



QUARTERLY PROJECT REPORT First Quarter 2009

United Nations Development Programme Afghanistan
Support for an Effective Afghan Legislature (SEAL)

01 January - 31 March 2009



Meshrano Jirga Internal Security Commission meeting on Community Policing March 2009

Project ID: 00059607

Duration: 01 March 2008 – 29 February 2012

UNDP Strategic Plan 2008-2011 Component : Fostering Democratic Governance

Total Budget: USD 15,316,166

Unfunded: USD 14,630,145

Implementing Partners/Responsible parties: UNDP in collaboration with Afghan National Assembly

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I. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

OUTPUT 1: ENHANCED PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY TO EXERCISE LEGISLATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES.

Legislation Tracking:

A study of the legislative process (and tracking) in the National Assembly has been undertaken. The study undertaken in partnership with the legislative divisions of the two Houses has brought to the forefront the areas of concern in the legislative process. It has made the parliament and project management conscious of the need for change. The process needs to improve available time for the Commissions and the Plenary Session to discuss and debate bills. The process needs to be more structured, transparent and accurate, reliable information needs to be available to people inside and outside the parliament. In the longer term, parliament's ability to initiate, time-plan, self process and track legislation (without derailing interference from the Executive) should be addressed. (On-going)

Paper on Quorum:

SEAL project team prepared a background paper on quorum, an issue that continues to handicap the work of the Wolesi Jirga (WJ). Quorum is an essential procedural requirement for the National Assembly to hold its sessions and exercise its legislative responsibilities. The management of the WJ was briefed on the different types of quorum requirements/arrangements in other Parliaments and is better able to address quorum needs.

Research Resources in Place:

The SEAL project research team is in place (see Human Resources below), supported by an on-line research service (Oxford Analytica) and the successful procurement of a reliable journals delivery service (these resources to be shared directly with parliament).

The researchers and resources will enable Members of parliament (Mps) to better carry out their duties in debate, bill analysis, policy discussions and oversight.

The short-comings of the Hansard Service are also under study with a view to moving as soon as possible to a full, reliable service as the next step in previous SEAL investment in Hansard equipment and training. Other Day-to-day advice and assistance is on-going to enhance capability to undertake legislative responsibilities.

OUTPUT 2 – PARLIAMENT EFFECTIVELY AND RESPONSIBLY OVERSEES THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE

Meshrano Jirga (MJ) Budget Committee Public Hearing on the 1388 Budget:

SEAL organized a public hearing for the Budget Committee of MJ with representatives of Chambers of Commerce and Professors from Kabul University. It was the first opportunity for the committee to seek the views of representatives of an important segment of civil society on the national budget. The interaction covered important aspects of the budget. The hearing focused on how the national budget could better address the need for economic development, internal revenue mobilization and effectiveness of donor's assistance. The hearing made recommendations which were included in the Meshrano Jirga advice to the Lower House during parliament's formal consideration of the annual budget. The government should better develop:

- Export promotion strategy
- Employment generating strategy
- Revenue increase opportunities
- Volume of assistance implemented by donors themselves i.e. External budget.
- Privatization of State owned enterprises.
- Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).

The event is recognized as a tool for making budget approval process participatory and channeling valuable public input to the budget process. The commission has incorporated numbers of issues discussed during the workshop in its recommendation forwarded to WJ according to the provision of article 98 of the Constitution. It has strengthened capacity of the parliament for effective decision/ policy making.

World Bank, Japan with WJ Budget Commission, other MPs:

Representatives from Japan and the World Bank presented to parliamentarians the status of financial support to Afghanistan, the role they are playing in the context of ANDS, and their priorities and plans at a SEAL organized workshop in Parliament, March 15. Donor representatives described their completed, ongoing and future programs. Budget Commission members and other MPs had an opportunity to ask questions, get responses, and share their concerns about assistance channeled through the external budget or implemented by donors themselves.

MPs asked donor representative to mobilize resources with closer attention to the needs and priorities of the people. This was vital feedback for donors to revisit their commitments, priorities and modality of assistance. The workshop further strengthened the capacity of parliament in its role of approving the budget according to article 98 of the Constitution. MPs have asked SEAL for follow-up meetings with USAID, other bi-lateral donors and UNDP.

Budget Paper:

Oversight of the Budget is an important function of parliament. In the 2009 (1388) Budget Session of the National Assembly, a briefing paper on the policy fundamentals of the budget was prepared and given to every member of the National Assembly. This intervention has significantly improved MPs understanding of the budget as the central economic and other policy tool of the government. They have begun to better understand that they have a constitutional right to analyze, review and suggest changes from a policy and impacts point of view.

Budget analysis input for WJ:

SEAL team prepared and presented Pie Charts for the WJ Committee on Finance, Budget, and Public Accounts. The easy-to-access information provided a base for analysis of last 3 years budgets:

- Trends of internal revenue increasing.
- Internal revenue against total budget.
- Trend of operation and development expenditure aspects of core budget.
- Trend of external assistance.
- Resources allocated as per the sectors of Afghanistan Development Strategy; Security, Good Governance, Rule of Law and Human rights, Infrastructure and Natural resources, Education, Health, Agriculture & Rural Development, Social Protection, Economic Governance and Private Sector Development, and Others.

