



## QUARTERLY PROJECT REPORT [Q1, 2007]

**United Nations Development Programme  
Afghanistan  
Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature (SEAL)  
01-04-2007 – 30-06-2007**



Representatives of the State at the *Combating Corruption* conference organized by the National Assembly/SEAL

Project ID:	00043513
Duration:	<u>Feb 2005 – Feb 2008</u>
MYFF Component:	Policy Support for Democratic Governance
Total Budget:	US\$ 15,501,906
Total Commitment :	US\$ 15,141,272
Total Received :	US\$ 14,211,926
Funding Gap:	US\$ 360,634

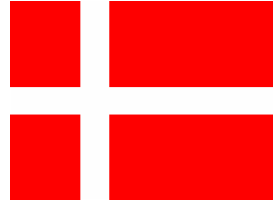
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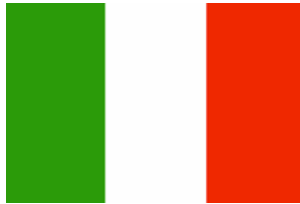
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## **Project Manager's Introduction**

### *Current work*

The quarter which has just passed has been marked by some excellent achievements, as outlined in the following pages. One notable example was the commendable way in which the Houses of the Assembly, supported by the UNDP-administered *Support to the Establishment of the Afghan Legislature* (SEAL) project, have dealt with the National Budget. The comparison with last year could hardly have been starker. Improvements to the Budget process can and will be made; but this is an excellent example of progress by the Assembly, assisted by SEAL.

This report covers the end of the original time span of the project, February 2007. We have come to recognise that the project as conceived in 2004 was overambitious. While magnificent progress has been made in supporting the National Assembly, much work remains to be done to assure a fully functioning institution. A project extension of one year was negotiated over the period of the report therefore, and the project end-date is now February 2008. No additional funding was required. This extension will provide the opportunity both to complete outstanding work, and to plan carefully for the future.

The top priority for current work is the progressive professional development of Assembly staff development in all areas. The staff require careful nurturing; wherever possible, conditions to attract and retain the best staff need to be created; cultural sensitivity needs to be demonstrated in all that the international community do in collaboration with the Assembly. At the same time, the door on modernism, transparency, gender respect, and widening democratic horizons, which has been opened by SEAL personnel working in the Assembly needs to be pushed further ajar. This can only be achieved by steady and thorough pressure, sustained with patience, and with the full cooperation of our Afghan partners. Where these conditions are not met, progress is most unlikely to be sustainable. This priority does not imply any reduction in support to parliamentarians, whose development will continue to be a major focus for SEAL activity.

In order to achieve our project objectives, it continues to be essential to achieve the right mix of international and national expertise within the project. This 'mix' will change from time to time. The present project conditions in which large capital investment is tailing off, provides us with the opportunity to lay renewed emphasis on the activities of our national colleagues. International colleagues have done a good job in training their counterparts, and that experience, combined with the innate capacities of our present national colleagues, can undoubtedly be utilised at a higher level. Progress in the selective transfer of management and programme responsibility from international to national colleagues within the project over the next 12 months will be made.

### *Future activity*

It is virtually certain that a similar project to SEAL will be required from March 2008. The rate of change will depend on the National Assembly's willingness and ability to adopt a 'stand-alone' approach to its activities, including the implementation of modern, transparent and fully accountable funding arrangements. Judgements about the success of this process will, in turn, determine the content of a successor project. While a major change of direction will not be appropriate, mapping some incremental changes is possible.

First, SEAL should move away from providing large capital investments in ICT, office environment, and security beyond the end of this project phase. The Assembly security forces have been equipped; the main buildings have been completed; the new MPs' office block should be substantially finished this year. Where a new building is required (a Senators' office building or a new Training Centre, for example) this should be budgeted for and paid in full by the Assembly itself. It cannot be emphasized

too strongly that one of the most urgent tasks faced by the Assembly is to modernise its financial administration (a task for which SEAL is providing support), to master the task of budgeting in accordance with its needs, and to ensure appropriate funding from the Government.

