

QUARTERLY PROJECT REPORT
3rd Quarter 2007

United Nations Development Programme Afghanistan
SEAL Project
(Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature)

July 1 to September 30, 2007



**The Afghan Deputy Minister of Finance and senior parliamentary officials
open the Meshrano Jirga payroll services bank, August 2007**

Project ID:	00043513
Duration :	February 2005-February 2008
Component (MYFF)::	Fostering Democratic Governance
Total Budget::	USD 15,501,906
Total Committed: :	USD 15,141,272
Total Received: :	USD 14,211,926
Funding Gap :	USD 306,634

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I. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

OUTPUT 1: Effective coordination and programming mechanism of support to the Parliament established

SEAL II

The SEAL 'Task Force' representing the National Assembly, the donors, UNDP Afghanistan, and the project met in June 2007 and will now be reconstituted as a UNDP "Project Board." In preparation for the next Project Board meeting (late October), and as a contribution to the development of SEAL II, SEAL senior staff reviewed the SEAL II draft proposal in late September and contributed suggestions and comments.

Development Strategy of the National Assembly

The Wolesi Jirga Secretariat has drafted a detailed strategic paper and a work plan (a similar paper is expected from the Meshrano Jirga in October/November). These will help guide SEAL activities and will help inform the development of SEAL II.

Working Group

Following the late September meeting of the donors/implementers Working Group, where little useful business was accomplished, SEAL offered to the Chair of the Working Group a dedicated SEAL staff person to assist with agenda consultations, meeting preparation, document collection, minutes and reports.

OUTPUT 2 – ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL STAFF, AS WELL AS MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT FULLY TRAINED AND FUNCTIONAL

Assembly Staff

In line with planned activity for enhancement of the legislative capacities of the Secretariat through the provision of Bill drafting and legislative analysis skills to enable the effective provision of support in these areas to the Members, the Legal & Professional Services Departments of both Secretariats continued to benefit from the daily advice provided by SEAL experts in legal and legislative research. Several advisory opinions were given during the reporting period, notable among them advice on the no-confidence vote on two Ministers of the Government and advice on the expulsion of a member of the Wolesi Jirga for unprofessional conduct. Similarly, the committee assistants of both Houses continued to participate in one-day weekly workshops of the Committee Assistants' Course drawn up by SEAL. The course is designed to be implemented on a continuing basis. It consists of seven modules. SEAL experts supervise committee assistants in this training. At the end of the training Committee assistants are expected to be able to provide better professional services to committee chairs and members. The delivery of these activities, have contributed in enhancing the effectiveness of the legislative drafting process.

Also, upon the request of the MPs, SEAL designed a four module course for the personal assistants of the Parliamentarians, to help make assistants more responsive and effective in their work. The course will be implemented in the next quarter.

Modernizing the Assembly's Financial Administration

Modernization and transparency of members' pay has now been introduced by SEAL. The pay slip system for members of the Meshrano Jirga has now been fully modernized (through a partner bank) and stabilized. The 102 senators now received pay slips on a monthly basis with full details of entitlements and deductions.

The computerized payroll system was inaugurated for the Meshrano Jirga on the 11th September 2007. The expected results of this new system include transparency and reliability in payroll processing, improved skills for payroll staff, improved knowledge for MPs and further financial modernization for parliament that can lead to great financial autonomy from government.

Opening the same day, a banking window at parliament will now facilitate the distribution of salaries of the staff of Meshrano Jirga. About 233 staff members out of 280 received their salaries for the first time through the computerized payroll and the bank system. While attempts are being made to finalize the location of this bank within the premises of the Parliament, the bank is currently operating out of the cash office, itself operational now for several months with SEAL support.

An interim semi-automated budget and expenditure tool was developed by SEAL for Meshrano Jirga. This was further customized for the use of Wolesi Jirga. Staff was trained on its use.

