UNDP Staff Retreat Thursday 9 June

Dear Friends,

It is my pleasure to invite you to the 2005 UNDP Country Office retreat to be held, as promised, on Thursday 9 June. As discussed at our last staff meeting, the objective of the retreat is to give us all the opportunity to spend a day outside the office thinking, talking, laughing and getting to know each other in a more relaxed atmosphere than the Office compound can provide.

During the day, we will be tackling two very important issues: the Global Staff Survey, and our new Country Programme 2006-2008. The discussions about the Global Staff Survey will be less about the statistical findings of the survey and more about the actual questions themselves and their underlying implications for UNDP in general and our office in particular. The presentation of the Country Programme will provide an opportunity for all staff to become familiar with our plans for work with the Afghan people over the next three years. Our discussions are intended to provide opportunity for all colleagues to ask questions and raise any concerns they may have about our daily work and how we relate in our work environment, and to discuss solutions to any problems that may exist.

In addition to the serious business at hand, we have also planned the day to give everyone a chance to show off any hidden (for some, not so hidden) talents during the first ever UNDP Staff Talent Show, over lunch! Of course, prizes will be awarded – so be sure to sign up and show off! Please contact Mrs. Miroslava Amiri to enter the show.

For those of you who may not wish to pick up the microphone and belt out the latest Bollywood hit song, you will still have an opportunity to win a much coveted prize in the “best national costume” contest. Whether it is Afghanistan, Canada, India, Norway, Panama or Zimbabwe – wherever you call home, the one requirement for the day is that everyone wears something of their national dress. Clearly some of you will not have your national costumes with you, but rest assured creativity will be rewarded!

The draft programme for the day is attached. I expect all UNDP Country Office staff to attend, and look very forward to spending the day with you!

Best regards,

Frederick Lyons, Country Director

NEWS

Hammam project opens with ribbon-cutting ceremony in Mazar-e-Sharif

24 May 2005; Mazar-e-Sharif: A high-level delegation from the UNDP, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, and the European Commission opened a public bathhouse in a ribbon-cutting ceremony held at Darwaza-e-Shadian Hammam in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Under this project, 19 hammams have been rehabilitated and reconstructed in the cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar and Jalalabad, providing thousands of people with access to clean, hot, running water. The EC has provided two million euros to fund this project, implemented by the UNDP/PIU in collaboration with the MUDH.

Addressing the opening ceremony, the UNDP Country Director, Frederick Lyons, praised the professional degree of dedication and coordination shown by the PIU staff in implementing the Hammam Project.

Towards the Rights of the Disabled

1-2 June 2005; Kabul: The motivation behind the two-day “The Basic Disability Rights” workshop was twofold: to raise rights-awareness among the disabled population of Afghanistan and, more importantly, to help people with disabilities acquire the long-term knowledge and communication skills needed to engage in constructive dialogue and activity in the pursuit of desired social change.

The Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled (MMD), H.E Najibullah Fahim, officially
opened the meeting, which was attended by over 25 participants from Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar, Herat, Helmand, Khost, Jalalabad, Logar, and Bakhlan. The workshop targeted the leaders of mainstream organizations representing the disabled across the country. It was organized around the following participant objectives:

i) to define the rights of the disabled;

ii) to identify and discuss the barriers and challenges that the disabled face in accessing their rights;

iii) to explore techniques and strategies that the disabled and disabled groups can use to monitor, enforce and protect their rights;

iv) to develop an effective action plan in promoting the rights of the disabled.

The workshop attracted a diverse array of organizational partners within the broad human rights initiative in Afghanistan, including UNAMA, AIHRC, JEMB, UNMACA and UNICEF. Representatives from these organizations gave presentations in a variety of fields relating to human rights and rights concerns particular to the disabled.

Topics of discussion included a basic introduction to human rights jointly presented by UNAMA and AIHRC, a presentation on self advocacy and communication prepared by UNICEF and UNMACA, and a discussion on the political rights of disabled people led by JEMB. The meeting was closed by a senior official from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

Country Programme Joint Strategy Meeting


Presentations were delivered by Senior Deputy Country Director Karen Jorgensen and Assistant Country Director Zahira Virani. Over the course of two separate meetings, for government and donor partners respectively, many critical and constructive observations about the proposed CPD were offered. Currently under revision, the document will incorporate the feedback provided at the meeting, and is expected to be finalized within weeks.

NHDR launches in the regions

After a successful February launch in Kabul, Afghanistan’s first National Human Development Report – Security with a Human Face makes its way to the regions of the country.

Initiated in 2003 by the Government of Afghanistan and UNDP, the National Human Development Report will be launched in Herat on 7 June 2005, marking the first of seven regional launches. A separate launch is planned for Mazar-e-Sharif the following week, but details have yet to be confirmed.