Second, the focus of a future project should be largely on what is called 'capacity development', the capacity of the staff and Members to carry out the 'core' business of the Assembly – the scrutiny and creation of proposed legislation, and the oversight of the Government. Of course this is a strong theme in the project currently, but it requires strengthening. Afghanistan has no recent parliamentary experience, and in this highly specialised area therefore it will be necessary to recruit good calibre international staff.

In addition to seeking appropriate adjustments inside the project, and while planning a new project for 2008 onwards, SEAL needs to take a careful look at what its future relationship with the Assembly might be like.

The objective of SEAL activity is designed to enable the Assembly to undertake the full range of its mandate with minimal external support. This applies equally to the 'support services' provided to the Assembly, including ICT, security, public outreach, HR, finance, administration, and procurement; as well as to the Assembly's 'core business': legislation and Government oversight. The particular challenges associated with the latter however mean that assistance for these Assembly's functions is likely to be required for longer than for the support services. Nevertheless, in no area of parliamentary support services is the present situation yet fully satisfactory. Where there are deficiencies in support services, therefore, it would be inappropriate to seek to change the existing direct implementation modality (DEX) in terms of engagement between the Assembly and SEAL.

At the same time, it will be most important that in devising a post-2008 project, the drafters construct a project document which anticipates the rolling back of support in these areas of activity as the Assembly's services are gradually strengthened, enabling the reduction of international support. Milestones will need to be established in any new project to help measure programme competence in these areas, and good progress will presage an eventual move from direct to national implementation (NEX). This process will certainly be an evolutionary one and not sudden. The Assembly's support services will require support beyond the end of this project phase, but the nature of that support will change depending upon the progress reached in respective areas. This process of change will begin in the present year.

The progress achieved in the initial two years of the project, and in this quarter, should give us cause for optimism for the future. There is little reason—aside from a catastrophic collapse in Afghanistan's security—why the pace of the National Assembly's progress cannot be maintained. It will need appropriate support from the international community however for some years to come.

**Dr John Patterson**

**Chief Technical Advisor and Project Manager  
UNDP/SEAL  
April 2007**

## **I. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES**

### **UPDATED PROJECT RISKS AND ACTIONS**

#### *Security*

No new risks were identified during the reporting period, however, the project does not underestimate the threat represented by a possible surge in security incidents and instability in Kabul and in Afghanistan at large. Against the background of uncertainty about national security, and recognising the negative implications for democratic institutions of a security lapse in the Assembly, SEAL continues to maintain a steady focus on strengthening and maintaining the body's physical and personal security. With this in mind, and under the direction of the Security Advisor and the National Associate, SEAL has developed security rules, regulations, and related procedures for the Assembly.

During the reporting period, SEAL also sponsored a visit by key members of the Assembly's Security Department to the Bundestag in Berlin for training in all aspects of security as applied specifically to parliaments. Further in-country training by ISAF is planned. These efforts, combined with continued provision of training activities and capital investments have resulted in a step-change improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of security arrangements at the Assembly during this quarter. However, improvements will continue to be made. Evaluation of the security situation, and identifying and providing relevant training, is a continuous process. To assist in this process, the project is developing and maintaining a variety of contacts with other parliaments who will be potential 'training hosts'

#### *Fiscal Autonomy of the Parliament*

The apparent incapacity of the Assembly in the present year to fund its activities fully is unsatisfactory. SEAL expects this situation to be addressed in future years in order to ensure that the Assembly can fund such basic operational areas as ICT and office environment independently of the project.

Currently SEAL is working to ensure that the Secretaries-General are specifically involved all SEAL work, particularly where sensitive issues or heavy expenditures are involved. In a hierarchical institution only top leadership support will ensure 'delivery'. Additionally, in the period covered by this report, SEAL spent a significant amount of time evaluating how to develop the basic administrative capacities of the Assembly. While this area has not been a priority until now, the administration of the Assembly requires to be modernized urgently if it is to support a fully functioning Assembly, and to command respect and confidence nationally and internationally. Consequently, SEAL has begun to collaborate closely with the Finance and Administrative Departments of both the Houses to help the Assembly to implement sustainable, modern administrative systems. A multi disciplinary Working Group has been set up under the auspices of the Secretaries-General including the staff of the departments, and SEAL staff. The initial focus is to modernize the financial systems of the Houses, starting with the human resources and payroll function. This work will increase the efficiency and integrity of the Finance and HR Departments. It is likely that modernizing the entire administration of the Houses will take not less than two years.

