

UNDP Afghanistan Newsletter

1 December 2005

Afghanistan is currently a signatory to six international treaties on human rights:

- [Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)
- [Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
- [Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)
- [Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#)
- [Convention against Torture](#)
- [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(and its two optional protocols\)](#)

Afghanistan has reports overdue under all treaties.

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Afghan government commits to transparency in human rights

The Government of Afghanistan has declared its commitment to its obligations under the international human rights treaties by taking a symbolic, but important step in establishing a permanent office in charge of reporting to the international community on the observance of fundamental human rights in the country.

Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah Abdullah said "It is important that we take action towards meeting our obligation to the international human rights treaty bodies by developing a program that builds capacity within the government for treaty reporting."

He expressed confidence that capacity building in the key ministries and other government agencies would promote human rights awareness and education throughout the Government. He also said this would lead to a more human rights focused approach in policy-making.

Dr. Abdullah was speaking at the ceremony of the launch of the "Project to Build Capacity for Sustained Human Rights Reporting" held at the Foreign Ministry on Nov. 27. Participation of the cabinet members at the ceremony was indicative of the importance attached to the project of the part the government with almost all of the ministers taking their seats in the front row.

Dr. Abdullah emphasized [that] "human rights is critical for development, although some may believe other way around... We must think of taking a human-rights-based approach to Afghanistan's Millennium Development Goals, particularly regarding health, education and housing etc..."

These ideas were echoed in a message by Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, read out at the ceremony by Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary General. The message stressed that neither security, nor development, both of Afghanistan's main concerns, could be accomplished without observance of fundamental human rights. It also stated that reporting on human rights treaties would be key to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the government.

Ms. Anita Nirody, Senior Deputy Country Director, UNDP, also said in her statement that each and every one of the Millennium Development Goals was linked to one or the other of the international human rights treaties to which Afghanistan has become a signatory. She said those links were "enough to illustrate that the legal agenda set by the human rights treaties is also the political agenda for government



From left: Zohra Rasekh, Anita Nirody, Sarwar Danish, Jean Arnault, David Sproule, Minister Abdullah.

action set by the Millennium Declaration. The human rights process and the development process are one and the same." And quoting the Secretary General Kofi Annan, Ms. Nirody said "Humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights."

Ms Zohra Rasekh, Director of The Office of Human Rights and Women's International Affairs, announced the project of \$297,619 and a life span of 15 months and is funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The idea for the project was conceived back in February 2004 following a workshop on human rights treaties. The Ministry of Foreign

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Affairs, in cooperation with UNDP and with technical assistance from the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, developed a framework to adopt harmonized guidelines on reporting on the implementation of international human rights treaties. A funding agreement was signed between CIDA and UNDP on June 19, and the agreement on the implementa-

tion of the project was signed between the Afghan Government and the UNDP on August 4, 2005. With the launch of this project, Afghanistan becomes the third pilot country to adopt a coordinated approach to human rights treaty reporting after Timor-Leste and Angola.

Under the project, the Office of Human Rights and Women's

International Affairs under MoFA has been assigned the role of coordinating unit for implementation. In the course of implementation a project office is to be established within the Office of Human Rights and Women's International Affairs, followed by the institutionalization of sustained reporting procedures and the creation of a treaty-reporting database.

Afghan expertise called in to assist with earthquake relief

AIMS: One does not very often see a country known as one of the largest recipients of foreign aid, both financial and technical, itself become a donor of technical assistance. Afghanistan has achieved this feat, thanks to information management skills developed through the AIMS project, by seconding Sayed Ghalib to work for the OCHA in Pakistan.

Immediately after the earthquake struck, UN emergency teams working at the site of disaster felt the urgent need for information management, a vital task at that stage, particularly because the rapid inflow of emergency assistance material and of incoming disaster assistance teams from all around the world had to be registered and managed. Receiving the request from OCHA in Pakistan, the AIMS project manager Neal Bratschun did not hesitate to assign Ghalib to this mission.

