



United Nations Development Programme Afghanistan

Support to the Center of Government (SCoG) [01-07-2006 – 31-12-2008]



Project ID:	00046407
Duration:	01 July 2006 January – 31 December 2009
Component of Strategic Plan (2008-2011):	Strengthening Responsive Governance Institutions
Total Budget:	USD 17,079,000
Unfunded:	USD 606,223
Implementing Partners:	Chief of Staff (CoS) and Office of Administrative Affairs (OAA) of the President and The Asia Foundation (TAF)

Table of Contents

Executive summary.....	3
I. Context	4
II. Performance review	5
Progress review	5
1. Overall progress towards the CPAP outcome and output(s).....	5
2. Capacity development	5
3. Impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries	5
Implementation strategy review.....	6
1. Participatory/consultative processes	6
2. Quality of partnerships	6
3. National ownership.....	6
4. Sustainability.....	6
Management effectiveness review	7
1. Quality of monitoring.....	7
2. Timely delivery of outputs.....	7
3. Resources allocation.....	8
4. Cost-effective use of inputs	8
III. Project results summary.....	9
1. Facilities Domain	9
2. Organisation Domain.....	9
3. Information Technology Domain	10
4. Training Domain	12
5. Administrative Work Processes Domain	13
6. Policy Facilitation Domain.....	14
IV. Implementation challenges	16
Project risks and actions.....	16
Project issues and actions.....	17
V. Lessons learnt and next steps.....	17
Lessons Leant.....	17
Recommendations	19
VI. Financial status and utilization	20
Financial status	20

Executive summary

The year 2008 mainly corresponded to the second year of the SCoG project implementation through its main contractor, The Asia Foundation. The overall achievements during the reporting period take their full significance when placed at their context.

Whereas, during 2006 professional relationships were developed and foundations for change – invisible change- were laid down, 2007 realised improvements in facilities and ICT infrastructure at CoS-OAA, provision of training and assessment of processes – tangible assets- and, finally, 2008 witnessed development and implementation of new policies, processes and procedures under all project domains and the awaited new behaviours in CoS-OAA offices.

The SCoG Project fulfilled its overall planned deliverables. The following are the major achievements of the year notwithstanding the risks and challenges detailed under section IV.

Among its major achievements have been the successful award of the construction contract under the Facilities Domain and actual start of civil works in the Presidential Palace. The progress at the end of the year reached 25 % completion of physical work and 20% of its disbursements.

Organization and Admin Work Processes Domains successfully built on the foundations laid down during the last two years (implementation of the new, Civil Service Commission compliant HR policies; implementation and refinement of software applications such as Afghanistan Financial Management Information system (AFMIS) and Human Resource Management Information System). The ICT and Training Domains provided the necessary communications technology backing and the accompanying knowledge and expertise. The major highlight of the year had been the Memorandum of Understanding between the Chief of Staff (CoS) Office and President Protective Services (PPS) to merge their IT departments for improved management.

The Policy Domain continued to be challenging in 2008. The project could however accelerate its progress during the last quarter through implementation of new initiatives: Policy Exposure Visit to International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA) University of Malaya; contracting ACRPS (the Afghanistan Center for Research and Policy Studies) on improving the policy process and decision making system; and an assessment by National School of Government, UK of the policy process from line ministries, through to the OAA and Council of Ministers Secretariat

The overall achievements took place as a result of the implementation of the annual work plan for 2008 prepared and approved prior the commencement of the year and the Project's main contractor provided throughout the year regular weekly plan and reports detailing the implementation of the project activities and outputs. Moreover, the Project Board has been normally convened two times for making by consensus management decisions regarding the implementation of the project. The first Board meeting reported on the "success stories" achieved under the project and the second Boar meeting recommended execution of some pending activities in view of smooth completion of the UNDP-TAF contract.

The two donor commissioned external evaluations of the SCoG project constituted the other highlights of the reporting year. While the weaknesses of the project implementation had been pointed out by the evaluations, both reports recommend the need for providing support to the national counterparts. The SCoG project related larger outcome evaluation had also been undertaken by UNDP. That internal document also provided insightful comments for the management of the SCoG project.

I. Context

The overall context of SCoG Project implementation remained the same. It supported the “Good Governance and Rule of Law” pillar in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy that has as its objective the improvement of public administration and implementation of civil service reform.

Moreover, the project supports Outcome 2 of the UNDAF: “By 2008, an effective, more accountable and more representative public administration is established at the national and sub-national levels, with improved delivery of services in an equitable, efficient and effective manner.”

Project resources have been applied towards the achievement of CPAP outcome 2: “The democratic state and government institutions strengthened at national and sub-national levels to govern and ensure quality public services including security with special attention to marginalised groups;” and CPAP Output 2.1: “Public sector capacity strengthened through the development of civil service at the central and sub-national levels, the establishment of accountability mechanisms and the enhancement of information management for better service delivery.”

The SCoG project implementation was based on its approved work plan (2008 Annual Work Plan further detailed in TAF 2nd Year Work Plan).

While the bulk of the project domains continued to be implemented within the framework of the UNDP-The Asia Foundation contract, the responsibility for implementing the remaining outputs of the Facilities Domain had been taken over by UNDP.

The project was aligned with the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) in that it supported the “Good Governance and Rule of Law” pillar in the ANDS that had as its objective improving public administration and implementing civil service reform.