### **UPDATED PROJECT ISSUES AND ACTIONS**

#### *Extension of project timeline to 29 February 2008*

The need was identified to extend the project by one year to February 2008. The original project had been designed to last until February 2007. Sufficient funds for a third year were available however and, more important, the disappearance of SEAL would have caused major operational difficulties for

the Assembly in its present state. The concept of a two year project was overly optimistic and this was recognised by the major UN Evaluation Report of late 2006.<sup>1</sup>

Stakeholders were requested to agree to the project's extension for another year. They did so, and several also took the opportunity to stress the need for continued support beyond 2007. While over-dependence on substantial international assistance must and will be avoided, progressively more targeted support will be required by the Assembly for a considerable period of time to come. As the National Assembly was not in existence in 2005, when the original project document was signed, a particularly pleasing aspect of the new 2007 extension document was the inclusion, as a signatory and the UNDP/SEAL's major partner, of the National Assembly as a representative body of the Government of Afghanistan.

A proposed programme of work for the extension year was required as an integral part of the project extension document. This was formulated as the 2007 SEAL Annual Work Plan (formally a separate requirement) and was produced to time. The programme, which covers all the present activities of the Project, is, rightly, an ambitious one and was shared in draft with the co-signatories prior to finalisation. It is worth stressing that full delivery of the works outlined there will, in several significant cases, such as support for the MPs' office building, depend upon the prior performance of our Assembly partners.

#### *Relocation of SEAL Office to Kart-e-Char*

In February, the SEAL Project Office was moved from Wazir Akbar Khan to Kart-e-Char within easy walking distance (100 metres) of the National Assembly. This was made possible by an easing of security restrictions by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security. The rationale for the move was based primarily on the need to strengthen proximity, avoid the lengthy and disruptive journeys between the Office and the Assembly, and, overall, to demonstrate SEAL's strong commitment to our client. The Assembly is chronically short of space, and SEAL is planning to offer space in the new office for the Assembly's use in terms of training and other activities, including English lessons for MPs and Senators when security permits. The move also meant a very substantial saving in current costs for the office. The change was disruptive and would have been difficult to manage without the modest facilities of the SEAL Parliamentary Office. It is a tribute to all SEAL staff that during the move there was no diminution in the service provided to the Assembly.

#### *ICT Department*

The lack of an efficient organization structure, a permanent management head, and problems of motivation and dedication in the staff in the Assembly's ICT Department have proved major obstacles to SEAL making progress on many of its initiatives. Despite these problems, the SEAL ICT team continued to support the staff closely in the development of a variety of plans, policies and procedures for the proper management of the ICT infrastructure. Towards the end of the quarter, a new and permanent ICT Director for the Assembly joined and this is a very welcome development.

#### *Study Visits*

The SEAL project has identified the need to ensure that Assembly commissions recognize the value of the learning opportunity provided by study visits abroad. While SEAL encourages commissions to travel, it is now making commission chairmen and staff justify each travel proposal against rigorous and pre-set standards. This will help build capacity, result in a greater sense of achievement on the part of the participants, deepen their expertise and professionalism, and ensure value for money for the project. Use 'employee agreement forms' in which staff traveling undertake to repay the costs of trips if they leave within a period of 2 years after the visit. This encourages them to hold SEAL sponsored visits at the correct valuation.

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<sup>1</sup> Circulated to all stakeholders.

The project has decided to hold pre-travel briefings as a routine to cover all aspects of travel including the role of an unofficial 'ambassador' for Afghanistan. Arrangements may be a 'closed book' to many participants, and many will also not anticipate what cultural and other norms to expect in a foreign country. The risk of embarrassment, anger, and confusion will be minimized by such a session.

Where possible, the project seeks to maximize the use of in-country facilities and local trainers where possible. This has paid rich dividends in the quality of learning and the ease of delivery.

## **II. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS**

During the quarter under review, the following activities were implemented in accordance with the SEAL workplan, thus contributing to progress achieved against the project outputs.

### **OUTPUT 1: ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND PROGRAMMING MECHANISM TO SUPPORT THE ASSEMBLY**

The immediate availability of a SEAL representative inside the Parliament due to the establishment of the SEAL parliamentary desk with the Secretary-General of the Lower House in late 2006, has substantially improved the communication and planning processes with Members and staff. The interpretation/translation team has been added to the rotation recently.