Zahira Virani, the UNDP Assistant Country Director; the authors of the report, Dr. Daud Sabah and Dr. Omar Zakhelwal; and high-level representatives of the Government of Afghanistan are expected to attend the launch in Herat.

The report details significant improvements in the economy and the expansion of education initiatives. However, it also addresses the severe challenges to achieving development goals in Afghanistan, detailing sources of insecurity, poverty, social inequality and instability. These challenges are reflected in UNDP’s 2004 Human Development Index, which ranks Afghanistan 173 out of 178 nations worldwide. Life expectancy, at 44.5 years, is at least 20 years lower than in neighbouring countries.

The report urges that human security needs take first and immediate priority in guiding the Afghan Government’s activities. The report expands on the conventional definition of security as freedom from mere physical threat. One chapter is dedicated to stating that “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want” are interdependent processes that require a more holistic approach to the security issue.

Afghanistan’s National Human Development Report was made possible thanks to the financial support from CIDA and the World Bank.
The Afghan Government called for the establishment of a Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF) and officially requested UNDP to administer the fund. The terms of reference for this trust fund were endorsed by UNDP headquarters and the trust fund was established accordingly. It is now open to donor contributions through the oversight of UNDP, which possesses extensive experience in Trust Fund administration in Afghanistan and globally.

The Ministries of Counter Narcotics and Finance are the two executing entities for the overall CNTF programme. The former is responsible for policy execution and the latter for the financial execution of the trust fund.

As CNTF will be executed through the National Execution (NEX) modality, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan retains overall management of the programme through its designated institutions, the Ministries of Counter Narcotics and Finance. Therefore, the government is responsible for the overall delivery of the programme and for the full involvement of its relevant departments in the programme activities.


The criteria for projects to be eligible for funding through the CNTF include geographical location, consideration of the absorption capacity of the line ministries and agencies, and the mainstream prioritization of counter narcotics in the given project. Projects that meet the criteria under the pillars can apply for funding through the CNTF.

MONTHLY PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: JUSTICE SECTOR REFORM

UNDP Justice Programme launches newsletter

On 15 May, UNDP Justice Programme launched The Justice Monitor. The newsletter aims to inform the public about challenges and accomplishments in the justice sector. The monthly publication will be produced in Pashto, Dari, and English.

It will be filled with news pertinent not only to UNDP’s own activities in the field of justice, but also important issues and developments related to the three Permanent Justice Institutions – the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General’s Office, and the Supreme Court – as well as the country’s Law Faculties.

The newsletter is available in soft copy on the UNDP and UNAMA websites, and hard copies will circulate as well, particularly through Afghanistan’s justice institutions.

Revision of the Law Curriculum

Under the guidance of UNDP Justice Programme’s Law Curriculum Development Specialist, Professor Wali Naseh, the Law Curriculum Development Board (LCDB) of Kabul University produced a second draft of the new proposed Law Curriculum this month. The draft has now been submitted to the Dean of the Faculty and the Chancellor of Kabul University for approval.

Also, this past month, consultations with other Afghan universities began. The LCDB conducted its first Provincial consultation of the draft curriculum with the Law Faculty of the University of Mazar-e-Sharif.

The aim of such consultations is to share the draft curriculum and discuss similar reform initiatives at provincial universities. During the consultations, the Mazar Law Faculty indicated a strong desire to initiate its own reform process and endorsed the draft curricula of the Kabul Law Faculty.

Another consultation with Nangahar University is planned shortly. The law curriculum reform process has been possible through extensive teamwork and consultations, exchanges with other universities, and study of the Curricula of Law Faculties in Islamic and non-Islamic countries.

Reform process in the Ministry of Justice

All but one of the departments within the Ministry of Justice has successfully been granted “Stage 2 approval” in the priority reform and restructuring process (PPR) by the Afghan Civil Service Commission. The Prisons Department is still awaiting approval.
With the granting of Stage 2 approval, which recognizes *inter alia* procedures for instituting a merit-based and transparent recruitment process, the ministry has now been given clearance to proceed with recruitment of some 1,500 new staff positions. Recruitment for these jobs will commence in the near future.

UNDP advisors, Fakria Assad and Larry Taman, have supported the Ministry of Justice PRR Task Force to obtain the respective approvals. The support provided by the UNDP Justice Programme was particularly requested by the Ministry of Justice, and the programme has agreed to provide further technical and logistical assistance with the recruitment process.