II. Performance review

Progress review

1. Overall progress towards the CPAP outcome and output(s)

The SCoG project contributes in the achievement of CPAP outcome 2 i.e. strengthening democratic state and government institutions. Project resources are applied to ensure that the centre of government institutions are more agile, streamlined, transparent and effective in their support of the Office of President as it strives to meet its policy objectives. The project, in particular, contributes to the development of government capacity in policy coordination, policy analysis and decision making at the Centre of Government.

The main achievements in 2008 directly contributed to the realization of the CPAP outcome. This include enhancing the working capacity of the center of government institutions through clarification of their admin work processes and improvement of their working environment (physical and IT infrastructures), simplification of the main support functions (HR, Procurement, Finance etc). Moreover, the overall capacity building sessions (in country and overseas study tours) have greatly improved the working capacity of a wide range of personal (policy advice roles, civil servant coordination roles).

2. Capacity development

Capacity development was a major focus of the project. Beyond the existence of stand alone domain foreseen in the project document, capacity development had been a cross-cutting area of support in the project. Its importance had therefore been more dedicated to strengthening of overall technical working capacity of every domain in implementation of the change management.

The project facilitated and coordinated delivery of a wide range of training sessions. In 2008, 681 civil servants received English and computer trainings; 115 staff members received skills training in the framework of the Civil Service Institute. Moreover, in 2008, 2 senior staff of the CoG institutions attended the Peace Conference in Ottawa and the Executive Development Course at Harvard while 11 other senior staff benefited from a Public Policy Exposure visit in Malaysia.

Additionally, 14 staff members were sent on exposure visit to Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad. Relevantly, during the reporting period, 12 staff members participated in a technical training on IT. Also, the project facilitated participation of 11 staff to a specialized training on Human Resource management in Malaysia.

All these trainings were conducted in the framework of the second year work plan and in response to the Training Needs Assessment conducted jointly with the management of both the organizations.

3. Impact on direct and indirect beneficiaries

The primary beneficiary of this project is the Office of the President; the staff of which is better equipped and enabled to direct the activities of Government as it works to meet the urgent development needs of its citizens. The tangible initiatives such as facilities, training and ICT infrastructure are now enabling the implementation of improved work processes, better information management, and ultimately, better quality policy facilitation and decision-making. The Office of the President can and has obtained immediate benefit from the project and greater gains can be made with increased involvement of the leadership.

The indirect beneficiaries are the people of Afghanistan, who will benefit from a more efficient and cost-effective administration in the Centre of Government that can formulate and implement development policy in a manner that better meets the needs of the citizens. The benefits in the policy area will not be apparent immediately as there is a significant time-lag from strategic analysis to policy implementation, however this will reduce as staff in OAA and line ministries become more adept.

Implementation strategy review

1. Participatory/consultative processes

The SCOG project followed a participatory/consultative process from the early planning stage. The team held regular meetings with Government counterparts to ensure that the intended outputs remained consistent with Centre of Government priorities. The team prepared annual work plans in conjunction with CoG staff and these were signed off by both parties and approved by the Steering Committee. As new needs emerged or priorities unexpectedly changed, due to the very nature of the Office of the President, the team reviewed budgets and planned activities accordingly. In a few cases changes in priorities resulted in requests that were outside the scope of the project. These had to be investigated and alternative implementing mechanisms identified. The team also looked to the wider Government and NGO community to prevent reinventing the wheel and to ensure that all initiatives were consistent with overall development frameworks and policies.

2. Quality of partnerships

The project was implemented through a partnership between USAID, DFID, UNDP, The Asia Foundation, OAA and the CoS of the Office of the President. Whilst the number of parties involved may initially appear cumbersome, the combination of Donors, Administrative Agency and Executing Agency proved quite workable. As highlighted in the DFID and USAID mid-project reviews the role of UNDP as Administrative Agency created some confusion in OAA and CoS but this had no adverse impact whatsoever on the day-to-day execution of the project. Indeed, as the project progressed through its life-cycle, the quality of the partnerships improved and working relationships at the personal level strengthened.

3. National ownership

The SCoG project displayed the conscious intent to ensure National ownership of priorities, decisions and solutions. It must be acknowledged that initially our counterparts viewed ownership of assets provided through the project as a higher priority, but as the project progressed and our counterparts' awareness of their role in the change process increased, there was a much greater realisation of the importance of Afghan ownership of the actual change process itself. This was more noticeable in OAA due to the greater opportunity for personal interaction on a very frequent basis.

4. Sustainability

While the SCoG project has provided inputs across all domains, the onus is on our government counterparts to implement career progression and succession planning to ensure that institutional knowledge is both retained and transferred, and to allow for capacity development in advanced and rapidly changing fields such as ICT.

A major impediment to sustainability is the low salaries paid by the GIROA, particularly in the ICT functions. As the private sector develops it will be able to offer higher salaries than the Government, and employees seeking to improve their financial position will move from the public to the private sector.

The adage "You can't put an old head on young shoulder" is particularly relevant when considering sustainability. The SCoG project team interviewed many candidates for key positions in both CoS and OAA. On paper the majority of candidates could present acceptable qualifications

and experience, but detailed questioning and reference checking revealed that many qualifications were suspect and the skills and experience claimed were at a lower level than was required to adequately perform in the position. Many younger staff “opportunity-hop” between donor organisations, NGOs and Ministries in the interest of gaining salary increases; however this results in limited experience in a variety of disparate roles and little accumulation of either institutional or transferable knowledge and skills. Many older staff members are entrenched in senior positions and need to “unlearn” the old way of doing things and acquire new skills.

