



Afghanistan

QUARTERLY PROJECT REPORT

United Nations Development Programme Afghanistan Afghanistan Information Management Services (AIMS) [01/04/2008 – 30/06/2008]



(Photo: Technology Awareness Workshops, Ministry of Counter Narcotics)

Project ID:	00037482
Duration:	April 2004-December 2008
Component (MYFF):	Public Administration Reform
Total Budget:	US\$ 10.8 million
Unfunded:	USD 600,000

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I. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

AIMS has significantly contributed to the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the county Programme Action Plan (CPAP) outcome through achieving the following four main project outputs during the past three months.

Output 1: Institutional Information Management Capacity of the GoA is strengthened

During the second quarter of 2008, the Institutional Relations Department conducted two Technology Awareness Workshops, one at the Ministry of Counter Narcotics where thirty-three staff participated, and one at the University of Education where thirty-two professors and students attended. The workshops were warmly welcomed by attendants from both entities. As a result, a meeting was held with Engineer Mohammad Ibrahim Azhar, the Director of the Survey and Monitoring Department of the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, who expressed his enthusiasm about receiving technical services and support from AIMS.

As another outcome of the workshop, the Ministry of Communications introduced a number of their staff to be trained in Geographical Information System (GIS) and database. According to participants, the Technology Awareness Workshop, given to twenty-eight students and professors of the University of Education, proved to be very impressive and educational. The members of the group were given presentations on map reading, database, GIS, GPS and other relevant topics.

The AIMS GIS department provided on-going technical support to eleven GIS labs in various ministries and departments as part of its advisory services to the Government of Afghanistan (GoA). Members of the GIS team have been assigned as focal points for GIS labs within a number of ministries. These focal points visited the GIS labs and provided both technical and project-related advisory services to the GoA staff. The GIS services and training extended to every regional office as well.

In order to create an enabling environment for information management and GIS, the Kunduz, Hirat, Jalalabad, and Kandahar Regional Offices started English Language and Computer Literacy Programme and as result trained 257 people.

PMUNA presentation and data entry training was conducted on 20-21 May 2008 for 10 staff of various UN agencies in Jalalabad who were officially introduced to AIMS as PMUNA's focal point. Similarly, the PMUNA project was presented to all UN agency heads during UN Regional Team meetings in Kunduz. PMUNA presentation and data entry training was also conducted in mid-June 2008 for eight staff of various UN agencies in Hirat, who were officially introduced to AIMS as the focal points for PMUNA. Likewise, PMUNA training was conducted for UN agencies on 11 and 12 of June. The PMUNA presentation was given to the heads of agencies in UNAMA.

Output 2: Cross-Institutions and National Information Management Capacity is built

GIS User Group Meeting (GUG)

Besides the map projects and GIS training, the GIS Department held the 8th GUG meeting on 22 May 2008. The meeting mandate was to bring professionals using GIS together in order to share their knowledge and experience. A total of 34 representatives from different organizations, including various Government ministries, UN agencies, international organizations, national organizations, and member of the private sector, attended this meeting.

Animal Health Development Program (monitoring and evaluation system)

The overall goal of the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Web Application is to identify and analyze the work of different NGO's working for animal livestock projects. The NGO's will be able to provide all information about the Animal Health Service Centers (AHSC) in Afghanistan such as staff information, transportation used, equipments deployed, and trainings provided to AHSC staff. The development of the programme will be coordinated with the development of online

web applications, which will have many functions, including generation of custom reports based on user requirements.

The overall goal of the Epidemiology Web Application is to identify animal health and welfare problems, and link them to rapid and effective diagnosis, responses, and controls available through the collection of data and analysis of information regarding animal diseases, and laboratory results. In accordance with this, the web application will be integrated with EPI-INFO, which, is a standard application used to store, analyze and generate statistical reports. Currently this resource is operating within six regions and is expected to expand throughout the country in the near future.

Enabling Environment Programme for Government Ministries/Departments

The capacity building programme at various Government agencies continued during the second quarter. A total of 378 people were trained in the English language and 342 in computer programmes.