During the quarter, 6 auditors from the Mehrano Jirga and Wolesi Jirga took a week's training with the Comptroller & Auditor General of India to learn modern procedures in planning and conducting Audits and Risk Management.

In order to assist key Assembly managers to perform at a higher level, enhance their skills, and to promote a culture of excellence, a one week training for the Assembly senior staff for improvements of the financial & administrative systems.

As part of the planned activity to provide top management training for the Secretariat, a study trip was facilitated on Budget & Finance to the German Bundestag. The joint delegation from Meshrano Jirga and Wolesi Jirga consisted of 9 senior members of the secretariat. The study visit focused on budget formulation, planning and procedures, mechanisms for the independence of parliament from the Ministry of Finance, members' entitlements, budget and expenditure management systems, and software. The result of this training will significantly contribute in achievement of the project's second output which emphasis on capacitating both staff and members of the Assembly in their performance.

OUTPUT 3 – NECESSARY LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT IS IN PLACE

Members (and Staff)

To help create a parliamentary presence and legal environment outside the capital, SEAL assisted the Committee on Social Affairs of the Upper House to look into the state of labor and social affairs in Logar Province and to examine the problems facing people with disabilities and the concerns of the dependents of martyrs (July).

SEAL also assisted the Committee on Natural Resources and the Environment of the Upper House to look into the problem of deforestation and unregulated oil and gas exploration in Badakhshan Province (September).

With SEAL assistance in Balkh and Kunduz Provinces, the Committee on International Affairs looked into the problems of refugees (August). SEAL helped formulate follow up legislative initiatives in cooperation with the Ministry on Refugees.

These in-country field visits by committees are key activities. As well as enlarging the legal environment of parliament's work, they help to familiarize MPs (and staff) with local issues. They enable direct MP-Citizen contact. And they help citizens better understand the role of MPs and the work of parliament.

As a result of these in-country parliamentary visits, SEAL assisted Committee members and staff to better prepare for provincial missions, to improve skills in preparing quarterly legislative agendas, to improve reporting formats and workflows, and to gain valuable experience in holding effective public hearings.

Committees also improved their skills in Reports to the Plenary (finalization of reports, role of research and committee assistants, coordination with other sister committees).

In a continuing effort to help strengthen the capacity of other committees, SEAL experts were assigned to the legislative affairs and justice committees of both Houses, where in this quarter they provided assistance with the Advocates' Law, the Law on the Structure of the Judiciary, and the Administrative Code of Afghanistan. The proposed Transportation Tax Law is in Committee and being assisted with SEAL expertise.

SEAL contributions positively impact the quality of committee legislative work as well as the legal environment within which the Committees interact with the Plenary. This assistance has strengthened Committees to better understand and analyze Government bills and to propose private members' bills. Through daily presence at Committees, SEAL helps members and assistants better understand policy areas of bills and to be aware of international best practices.

To help meet Parliament's need for expert knowledge, SEAL initiated the publication of a Directory of Experts, where any commission can identify and tap any available expert in Kabul to help in the scrutiny of bills and/or determine appropriate legislative initiatives. SEAL experts also put forward several draft rules for the Administrative Boards of both Houses, among them: Proposed Uniform Rules for the Committees; Proposed Rules Governing Investigations of Government Actions; Proposed Rules on Oversight; and, Proposed Rules Governing Bicameral Conference Committees. In addition, SEAL experts continue to sit with, and offer advice to, a Special Committee in the Meshrano Jirga discussing and proposing amendments to the Rules of the House, and to the Administrative Board of the Wolesi Jirga.

OUTPUT 4 – INFORMATION SERVICES AND ICT SET UP TO PROVIDE TIMELY ASSISTANCE TO MEMBERS, STAFF, THE MEDIA, AND THE PUBLIC

Procurement of IT equipment and provision of IT services.