Both CoS and OAA have taken the initiative to recruit younger, well-qualified staff at the Deputy Director level. These people are computer and English-literate and have made a significant contribution to the project and their respective organisations during 2008. The combination of “old head” at Director-level supported by a “younger head” at Deputy Director-level is working well and will greatly enhance sustainability.

Management effectiveness review

1. Quality of monitoring

The project activities were set out in the Inception Report (November 2006) and the Annual Work Plans for 2007 and 2008. Weekly reports on activities carried out and activities planned for the following week were circulated to all project stakeholders. Quarterly Project Steering Committee meetings, which were chaired by UNDP, were held and any amendments to scope or funding allocations were discussed and decided upon. A Quarterly Project Report was submitted to UNDP for circulation to project stakeholders.

The only change requests referred to the Steering committee were the request for flexibility in expenditure across the domains on an as-needed basis and the request to reallocate the surplus from the facilities domain across the remaining domains on an as-needed basis. The Steering Committee approved both requests, which enabled the project to better meet the changes in priorities that emerged during the life of the project.

USAID and DFID conducted mid-project reviews in quarter 3 of 2008. These highlighted that while considerable progress had been made in five of the six project domains, the area of Policy facilitation and decision-making was particularly challenging. From June to December 2008 the project directed considerable resources towards improving the outcome in this domain, including an overseas exposure visit to INPUMA in Malaysia; an assessment of the capacity and processes in Policy by the UK National School of Government and the development of an education and training curriculum to increase capacity; and engaging the Afghanistan Center for Research and Policy Studies to conduct workshops on the policy development process.

2. Timely delivery of outputs

Project outputs were delivered in accordance with the Annual Work Plans, with the exception of an Electronic Document Management System to automate processes in the Documents and Relations Directorates in OAA and CoS. The reality is that suitable software applications are not available in the local languages and the local software development industry is in its infancy.

The procurement of goods and services and lead time for delivery introduced delay. In addition, the security requirements of the Office of the President created difficulties in both access to the Presidential Compound for project staff and sub-contractors and in delivering furnishing and ICT equipment to the Arg. The SCoG project experienced changes in the leadership in both CoS and OAA. In CoS the entire counterpart team changed during the latter half of 2006 and 2007 and the project had to adapt to the changes in personnel. In OAA the change in leadership in 2008 resulted in a minor delay in the Policy domain only.

3. Resources allocation

The budget for the SCOG project initially allocated 50 percent of the total of USD10.66 million to “hard” aspects such as Facilities and IT and 50% to Technical Assistance and capacity building across IT, Training, HR/Organisation, Administrative Work Process, and Policy Facilitation and Decision-Making.

During the reporting period and based on the early achievement of the deliverables in the Facilities domain, UNDP agreed to amend its contract with the Asia Foundation to allow them realignment of balance resources of the Facilities Domain to other domains as follows: IT 5%; Training 6%; Administrative Work Process 1% and Policy Facilitation and Decision Making 1%.

Completion of the Facilities activities by the main contractor and the implementation of international standard ICT infrastructures in OAA and CoS, enabled more focus to be directed at software applications and capacity development in Administrative Work Process improvement and Policy Facilitation.

4. Cost-effective use of inputs

A key focus of the project was to increase the capacity of Afghan team members. Local staff was recruited, coached and mentored, and as the contracts of international staff expired they were not replaced. The number of international consultants was reduced from eight in 2007 to four in 2008. The merger of the HR/Organisation and Training domains further increased the cost-effectiveness in these areas.

Where possible the project team sought to obtain the maximum value for money. Competitive tenders were carried out for all procurements except for cases where previous experience with suppliers and knowledge of local and international market prices meant that a competitive bidding process was unnecessary and would introduce delay. The team also determined that it was more cost-effective to procure certain IT equipment directly from Dubai than to buy locally. This also met security requirements and overcame the issues of handling and customs at the airport. In the HR/Training domain a competitive bidding process combined with strict quality control resulted in a group of preferred suppliers for particular courses and significant discounts on price.

To maximise the cost-effective use of inputs and broaden the capacity building within the OoP the SCOG project negotiated several training courses on a per class basis, as opposed to pricing per participant. This enabled us to offer seats in the training classes to other units in the OoP such as PPS at no additional cost to the project. The offer was also extended to other TAF projects in the GIROA, and this has now become standard practice in The Asia Foundation.

The SCoG project collaborated with several other projects; government institutions; consulting firms and NGOs to leverage existing knowledge and deliverables and to obtain the most cost-effective use of project funds. Specific examples include the IARCSC, Ministry of Information and Communications Technology and BearingPoint for the Human Resource Management Information System; Ministry of Finance for AFMIS; BearingPoint and the Ministry of Urban Development for the Council of Ministers building ICT infrastructure; the Civil Service Institute and Charles Kendall for training in procurement; and AIMS for the development of several software applications. One of the guiding principles of the SCoG project has been “re-use before buy; buy before build; and build for re-use”. Following this principle has enabled the project to avoid reinventing the wheel and where new ground has been broken, the knowledge gained and deliverables produced have been encapsulated in a manner that allows other projects in Afghanistan to re-use the SCoG work products before reinventing yet another wheel.

III. Project results summary

1. Facilities Domain

After completion of the architectural designs through TAF subcontractor, UNDP launched the process of tendering out the construction work of the CoS Admin Building.

Parallel to this, an International Site Engineer-Consultant was recruited for the oversight of the construction work as well as management of the sub-contract. As a result of the international bidding process a qualified afghan company was selected.

