

Celebrated Afghan Musician Farhad Darya is UNDP National Goodwill Ambassador

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

2

700 Staff of Lower House Connected to Computerized Payroll System

3

Over 6,000 Community Representatives Link to Sub-National Consultations

5,6

Helping Job Seekers—Photo Essay

7

CISCO Academies Open New Opportunities for Youth in Afghanistan

9,10

International Women's Day 2008

Celebrated musician, artist and human rights activist Farhad Darya has been appointed the UNDP National Goodwill Ambassador for Afghanistan. This was announced by the UNDP

succeeded in giving a new shape to the traditional structure, composition and voice in Afghan music. Yet his work and contributions make him more than only a great musician. He is a human rights

of the best role-models to the present generation of Afghans, Darya has used his songs and his personality to introduce Afghanistan to the world not as a country of conflict and desperation but a country of



Farhad Darya at the Launch Ceremony with Bo Asplund, UNDP Resident Representative and Deputy Special Representative of Secretary General in Afghanistan © UNDP Photo

Resident Representative in Afghanistan, Bo Asplund, in Kabul.

Farhad Darya is one of the most influential Afghan musicians since the mid 80s, and has been a pioneer of creativity, love and change in Afghan contemporary music. He is one of few Afghan artists who have

activist and has been involved in various national and international projects and activities promoting rights of under privileged groups.

Addressing newspapers, the UNDP Resident Representative in Afghanistan said, "UNDP is honoured to have Darya as part of its family. One

hope and inspiration. We very much look forward to working with Darya to promote the messages of peace and development all across the country."

Darya has written and sung a remarkable array of songs in all major

(Continued to Page 2)

(from Page 1)

Afghan and other languages. He has always strived to bridge the hearts. His music reflects the freedom and unity of Afghanistan. He has won numerous prestigious awards for his work in music and Human Rights across the globe.

He received the National Human Rights Award 2006 in Kabul for his activism for the

promotion of rights of the underprivileged.

In November 2007 Darya joined the UNDP's campaign for the Elimination of Violence Against Women to promote greater awareness and engage the public, particularly students and youth and encourage them to take active part in the campaign.

His call to the public to join this campaign appealed to many Afghans. Darya called upon men to join the campaign as change makers and critical partners in the efforts to end violence against women. His presence in the campaign met with significant response from the government, the student community,

academia, international community and the wider public.

Speaking on the occasion, Darya said: "I am privileged to be a part of UNDP's journey on serving the mankind. We will work together to secure rights of the disadvantaged and to expand opportunities for a better future for all Afghans."

700 Staff of Lower House Connected to Computerized Payroll System

Seven hundred staff members and civil servants of the Secretariat of the Wolesi Jirga or the Lower House of Afghan Parliament have been connected to the computerized payroll and banking systems in March 2008.

Ensuring independence, effectiveness and accountability of the Parliament depends on the well developed Corporate Management Systems. This includes human asset management systems, physical assets management systems along with best practices in the Financial Management systems. With these objectives in mind, the Wolesi Jirga has started building its capacity in the areas of finance, administration and

human rights departments.

The UNDP-SEAL project supported a study to identify various measures and programs that could help build the financial administrative capacity of the secretariat. Fol-

lowing this study, over 13 major recommendations were identified that could improve the financial administrative systems. Out of these, the introduction of a computerized payroll system, making payments through bank and the introduction of electronic attendance systems have been identified as the first most important steps towards this journey to an efficient corporate system. In the current phase,

progressively.

In fact when the payroll and banking system is extended to the entire Parliament, the facility would serve over 3000 employees and members. Future initiatives of the UNDP/SEAL project include introducing electronic attendance systems, budget and expenditure management systems and asset management systems, initiatives aimed to further strengthen efforts towards an efficient Parliament.

The procurement system and the banking system are just the beginning steps of the journey in building a strong accountable, transparent and efficient financial and administration system.

Future initiatives of the UNDP/SEAL project include introducing electronic attendance systems, budget and expenditure management systems

Afghanistan National Development Strategy

Over 6,000 Community Representatives Link to Sub-National Consultations

Nationwide, over 6,000 community representatives have participated in the preparatory process as part of the sub-national consultations (SNC) for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS). The number of participants varied from province to province, with Nooristan having the lowest number of total participants and Baghlan having the highest, followed by Bamyán and Wardak with 255 each. In percentage terms, the average participation rate of the preparatory workshops was 38 per cent female and 62% male.

The workshops were conducted in all 34 provinces involving community representatives (rural and urban residents, Kuchi and other vulnerable groups), as well as representatives of the Government, donor community, UN agencies, NGOs and civil society. While the goal of equal participation by men and women was not achieved, the consultations exceeded the target set by the Ministry of

Women's Affairs, which was for a female participation rate of 30 per cent.