*Strategy for the House.* In March, His Excellency Younus Qanooni, the President of the Lower House (Wolesi Jirga), requested SEAL's assistance in producing a draft strategy which encompasses all the key capacity building activities that will be required if the House is to develop over the years ahead. The request is an indicator of the strong collaborative relationship and exchange between the House and SEAL. This was delivered in early April in accordance with the agreed timetable. The strategy represents a preparatory step to feed into the creation of the National Assembly's full corporate plan and final strategy (which will of course encompass the Upper House as well).

*Working Group meetings.* Regular WG meetings continued on a bi-weekly basis throughout the quarter to avoid duplication or gaps in parliamentary support activities of the stakeholders (including donors and Assembly representatives) and to ensure the progress of the National Assembly's Training Plan.

### **OUTPUT 2- BUILDING THE CAPACITIES OF SECRETARIAT STAFF AND ASSEMBLY MEMBERS**

#### *National Budget*

So far as the 'core' business of the Assembly is concerned, the successful passage of the National Budget process was the undisputed highlight of this reporting period, demonstrating the successful implementation of one of the basic functions of the Assembly. In contrast with 2006, the Assembly capitalized on the allotment of ample time and opportunity for capacity building support from SEAL to plan budget analysis and training activities in a timely and systematic manner. The efficiency of the Assembly process in 2007 represents a very substantial improvement on last year's efforts. The Assembly achieved their successful work within the context of a new, SEAL-sponsored Budget Research Unit, providing and planning and budget support to both Houses. The unit includes staff drawn from the Research Departments of both Houses, Committee Assistants of the Budget Commissions, SEAL staff, and national and international experts as required. SEAL provided the unit, and all the relevant subject and budget commissions, with detailed analyses of the draft budget, support for the hearings at which Ministers and senior officials gave evidence as well as for key reports. The final reports of the two Budget Commissions to the Houses, the preparation of which was also supported by SEAL, consolidated the views of the various sectoral (subject) commissions and

provided the key base of plenary discussions. The BRU will extend technical and administrative support to the budget commissions of both Houses throughout the year.

#### *Capacity Development of the National Assembly Commissions*

SEAL has continued to provide strong routine support for the National Assembly commissions through the 'interlocutor' system, as described in the report for the third quarter of 2006. At the start of the new Assembly Session, the number of commissions in the Meshrano Jirga dropped from 16 to 13 and back to 16. The number in the Wolesi Jirga stayed the same at 18. The present support arrangements have been sufficiently flexible to cope with these changes and to help minimise duplication of international support. SEAL presently supports 10 committees in the Wolesi Jirga and 11 in the Meshrano Jirga.

SEAL has conducted a series of seminars to four commissions in the Meshrano Jirga and seven in the Wolesi Jirga covering important basic subjects such as rule making, investigations in aid of legislation, exercising the oversight function, the Constitution and the Budgetary process. In addition, the main capacity building sessions held for the Members and the Secretariats include training on regional consultations, programme-building, reporting, gender issues, oversight, strategic work plans, and the relationship between the government and the Assembly. Specific budget training programs offered during the reporting period to the budget commissions of one or both of the Houses included: analysis of the draft 1386 National Budget; the mandate, structure, objectives of the Budget Research Unit; the budget process; preparation of the Annual Work Plan of the Budget Commissions; briefing on the Afghan National Budget and related budgetary issues; support to the budget commissions in organizing and preparing hearings on the sectoral budgets with Ministers, Deputy Ministers and senior Ministry officials, and support to the preparation of the reports on specific sectors based on the hearings by the Budget Commissions. Additionally, cross-cutting gender analysis training on the Budget, and amendments raised, was provided to the Commissions on Gender of both Houses, and for the Gender Forum (a group of female parliamentarians who meet on a weekly basis and are supported primarily by UNIFEM).