"I was the OCHA focal point for information management for 10 different groups, advising and helping them on how to analyse and use the information they had," said Ghalib in an interview upon returning to his country at

the end of his assignment. He said he had maintained contacts with all the ten groups throughout his first two weeks, thanks to his "mapping" skills, and after his first two weeks as focal point, he had worked as "Liaison officer" for UNDAC (UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination), again performing mainly the function of information manager.

Ghalib said throughout his mission in Pakistan he was always treated with a lot of respect and affection. "People were very happy to see someone from Afghanistan helping them, they were always very appreciative" he said.

He still sounded very excited about the mission he had completed, but the excitement and enthusiasm on the ground was much better reflected in his "Hi from nowhere" message to his project manager:

"Dear Neal

Sorry for the late reply as I was out in the field and returned back to Mansehra last night. Of course it's great that AIMS is part of this relief effort and a great opportunity for me to learn

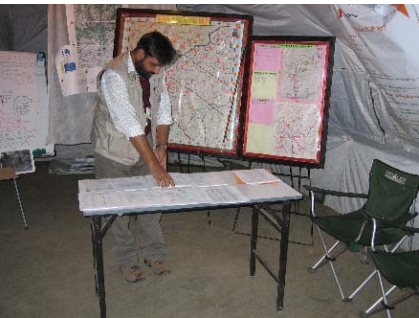
new things and share my experiences from AIMS with them.

Now coming to the question.

On the technical side there is not much that I can say I have learned but on the application side I have learned how best you can use GIS and databases in emergencies. I have been sent with UNDAC (United Nation Disaster Assessment and Coordination) team to Mansehra one of the worst affected area (some of the sub districts are 90% destroyed) and I can easily say that what I have learned here in terms of planning and disaster assessment in the last few weeks I couldn't have learned in any university and of course I will share all this with colleagues in AIMS and especially with DMIS colleagues. I am also bringing some of the training material for them with myself..."

This is probably what is called a "win-win situation": helping earthquake victims in Pakistan helped Afghanistan build capacity in disaster aid management.

The AIMS project is supported by: EC, USAID, UNDP.



Sayed at work in disaster assessment in Pakistan.

"People were very happy to see someone from Afghanistan helping them, they were always very appreciative"

Disability Resource Centre becomes a reality

NPAD: Afghanistan's first "universally accessible Disability Center" came one step closer to reality on November 22 with Sediqa Balkhi the Minister of Martyrs and Disabled laying the first foundation stone to launch the construction process in a ceremony attracting high level dignitaries, among them several Ministers and the French Ambassador to Kabul, Mr. Regis Koetschet.

The disability center will be open and accessible to all disabled people of Afghanistan regardless of the type of their impairment and it will also be a resource center to assist the more than 2 m. disabled living in Afghanistan to improve themselves and advance their skills.

In an address to the participants, Ms. Balkhi admitted that Afghans had not been "Conscious of the special need of the people with disabilities" but indicated that this attitude had already started to change as witnessed by the efforts to

construct the new Center. Referring to the construction of the Center, she said: "I believe that we have made a good start to dealing with some of the many challenges that face my Ministry today. However, I am also well aware that a lot remains to be done."

Mr. Koetschet, the French Ambassador, said he was honored to be a participant to the "tireless efforts of national and international agencies in developing a comprehensive approach to address the issues of disability."

The Center is being constructed with funds provided by the government of France through the French Trust Fund. The French contribution to Afghanistan's disability program is being managed by the UNDP, which earlier contracted a consultant to advise on the construction and designing of the building to facilitate access for the disabled Afghan citizens.

The building, which was de-

signed by UDG and UNOPS and is being constructed on an area of 568 m², will cost \$110,000 and will be completed in December 2006. The Center will feature a complete information base for all disabled people, including a library for the blind, and computers with special software to enable visually impaired individuals to use them. The center will also be a meeting place for the disabled as well as the center for payment of the welfare entitlements of the disabled people.