The contract was signed on 9th July 2008 and the contractor given access to the site for starting works on 23rd July 2009. The contractor was provided with a mobilization advance payment to engage manpower, equipment and materials. At the same time, the work program for implementation of the civil works was submitted and approved with assistance of the International Site Engineer-Consultant. The latter also set forth a method for oversight of civil works through monitoring plans and established a quality control management system including laboratory tests.

Until the end of the 2008, the RCC work (1st and 2nd stories) including Brick work and plastering work were completed up to the 2nd story level. At the beginning of the cold season, preparations for internal finishing works started (Partition wall inside the building, Electrical, Plumbing and water supply, sanitary and mechanical work).

The contractor has mobilized qualified manpower and uses the adequate quality supply including outside the country. In 2008, 3 invoices were paid. Although the financial progress of work is not up to the mark, the physical work progresses as per the target and the agreed work plan.

2. Organisation Domain

Annual target deliverables

Strengthening the Human Resources Departments of OAA and CoS.

Progress

Excellent progress has been achieved during the reporting period towards achieving year two deliverables and setting the foundation for very positive leadership attitudinal change across the Office of the President with regards to implementing sound HRM policies and procedures. Daily mentoring, coaching and frequent HR symposiums have resulted in the SCoG HR team developing strong working relationships that have assisted greatly with the achievements to date. In addition, an HR Exposure Visit was conducted in Malaysia for the HR and Senior Leadership in order to build their capacity, introduce them to modern management techniques and familiarize them with strategy and policy design for their offices. These collective efforts have acted as a catalyst to minimize the challenges that existed with "buy-in" to the benefits of modern HRM practices by some actors within OAA and CoS.

The SCoG team conducted a comprehensive HR assessment for both Offices and provided recommendations on structure and HR policies. In addition, over sixty job descriptions were prepared.

The team developed HR policies covering Grievance; Performance Appraisal; Recruitment; Leave; and Training. These were refined in consultation with the IARCSC and subsequently implemented.

The policy on Employee Recognition and Promotion was refined and is under final leadership review during the reporting period.

The SCoG project provided basic and advanced training in HR management and conducted leadership and HRM symposiums for all HR Staff to enable the HR managers of OAA and CoS to perform their functions more efficiently and effectively. Feedback from participants of such symposiums has been encouraging and level of awareness amongst OAA and CoS HR staff regarding modern HR management.

In conjunction with the Work Process and IT domains, the team introduced the MOCIT-developed Human Resource Management Information System.

The team led an HR exposure visit to INPUMA in Malaysia and five HR and senior managers from each office participated.

In addition, the team reviewed the personnel filing system in CoS and introduced a new and modern system with filing cabinets and hanging files, which has improved the filing system of CoS HR department.

3. Information Technology Domain

Annual target Deliverables

Design of the network architecture for the new Council of Ministers building; Design and implementation of the technical infrastructure of the immediate CoS and OAA office buildings; and Design, development and deployment of a software application required to support at least one key process (to be determined.)

Progress

CoS: A current state assessment of the ICT organization at CoS was completed in 2008 which highlighted the shortcomings in the current infrastructure and organization and offered solutions categorized by urgency and ease of implementation. Several solutions outlined in the assessment have been put into action.

OAA: SCoG IT team designed a complete Cisco-based network infrastructure for the OAA campus to provide connectivity between the four main buildings. Prior to deploying the infrastructure, the SCoG IT team along with a local solutions provider first tested, labeled, mapped and repaired each individual voice and data point including fiber optic throughout the OAA campus. This massive undertaking was completed after several months of difficult work and the benefits of this process included: simplified troubleshooting and maintenance; greatly improved network performance; internet bandwidth and voice communications; and the ability to properly secure and segment the network. A complete voice and data solution for the Services Department was also deployed and included wireless connectivity to the Marble Palace. Additional Cisco devices were procured and the network infrastructure deployed, providing stable, secure voice and data services to all users.

The SCoG IT team deployed a complete systems and network infrastructure, which included a secure Microsoft Windows domain that connected all OAA users; Exchange email solution; file and antivirus servers; an SQL application server; as well as ISA Server and Websense for secure, filtered web browsing. The deployment of the systems infrastructure also included the procurement and configuration of additional servers and server accessories as well as server and client software resulting in the OAA reaching 100% software licensing compliance.

To ensure that critical data and services remained accessible, the team deployed a redundant backup solution utilizing Backup Exec, which included a robotic tape library and network attached

storage, resulting in the highest levels of data redundancy. Additionally, the server room was refurbished, including the installation of air conditioning units, a high capacity electrical system with UPS battery back-up and international standard cabling and rack equipment. The IT domain also funded internet connectivity for the OAA throughout much of the project in order to ensure that email and web connectivity went uninterrupted.

CoS: The SCoG IT team designed a complete ICT infrastructure which would provide network connectivity to various entities within the ARG, including CoS. The buildings which made up the CoS campus were dispersed over a large area and had only rudimentary connectivity between them or in some cases, none at all. The SCoG team designed and deployed a Cisco-based wireless network infrastructure which provided connectivity between four of these buildings. In addition, a complete network design was prepared for the newly constructed Telephone Khana building, which houses many senior CoS staff. This design included structured cabling, Cisco devices and a state of the art server room. Upon completion of the Telephone Khana building, the server room was completely refurbished, including raised flooring and a high capacity electrical system that includes UPS and a power stabilizer.