The ability of the commissions to work effectively and to carry out basic functions efficiently rests largely on their staff. A group of 12 staff committee assistants were sponsored for intensive training in the French Parliament for two weeks in February and accompanied by Ms Enie Wesseldijk, Senior Parliamentary Expert of France resident in Kabul. Through a combination of seminars, lectures and practical exercises, this group was trained on various subjects including: drafting a member's bill, drafting amendments, information for inclusion in the 'President's file', and preparing legislative reports. A series of training modules were conducted in Kabul for commission assistants including: the role of the commission in the law-making process; familiarization with the Rules of Procedure; roles of the Commission Assistants; mechanics of conducting a commission meeting/hearing and; essential skills in dealing with the public. A total of 28 committee assistants from Meshrano Jirga, and 36 from the Wolesi Jirga received this training.

SEAL continues to finance successful English language training for the Members of the Assembly through the British Council. Consideration is being given to providing this training in the new SEAL Project Office where there is suitable space until the new Assembly Training Centre is completed. Stringent security measures will be required however.

#### *Overseas Study Visits and Training*

During the quarter, SEAL sponsored successful visits by the International Affairs Committee of the Meshrano Jirga to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to examine and address the worsening situation of Afghan nationals and refugees in those countries. Based on the commission's findings, the Minister of Education was invited to the Meshrano Jirga and there gave a commitment that the Government would facilitate the construction of two schools for Afghan refugee children, one in Tajikistan (named

Samanian) and one in Uzbekistan, which concretely demonstrates the usefulness and applicability of such visits. SEAL also sponsors delegations of senior Members to appropriate conferences abroad, and during the quarter facilitated an eight member delegation of both Houses to New York to participate in the conference, 'Violence against the Girl Child' in cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

#### *National Assembly Provincial Visits*

SEAL's initiative, 'Bringing Parliament to the People' began in the last quarter with a visit of the Social Affairs Commission to Herat. This initiative gives a high priority to commissions wishing to undertake routine and meaningful missions to the provinces, and has established an opportunity for the commissions to conduct provincial visits. This initiative provides vital professional information and exposure to the commissions in the current absence of any budget provision. The higher the visibility of the commissions in the country, the higher will be their credibility and that of the Assembly itself. During these visits, the commissions conduct public hearings in provincial venues, take evidence from local witnesses, make inspections, meet local people, conduct local consultations, engage communities and civil society organizations, and in due course, are required to submit a report to a plenary session of its House. During the reporting period, a visit was organized for Members of the Defence Committees of both Houses to Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Herat with the assistance of ISAF, to assess the security situation and undertake local consultations. SEAL staff accompanied this mission, which also included a substantial TV, radio and other media presence. Several commissions have expressed the desire to conduct similar provincial visits and it is expected that demand will only increase. For example, plans have been drawn up by the Commission of the Disabled & the Widows, for visiting Mazar-e-Sharif to conduct public hearings on the state of the disabled, and to engage civil society organisations. It is intended that this component will be wound down after the commissions to have been trained and the Assembly has time to make provision for the commissions directly from its own budget.

#### *Building up Parliamentary Support Departments*

SEAL completed a thorough study and documentation of the current workflow processes in the Finance and Administration Departments of the Houses in the course of this quarter. The study included thirteen major recommendations for improvement and modernisation of outdated systems of work in the Assembly's Finance and Administration Departments. These recommendations were presented to the senior management of the Secretariats and were accepted in principle by both Secretaries-General. The recommendations focus upon simplifying procedures, quantifying and reducing the duplication of work, and increasing the speed and accuracy of financial transactions. One major recommendation is the integration of a number of departments responsible for core financial transactions to establish unified, transactional units. These units will provide much needed rigour, eliminate slack in the workflow processes, and encourage the creation of an 'accountability mentality'. The most urgent initiative was the modernisation of the Human Resources and Payroll function because of the disproportionately high level of resources consumed currently by the Finance and Administrative Departments of the Houses in calculating and paying salaries manually. SEAL has evaluated various approaches to installing an appropriate alternative HR & Payroll system. The work is being steered by a working group consisting of representatives from the HR, ICT and Finance Departments. It is anticipated that an appropriate, modern system will be installed; staff trained; and links with a banking system forged within a year. This will result in the reduction of errors, and will help to bring a much higher level of accountability and transparency to Assembly financial transactions than is possible with the present system.