The purpose of the SNC-PDP process was threefold: to give Government ministries the opportunity to talk with communities to ensure that their strategies designed to meet the ANDS devel-



opment objectives were also responding to the needs and priorities of ordinary people; to encourage communities to participate in planning for the development of their province; and, to produce a Provincial Development Plan (PDP) which identified the most important development needs and top priority projects for their province so that the Govern-

ment, donors, NGOs and communities could all use the resources available for development in the most effective way.

Throughout the preparatory phases, an unprecedented effort was undertaken to try to get female community participants into

appropriate accommodation and transportation.

In four provinces – Kandahar, Zabul, Nooristan and Helmand – separate venues for men and women were organised at the request of the local communities.

However, the female participants in Zabul and Kandahar requested to sit with the men during the opening and closing ceremonies (and this request was accepted). In

the workshop process and to ensure that there was a female voice in the discussions/deliberations. In logistical terms, efforts to mobilise greater female participation necessitated consideration of the specific needs and circumstances of female participants, including the presence of *Mahrams* and the requirement to provide ap-

all other provinces, women and men sat together and participated equally in the consultations.

Cultural constraints are an ongoing challenge to involving women in any consultation process. Each consultation and planning process presented a unique

(Continued to Page 4)

(from Page 3)

challenge with regard to women's participation. For instance, male participants in many provinces tried to use cultural resistance and adherence to tradition as a way to manipulate their own district's representation in

consultations, saying they did not want women to participate, but then demanded that places reserved for women be filled by men from their districts.

The SNC-PDP workshops were a platform

for discussion of development strategies between community representatives and the Government.

The SNC-PDP workshops also enhanced participatory decision-making processes, which NABDP has

been doing through the DDA and DDP processes country-wide.

The challenge now is to sustain that momentum, especially with regard to the participation of women.

UNDP-Supported Poverty Assessment Calls For Redoubling Efforts for Better Access To Basic Services

The Final Report of the Afghanistan Pilot Participatory Poverty Assessment (APPPA) to be released on 21st April is expected to outline the assets of and access to services for the poor. The report will present a comprehensive overview of the drivers, maintainers and interrupters of poverty from various field sites in Afghanistan.

Access to clean drinking water, access to quality education, access to quality healthcare, improved long-term employment opportunities and increased presence of suitable roads are some of the priority interventions that form a part of the poverty assessment under the APPPA report.

The report will draw attention to the need for the Government to focus strongly on disaster mitigation, with particular reference to flood control measures. Broad (social) protection programming, to counter the effects of shocks, trends and seasonality, is also called for.

It is reliably learnt that the report emphasizes the need for quality local health services as a major priority for the poor. Serious attention is required to promote maternal health services, regulate pharmaceuticals and facilitate the professionalisation of healthcare workers. Public health services must be increasingly user-friendly and the minimization of hidden expenditures in so-called free health services must be actioned.

Another primary need expressed by the poor is access to quality local schooling. Access to schools for young girls must be encouraged. Sex disaggregated schooling is necessary. The illegal sale of distributed school goods by school teachers must be countered and the quality of school teachers must be increased, the report is understood to have recommended.

Increased access to education and health services for women is dependent upon addressing issues relating to the limitation of women's mobility and countering associated negative traditional perceptions of female behaviour.

Calling for steps to augment installation and maintenance of clean water sources for all dimensions of community, the findings reveal that access to clean drinking water to be on top of the agenda of the poor. Other development priorities identified in all APPPA field-sites as the essential priorities required to meet the urgent needs of the participants of the APPPA include improvements in a range of areas including security and rule of law, infrastructure including road infrastructure, improvements in employment opportunities, irrigation and water storage facilities and natural disaster mitigation infrastructure and response mechanisms.

Helping Job Seekers—Photo Essay



The unemployment rate in Afghanistan is estimated around 35 percent. UNDP collaborates with ILO to bridge the Afghan job-seekers with various employers

The Employment Service Center (ESC) helps the ordinary jobseekers to get connected with possible employers



Registration of male jobseekers is at a higher level compared to females

(Continued to Page 6)

(from Page 5)

Helping Job Seekers—Photo Essay

Good command in English is now required by most organizations. The ESC also provide free English training courses for the jobseekers



Most female jobseekers want to be involved in service works, especially education and health

Now it is no more uncommon to see women working alongside with the males in workplaces



By: Agustinus Wibowo

CISCO Academies Open New Opportunities for Youth in Afghanistan

Close to 2000 youth across Afghanistan have benefited from the Cisco Networking Academy Program (CNAP). The programme, launched in 2002 at Kabul University's Faculty of Computer Science is sup-

ported by UNDP Afghanistan and Cisco Systems. In 2004 USAID joined this initiative to expand the programme to other part of the country. CNAP has grown to include one Regional Academy based at Kabul University and seven Local Academies hosted at the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Communication and Information

Technology's (MoC&IT) Telecommunications Training Center, Kabul Education University, and Khost, Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat and Nangarhar provinces.