SCoG procured several Dell servers and server room equipment including racks, PDU's and a KVM switch. In addition, Microsoft and Symantec software were procured including, 2003 Server, Exchange, ISA, as well as Symantec BackupExec, Ghost Suite and Antivirus.

After deployment of the base ICT infrastructure within OAA, the needs for HR, Finance and IT applications were identified. In cooperation with the Ministry of Communication, the SCoG team deployed an HRMIS system, provided support for the implementation of AFMIS and developed databases to support the needs of the ICT department, including asset management.

A Kitchen Pilot application was developed and deployed within CoS to support the kitchen procurement process and SCoG provided support for the deployment of HRMIS and AFMIS. In addition the SCoG managed the development of two software applications; one in the Office of Presidential Programs to better manage the President's meeting schedule, and the other in OAA to manage the history of Presidential awards and medals.

Mentor ICT managers and technical staff

The SCoG IT team provided day to day, onsite support including network, systems and helpdesk management as well as direct support to ICT management.

In cooperation with OAA ICT management, the existing ICT policy was reviewed and re-written to better suit the needs of the organisation and its greatly enhanced ICT infrastructure. Policies were put into action which enforced proper web and email usage, ensured data integrity and maintained the overall health of the ICT systems within OAA.

Automatic reports on file resource usage, internet usage, antivirus monitoring and back-up are generated daily and made available to ICT management for review. ICT management has been continuously mentored on managing and monitoring the infrastructure, as well as on security, software licensing, budgeting and standardization.

The SCoG IT staffs, with industry certifications from Microsoft and Cisco, were able to transfer knowledge to the OAA technical staff on a near daily basis. In addition to the onsite mentoring, the SCoG project arranged for CCNA trainings at a local training provider and also facilitated the travel arrangements for advanced level Siemens training for key members of the CoS ICT team. ICT management benefited from travel to the top regional technology conference in Dubai and was able to participate in seminars focusing on topics such as ICT strategic planning and security.

4. Training Domain

Annual Target Deliverables

Any training required at any level of the organization in order to improve performance (limited by the available budget.) – focus will be on intensive senior level management training, international exposure visits and middle level management training.

Progress

Where year one laid a foundation on which to build and strengthen the capacity of OAA and CoS, year two was intended to focus on job-specific skill building activities as well as continuing to provide generic training for staff at all levels. Therefore, during year two, a second needs analysis was undertaken with a tighter focus on job-specific skills for key directorates – Office of the Spokesperson, Protocol, CoS, Policy Directorates, Service, and Communications.

The primary objective of round two needs analysis was to identify, to the extent possible, functional training needs for staff throughout both organisations. In particular, its purpose was to provide a basis for a calendar of courses and learning activities as part of a year-two plan to provide generic management skills at the Civil Service Institute. It was also an objective to determine if management and staff were aware of courses and programmes offered under SCoG and the extent to which they had participated in training and development activities. Further, we wanted to obtain their feedback regarding strengths and weaknesses of the training provided and whether or not skills and knowledge learned had been transferred to the job.

English language training and Computer Skills training courses offered at both OAA and CoS were very effective and participation has steadily increased since the programmes began. Language courses offered ranged from Basic to Advanced and Conversational. Classes were held each day and participants were required to attend one to one and a half hour classes depending on their fluency levels. Computer Skills training included Windows, MS Word, Excel and Access.

Exposure visits to India and elsewhere were rated highly by all who were interviewed. While there were some difficulties related to language differences it was felt that all participants had benefited from the experience. Directors urged SCoG to continue to arrange such visits – within the region or beyond – with particular emphasis on functional groups.

During the final months of the project efforts were made to procure and organise training to deliver the curriculum of generic management skills at the Civil Service Institute. At least 100 personnel have participated in these trainings. The domain also worked closely with the HR/Organisation and Policy Domains to design and organise exposure visits to Malaysia for Human Resources and Policy Specialists to address technical and specialist training that was urgently required. A group of 12 people attended each of these visits; ten from the Office of the President, the SCoG National consultant and an SCoG translator.

In general, the impact of the Training Domain under the SCoG project has been significant. The capacity of every staff member who participated in various courses and programmes offered has been strengthened and extended. Attitudes toward training and its place in public administration have changed dramatically since the project's inception. Where courses were initially supply-driven, staff and management alike are now demanding training that is relevant and that produces an improvement in job performance. More than one thousand staff has attended English language training and computer skills training and many have progressed from entry-level to advance. This has added significant value to the operations of counterpart agencies and their Directorates. Recently demand for these courses has increased and participation levels are higher. The momentum established here should continue as long as possible.

The table below shows participation in various courses offered by the Training Domain:

Course/Training Event	Male	Female	Total Trained	Year
English and Computer	676	5	681	2008
Skills Training – Civil Service Institute	112	3	115	2008
Peace conference - Ottawa	1		1	2008
Executive Development Course, Harvard	1		1	2008
2nd Exposure Visit to ASCI – Hyderabad	14		14	2008
I.T. Technical Training	12		12	2008
Human Resource Management Exposure Visit	8	3	11	2008
Public Policy Exposure Visit	10	1	11	2008
Total	834	12	846	

5. Administrative Work Processes Domain

Annual target Deliverables

Redesigning of the key administrative work processes of the OAA and CoS office, e.g. procurement; “Quick Hit” improvements of basic office processes and procedures in the Administration wings of the CoS and the OAA.