This quarter saw the launch of the renovation of Annex buildings to provide new, additional working space for MPs and their staff. Official renovation work for the Wolesi Jirga started in August 2007, involving a major SEAL supported ICT component. The Annex consists of three buildings, which will provide office space for six hundred people (MPs and assistants).

Work began with a preliminary 4 day detailed survey of the buildings by SEAL ICT staff and the ICT department of the National Assembly. After an updated analysis of the needs, SEAL has started to provide the IT equipment and services for the Annex buildings.

This major delivery to be carried out by the SEAL comprises installation of Local Area Network (LAN), which includes 600 data points, and installation of a PABX (telephone exchange system), which includes 300 voice points and all the related needed equipment such as Cisco Routers, Cisco Switches, Cisco Firewall, Servers, and Wireless Access points.

During this quarter, the procurement process for the installation of LAN and PABX was finalized and the service provider selected to carry out the installation. This project will last for three months, through the next quarter. In addition, 300 UPS have been provided to the National

Assembly. This delivery complemented provision of 300 Desktop computers which were already provided in earlier quarters.

The expected results of this significant commitment to equip the Annex building with communications technology include state of the art communications systems for all Wolesi Jirga MPs and their staff, with the subsequent ability to communicate with others including fellow parliamentarians, citizens, government, NGOs.

Training

To strengthen the managerial and technical skills of the Assembly ICT department, SEAL organized a training program on Network Security and Project Management. Six staff members participated - five from the ICT department of Parliament and one from the ICT component of SEAL as facilitator. The main goal of the program was to train the ICT staff on the effective use and configuration of the core ICT and related security equipment and to enhance the managerial skills of the ICT staff. The training took place from 10 - 20 July 2007 at Multimedia University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In the framework of SEAL's commitment to building the computer literacy of MPs, a basic training program for women MPs was organized in the UNIFEM resource center. The programme continued during the quarter. The training focuses on the basics of computer software.

Technical Advice

SEAL helped the Assembly ICT department to draft its annual work plan. The plan clarifies funding resources and particular activities with timelines. The plan gives a clear idea of the activities that will be carried out by the ICT Department of the National Assembly and the SEAL project to help to eliminate the possibility of unplanned activities. The plan also provides a blueprint for the ICT department for annual activities, expenditures, and the budget allocation for the department.

OUTPUT 5 – EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INFORMATION, AWARENESS, AND PARLIAMENT OUTREACH STRATEGY DESIGNED AND IMPLEMENTED

SEAL continued to assist the National Assembly's Information and Public Relations Departments to disseminate useful information to the people of Afghanistan. These activities included publications, broadcasting, the parliament-media forum, and parliament-civil society meetings. Together these activities helped raise public awareness and understanding about parliament.

Civil Society

SEAL has continued to facilitate Parliament CSOs interaction. The parliament –civil society group met on September 27. The information exchange included committees of the Wolesi Jirga informing civil society organizations about their achievements on the prisoners' situation, women's right, and denunciation of mass graves discovered in northern Kabul. These regular meetings continue to result in useful civil society information and advice to MPs and their committees. The meetings also help civil society leaders better understand parliamentary work and priorities.

Youth

In line with SEAL's objectives to establish and provide follow-up support to the first Afghan Youth Parliament, SEAL has assisted the members of the AYTA to form and discuss issues such as education problems, poppy cultivation, high prices of fuel & gas, and the impact of current efforts of the Government to maintain security in the country.

It was also planned in this quarter to support participation of a group of Afghan Youth parliamentarians in the "Global Youth Summit" in New York. However, due to difficulties in obtaining US visas, the delegation could not attend the event.

Provinces Profile Pilot

As part of the planned activity to expand parliamentary outreach to the subnational level, after preliminary discussions and planning with the relevant Wolesi Jirga committee, approval was received to put in place a pilot Parliamentary Resource Centre (to include a library) in one of the provinces to increase public awareness and access to parliament. Establishment of the resource centre will be carried out in the upcoming quarter. It is expected that this resource centre will provide many opportunities for expanding parliament's linkages with constituencies and enhancing citizens' understanding of the role of their representatives.

