



United Nations Development Programme
Afghanistan
Strengthening State Building through Strategic
Government Communication (SSBSGC)
From April 1st 2008 to June 30th, 2008



Quarterly Project Report [Second Quarter, 2008]

Project ID: 00059207
Duration: 3 years
Component (MYFF): Public administration reform and anticorruption.
Total Budget: USD 3,543,214
Unfunded:
Implementing Partners/Responsible parties: UNDP in collaboration with the Office of Presidential Spokesperson

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I. Implementation progress

As the Strengthening State Building through Strategic Government Communication (SSBSGC) project has been delayed for various reasons, the project has yet to hire the two international consultants which will be recruited to ensure the formulation of an overall Government communication strategy with a firm sub-national focus and a capacity development and organisational restructuring strategy for the OPS and the provinces to be able to implement. The UNDP programme team has held a number of preliminary discussions with the counterpart and other stakeholders in regard to the development of an effective Government Communication strategy. ToRs were developed for the two consultants, one Organizational Re-engineering Consultant and one Communication Expert. These consultants will be recruited during the third quarter. Recruitment of the National Project Manager took place and a candidate was identified. He has now been brought onboard. The transfer of assets and staff from the Bridging the Public Information Gap BPIG project was also undertaken during the reporting period and is ongoing.

Output 1: An effective government communication strategy prepared and government communication with its citizens improved.

The Strengthening State Building through Strategic Government Communication (SSBSGC) project undertook the following initiatives to progress towards the envisaged output:

In terms of the the creation of an overall communication strategy for the OPS and the Government and the review of the organisational structure and capacity at the OPS, activities will be commenced during the third quarter. The Communication Expert will carry out an assessment of current capacity at both the national and sub-national level and evaluate the volume and character of existing TA as well as the existing structures and the extent to which the new strategy can build on these.

Despite the delays in activities towards formulating communication and organisational restructuring and capacity development strategies, the SSBSGC project has continued to provide vital support to the OPS in its everyday function as a continuation of activities under the previous UNDP Building the Public Information Gap project to ensure that activities are maintained and quality communication and information dissemination carried out until such processes can be further improved and strengthened based on the communication strategy and the organisational re-engineering and capacity development strategy. The majority of current SSBSGC staff previously worked as part of the BPIG project and therefore provide vital skills to the everyday function of the OPS.

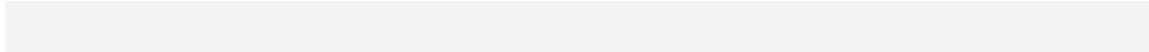
Among these continued activities is the contribution of project staff to the coordination among the different media components at the Office of the Presidential Spokesperson (OPS), which covers press conferences and news on the President's meetings/visits with senior international officials inside and outside the country. Project staff also contributed to ensure that material for meetings, speeches, press conferences, protocol signings of the President and the Presidential Spokesperson was produced, entailing the production of around 200 individual documents now available from the archive of the OPS.

The role, structure and institutional location of the provincial hubs will be evaluated as part of the assessment on which the communication strategy will be based and it will be analysed how best to ensure increased and improved links with the sub-national level with a firm focus on provincial outreach and awareness.

Output 2: Capacity of the OPS and provincial information ability developed for the implementation of an effective communication strategy

While the overall analysis of the organisational structure and capacity of the OPS will depend on the needs and capacity assessment taking place through the third quarter and the input and guidance of the Organisational Re-engineering Consultant to be hired during the third quarter, a number of steps were taken during the second quarter to ensure quality staffing at the OPS. At the end of the second quarter 80 % of project staff have been recruited, mainly from the pool of staff which were already working under the BPIG project, to ensure the continuation of support to the OPS and quality media production. The structure and individual staff roles, as well as capacity development needs will be reviewed by the Organisational Re-engineering Consultant during the third and fourth quarter based on the communication strategy.

To guarantee that the initiatives under the SSBSGC project are not duplicative of other projects and initiatives at the OPS and at the provincial level some discussions with such other projects and initiatives were commenced during the second quarter and it is essential that both the communication strategy and the organisational re-engineering strategy duly considers existing assistance and structures..