Progress

At the request of the then Deputy Chief of Staff Administration, the SCoG team initiated the development of a small-scale pilot application in the kitchen and depot to demonstrate the benefits of computerization. The pilot was launched mid-2007 and was anticipated to require twelve weeks development effort. The pilot was a valuable learning experience for all concerned, as it highlighted the difficulties and challenges inherent in requirements definition, process and scope change, and software development. In addition, events and circumstances external to the pilot, such as security constraints, road closures, insurgent activity, VIP visits, traffic accidents and religious festivals presented considerable barriers to success. The kitchen application was approved late in 2008 and is in use after 18 months’ effort.

To facilitate improvement in the financial management processes, the team consulted extensively with the MoF and BearingPoint. This required additional hardware and networking equipment, which was provided by the IT domain. Prior to the implementation, investigation of the manner in which AFMIS was being deployed revealed that the application was of little benefit for the financial processes that preceded “request for payment”, i.e. plan, budget, allocate, requisition, procure, reconcile invoice, etc. It was agreed that the SCoG project would implement AFMIS, although the Office of the President was not initially on the MoF/BearingPoint roll-out schedule, and further investigate automation of the financial processes that are internal, i.e. are performed before submitting the request for payment to MoF. The team conducted a competitive bidding process for the development of a rudimentary financial forms automation process as a precursor to an enterprise FMIS.

In addition to AFMIS, the SCoG team facilitated the implementation of the Verifiable Payroll Project (VPP) application.

The SCoG team investigated the availability of Electronic Document Management Systems because there is significant potential for streamlining correspondence and document management in the Office of the President. Analysis of the document management process indicated that introducing scanning technology into a properly networked environment could

improve process efficiency by over four hundred percent and significantly reduce costs such as paper and photocopying, and other requirements including storage space. Two major constraints have yet to be overcome: the lack of an EDMS application in the local languages and the need for an HR strategy to address the situation where work-steps are automated and positions become surplus to requirements.

During the assessment of the Documents and Relations Directorate in OAA the office that housed the current archive was reallocated to the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate. The SCoG team refurbished a room next to the Resources Center and procured and installed a mobile shelving system that has over eight times the capacity of traditional fixed shelving. This will enable OAA to retain documents in the current archive until the historical archive building has been built inside the Arg. The mobile shelving was considerably less expensive than traditional shelving and provides greater security.

6. Policy Facilitation Domain

Annual Target Deliverables

Improvement of the policy development, analysis, and decision-making process “chain” from the originating ministries to the OAA and the CoS to the CoM; Improvement of the CoM process.

Throughout the project the policy domain proved challenging as the public policy process itself is very tortuous. It would have been ideal to cover the policy process of both the legislative and executive branches, but as per its assigned mandate the policy domain only focused on the latter.

The policy domain provided technical support to advise OAA and CoS in matters involving policy development, policy analysis, policy coordination, decision making procedures and liaison with the rest of the Government of Afghanistan.

The policy domain assisted OAA in implementation of several of the recommendations from the mapping process to streamline the policy process e.g. it developed a policy submission format in consultation with policy directors and other Ministries to ensure wider stakeholder and inter-ministerial consultation and that appropriate links have been made with existing policies, laws and regulations. This format also assists the ministries in the policy formulation process to ensure quality assurance of policy proposals and also that they are complete and able to be implemented.

The concept of Council of Ministers Liaison Officers (CLO) was further strengthened and a workshop was conducted for all policy and planning directors to introduce the new policy proposal format and define the role of the CLOs in Ministries. Later, the policy domain facilitated dialogue and roundtable between OAA and IARCSC to structuralize the CLO network within the Government Tashkeel. If it were operationalized the CLO would have provided a smoother passage for policy proposal submissions to the council of Ministers.

As the policy domain proved very challenging the SCoG team adopted different approaches to achieve its main objective i.e. to improve the policy facilitation and coordination process at the Centre of Government. The project solicited a proposal from the Afghanistan Centre for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) on how to better achieve its prime objective. ACRPS was subcontracted to support OAA on developing and introducing a new format for policy formulation, develop new policy procedures and deliver a series of workshop and training to at least 7 key ministries to teach policy-related process that are consistent, understood and managed. ACRPS is continuing to work with Ministries and OAA to identify and formulate at least one new policy using the new format. ACRPS will conduct an impact assessment of the implementation of new policy format, teaching of new policy definition and policy procedures in the next six months.

To further strengthen the policy domain SCoG project funded two policy experts from the National School of Government UK (NSG) to visit Afghanistan and conduct a Policy Scoping Study. The policy domain facilitated the study in order to assess the training needs and tools required to enable the government to enhance the process. NSG will submit a proposal for delivering an education and training curriculum covering the identified techniques and tools required to further enhance the policy process, tailored to the Afghan context.

To better equip the policy experts with policy making skills, the policy domain designed and organised a Public Policy Exposure Visit to Malaysia in partnership with the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA) University of Malaysia. Ten policy experts from OAA and CoS participated in this visit. The participants were exposed to the inner workings of the Malaysian Government with particular attention given to how government policy is formed, analysed, amended, approved, implemented, monitored and evaluated. The visit provided a comparison for participants with their own systems and procedures and they saw how their counterparts meet similar challenges in their government. Equally important, the visit also provided a foundation on which organisational and professional needs were identified as a basis for continued capacity development in the years ahead.