OUTPUT 6: PARLIAMENT SET-UP AND OPERATIONAL COSTS MET

While parliament's first year of activity is now over, the project continues to provide support to basic running costs, again in this quarter, including building rental, security operation costs, transport, and logistics.

OUTPUT 7: MANAGEMENT TEAM FULLY OPERATIONAL

Audit

During the quarter, as part of UNDP planned activities, an external audit firm conducted an audit of the SEAL Project. Project staff, with CO colleagues, gathered the requested information to meet audit requirements. The SEAL response to the draft Audit Report and the final report will be prepared in the next quarter.

New Project Manager

The Project Manager left at the end of his contract on 17 July. The new Project Manager took up duties in the fourth week of September. In the interim, the Deputy Project Manager acted as Officer-in-Charge.

New Unit Heads

The appointment of national heads of units to support Assembly Capacity Building, Public Outreach and ICT were important steps in opportunities for national staff to gain professional development, mentoring, and future experience for longer term SEAL capacity building. Recruitment of a Programme Assistant in the SEAL Finance and Administration Unit will strengthen capacity there.

International Staff

Recruitment of two women candidates for Technical Adviser Public Outreach and Technical Adviser Capacity Building was successful (both are due to join in November).

The position classification of international Finance Advisor was reviewed in the light of the position's enlarged responsibilities.

II PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

Updated project risks and actions

Deteriorating security environment – immediate risks to parliament and project

The difficult security situation in the country as a whole and the deteriorating security situation in Kabul remain the most immediate challenges to the implementation of the project. Violence and the threat of violence to Afghan civilians, to foreigners and to symbols of State authority (e.g. police, army) challenge the project goal of helping to establish a well functioning parliament, well connected to and respected by citizens in every region.

Insecurity in the capital includes the threats to the premises and precincts of the National Assembly (including the nearby SEAL office) and the challenge to provide a secure environment for MPs, Assembly staff, SEAL staff, visitors, and parliamentary work.

Actions taken: To help address security risks, SEAL assisted the National Assembly Security Department in developing, organizing, and conducting a range of security trainings. SEAL also provided and installed 10 security cameras in the parliament compound and replaced damaged security equipment. SEAL coordinated and helped share security related information among the Security Department of Parliament, UNDSS, other UN agencies, NATO-led ISAF, the Afghan National Security Department, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Defence. SEAL also planned, coordinated, monitored, and evaluated crisis and emergency preparedness measures in support of the National Assembly's Security Department. SEAL procured essential equipment, furniture and electronic material for the Parliament Security Department at the end of the quarter.

Personnel challenges: Retention of staff has been a challenge throughout the Project (due in part to competition and poaching within the international community).

Actions taken: Some progress was made in this quarter in finding international staff for vacant positions (Project Manager, and selected candidates for 2 Technical Advisor positions). Other positions remain vacant and our recruiting efforts are on-going.

Updated project issues and actions

Participation of women- immediate, on going

Advancing toward UN and other norms of women's participation and gender equality are challenges for both the Parliament and for the SEAL Project itself. Parliamentary delegations for trips abroad were formed in this quarter, with no women participants.

Actions taken: The participation of women in parliamentary work was addressed at the end of the quarter with requests to parliamentary leadership to ensure the participation of women in delegations abroad. Specific requests were made for women to the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Geneva, the planned delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Association, and a study visit to India.

Resistance to coordination- ongoing challenge

Relations with other implementers of projects that support parliament, especially the USAID funded SUNY project, remain a challenge. SEAL team members report poor information sharing from SUNY at the regular bi-weekly Working Group meetings, and a competitive approach by SUNY. The Working Group meetings themselves are poorly prepared, poorly run, unproductive and do little to generate the discussions necessary for implementer coordination.

