	4,299		-		4,299
	Parliament Outreach		113			113
	Programme Support	103,686			723	104,409
	Realized Gain/Loss	(1)				(1)
UNDP Core Total		643,755	(687)	(487)	723	643,304
GMS		174,959	210,096	194,985	80,854	660,893
Grand Total		4,449,348	4,447,188	3,871,254	1,594,472	14,362,263