Conference on Gender Budgeting:

This seminar was convened by Gender Equality and SEAL projects of UNDP in partnership with parliament. Hosted in the National Assembly, the seminar was presented by Patricia Alexander, Regional Gender Coordinator based in UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo Sri Lanka. The seminar was attended by 80 Members of Parliament of both the lower and the upper Houses. MPs are better aware of the link between investing in women and overall national economic growth. For MPs, research results were presented showing that investment in education contributes to GDP and development, but what is becoming more evident through many studies is that investment in education of girls may be the highest return available in the developing world.

Oversight of the security sector:

An international expert on police reforms was invited to make a presentation before the Committee on Interior Affairs, Meshrano Jirga on Community Policing. *As a result of the presentation, the Chair and the Committee members are better aware of the concept of Community policing recently adopted by the Ministry. Now, they are in a better position to question the Minister on this.*

OUTPUT 3 – STRENGTHENED DIALOGUE BETWEEN PARLIAMENT AND CITIZENS

Communicating with citizens- Radio Studio:

This Quarter SEAL provided a Radio Studio to parliament. The Radio Studio aims to enhance Parliament's outreach to citizens through better reporting opportunities for parliamentary activities and outcomes. The Parliamentary Secretariats of both Houses will have responsibility for day to day running and maintaining the Radio Studio. SEAL will aim to ensure that gender considerations and issues that are pertinent to women MPs will be included in programme content. (Seal 1 funding/delivery)

This Quarter, 7 parliament staff from both houses responsible for running of the Radio studio have been trained on professional use of the Radio Studio. The Radio studio is used as production facility while the actual broadcasting will take place through RTA and other private radio stations.

Communicating with citizens, experts/international community:

During the reporting period, SEAL provided a modern Simultaneous Interpretation System to parliament. The System has capacity for interpretation of three languages at a time including 200 wireless sets. The system will be used for the communication of Parliament with donors and the international community and for conferences. (Seal 1 funding/delivery)

Communicating with citizens/constituents:

MPs now can more easily communicate via new PABX Telephone systems. A PABX System including 300 telephones sets has been provided to parliament. The System will be used in MPs offices in the new ANNEX building of parliament. The system is installed and ready to work. (SEAL 1 funding/delivery).

Publications for the public:

SEAL also continued to support essential parliamentary publications including the official Gazette of each House. These publications inform citizens, government and others about the official business and decisions of parliament.

1. 6 volume * 1000 of Gazette of Wolasi Jirga has been edited and printed
2. 1000 Wolasi Jirga book by the name of Mirror of Shura has been edited and printed
3. 1000 books of History of MPs of Wolasi Jirga has been printed
4. 6 volume * 1000 of Gazette of Meshrano Jirga has been printed

OUTPUT 4 – STRENGTHENED CAPACITY FOR EFFECTIVE DECISION/POLICY MAKING

Health:

A delegation of two members of the National Assembly consisting of Dr. Roshanak Wardak from WJ and Mr. Dustum from MJ participated in the HIV/AIDS conference in Nepal. This was a two day conference Feb 25-26 hosted by the Speaker of the Parliament of Nepal. This gave the Afghan MPs the chance to enhance their knowledge about advancements and consider the applicability of strategies and operational plans developed by neighboring countries to be adapted and used in Afghanistan.

Resources/Water:

Four members of the Afghan National Assembly (one Senator and three Members of the WJ) participated in the annual World Water Forum, this year in Istanbul, Turkey from March 17 to 22. This conference aims at putting water firmly on the international agenda. A stepping stone towards global collaboration on water problems, the Forum offers the water community and policy-and-decision-makers from all over the world the unique opportunity to come together to create links, debate and attempt to find solutions to achieve water security, a critical policy and resource issue for Afghanistan.

Gender:

SEAL organized and hosted meetings with women MPs, and others including, UNIFEM, GEP and NDI to work out a coordinated approach to enhance the capacity of women Members of Parliament. SEAL commissioned an interview/filed work study with women Mps and the production of 2 policy papers, one on a gender strategy and one on leadership and women MPs.

International Women’s Day March 8, 2009

At the request of the Chair of the WJ Gender Commission, SEAL team helped to organize the formal event for parliament to recognize IWD 2009. Participants included WJ Speaker (President) Qanooni, Senators and MPs, diplomats and others. SEAL provided the lunch for this event held at the newly completed hall for Joint Sessions at the parliament Annex.