From a pilot group of 17 students, there are now more than 900 students enrolled at the various academies

highest number of female CISCO Academy graduates in the region and measures are being sought to improve females' participation to the target of 50 per cent female enrolment.

Assisting the female population in gaining equally shared as an important and uncompromising goal by the Government of Afghanistan.

The initial CNAP curriculum contained CCNA 1 -4 and IT Essentials 1 & 2. The curriculum has however



Women at one of the CISCO Academies getting trained in networking applications © UNDP Photo

changed and now has CCNA Explorer and CCNA Discovery. The ITE Essentials, both 1&2 have also been improved upon so as to meet the ever-changing IT demands. Wireless Network and Network Security curriculums are part of the new curriculum at Kabul Regional Academy while CCNP will be on the menu starting with June 2008.

in the country with more than 900 having already graduated in the fields of IT and networking. Of these 35 per cent are females. This is the

equal rights and opportunities during the reconstruction of Afghanistan has been a major objective of UNDP and the international community. This aim is clearly reflected in the ICT policy document and is

More than 900 students enrolled at the various academies in the country with more than 900 having already graduated in the field of IT

Afghan Women in Information Technology Initiative

Helping Women Gain IT Edge

The goal of the Afghan Women in Information Technology Initiative (AWIT) is to promote Afghan women's participation in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) skills training and IT career paths and to empower Afghan women through the use of ICTs. Back in May 2006 the project established a well equipped IT center with 30 computers networked and connected to the Internet at the Kabul university women's dorm. The AWIT Initiative supports IT skills training as an empowerment tool for women by encouraging women to learn basic and advanced ICT skills as a way to enhance their employment opportunities. By engaging the support of industry partners, academic leaders, community and government officials, alumni and current students, the initiative also seeks to enable educational institutions in Afghanistan to make available the benefits of new technologies to women. In order to promote the participation of women in the field of IT the CISCO Networking Academy project has taken some initiative by awarding Women scholarship and tuition discount.

One of the beneficiaries of this gender initiative is Ms Ghezal Thoki. Ghezal, who hails from Kabul City is the first born of 4 siblings. Born in 1988, she went through Primary and High School and is now a 3rd year student at Kabul University offering English as her Major in the Faculty of Literature. Ghezal heard of CISCO through a friend who happened to have been a student at the only-females CISCO Academy at the Ministry of Women Affairs. "This was a dream about to come true, since computers had mesmerized me right from my childhood. I was very excited and to make matters interesting, my friend also told me that the classes were free and in the afternoons. That was enough to make me join the academy. My parents were also supportive," says Ghezal.



She belongs to the first batch of graduates from the MoWA Cisco Academy. She was invited to join the CCNA and IT Essentials Instructors' Training Course at Kabul Regional Academy. Ghezal is now one of the trainers at MoWA Academy and is helping other women, some of whom are old enough to be her mother, to learn IT and Networking skills.

Because of her job as a trainer, Ghezal is able to meet most of her personal, economic, social and basic needs as well as render support to her family. CNAP has enabled her to gain experience in IT skills and her confidence as a knowledge facilitator, greatly improved. Ghezal hinges her success and personal achievement to God, but also to her understanding of the English language which is the medium of exchange. She cites lack of English language skills, both spoken and written, as the most serious challenge to the students understanding and utilizing learnt IT/Network skills. Says Ghezal, "I want to thank the UNDP, USAID and other donors for supporting us, especially women, and enabling us to acquire the necessary IT/Networking skills through the CISCO program. I appeal to the donors to continue supporting the program and to all females to use this chance to better themselves."

International Women's Day 2008

First Ever Solidarity Concert for Afghan Women by UNDP Goodwill Ambassador Farhad Darya

Noted musician and UNDP National Goodwill Ambassador

led a solidarity concert for women to promote women's cause on 8 March to mark the International Women's Day. The concert was the result of a collaboration between the Ministry of Information

The concert, held at the Loya Jirga tent in walks of life, from ordinary house wives to



diplomats to police constables, from journalists to grassroots activists.