The Asia Foundation funded capacity building programme at the Office of the President and Office of Administrative Affairs was successfully completed. Since the funding agency and the client agencies were satisfied with the services AIMS provided, the project was extended for another 4 months beginning on March 1, 2008, and ending on June 17, 2008. During this period, 125 staff of the Office of Administrative Affairs will be trained in the English language and computer programmes.

Customer Services

During the second quarter of 2008, a total of 1,241 hard copy maps and 21 soft copy maps (on CDs) were sold. Advisory information was also provided to clients visiting AIMS. Aside from the distribution of maps, the major services provided by the unit include oral and online information and advices and the printing and scanning of maps. The regional offices also distributed 615 maps.

Evaluation of GIS LABS

Three Government agencies facilitated with GIS labs were visited and evaluated during the second quarter of 2008. The purpose was to find out whether the GIS labs were functioning and the GIS software provided was utilized appropriately. The result of the evaluation indicated that the majority of the staff trained by AIMS was doing well on the job but a few were replaced by new recruits. Helpful recommendations were provided to staff members in order to enhance their knowledge of the latest software versions and improvements within the GIS resources. The agencies visited included the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry & Landry Departments, Polytechnic University and Kabul University.

Capacity Building Projects

After initial meetings with the American Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) on building the capacity of the Afghan National Army (ANA) in the use of GIS, a proposal was developed and submitted to the American PRT to establish a GIS lab in ANA Kunduz. Upon request of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) Kunduz, the concept paper for establishing a training center was developed and submitted to the Provincial Development Fund (PDF) Committee in Kunduz.

The AIMS Hirat office is assessing the municipality in order to enroll them into an AIMS capacity building initiative. AIMS is interested in providing municipality staff with GIS training to enable them prepare maps and scathes, and to draft city boundaries and plot other information through advance GIS techniques.

Output 3: Improved decision making by GoA through better access to information

Disaster Information Management System (DMIS)

Afghanistan is a country prone to natural disasters such as earthquakes, flooding, droughts, landslides, and avalanches. This country has experienced an extended drought for the last four

years, and every year flooding, landslides, avalanches, mudslides, agricultural pests, and disease outbreaks occur. The lack of critical and timely information for natural disasters is characteristic for developing countries, particularly those emerging from decades of war and civil conflict; Afghanistan is not an exception.

Disaster Management (DM) is typically a multi-disciplinary endeavor requiring many types of data with spatial and temporal attributes. DM also cuts across many boundaries including organizational, political, geographic, professional, topical, and sociological.

The Government of Afghanistan remains weak in this area and must therefore rely heavily on the humanitarian community, particularly the UN, for responding and managing natural disasters.

The goal of this project involves developing a DMIS together with building the capacity of Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authorities (ANDMA) to maintain, update, and disseminate information to stakeholders and users for rapid and effective decision-making. AIMS was contracted for the development of the DMIS and after conducting the requirement analysis phase of software requirement a specification document was signed. The system is under development and it is expected to be finalized during the 3rd quarter of 2008.

Ministry of Education (MoE), Certificate Computerization Project

The main goal of the MoE Certificate Computerization Project is to automate the archival, retrieval, and tracking of grades 10, 11, and 12 student transcripts and to develop a computerized solution enabling the automated generation of secondary certificates. The system developed for this purpose will be web-based and can be rolled out to provincial offices. Once the capacity and infrastructure is built at the school level, the system can then be used directly for local entry and report generation. The data populated into the system is highly confidential therefore advance security measures will be implemented to provide confidentiality and protection of records and information.

AIMS is in the mid-phase of this Certificate Computerization Project. The initial requirement analysis phase has been completed after which data entry template and the specification document for the system development was completed. Currently, the data entry template has been provided for practice purposes, practice which will enable MoE to familiarize itself with the data entry template usage and assist the data entry team to be prepared for real time entry of records without error. The specification document was shared with MoE for their feedback.

