



UNDP Afghanistan Newsletter

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500 ".af" domain names registered and 100% further rise expected

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is rapidly growing in Afghanistan, bridging diversity of facilities into every day's life. Through UNDP-ICT Project, launched in July 2002, the Ministry of Telecommunication of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (MoC) has implemented various projects designed to support capacity-building, digitalize telecommunications, and facilitate modern information technology in the country.



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Only five years ago, Afghanistan was isolated from the global web. Today, however, there are 500 private and formal web pages with ".af" domains. The ".af" office has, meanwhile, successfully integrated an online domain name registration system through CoCCA (Council of Country Code Administrators). It is expected that online domain name registration system will cause a 100% rise in domain name registration, and will also generate enough revenue for the sustainability of ".af" domain name.

Besides, around 3,000 civil



Afghan women at a computer training class in Mazar-i-Sharif ICT centre.

servants and students completed basic ICT trainings in Kabul and six main cities, through UNDP-ICT Project. Currently there are 10 ICT training centers, managed by MoC, in Kabul and other provinces, with over 600 students. The basic ICT training includes MS Word, Excel, Power Point, Windows XP, and Introduction to Internet.

Moreover, UNDP-ICT Project has provided generous assistance and support to a number of other developmental & capacity-building projects in close collaboration with MoC. In July 2003, nine Telekiosks were established in Kabul to provide Internet access and basic computer training to the public. Only in 2004, some 60,000 individuals visited Telekiosks and over 2,000 school students received basic computer trainings. 20 MoC employees were cross trained to handle daily operations of the Telekiosks.

The Cisco Networking Academy

Program (CNAP) is another comprehensive e-learning program which provides students with the Internet technology skills essential in a global economy. The Networking Academy delivers web-based content, online assessment, student performance tracking, hands-on labs, instructor training and support, and preparation for industry standard certifications. Since 2002, CNAP has graduated a total of 414 Cisco certified Networking Associates.



Some of Provincial ICT class

Some of the graduates have found employment opportunities in organizations like; Afghan Women's Network (AWN), French Embassy in Kabul, Ministry of Commerce, UNOPS, Internews Agency, Kabul

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University ITC-K Center, Global Systems International (GSI), Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), USAID, UNIFEM, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), AWCC, UNDP, and many others.

For 2006, UNDP-ICT Project has received a total of US\$ 1,373,147.00 funding from UNDP Core, FTF, Microsoft, EC, Cisco and USAID. The Project has a number of future priorities such as; Forming an ICT Council, Supporting E-Governance, Working on gender initiative and sustainability of the Cisco Project, Fundraising for E-Governance Project, Recruiting Experts for the E-Governance, Purchasing IT Equipments for E-Governance, and Expanding Cisco Academies and enriching the CNAP curriculum.



Some Graduates of CISCO Networking Academy.

UNDP-SEAL workshop raised corruption awareness among Afghan legislators

Pursuing its program of support to the legislative committees of the National Assembly, the UNDP-SEAL Project conducted the second in a series of workshops on anti-corruption on September 5, 2006.

SEAL was delighted to welcome to the seminar members of the Commission on Anti-Corruption of the Wolesi Jirga.

Speaking for the Transparency Section of the UNDP, Ms. Karen Houseman gave a presentation on the state of corruption in

Characterizing the state of affairs in this country, the Honorable Sayed Husain Alimi Balkhi, Chairman of the Commission, said that while corruption appeared to be a problem in all nations, Afghanistan had not been spared."

Afghanistan to members of the Commission, and outlined several measures designed to combat corruption. Houseman urged the members to make full use of the oversight function of their committee, exercising this in their approval of the budget, screening of public accounts, confirmation of key public officials, and a constant monitoring of policy performance.

Matteo Pascuale of the UNODC (United Nations Office for Drug Control) then presented the features of the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) to the members of the Commission, and recommended that

Afghanistan ratify the convention without delay.

Chairman Sayed Balkhi said that the Commission will do all it can to have laws enacted that will combat corruption, including the ratification of the UNCAC. He stressed that with the extent of the problem of corruption in Afghanistan, ratification of the UNCAC alone would not solve it. "Vigorous follow through action would be required," he said.