A number of specific initiatives based on the recommendation of the study have already been supported as follows: organization of a month-long, intermediate-level course on MS EXCEL to all staff of both Finance Departments; development of a so-called 'interim semi-automated electronic tool' to track aggregate budget and expenditures of both Houses pending implementation of the modern

financial system envisioned; development of a formal cash scheduling system for disbursing salaries in the Meshrano Jirga, endorsed by the Secretary-General and to be followed by all Departments; establishment of cash offices with safes for storage and distribution; creation of cash register books for the cashiers to improve controls over money; development of an audit plan for the Audit Offices to ensure that the cash-offices are properly controlled and to enable regular reconciliation of physical cash against the balances indicated in the cash-register; and support to the Secretaries-General in drafting official advisory circulars about the initiatives outlined above.

Various specialized training programs for the parliament security personnel, both in-country and abroad have been implemented by SEAL, including training presentations to the heads of the Assembly Security Department sub-departments covering *Planning Security*, *Technical Security Arrangements*, *Organizing the Security of the Assembly*, *Personnel Movement Control*, *Security Analysis and Risk Assessment*, *Personal Security of Designated Individuals*, and *Manpower Procedures*. SEAL has also assisted the heads of the sub-departments in planning processes for certain organizational restructuring and procedures. Together with the Director of the National Assembly's Security Department, SEAL conducted a small arms shooting exercise in order to enhance the troops' self confidence in weapons' handling.

A training course was conducted in the Bundestag for key security personnel in all aspects of the security as they apply specifically to parliamentary situations and premises. An important outcome is that the officers who have been trained abroad have subsequently 'custom-developed' an in-house training course for Security Department colleagues.

The dissemination and exchange of security related relevant information to a number of partners has been co-ordinated: the Security Department of the Assembly; UNDSS & other UN agencies; NATO-led ISAF; the Afghan National Department of Security; the Ministry of the Interior; and the Ministry of Defence. SEAL has also played an important role in planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating crisis and emergency preparedness measures in support of the National Assembly.



To complement these training steps, SEAL procured for the Security Department much needed police equipment including: riot control gear for 100 troops, explosive detectors, antenna and an solar power system for the VHF repeater placed on the top of 'TV Hill', control key board for the CCTV, Satellite telephones, and electrical stabilizers.

### **OUTPUT 3 – NECESSARY LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN PLACE TO ENABLE THE FIRST SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENT**

SEAL continues to liaise closely with, and provide advice to, the relevant parts of the Secretariat on the application of the Rules of Procedure. The Houses have also been provided with a number of draft amendments to the existing Rules of Procedures. Within the context of the proposed amendment to Rule 9 of the Rules of Procedure of the Wolesi Jirga, SEAL prepared a comparative paper on the removal of Presiding Officers of legislative bodies. SEAL also produced several drafts of new standing orders for consideration by the Secretariats and the Administrative Boards of the Houses, including orders for the inauguration of the legislative term of the Wolesi Jirga, motions, resolutions, the Joint

Commission mechanism; communication between the Houses of the National Assembly, the code of conduct for the Members of the National Assembly, the privileges and immunities of Members of the National Assembly; and the resignation and the vacation of seats by the Members of the National Assembly.

It is generally recognized that the legislative process in the Assembly is presently sluggish. The project has, in collaboration with the project's ICT Department and the Secretariats, laid the groundwork for a simple Legislative Tracking Programme. This initiative aims to make the legislative process in the Assembly more transparent to members, press and public. The programme is also intended to include a record of changes to the Rules of Procedure.

A substantial programme of publications produced by SEAL in collaboration with the Assembly is in train. The 'National Assembly Handbook', written in English, is nearing completion in Dari. Two 'Who is Who' volumes providing short biographies of Members are in the process of publication. That for the Upper House has been published in Dari and Pashto and publication in English is in the offing. The volume detailing the Members of the Lower House will follow. Once the Assembly's printing press, supplied by SEAL, is operational, the responsibility for all publications, including updating these volumes, will rest with the two Departments for Public Information.<sup>2</sup>

#### **OUTPUT 4 - ENSURING GOOD QUALITY INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) IS IN PLACE FOR ALL THOSE WHO USE THE ASSEMBLY**

The task of equipping the core parliamentary estate with modern technology and equipment is virtually complete. During this quarter, SEAL's ICT group has focussed on several specialized training programs targeted at the staff of the Secretariat and Members of the Assembly. These are designed to ensure the efficient and effective use of the present facilities and equipment, and examples include: international specialized course on the software systems for automating Hansard preparation, storage and publishing conducted in the Belgium Parliament for the staff of the Departments of both Houses; reconfigured official e-mail for all the staff to use the @nationalassembly.af addresses; use of VSAT (virtual satellite equipment), and internet services; and basic computer and software skills for the Members and staff.