The event was opened by the Minister of Information and Culture and a message of congratulations and appreciations was conveyed by the Minister for Women's Affairs. During the concert-



(Top) Farhad Darya performs at the concert (center) A cross section of the audience and (below) Minister of Women's Affairs, Husn Banoo Ghazanfar, addressing the audience © UNDP Photo

and Culture (MoIC) and the Gender Equality project of UNDP, with financial support of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Netherlands Embassy in Kabul. Throughout the concert Darya conveyed messages of peace and empowerment.

Kabul, was attended by over 2200 women and around 500 men from diverse walks of life. It brought together Afghan women from all



parliamentarians, from ministers to office cleaners, from

Darya delivered messages of women's rights, peace and equality.

The concert sent a powerful message that Afghanistan is not a country of destruction and desperation but a country of hope, development, peace and inspiration.

Joint UN Observance at *Bagh-e-Zanana*

The Gender Equality, Youth and Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) projects of UNDP participated in the UN agencies' co-celebration of the International Women's Day held on 7th March at *Bagh-e-Zanana* (women's park in Kabul). This event was attended by a large number of women and girls. Two Deputy Ministers for MoWA and Youth were among the government dignitaries present who ordinary women had an opportunity to listen to and see from very



Visitors at the UNDP Stall at the Exhibit © UNDP Photo

close. The Gender Equality project presented UNDP's work for women and gender equality on the occasion. Advocacy materials on women gender and development were distributed among the participants.

More on the International Women's Day 2008

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, the Ministry of Womens Affairs (MoWA) produced the

Ershad-ul-Naswan. MoWA also produced other awareness-raising and advocacy materials such as bill-

Kabul and in the provinces. The Gender Equality Project supported MoWA in the production of materi-

was convened on Saturday 8th March 2008, at Amani High School. Opened by HE President Hamid Karzai, the

event was attended by dignitaries from the government ministries and other state institutions, parliamentarians and members of the diplomatic corps, UN agencies and civil society organisations.

Opened by HE President Hamid Karzai, the event was attended by dignitaries from the government ministries and other state institutions



special International Women's Day edition of *Mirman* and

boards, banners, flyers, posters and leaflets. These materials were disseminated both in

als and convening different events in the commemoration of International Women's Day. The main event

Christopher Alexander, DSRSG, UNAMA, represented the UN family at this important event.



Afghanistan

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.

Overview of UNDP in Afghanistan

UNDP has been present in Afghanistan since 1956, providing development assistance to the country and helping build the capacity of national institutions. During the Taliban regime, UNDP continued to provide assistance to communities throughout the country from its relocated offices in Islamabad. During that decade, UNDP delivered US\$200 million of assistance to Afghanistan. In early 2002, UNDP inaugurated its new office in Kabul.

The human development challenge for Afghanistan is enormous. According to Afghanistan's National Human Development Report (NHDR) 2004, the Human Development Index ranks Afghanistan at 173 out of 178 countries worldwide and its MDG indicators place it below the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries. The depth of poverty in Afghanistan is reflected consistently in all human development indicators, revealing a mosaic of a nation in need of sustained assistance. Not surprisingly, therefore, Afghanistan has been identified as a global priority for addressing the Millennium Development Goals.

UNDP operates within the framework of the integrated United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In December 2005, UNDP signed a three-year Country Programme Action Plan with the Government of Afghanistan focusing on three development areas: state-building, democracy and civil society empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. UNDP new Country Programme focuses on capacity development, national ownership and policy dialogue. UNDP aims to enhance government institutional capacity to deliver public services in an equitable and sustainable manner and to create an enabling environment for legitimate livelihoods.

The expected results are pursued in line with the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) objectives and benchmarks. In particular, UNDP supports the Government in achieving a number of development benchmarks in the field of security and the rule of law, administrative reform, transparency and accountability, local governance, political processes (elections and parliament), civil society empowerment, gender equality, human rights, environment and rural energy, the reintegration of former combatants into society, the implementation of the national counter-narcotics strategy, as well as rural development planning and private sector development.

All UNDP activities are undertaken in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, sister UN agencies and other development stakeholders.

UNDP has built strategic partnerships with a number of government institutions such as the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Interior, the Civil Service Commission, the Independent Election Commission, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. UNDP's top ten donor partners in Afghanistan are the US, the EC, Japan, CIDA, UK, Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Norway and the World Bank.

UNDP is thankful for the support and confidence lent by its national and international development partners.

United Nations Development Programme, Shah Mahmood Ghazi Watt, Kabul, Afghanistan
Tel: +93 (0) 20 212 4000 or +93 (0) 20 212 4076

For more information on any of these stories, or to make contributions, please contact:

*Kumar Tiku, Head of Communications, at kumar.tiku@undp.org, or Fezeh Hosseini,
Public Information Officer, at fezeh.hosseini@undp.org*

www.undp.org.af