Ministry of Education, Text Book Distribution

The text book distribution system will be designed for use at the national, provincial, district, and school level for tracking the distribution process and inventory availability of texts. The system will provide efficiency, transparency and effective management to the Textbook Distribution Unit. AIMS' contribution was to develop an inventory management system for the Text Book Distribution Department. AIMS has done the initial requirement analysis and developed the specification document for building the inventory database, however, MoE requested AIMS to fully automate their entry process of distribution.

GeoBase 3.0

GIS capability in mission critical applications is demanding. The ArcGIS server, a new technology introduced by the ESRI Company, brought a new revolution into the GIS world. AIMS Software Engineering Department recognized this fact and successfully re-engineered one of the mission-critical applications called GeoBase, using the ArcGIS technology.

This technology enabled the system to provide USAID and other stakeholders with the required maps of their activity and thus advancing the decision making process. Certain ArcGIS technology expertise was built at AIMS with the potential to benefit other systems within the Government of Afghanistan. Adopting ArcGIS will provide systems with the ability for unlimited retrieval of textual information and the production of dynamic maps.

Geobase 2.0, which is currently operational and being used by implementing partners, has been maintained on a regular basis and new functions have been added to further improve the system. All the required activities, including frequent scheduled and unscheduled trainings were given to data providers to ensure the system is populated with up to date data.

Mapping Services

The AIMS GIS department develops customized maps based on requests received from the Government, the UN, national and international agencies. During the second quarter of 2008, the GIS department was involved in several customized mapping projects and training programs. The Musa Qala City map from the satellite images of ISAF 2006 was successfully completed.

During the second quarter, AIMS has provided/delimited different types of maps to the Government and several humanitarian organizations. The mapping information provides different types of customized and relevant information to the Government ministries and departments to facilitate and support their planning and decision making processes.

Establishment of Publication and Translation Unit at the Supreme Court

Based on the request of the Justice Project of the UNDP for AIMS to conduct a requirement analysis for the establishment of a Publication and Translation Unit at the Supreme Court, a proposal was drafted and submitted to the Justice Project.

Information Management Services (software engineering)

Social Affairs and the Martyred & Disabled Department of Kunduz requested the expertise of AIMS for designing a system to track current and future assistance and support provided to the families of martyred and disabled people. The database was developed and installed and their staff members were trained for further use of the system.

The Comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction Programme & ANDMA requested AIMS to prepare a simple database for the recoding of available resources within the Kunduz province in response to disasters. AIMS prepared a spreadsheet capable of sorting and filtering all of the available resources.

Provincial Mapping of the UN Activities (PMUNA)

The system has been fully completed. All project documents were prepared and submitted to UNAMA. The final report, self-evaluation report and the financial report were submitted to UNAMA accordingly.

IRD Marketing

As part of an awareness raising programme, AIMS' profile was updated to cover the latest accomplishments, initiatives, and changes taking place in the overall services that AIMS provides.

Output 4: AIMS transitioned to a sustainable national NGO

The AIMS Non-Governmental Organization has now been officially registered with Ministry of Economy, Islamic Republics of Afghanistan as of 12 June 2007. The Board of Directors of the NGO has held a total of 4 meetings, including two preliminary Board meeting and two regular NGO Board meetings.

The organization staffing and budget plans for the year 2009 are prepared and have been reviewed by the Board of Directors. As AIMS has become an NGO with no current funding mobilized for the year 2009, the Board of Director will focus more on resource mobilization, programme alignment, product re-designing and partnership development. Several meetings have been held with possible donors and partners, and a number of project proposals have been prepared and shared.

UNDP has hired a Transition Advisor to work out the assets, staff and funding transfer to the AIMS NGO during the third quarter of 2008. AIMS staff contracts will therefore be extended for an additional two months under UNDP before staff will be hired on NGO contracts.

The five years strategic business plan was developed for the AIMS NGO and a series of bilateral meetings were held with the donors on the future funding of the NGO. The draft HR and Finance policies are currently under review with the Transitional Advisor and will be approved by the Board of Directors.

II. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

UPDATED PROJECT RISKS AND ACTIONS:

The UNDP/AIMS project is registered as an independent self-sustained national entity under the structure of the Ministry of Economy as Non Governmental Organization (NGO). The risks in this regard remain the same. Organizational transition presents significant risks and operational challenges even under the best of circumstances. Without access to operating reserves or access to capital funding sources, the necessity for a comprehensive business strategy is unquestionably critical for the viability of AIMS. In order to mitigate the risks associated with exiting the UNDP system, AIMS retained three international experts to assist with the areas of legal structure, resource mobilizations and transition issues.

In order to address the weaknesses presented by limited capital resources, AIMS established an initiative for resource mobilization with the goal of securing operational funding for the 2 months shortfall in 2008 and a reasonable level of operating reserves. In response to the needs for continued project support, USAID has verbally committed to provide \$600,000 to AIMS to meet its shortfall funding for the year 2008. Considering the aspects of capacity development, operational sustainability, and the collaborative support AIMS will continue to provide to the Millennium Development Goals for Afghanistan, AIMS remains optimistic that additional subsidies will help reduce a projected 3.5 million dollar unfunded amount for the year 2009 after AIMS exits UNDP. A continued emphasis on resource mobilization, securing donor support, and implementing client sponsored projects has been targeted to further mitigate fiscal risks and provide new venues for revenue generation.

UPDATED PROJECT ISSUES AND ACTIONS:

An increased demand for AIMS' services and a number of client supported projects resulted in the need for AIMS to invest additional resources in the realm of project management and organization efficiency. These resources have included additional Afghan technical staff members and three short-term international employees for special projects. In all, AIMS has hired more than 30 employees and interns, thus contributing to the process of capacity development. The retention and training of staff will therefore continue to be one of the most important issues facing AIMS following the exit from UNDP.

Infrastructure and physical resources issues will also contribute to the challenges facing AIMS. A substantial investment in rapidly depreciating fixed assets is an issue AIMS must quickly address. The emphasis on technology places a substantial fiscal burden on organizations within the information management sector. As also mentioned in the last quarterly report, AIMS will therefore need to secure the necessary capital to upgrade existing technology and establish a reasonable cycle for alternating replacement in order to meet market demands.

III. FINANCIAL STATUS AND UTILIZATION

FINANCIAL STATUS:

Table 1: Contribution Overview April 2004– 31 December 2008

DONOR NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS		CONTRIBUTIO N BALANCE
	Committed	Received	
USAID	6,211,641	5,611,641	*600,000
EC	2,577,588	2,577,588	-
UNOCHA	1,935	1,935	-
FAO	49,817	49,817	-
UNAMA	470,893	470,893	-
UNDP	1,500,000	1,500,000	-
TOTAL	10,811,874	10,211,874	600,000

*Note: This amount is part of \$2,271,204 committed by USAID scheduled to be released after June 2008.

FINANCIAL UTILIZATION:

Table 2: Quarterly Expenditure by Activity 1 April – 30 June 2008

Activity	BUDGET [2008]	QUARTERLY EXPENDITURE	BALANCE	DELIVERY (%)
Activity1 Project Management	582,644	514,906	66,123	88%
Activity13 Exit Strategy Development	1,005,000	709,489	292,726	71%
UNDP GMS 5%	83,560	68022	19,936	81%
Total	1,671,204	1,292,417	378,787	77%

Table 3: Quarterly Expenditure by Donor 01 April – 30 June 2008

DONORS	ACTIVITY (as per approved budget)	2008 Budget	Q2 EXPENDITURES 01/03/08 - 30/06/08	BALANCE as of 30/06/08	DELIVERY RATE %
USAID	Activity 1: Project Management	582,644	514,906	66,123	77%
	Activity 13: Exit Strategy Develop	1,005,000	709,489	292,726	
	GMS 5%	83,560	68,022	19,936	
Subtotal USAID		1,671,204	1,292,417	378,787	
UNDP	Activity 1: Project Management				
Subtotal UNDP		-	-	0	
Total		1,671,204	1,292,417	378,787	77%