On a personal note, the Minister also thanked Ms. Sarah Dyer for her relentless efforts and her dedication to the cause of helping the disabled in Afghanistan and expressing her appreciation of her contribution to the work of the Ministry. Ms. Dyer is completing her assignment as the Programme Manager for UNDP's National Plan of Action on Disability project to take up another task outside Afghanistan.



Sediqa Balkhi (far right) smiles upon the foundation stone laying of the Disability Resource Centre with the French Ambassador Mr. Koetschet (left).

Action on disability – why and how?

NPAD: Globally, it is estimated that there are about 600 million disabled people, of which 80 % live in economically poor countries. Less than 5 % of disabled children have access to any education in poor countries (UNESCO estimates) and 80% of disabled people are unemployed (ILO estimates). The challenges are even bigger in Afghanistan, a least developed country that has experienced more than two decades of war, with an estimated 800,000 to two million disabled people. The disabled face discrimination

and many barriers including physical access barriers, communication barriers, and attitudinal barriers.

The National Programme for Action on Disability (NPAD) promotes mainstreaming of disability to ensure that development efforts reach the poorest and most vulnerable. Mainstreaming of disability in development interventions involves policies, strategies, and development plans that include issues of disabled people in access to education, health, livelihoods, communication, and basic infra-

structure, in agreement with globally accepted UN conventions and treaties. NPAD does this through raising awareness in government, development agencies, and civil society on issues concerning disabled people and their rights; building the capacity of government to develop and implement inclusive policies; and ensuring greater and more equitable access to disability services through NGOs and other development partners.



A wheelchair-bound man works away at his tailoring job.

Participatory process shapes the first CPAP for Afghanistan



The framework for UNDP's assistance to the people and the Government of Afghanistan over the next three years has begun to take shape through a participatory process involving representatives of the government organizations and civil society.



The main goal of the process is to finalize UNDP's Country Program Action Plan (CPAP), by first focusing on the areas where assistance needs to be concentrated, and then chart the broad timetable for the implementation of the activities.



Lively discussions and intense exchange of ideas marked the two-day workshop that attracted high-level participants from the government such as Mr. Mir Hayatullah Al Hashimi, the Deputy Minister of Justice.

Workgroup sessions brainstorm the future direction of UNDP's Country Programme.

Participants of the workshop participated in a role-swapping activity in an effort to allow the implementing partners to understand the concerns of the other side in developing and implementing projects. The tool for these simulation exercises were CPAPs of various UNDP country offices, such as Romania, Iran, Philippines and Kyrgyzstan. In the course of this exercise participants worked hard to get to

the details of the CPAPs they examined, how they were compiled and what yardsticks were used to measure outputs; on the second day, they moved on to the "real thing" by actually identifying the goals, activities, the outcomes and results that should be attained in Afghanistan, including the specification of indicators.

Clark Soriano, UN Country Team's Coordination Advisor, who conducted the workshop, helped participants to chart the course for the next three years in tandem with the UN Development Assistance Framework, the overarching document for the support to be provided to Afghanistan until 2008.

The conclusion of the workshop showed that the emphasis of UNDP assistance would be on improved governance through strengthened national and public service institutions; on expanding the choices for the people of Afghanistan to earn a sustainable livelihood and on the advancement of the management of the country's environment and natural resources in a way that will assist the programming pillar on sustainable livelihoods.

Non-UNDP participants of the workshop were excited about being part of a process that would contribute to the development of their country in the next programming cycle. Mumina Yari of the Independent Election Commission, taking part in the discussions said the event provided her with a very good opportunity to share information with her colleagues. "To become involved in the UNDP's process of identifying development priorities is very useful to understand the workings of the development assistance" she added. Hakim Murad, another participant representing the Afghan public institutions said it was a great experience to know how the CPAP was developed. "It is particularly interesting to know the linkages among the program activities and how they jointly contribute to the reconstruction efforts," he added.