II. Project implementation challenges

Updated project risks and actions

Late disbursement of funds by the donors and continued strategic discussion on project outputs caused delays in recruitment of project staff. Initiation of activities towards project outputs was therefore delayed and a Project Manager was just recently recruited. Due to this there is a risk that the needs analysis and planning on which the current work plan is based is no longer valid. To mitigate this, the Project Manager is currently engaged in an analysis and revision of the work plan to be presented at the next board meeting and thorough needs assessments will be carried out prior to the formulation of both the communication strategy and the organizational re-engineering and capacity building strategy to ensure accordance with current needs.

Additionally, a considerable number of positions under the project still remain vacant, which risks hampering the capacity of the OPS and the quality of its productions. To mitigate this risk, focus has been maintained throughout the second quarter to ensure rapid and quality recruitment, and efforts will continue into the third quarter, including through the recruitment of the two international consultants.

Another substantial risk to the project is the deterioration of security in particularly the eastern and southern provinces, which limits accessibility to and communication with some areas. This risks decreasing the vital communication links with the provincial hubs. To mitigate this risk, the collection of security related information from different reliable sources can be used as a basis for the formulation of realistic implementation plans. Additionally, UNDP security procedures should be followed and the advice of the UNDP Security Advisor sought prior to the set up of structures in the provinces.

Updated project issues and actions

Communication with and messages to the media and the public is not coordinated among the ministries, relevant departments and agencies. The communication strategy and organisation re-engineering strategy will have to consider how to ensure the existence of a quality coordination mechanism at the national level, as well as between the national and provincial level.

The working environment at the provincial level is characterized by insufficient office space, equipment, furniture and stationary, which limits the ability of the provinces to provide quality input and convey communication from the OPS to the public. These capacity constraints will have to be approached by the project. Additionally, the number of provincial hubs envisaged needs to be assessed during the needs assessment, as provinces are presently unevenly covered and it is vital to ensure an equitable and country wide flow of information from the President to the people and vice versa on everything from security, reconstructions and development issues.

III. Financial status and utilization

Financial status

Table 1: Contribution overview [start date of the project – end date of project]

DONOR NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS		CONTRIBUTION BALANCE
	Committed	Received	
DFID	3,393,214	894,632	2,498,582
UNDP	150,000	150,000	-
	-	-	
	-	-	
TOTAL	3,543,214	1,044,632	2,498,582

Financial utilization

Table 2: Quarterly expenditure by activity

Activity	BUDGET [2008]	2 QUARTER EXPENDITURE	BALANCE	DELIVERY (%)
Activity 1 [Drafting Multi-Year Comm. Plan]	90,000.00	34,560.00	55,440.00	38.40
Activity 2 [Media Training]	754,899.75	232,034.06	522,865.69	30.74
Activity 3 [Develop of Presidential Website]	137,108.29	-	137,108.29	-
UNDP GMS 7%	62,624.16	20,066.22	42,557.94	32.04
Total	1044632.20	286,660.28	757,971.92	27.44

Table 3: Quarterly expenditure by donor [start date – end date of quarter]

DONORS	ACTIVITY (as per approved budget)	2008 Budget	Q2 EXPENDITURES 01/04/08 - 31/06/08	BALANCE as of 01/07/08	DELIVERY RATE %
DFID	Activity 1 [Drafting Multi-Year Comm. Plan]	45,000.00	34,560.00	10,440.00	
	Activity 2 [Media Training]	679,899.75	232,034.06	447,865.69	
	Activity 3 [Develop of Presidential Website]	107,108.29		107,108.29	
GMS 7%		62,624.16	20,066.22	42,557.94	32.04%
Subtotal DFID		894,632.20	286,660.28	607,971.92	
UNDP	Activity 1 [Drafting Multi-Year Comm. Plan]	45,000.00		45,000.00	
	Activity 2 [Media Training]	75,000.00		75,000.00	
	Activity 3 [Develop of Presidential Website]	30,000.00		30,000.00	
Subtotal UNDP		150,000.00	-	150,000.00	-
Total		1,044,632.20	286,660.28	757,971.92	27.44%

Annexes