OUTPUT 5 – EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES ARE IN PLACE

Inter-Parliament Training (Australia):

A staff representative/participant of the Secretariat of the WJ participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Study Program of the Australian Parliament from Feb 15 to 26, 2009. The training program covered a wide range of parliamentary issues and topics:

- a. Supporting the Parliament: funding, legislation and administration system
- b. Clerk’s (secretary general) Office
- c. The Role of Clerk in multiparty chamber
- d. The legislative process in the both Houses
- e. Department of Parliamentary Services overview
- f. Information, analysis and advice for the Parliament: an introduction to the services provided by the Parliamentary Library
- g. Parliamentary Committees of the both Houses
- h. Hansard
- i. Broadcasting
- j. Overview of IT services
- k. Role and activities of the Research Office
- l. Parliamentary diplomacy and the role of the Parliamentary Relations Office
- m. Public outreach initiatives of the Liaison and Projects Office, and
- n. Security Services

The Afghan participant will share the knowledge and results of this study program with others in both Secretariats of the national Assembly.

Staff strategy/structure development:

In partnership with legislative departments of both Houses of the National Assembly the work allocation within the department is under study. As a consequence of the study, awareness has been generated about the need to organize the staff on functional lines to improve the work flow and quality of the output. (On-going)

II PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Updated project risks and actions

Security environment – immediate risks to parliament and project:

As in previous quarters, the security situation in the country and the security situation in Kabul remain the sharpest and most immediate challenges to the implementation of the project. SEAL staff has been removed from full time work duties in the parliament precincts, to the SEAL offices outside parliament. During the Quarter a diplomatic vehicle was suicide bombed outside parliament, and several government Ministries were attacked in Kabul. Provincial Council and other State offices were attacked elsewhere in the country. Project bunker improvements and bunker drills are being undertaken. An armored vehicle has been ordered for the project.

To help address security risks, SEAL continues to advise the National Assembly Security Department and continues to provide and assist with security equipment where necessary and possible.

Updated project issues and actions

The project is facing funding shortfall and would not be able support some of the activities. The project team and the CO have contacted the donors including the SIDA to secure funding for the project.

The Project Manager accepted another UN position, while the Deputy Project Manager post is lying vacant. Recruitment is underway for a replacement.

III. FINANCIAL STATUS AND UTILISATION

FINANCIAL STATUS

Table 1: Contribution Overview (January 012009 to March 31 2009)

DONOR NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS		CONTRIBUTION BALANCE
	Committed	Received	
UNDP	100,000.00	100,000.00	0.00
Denmark	586,021.00	586,021.00	0.00
France			
TOTAL	686,021.00	686,021.00	0.00-

FINANCIAL UTILIZATION

Table 2: Quarterly Expenditure by Activity (01 January 2009 – 31 March 2009)

Activity	BUDGET 2009	QUARTERLY EXPENDITURE (01 Jan 09 - 31 Dec 2009)	BALANCE	DELIVERY (%)
ACTIVITY01 Enhancing Parliamentary Capacity		210,987.25		
ACTIVITY02 Strengthening Parliament Oversight	180,000.00	1,696.81	178,303.19	99.1%
ACTIVITY03 Strengthening Dialogues between People and Parliament		7,542.36	(7,542.36)	0.0%
ACTIVITY04 Strengthening Capacity for effective Decision/Policy Making		63,988.61	(63,988.61)	0.0%
ACTIVITY05 Supporting to Administrative Structure	20,000.00	1,951.18	18,048.82	90.2%
ACTIVITY06 Project Management	445,000.00	149,952.59	295,047.41	66.3%
UNDP GMS (7%)	41,021.51	31,809.56	9,211.95	
Grand Total	686,021.51	467,928.37	218,093.14	31.8%

Table 3: Quarterly Expenditure by Donor (March 2008 – 30 June 2008)

DONORS	ACTIVITY(as per approved budget)	2009 Budget	EXPENDITURES 01/01/09 - 31/03/09	BALANCE	DELIVERY RATE
UNDP	ACTIVITY01 Enhancing Parliamentary Capacity		45,315.59	(45,315.59)	54.7%
	ACTIVITY03 Strengthening Dialogues between People and Parliament		-	-	
	ACTIVITY06 Project Management	100,000.00	-	100,000.00	
UNDP- Subtotal		100,000.00	45,315.59	54,684.41	
Denmark	ACTIVITY01 Enhancing Parliamentary Capacity		165,671.67	(165,671.67)	35.5%
	ACTIVITY02 Strengthening Parliament Oversight	180,000.00	1,696.81	178,303.19	
	ACTIVITY03 Strengthening Dialogues between People and Parliament		7,542.36	(7,542.36)	
	ACTIVITY04 Strengthening Capacity for effective Decision/Policy Making		63,988.61	(63,988.61)	
	ACTIVITY05 Supporting to Administrative Structure	20,000.00	1,951.18	18,048.82	
	ACTIVITY06 Project Management	345,000.00	108,600.60	236,399.40	
UNDP GMS (7%)		41,021.51	28,443.70	12,577.81	
Denmark-Subtotal		586,021.51	377,894.93	208,126.58	
France	ACTIVITY06 Project Management		41,351.99	(41,351.99)	0.0%
UNDP GMS (7%)			3,365.86	(3,365.86)	
France-Subtotal		-	44,717.85	(44,717.85)	
Grand Total		686,021.51	467,928.37	218,093.14	31.8%

Annexes:

Annual Work Plan 2009