Once the conclusions of the workshop have been drafted in the form of a structured implementation timetable, Afghanistan's first CPAP, after more than two decades of war and destruction, will have been put in place.



ANBP public information seminar

ANBP: On 28 and 29 of November, the Joint Secretariat of the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission held a seminar on Public Information and Development, two pillar components of Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups, (DIAG). Public information helps garner the support of the authorities and the public, whilst development is the indi-

rect consequence of an arms-free environment.

The Minister of Information and Culture launched the first session with a speech to over 90 participants, where he insisted on "the critical role of information and of the representatives of the Ministry of Information and Culture in promoting the

DIAG process so Afghanistan can progress towards a better future, free of weapons." The Deputy Minister of MRRD emphasized the "importance of DIAG to establish security and peace, both pre-conditions for development and reconstruction", adding that if Afghan people work for DIAG, DIAG will work for them.

GMA reflects hope for the future

“Life has never been any better” said young Mohammed Naseem, only 23 years old, holding a certificate of success and the \$300 prize money tightly in his hand. He was one of the winners of the Global Microentrepreneurship Awards (GMA), an activity that was part of the global campaign to raise awareness, and hope, in the 2005 UN International Year of Microcredit, on how people could turn the adverse tide of their lives through small loans.

Mohammed was born and grew up in turbulent years of war and he had been recruited to fight when he was in his mid-teens. Once peace broke out in his troubled land, he shed his rifle to take up the plough and received a small loan to become a farmer. He did so well in farming that he was awarded the second prize in the Demobilized Soldiers category of the awards.

Ms Khadeeja (35), the first prize winner of the war widows' category was equally confident: “I had the skills, the microcredit provided me with the tools. Now, I have a business of my own”, she said proudly brandishing her certificate which was presented by Waheedullah Shahrani, Advisor to the President and Deputy Finance Minister.

The winner of the first prize of the businesses outside Kabul category, 38-year-old Ms. Shaima said “My life has changed enormously. With my income, I can pay for my children's education and well-being. My respect has been restored in the community

where I used to lead a life of hardships.”

They were all among the 12 finalists, six men and six women equally sharing the first and second prizes in six categories: Agricultural Business, Busi-



Second place winner of Businesses Outside Kabul, Zainab Barat (in red) stands with Christine Mulligan of CHF.

nesses outside Kabul, Conflict Widows, Demobilized Soldiers, Returned Refugees and Alternative Livelihoods.

The competition for the awards was organized with the coop-



DDR winner, Abdul Mohammad, accepts his prize from Deputy Minister of Finance, Mr Shirani.

eration of a number of international and national organizations: UN Capital Development Fund provided the funding, which was managed by the

UNDP, whilst Afghanistan Microfinance Association and MISFA (Microfinance Investment Support Fund for Afghanistan) coordinated the activities.

The winners were Abdul Majid and Sumia in the Agricultural Business category, Shaima and Zainab Barat in the category of Businesses outside Kabul, Sughra and Hadeeja in the category of Widows of the Conflict, Abdul Muhammad and Muhammad Nasim in the category of Demobilized Soldiers, in the Returned Refugees category Shah Jahan Reaza and Nasrin Dost Muhammadi, and finally in Alternative Livelihoods category Abdul Hamid Alam Khan and Gulbaz Khan. The awards were \$500 each to the first prize winners and \$300 each to the second prize winners.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Anita Nirody, the Senior Deputy Country Director at the UNDP Country Office, said the hope inspired by the microcredit schemes for better living conditions appeared to have taken hold in Afghanistan. She expressed the hope that microfinance services could be made available to those who were not able to access them. Edward Greenwood, the head of the Afghanistan Microfinance Association, remarked that microfinance was at a very exciting stage in Afghanistan and he hoped that similar organizations in the future would help raise awareness about the availability of microcredit schemes.