The UNCAC is now before the National Assembly for ratification pursuant to Article 90 of the Constitution.

SEAL ('Support for the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature') is the program of the UNDP that supported directly the successful establishment of the Afghan National Assembly in December, 2005.

SEAL's program "Energizing the Commissions" is designed to help arm all committees of the National Assembly with the parliamentary tools to exercise effective scrutiny of the Government, identify problem areas and priority concerns that require to be addressed, and adopt vigorous work plans for those purposes. It continues to perform capacity building activities for the National Assembly, its members and staff.

The header features the United Nations logo on the left, followed by the letters 'UN' in a large, bold, black font, and the word 'Volunteers' in a large, bold, white font on a dark blue background.

UNV Highlighted: Evan Lou Lopita Binyason had a unique experience of encouraging people in Kandahar and Daikundi province to volunteerism and self-help

Before I traveled to Afghanistan in March 2006, many people warned me of the insecurity in Afghanistan. But having grown up in a 40 years long civil war, I thought that I possess the cushion to absorb and persevere all ills of insecurity in Afghanistan. During the war in Sudan hearing of gunshots was just like hearing ululation on marriage occasions. When a day passed without hearing gunshots, everybody got more worried instead of rejoicing. All people daily share the bush sleeping with snakes, wild and animals for fear of being picked from their houses and killed at night. Many got killed by snakes and wild animals but few also survived through God's grace. Some of my people wondered why I chose to come to Afghanistan at a time I should be enjoying working as a national Programme Officer in a peaceful Sudan. I thought the insecurity in Afghanistan was similar to Sudan and that I would be able to contribute to disseminating the spirit of voluntarism. Will it turn to be a relief or a curse, sometimes I asked myself, to be in an insecure place like Afghanistan?

When I arrived to Kabul Airport on 31st March 2006, I was rushed immediately to UNDP security briefing. Weeks later over 200 people were reportedly killed in Kandahar, while I did not hear a single gunshot: something that was once a daily problem in our life in Sudan. Soon after that, UN Staff were threatened with suicide attacks. This made movements, inside Kandahar city, almost impossible for all UN staff. All I could contribute was to strengthen the capacity of our national staff to enable them conduct their field works successfully. I managed to train our staff how to improve reporting and administer good assessments for the Area Office. Nevertheless, as a field oriented person, I was not satisfied, though the office enjoyed good reputation due to the excellent reflection of its achievements through good reporting.

I was later reassigned to the Central Highlands Daikundi Sub Office where security is relatively calm. The first challenge was to open the new Sub Office in Nili. I managed to negotiate contracts for renting



Afghanistan

premises, supervised successful setting up of the office and established an effective system to run the office properly. The hardest job was, however, to install a spirit of voluntarism and self help to steer development, and to gain community and partners' trust for good working relation. The community was totally affected by free aid support syndrome. Some community members kept on asking payment for their every single work. A spirit of voluntarism was totally nil in that community. First I started by encouraging our national staff on the spirit of self help, which can ensure sustainable development. I was giving them examples of other countries where voluntarism was playing a crucial role in national development. As a result, we were able to impart the spirit of voluntarism and self help among community members and other implementing partners. Today, I am happy to say that that community is now contributing free labor to the construction of three local schools.

A small achievement in a hard way is very precious and satisfying than huge soft achievements. My stay in Afghanistan was a blessing to me and to the community in Daikundi at large, with whom I worked hard and tried my best to create a good spirit of voluntarism. But in order to sustain allot more still remains to be done, the little achievement. This is possible only if all development actors apply the same spirit of voluntarism. The only problem of insecurity in Afghanistan is the invisible killer, the suicide bombers, that causes widespread anxiety among the public, day and night. Yet I did not find life a curse, in insecure Afghanistan, because it



provided me with the opportunity to prove my love, commitment in saving the lives of many helpless individuals. My live and the lives of my fellow Afghan are the same. I will not feel the pain of death, if I die while saving the lives of helpless fellows. While I end my assignment in Afghanistan, I am going to save lives in East Timor. May God help Afghanistan and bring total peace as He did for Sudan.