Actions taken: In order to address the issue, as mentioned above SEAL has offered a dedicated secretary to assist the secretary generals in overall management and coordination of the working group meetings.

III. FINANCIAL STATUS AND UTILISATION

FINANCIAL STATUS

Table 1: Contribution Overview

Donor	Contributions		Contribution Balance
	Committed	Received	
France	2,884,923	2,884,923	0
Italy	1,204,819	1,204,819	0
EC	3,618,818	2,895,054	723,764
SIDA (Sweden)	1,277,139	1,277,139	0
UNDP - 01	643,757	643,757	0
Germany	2,671,819	2,466,237	205,582
Denmark	2,000,000	2,000,000	0
CIDA	1,052,632	1,052,632	0
TOTAL	15,353,907	14,424,561	929,346

FINANCIAL UTILIZATION.

Table : 2 : Quarterly Expenditure by Activity (1st January 2007 to 30th September 2007) *

Activity	Budget 2006	Quarter - 3 Expenditure	Quarter- 3 Expenditure (Cumulative)	Balance	Delivery %
ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)	908,594	211,431	863,071	45,523	95%
ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)	249761	20,841	93,187	156,574	37%
ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)	743,307	194,720	738,392	4,915	99%
ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	972,567	100,680	638,468	334,099	66%
ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)	358,333	67,145	144,960	213,373	40%
ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	1,203,823	229,654	848,922	354,901	71%
UNDP GMS (as per Donor agreement) **	233,494	43,393	175,105	58,389	75%
TOTAL	4,669,880	867,863	3,502,107	1,167,773	75%

Table 3 : Quarterly Expenditure by Donor (1st January 2007 to 30 September 2007) *

DONOR	Activity	2007 Budget	Quarter - 3 Expenditure	Quarter 3 Cumulative Expenditure (01.01.07 to 30.06.07)	Balance as on 30.06.07	Delivery rate (%)
00078 - CIDA	ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)	157,493		107,264	50,229	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)	743,307	141,343	738,392	4,915	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	99,199	93,564	99,199	-	
	GMS (5 %) **	52,632	12,364	49,729	2,902	
Sub total - CIDA		1,052,631	247,271	994,585	58,046	94%
00095 - DENMARK	ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)			0	-	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)		6,125	0	-	
	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	469,412	71,150	469,412	-	
	ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)	92,773		20,001	72,772	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	326,442	32,099	260,245	66,197	
	GMS (5 %) **	46,770	5,757	39,456	7,314	
Sub total - DENMARK		935,397	115,130	789,113	146,283	84%
00112 - FRANCE	ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)	309,080	(4,589)	309,925	(845.28)	

	ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)	28,187		28,187	-	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)			0	-	
	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)		(74)	0	-	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)			0	-	
	GMS (5 %) **	17,751	(245)	17,795	(44)	
Sub total - FRANCE		355,018	(4,909)	355,907	(890)	100%
00117 - GERMANY	ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)	446,550	216,020	445,882	668	
	ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)	217,045	20,841	65,000	152,045	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)		47,251	0	-	
	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	505,382	29,604	169,056	336,326	
	ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)	263,333	67,145	124,959	138,374	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	374,695	103,991	374,695	0.40	
	GMS (5 %) **	95,106	25,519	62,084	33,022	
Sub total - GERMANY		1,902,111	510,370	1,241,677	660,434	65%
00280 - EC	ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)			0	-	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)			0	-	
	GMS (5 %) **		-	0	-	
Sub total- EC		-	-	0	-	

00555 - SIDA	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	-		0	-	
	ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)			0.0	-	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	403,487		114,783	288,704	
	GMS (5 %) **	21,236		6,041	15,195	
Sub total - SIDA Total		424,723	-	120,824	303,899	28%
Grand Total		4,669,880	867,863	3,502,107	1,167,773	75%

*The financial figures match the ATLAS expenditure reports, but line items have been manually adjusted in anticipation of journals that are pending to be posted.

** GMS added manually