**Comprehensive justice needs analysis**

The UNDP-supported Justice Consultative Group is part of a larger Consultative Working Group Team that is producing the initial draft of a Comprehensive Gap Analysis in the justice sector. The analysis will articulate the comprehensive requirements for a minimally functional justice system over the next 12 years. It is expected to be a useful planning and resource mobilization tool for the government.

**Female Supreme Court Judges complete first semester of English training course**

English language training has been offered to some 30 female judges from the Supreme Court. Much of the legal literature is published in English, which necessitates legal professionals to sharpen their English language skills in order to sharpen their judicial capacity. Proficiency in the English language will also provide women judges with added opportunities to pursue further training or out-of-country study where available.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**UNDP launches mission on women’s advancement and equal opportunities in the Afghan Civil Service**

The Government of Afghanistan has recognized the importance of establishing a civil service that fully reflects the Afghan public, providing every group with equal-opportunity access to employment. On request of the Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), UNDP is deploying a three-month mission that will initiate activities related to gender and equal opportunities in the Afghan civil service. The main objectives of the mission are:

i) to analyze gender disparities and obstacles to equal opportunities in the Afghan civil service and identify effective options to address gender-related inequalities;

ii) to develop a long-term strategy to increase the gender balance in the Afghan civil service and promote equal opportunities to all Afghans regardless of language, religion, ethnicity or disability;

iii) to support the commission in implementing related activities in the future.

Headed by Ms. Nouchine Yavari d’Hellencourt and Ms. Judy Benjamin, the mission will be conducted over the next three months. For more information about the project, please contact: Stephan Massing, stephan.massing@undp.org

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**SEAL Project – Parliamentary Staff Training Inaugural**

**Kabul June 11**

The Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Parliament (SEAL) project will be putting another foot forward this next week in the long march to developing the capacity of the Afghan Parliament.

Recruitment of between 100-120 intermediary level parliamentary staff is currently underway, managed by the IARCSC. These new recruits will be thrust into an intensive six-week core training programme that will orientate them to the administrative work of parliament and develop their abilities. First day of classes will be held on Saturday 11 June.

The training programme was developed by parliamentary expert trainers, supported by SEAL. It has been designed to develop very practical and pragmatic administrative and management skills, and introduces the participants to the basic rules common to all legislative assemblies.

It also addresses the specific protocols and procedures required of the administrative task force, which consists of parliamentary support staff who will welcome new Members of Parliament in the fall, preside over the opening of the National Assembly, the first Committee’s sessions and the regular functioning of the legislative body.
Subnational training needs assessment for the civil service:

Herat June 12-14
Jalalabad June 26-28
Kandahar July 9-11

In response to the growing need to improve the competencies of civil servants in the provinces, municipalities and districts, the Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) has collaborated with UNDP to conduct a series of regional Training Needs Assessment (TNA) workshops.

After the successful completion of two workshops in Kabul and Balkh region, the TNA workshops will continue into July. Upcoming TNA workshops for sub-national civil servants are planned for Herat (12-14 June), Jalalabad (26-28 June) and Kandahar (9-11 July).

Each workshop is attended by a total of 120 senior provincial and district administrators, heads of line ministries, provincial directors and selected mid-level staff. The workshops focus on gathering data on administrative functions and procedures, identifying competency and capacity levels of civil servants, and assessing their training needs based upon their skill levels.

For more information about the TNA workshop series, please contact: Anna Lappay, anna.lappay@undp.org, or Stephan Massing, stephan.massing@undp.org.

NEW STAFF

Nouchine Yavari d’Hellencourt (Iran) has joined UNDP Women’s Advancement project. She has extensive knowledge of gender issues in post-conflict contexts and has worked with UNICEF, UNODC and UNIFEM in Afghanistan.

nouchine.hellencourt@undp.org

Judy A. Benjamin (USA) joins UNDP Women’s Advancement project as a Senior Technical Advisor. She joins from The Louis Berger Group where she has been working as a Senior Anthropologist. Previously, she worked with USAID and OCHA in Afghanistan.

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Abdel-Ellah Sediqi (Afghanistan) joins UNDP as a consultant within the Management Team of the Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature (SEAL) project. Previously, he lived and studied law and public administration in France for seven years, and has also served as Advisor to Minister of Finance.

abdel-ellah.sediqi@undp.org

Anosha Ahmadi (Afghanistan) joins the UNDP as a Reporting Associate. Anosha lived and studied in France, and worked previously for the German Embassy in Kabul, FAO and UNDP’s Bridging Public Information Gap project.

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Eugena Song (USA) joins the UNDP as a Reporting Associate. Eugena worked with a fair trade business in California for the past six months, prior to which she studied Afghanistan in the course of completing her joint Master’s and Bachelor’s Degrees in comparative history and politics.

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To make a submission to the next newsletter, please e-mail gary.holub@undp.org