About the author of this story:

I am a Sudanese by birth and nationality. Born in 1964, Kajokeji County of South Sudan. I am educated in Uganda, Sudan, Ghana and Germany. I have a B.Sc and two MSc degrees in Development, Finance and Accounting. I worked for 12 years as Auditor, and for 11 years I worked for UN WFP.

A micro hydropower plant will be built in Farkhar - once all commanders comply with DIAG



Taloqan, Takhar province, 10 September 2006: Work on a Micro Hydropower project in the district of Farkhar (Takhar province) will start as soon as leaders of the remaining illegal armed groups in the district surrender their weapons and declare their groups disbanded.

The Micro Hydropower project, which has already been designed, needs a contractor who will only be selected if all weapons are handed over and disbandment is completed.

The Micro Hydropower plant, which will be built on the river Warsage, has been designed following the surrender of weapons and commitment to disband by most of the leaders of illegal armed groups based in Farkhar. By voluntarily handing over their weapons and disbanding their groups, these commanders have contributed to enhanced stability in the district, which resulted in a more secure environment thus allowing projects such as the Micro Hydropower plant to be devised for the benefit of the communities. These

commanders should be praised for listening to the voice of the people, who after years of painful war want peace, stability, rule or law and prosperity.

Remaining commanders cannot keep the district and communities hostage by not complying with DIAG. They must surrender their weapons and disband their groups so the Micro Hydropower project can be launched. Once built, the power plant will provide electricity to the main district administrative building, the district police headquarters, a hospital, two high schools, 170 shops and seven villages. The project will support economic growth and development as well as better governance, which in turn will have a positive effect on the life of every single citizen in the district.

The project, which was selected after consultation with communities, has been chosen as one of four priority projects screened by a joint team from the Joint Secretariat of the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, which will be building the Micro Hydropower plant.

The citizens of Farkhar are hopeful that in the interest of security and of attracting development to their district, the DIAG process will be completed very soon.

Here are some contact persons for the DIAG press release, you may like to include in our web story.

Visit:
www.undpanbp.org

Government of Japan contributes US\$29 million to two UNDP projects in Afghanistan

In its latest contribution to UNDP Afghanistan, the government of Japan contributed US\$29 million to support economic regeneration, poverty reduction, improve livelihoods and bolster Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) in the provinces of Bamyan, Balkh, Nangarhar and Kandahar. The contribution will be used to maintain two key UNDP programmes: the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) and the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG).

Twenty-three million USD will be used by NABDP to support the comprehensive rural development process in the 4 provinces of Bamyan, Balkh, Nangarhar and Kandahar. The bulk of the contribution will assist the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to implement priority activities and initiatives in these areas. The funds will support the creation of a favourable environment to consolidate the security and peace-building gains achieved by the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (IAGs). The contribution will also facilitate the economic reintegration of disbanded groups into their communities. Projects to be implemented will be identified through community consultation and are likely to include such areas as agricultural projects for new and existing food crops, infrastructure such as roads and bridges, drinking water and irrigation, public baths, buildings and more. A further \$6

million will be used to help the government to establish a secure environment in Afghanistan by disbanding Illegal Armed Groups. These programmes fall under the Support of the Integrated DIAG Initiative.

DIAG

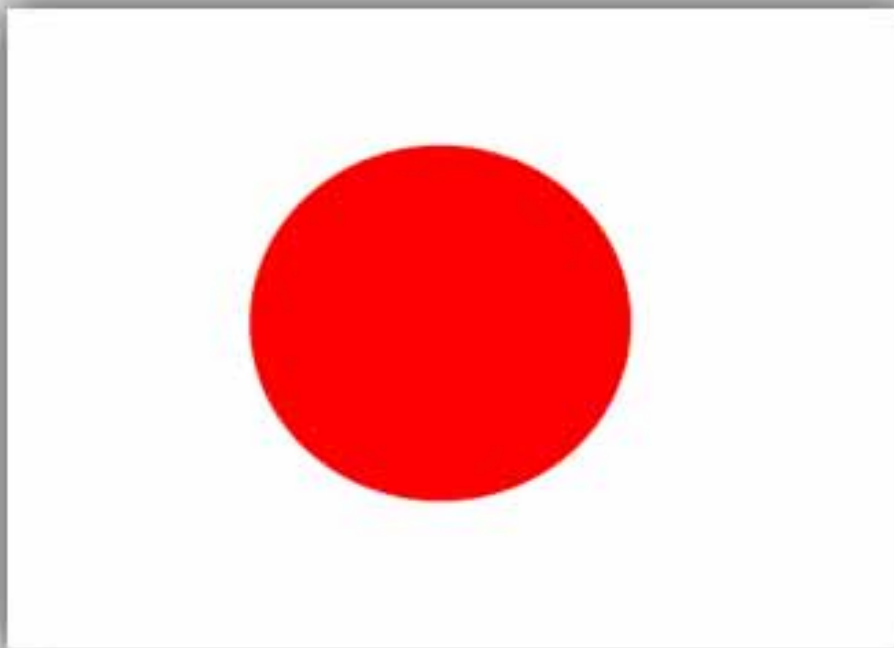
The Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme aims at supporting the government in improving human security through disarmament and disbandment of illegal armed groups and reducing the level of armed violence in the community. This programme also seeks to empower existing government programmes for socio-economic