“My life has changed enormously. With my income, I can pay for my children's education and well-being. My respect has been restored in the community where I used to lead a life of hardships.”

Afghan government promises to end forced and child marriages by 2008



Government ministers collectively commit to the end of forced and child marriages.

The President's office also promised the immediate issuance of a decree making it compulsory for all marriages to be registered as the first step of eradication of child marriages.

MoWA: In a further move to strengthen observance of human, and particularly women's, rights, Afghan leadership has committed to end all forced and child marriages by 2008.

The declaration of the government's dedication to this goal came at the end of a two-day workshop organized by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and supported by UNDP and UNIFEM.

Before the workshop, for which preparations started months ago, all line ministries were provided with a draft of the protocol. The two-day discussions helped refine the steps that the government and civil society organizations could take to accomplish the stated goals.

Keynote speaker of the event was Prof. Yakin Erturk, UN's Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. His speech at the workshop focused on his findings of the forms of violence perpetrated against women in Afghanistan.

After lengthy discussions, representatives of the office of the President and almost all the ministries present at the workshop signed the protocol, expressing broad agreement with the tasks foreseen for them.

"Even the ministries that were not originally part of the process signed the protocol" said Fulya Vekiloglu, head of UNDP's program on "Institutional Capacity Building Support to MoWA".

She was also happy with the intense and enthusiastic participation of both government and civil society representatives in the discussions. "On both days, at least 150 people were involved in very lively discussions," she added.

The plans are now for drawing up of a quick action plan by frequent follow-up meetings, the first of which was already held within a week of the workshop.

In the course of those meetings, representatives of government agencies and institutions as well

as of civil society organizations will fine-tune the steps to be taken to finalize the action plan. According to protocol, the Office of the President takes on the role of direct oversight of implementation, and delegates monitoring and coordination authority to MoWA. The President's office also promised the immediate issuance of a decree making it compulsory for all marriages to be registered as the first step of eradication of child marriages. Other moves include review and/or passing of new legislation where necessary, increased monitoring of cases of child and forced marriages and of cases of abuse resulting from such marriages.

Child and forced marriages are considered as one of the major social ills in Afghanistan. Alongside the inhumane nature of these practices, many of the forced marriages, being arranged within close family circles, lead to defective births and substantially raise the number of disabled people.

Donor contributions

The Netherlands	Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups	USD1.2million
UK	Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups	USD1million
Finland	Parliament Elections	Euro630,000
Germany GTZ	Support of the Establishment of Afghan Legislature	Euro2million
Denmark	Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups	USD1.3million

Schedule of Events

3 December World AIDS day

Details: 09:00 – 11:30, Serena Hotel

Contact: Mirwais Sarah
mirwais.sarah@undp.org

3 December International Day for Disability

Details: exhibition to be held in Loya Jirga tent, Kabul, plus other nationwide events

Contact: Joy Daniel joy.daniel@undp.org

4-5 December Regional Economic Conference

Details: 09:00 – 17:00 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Contact: Govind Venuprasad
govind.venuprasad@undp.org
(By invite only)

6 December Private sector development and trade investment workshop

Details: 14:00 – 17:00 German Embassy

Contact: Marilyn Garson
(By invite only)

6 December UNDP staff retreat

Details: all day, location TBA
Staff only

7 December ANBP Programme Director's Conference

Details: 0800-1300 ANBP VIP Conference Room

Contact: Shapari Enshayan
senshayan@anbp.afg.org
(By invite only)

7 December ANDS Working Group meeting on corruption

Details: 14:00 at ANDS office,
Contact person Karen Hussmann
karen.hussman@undp.org
(By invite only)

8 December Commanders Incentive Programme

Details: Time TBC, old British Embassy building
Contact: ssafi@anbpafg.org
Invite: open