IV. Implementation challenges

Project risks and actions

Risks	Mitigation Strategy
Resistance to change by CoG staff.	Ensure CoG staff is involved in the redesign effort (ownership and "buy-in" are key)
Physical location of CoS and OAA affects face-to-face time.	Establish permanent on-site presence (OK for OAA, probably not for CoS.)
IT support not available.	Stage improvements to coincide with availability of IT support.
CoG staff exhibit high attrition.	Rise as an issue with project sponsor and donors.
Lack of trust and/or capacity hinders delegation of authority to line managers.	Educate and train staff to increase capacity; ensure CoG enforces accountability with delegation of authority
Lack of enterprise architecture (process, applications, data and technology) could result in ad-hoc implementation of fragmented point solutions that interface poorly, if at all.	Encourage and support IT domain in development of IT target architecture and strategy
Increased activity by insurgents could result in reduced ability to travel to/from CoS and OAA.	Monitor and adjust meeting times/locations if necessary
Impact of events such as Peace Jerga and overseas visits reduces availability of senior government executives	Have several initiatives under way all the time so that if one is constrained work can proceed on another.

Unavailability of Centre of Government Staff

Both organisations, Chief of Staff (CoS) and the Office of Administration Affairs (OAA) are engaged in highly sensitive political and administrative activities. Due to their proximity to the President, in addition to their mandated responsibilities, the President quite often assigns them to deal with emergencies and newly emerged priorities such as "Peace Jirga". This makes interaction time and/or reasonable access to the CoS and OAA leadership difficult, if not impossible.

Ongoing Staff Turnover – Key Personnel at both OAA and CoS

The change/replacement of high ranking officials, for example Chief of Staff of the President, results in changes in key positions in the Chief of Staff office, which in turn slows the pace of interaction. This resulted in a slowdown in interaction between the project team and our counterparts. The strategy of the SCoG project was to meet weekly with both the OAA and the CoS and work with a larger number of project counterparts.

Attitudinal Leadership Change

The SCoG project provides the necessary "inputs" for institutional change and strengthening, however the greatest implementation challenge to improvement of the capabilities of both organisations is clearly "attitudinal leadership change" and the acceptance of these institutional changes by the respective senior leadership. Without strong leadership commitment to the latter, positive change proved to be difficult to achieve.

Lack of Local Providers

The limited number of local vendors and service providers put the project team in a difficult position when having to make quick decisions on procurement e.g. procurement of ICT hardware and software. Over the life of the project the SCoG team developed considerable knowledge and

experience in dealing with local firms and this proved to be invaluable in increasing the quality of infrastructure implementation and reducing the lead time on implementation.

Project issues and actions

The greatest challenge towards implementation of sound HR and organizational development practices is clearly “Attitudinal Leadership Change” and the acceptance of “best practices” by the respective senior leadership.

Without strong institutional leadership commitment to the latter, positive change will be difficult to achieve. Meetings, seminars and numerous training sessions have been conducted to encourage the staff and leadership to accept change and to become involved through ownership in the process. To take advantage of the positive momentum to date and for long term results to come to fruition, continuation of the SCoG methodologies should be continued.

V. Lessons learnt and next steps

Lessons Leant

The SCoG project team documented the lessons learned in each project domain. The purpose of this documentation was to share and use the knowledge and experiences derived from the project implementation with the project team and project stakeholders to increase efficiency and effectiveness and to build on the knowledge that had already been gained by the project team. This exercise also assisted the project team to promote the achievement of the desirable project outcome and to identify remedial actions that would be taken as a result of the lessons learned. Lessons learned in each domain are listed below:

Information Technology Domain

Middle management has been generally distrusting of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), mostly because ICT staff usually present critical issues in a manner that is difficult to understand and process in layman’s terms. We should strive to educate, not only inform.

Middle management often sees any ICT project effort only in terms of being a vehicle for procurement of ICT equipment and software. Other project goals are either ignored or discounted as not being important. More emphasis on overall project goals should be stressed rather than just the “glitz” of hardware and software.

There is a widely held perception that “a database” will provide all the answers and a lack of awareness of the business process and application layers, and their role in information systems.

All ICT infrastructure (wiring, cables, network equipment, servers, software, etc.) must be regarded as “suspect” until certified as suitable and operational by independent technically competent authority. Verification is necessary. The training of ICT technical staff cannot be considered in the same context as end-user training. They are two separate areas of education, and delivery of such training is different, and requires different support facilities. The Training Domain needs to be brought in earlier, and more often.

All trained and experienced staff can get better-paying jobs outside of government, and there is the likelihood that once a person is fully trained, they will leave for better jobs. The Human Resources Domain must be brought in to mitigate staff turnover.

Organization/Human Resources Domain

The key lessons learnt under this domain are that the time spent in building relationships and trust of senior leadership is paramount to long term success. Also, widespread awareness and understanding of the relevant HR laws and regulations (Civil Service Law) is needed to ensure consistent performance.

Additionally, it has been noted that lack of delegation of authority is a constraint and leads to lengthy delays in implementation.

Finally, attitudinal change and acceptance of modern HR and organisational development must be reinforced at the highest levels of leadership on a daily basis to ensure positive change across the organisation.

Training Domain

The participatory nature of the trainings has engaged participants in the learning process and there is a much greater awareness of the importance of continuous learning at all levels of the organisation as a result.

A second lesson has to do with the volatility of the working environment and the need to be as flexible as possible when planning and implementing training activities. Supervisors and managers were initially reluctant to free up their staff for training activities, claiming that work would suffer in their absence. A means must be found to ensure that work continues uninterrupted while members of the staff attend training programs. At the same time it is important that managers be informed of the significance of training and of their responsibility to encourage staff to engage in professional development activities.