development to enhance stability and the promotion of good governance which is an essential and integral part of Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan.

NABDP

This project will contribute to creating an enabling environment for sustaining the results of DIAG initiatives and facilitate disarmed groups to be reintegrated into their communities through economic regeneration, sustainable poverty reduction and livelihood improvement, particularly in the four targeted provinces, which are Balkh, Kandahar, Nangarhar and Bamyan. The proposed project will be undertaken within

the framework of NABDP Phase II to secure peace and human security enhanced by DIAG initiatives through promotion of Comprehensive Rural Development. This will be achieved by (1) supporting priority needs for social and economic infrastructure and services, as well as rural income- and employment-generation, and (2) establishing integrated and participatory community-based planning and investment mechanisms with strengthening the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development central, regional, provincial and district levels.





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 the 1950s, providing development assistance to the country and helping build the capacity of many national institutions. During the 1990s, while many government institutions were jeopardized by civil war and neglected by the Taliban regime, UNDP continued to assist communities throughout the country. During that decade, UNDP delivered US\$200 million of assistance to Afghanistan, using its own resources as well as those mobilized through bilateral partners and its extensive outreach throughout the country.

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 are below the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries. There are only two countries with lower poverty indices than Afghanistan, where the majority of the population lives below the poverty line – 70 percent. The percentage of Afghans with access to safe drinking water source is one of the lowest in the world – 23 percent – while just 12 percent of the population have access to adequate sanitation. As a result, preventable diseases remain prevalent.

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.

Since the Bonn Agreement was signed in December 2001, UNDP has delivered more than US\$600 million of assistance to Afghanistan.

Within Afghanistan's broad National Development Framework (NDF) are many cross-cutting priorities that address gender equality, security and the rule of law, administrative and financial reforms, human rights, environmental integrity, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their communities, and reintegration of former combatants into society. Guided by the requirements set forth in the NDF, UNDP Afghanistan focuses its activities on the following UNDP global practice areas: poverty reduction, democratic governance, and crisis prevention and recovery.

All UNDP activities are undertaken in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, UN agencies and donors. All UNDP programme activities aim to consolidate peace, enhance security and promote respect for the rule of law. UNDP projects also enhance government institutional capacity to provide public services and to create an enabling environment for legitimate livelihoods. UNDP works collaboratively with all partners to empower Afghan women and promote gender equality in Afghanistan, ensuring that gender issues are consistently mainstreamed and carefully paced.

The UNDP Afghanistan programme remains responsive to the changing needs of a nation still in transition from conflict to peace. Afghanistan is at a crucial point in moving from state building initiatives to emerging as a newly democratic state, and the opportunity to shift focus to longer term development and government support is at hand. Accordingly, the UNDP Afghanistan programme of activities is organized thematically into three pillars: State-Building & Government Support, Democratization & Civil Society Empowerment, and Promotion of Sustainable Livelihoods.

As UNDP develops and implements its regular Country Programme in Afghanistan, a major focus on results-based management will remain. Future activities concentrate on institutionalizing accountability, transparency and integrity in the public service, continuing to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions such as the Constitution of Afghanistan, and further promoting access to and respect for justice and human rights for all Afghan citizens.

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