TBA December GHDR final event

Details: Kabul University
Description: the final event in the human development month
Contact: Fakhruddin Azizi fakr.azizi@undp.org
Invite: open

December 2005

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Stop AIDS. Keep the promise

Recognised around the world as a day to renew hope, commemorate those lost and celebrate progress, 1 December marks World AIDS Day, representing commitment by politicians and the international community to the prevention of AIDS. On 3 December, the Ministry of Health and UNDP, will host an event designed to promote awareness about AIDS. The ministry wants to stress to the people of Afghanistan that HIV/AIDS is a very important issue and that there must be more action from the government and donor countries in addressing the issue. Religious leaders will be included in the proceedings as presenters and participants.

The Ministry of Health's National Aids Control Programme (NACP), has initiated a project for drug users through its Voluntary Counselling and Confidential Testing (VCCT) centre in Kabul. The centre is testing drug users then giving them a small amount of money as an incentive for them to call other drug users in for testing. Of those being tested as positive, 60 – 70% are drug users.

Representatives from the Ministry of Transport, including the department related to truck drivers are also invited. Different ministerial staff will attend the event along with stakeholders working on HIV/AIDS such as UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, Global Fund and NGOs.

The Minister of Health will open the celebration, followed by speeches from President Karzai and other dignitaries. Various presentations about HIV/AIDS will be made, along with dramatisations which will be performed to educate about HIV and AIDS in the local context.

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An image of Afghanistan



Lake Bandamere by Ayna Khaidova

A knowledge organisation

ECO ministerial meeting and trade fair promise trade boost

Afghanistan, as the host the 3rd Ministerial ECO Conference on Promotion of Trade and Investment and the ECO Trade Fair, was in the focus, between November 9 and 12, of all representatives of regional governments and trade experts with the opportunities it provided for trade and direct investments.

Grouping Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), is at the forefront of efforts to promote regional trade and investment. UNDP, emphasizing the role of trade in poverty alleviation and human development, supported both the trade and investment conference and trade fair which attracted companies from 23 countries as diverse as Russia, Monaco and ECO member states.

Frederick Lyons, the UNDP Country Director in Afghanistan, addressing the delegates in the opening session of the Conference, stressed the importance of facilitating trade and investment by creating "an efficient transport infrastructure and improve transport services for lower-cost intra-regional and international access". He also stressed the need for urgent reform of the business environment and of the financial sector and the necessity of strengthening of the regional forum for the business sector.

The conference ended with the expression of determination on the part of all delegations to move swiftly for the finalization of the ECO Trade Agreement that is expected to substantially expand commercial opportunities for businesses from all member countries. The delegates voted to come together

again in Kabul in 2006 for the next ECO Ministerial meeting.

UNDP's "Regional Trade Cooperation" project, which supported the Trade and Investment Conference and facilitated the participation of business enterprises at the trade fair, emerged as a follow-up to the Bishkek Conference of May 2004 with a view to putting Afghanistan in the regional map as a new destination for business opportunities and a "land bridge" for economic cooperation in the region.

At the ECO Trade Fair, expectations of companies invited by UNDP appeared to have been surpassed on the first day of the three-day event, with the food products coming from the three Central Asian Republics, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, generating a huge demand from Afghan trading

companies.

Maqsoud Odinaev of the Tajik delegation taking part in the Fair said they had concluded deals for the export to Afghanistan of the whole range of some 30 food products displayed at the exhibition. He said the Tajik government was preparing to organize its own trade exhibition in Kabul in the near future.

Indira Kadyrkanova of Kyrgyzstan said there was also huge demand for high quality steel and cement imports to Afghanistan from her country and that their only concern could be the inability of Kyrgyz companies to respond to the size of the demand. She said the trading companies in her country, particularly those in the Osh region, which lies in the Ferghana valley, were very much interested in expanding commercial ties with Afghanistan.