An ad-hoc selection process initially meant that the 'right staff' was not always involved in the 'right training' and we observed many participants who attended two or more training courses while the majority of employees was not given the opportunity. Better information is required in order to rationalize selection. This will ensure that no one office is without staff during training programs, and that training activities will not conflict with other priority activities.

Administrative Work Process Domain

Lack of delegation of financial authority is a severe constraint in improving processes such as supply chain management. Lack of delegation of decision-making authority combined with delegation of task results in prolonged timeframes for decisions and/or approvals.

Non-acceptance of electronic signatures precludes full automation of processes such as procurement.

Widespread education in the relevant laws and regulations (Procurement Law, Public Expenditure and Financial Management Law, Civil Service Law) is needed to ensure consistent performance of core administrative work processes.

The time needed to progress through the "awareness, interest, education, understanding" learning cycle is significant and must not be under-estimated. It is not possible to omit a stage in this linear sequence and still achieve understanding and successful implementation of an improved process.

Care must be taken when translating from English into Afghanistan's official languages .. Accurate translation requires several iterations to ensure that the context and the content are accurately translated.

Unavailability of localized (Dari/Pashto) software programs and the low level of English and computer literacy significantly increase software development time.

There is a commonly-held perception that the more signatories there are in a process, the more transparent the process, when the reverse is actually the case.

There is no HR strategy to cater for redundancy arising from roles being eliminated through process improvement and automation. In many cases generous early/voluntary retirement would be more cost-effective than keeping people on the payroll.

Policy and Decision Making Process Domains

In most cases policies have been initiated and formulated by donors with little or no participation from Afghans. Serious efforts should be undertaken to transfer the policy ownership to Afghan experts.

Policy formulation and adoption is happening in an uncoordinated manner, which creates major problems at the implementation stage. The agencies must be encouraged /taught to conduct extensive consultation at the time of policy formulation with other agencies and constituencies that might be affected as a result of the implementation of a particular policy.

Some policy objectives and implementation procedures/modalities are not clear and as a result success and failure can not be gauged properly. Therefore, efforts to make policy objectives clear should be increased.

Also, clearer and more measurable indicators, benchmarks and milestones should be developed and agreed upon with the OAA and MoE (depending on the nature of the activity) at the time of policy development.

Recommendations

It is extremely difficult to achieve sustained organisation change without daily face-to-face interactions at the leadership / sponsor levels. Therefore, short regular meetings with the project team are more effective than longer but irregular meetings.

In order to increase the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the project implementation, priority should be given to a modality with the minimum of subcontracting layers.

“Afghanization” at all possible levels should be strengthened and the capacity of Afghan counterparts should be improved to better manage the reform process and take the maximum of benefit from the external assistance while building their own institutional capacity.

Furthermore, an exit strategy should be kept in mind at all stages of project implementation and phasing our strategy of external support should be envisaged at the conception stage of future interventions.

VI. Financial status and utilization

Financial status

Table 1: Contribution overview [June 2006 – December 2009]

DONOR NAME	CONTRIBUTIONS		CONTRIBUTION BALANCE
	Committed	Received	
USAID	6,000,000	6,000,000	-
DFID	9,702,377	9,702,377	-
UNDP	770,400	770,400	-
TOTAL	16,472,777	16,472,777	-

Table 2: Funding status (as of 31 December 2008)

DONOR NAME	RECEIVED*	EXPENDITURES			PROJECT BALANCE	EARMARKED	AVAILABLE FUNDING (as of 1 Jan of 2009)	REMARKS
		Period Prior to the Reporting Year	Reporting Year Only	TOTAL				
UNDP	770,400	682,989	84,430	767,419	2,981		2,981	
DFID	9,702,377	4,818,674	1,821,006	6,639,680	3,062,697		3,062,697	
USAID	6,000,000	1,645,164	3,214,547	4,859,711	1,140,289		1,140,289	

Financial utilization

Table 3: Annual expenditure by activity [1 January 2008 – 31 December 2008]

Activity	BUDGET [year]	EXPENDITURES ¹	BALANCE	DELIVERY (%)
Activity 1: PD Formulation	7,015,741	4,648,720	2,367,021	66%
Activity 2: Leading CoG Reform	120,708	111,830	8,878	93%
UNDP GMS	362,304	359,432	2,872	99%
Total	7,498,753	5,119,983	2,378,770	68%

Table 4: Annual expenditure by donor [1 January – 31 December 2008]

DONORS	ACTIVITY (as in ATLAS)	BUDGET 2008	EXPENDITURES*	BALANCE	DELIVERY RATE (%)	REMARKS*
UNDP	Activity 1: PD Formulation	5,286	5,286	0	105%	
	Activity 2: Leading CoG Reform	75,211	79,144	-3,933		
Subtotal UNDP		80,497	84,430	(3,933)		
DFID	Activity 1: PD Formulation	4,079,291	1,712,271	2,367,021	42%	
	Activity 2: Leading CoG Reform	-	-	0		
GMS		214,699	108,735	105,964		2 different GMS rates applied
Subtotal DFID		4,293,991	1,821,006	2,472,985		
USAID	Activity 1: PD Formulation	2,931,163	2,931,163	0	103%	
	Activity 2: Leading CoG Reform	45,497	32,686	12,811		
GMS		147,605	250,698			
Subtotal USAID		3,124,265	3,214,547	-90,282		
TOTAL		7,498,753	5,119,983	2,378,770	68%	