SEAL has now received a substantial amount of IT equipment ordered in 2006. This has been delivered to the Assembly and we have assisted the Administrative Departments in sharing this between the Houses based on need. The work of installing an audio system for a conference room in the main Assembly building was completed, and efforts are being made to procure a similar audio system for the commissions. The project has been assisting the Assembly in finalizing or renewing contracts for the maintenance of support services for various types of existing or new systems, during the reporting period. SEAL has also spent significant time in resolving several technical and configuration issues that have emerged. Plans are also underway to ensure the Internet 'connectivity' of 'remote' office buildings to the main Assembly site. Without such a connection, full modernisation of the Secretariats will not be possible.

In order to achieve a wider coverage and visibility for the Assembly, the SEAL project has facilitated the updating of the current Assembly website and also the creation of a new website with more information and general public appeal. SEAL's own new website has been launched and this will provide a more attractive and effective picture of the project, its achievements and challenges.

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<sup>2</sup> See section on Public Outreach, page 13

## **OUTPUT 5 – PROMOTING ASSEMBLY OUTREACH AND DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC INFORMATION AND AWARENESS STRATEGY**

### *Media Outreach*

SEAL's Public Outreach Unit has facilitated a draft agreement between the Parliament and RTA (Radio & Television Afghanistan) for recording and telecasting two hours of parliamentary news and proceedings every day. These efforts will reinforce the visibility of the Assembly as a representative accountable, and transparent institution, a key objective of this project. thereby contributing to specific media coverage as well as public debate on parliamentary affairs.

### *Outreach in the South*

SEAL worked with the Defense and Internal Security Commissions of the Assembly to organize and conduct (in close collaboration with ISAF) a highly significant visit with the former commission to the provinces of Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Herat. Given the security situation in some of these areas this was resulted in a substantial heightening of the commission's and the Assembly's profile in areas of the country where it is important for the new democratic institutions to demonstrate a presence.

### *Promotion of Afghan Youth Training Assembly*

Significant progress towards making a Youth National Assembly a reality has been made through the formation of a working group comprising the heads of the Houses' Public Information Departments, the deputy Secretary-General of the Upper House, representatives of the Electoral Commission, and the Ministry of Education, together with a number of international organisations led by SEAL. The Deputy Minister for Youth is an active participant. Direction is exercised by a steering group comprising a number of parliamentarians. The first meeting with MPs has just taken place and those present endorsed the idea of a Youth Assembly enthusiastically. Subject to satisfactory progress being made, the first meeting of the Youth Assembly will take place early in the National Assembly's Summer Recess 2007.

### *Civil Society Forum*

SEAL's efforts to support an Assembly-Civil Society Forum are well established, and the fifth successful meeting of this forum was held during the Quarter in the National Assembly's library. The Forum was well attended by a number of representatives from the media who have discussed with the Assembly's leadership the ways and means of maintaining effective relationships. Amongst the subjects discussed by the Forum were preferred approaches to potentially alarming/ frightening news in the Afghan Media; the proposed Media law; and the proposed Civil Rights law.



Civil Society Forum Meeting in Library.

### *Capacity Development of Parliamentary Public Information*

SEAL has undertaken further planning for training the Assembly's photographers. There will be a substantial course implemented next quarter in collaboration with UNESCO. Other assistance during the quarter included printing of gazettes and magazines for both the Houses; a study visit for Assembly ICT and Hansard staff to the Belgian Parliament for a short visit to study Hansard automation - preparation, storage and publishing; and preparation for the establishment of a 'partner library' of the National Assembly of Afghanistan library.

**OUTPUT 6: PARLIAMENT SETTING-UP AND BASIC RUNNING COST MET DURING FIRST YEAR OF ACTIVITY**

Considerable effort over the period has gone into ensuring that within the next months the Assembly will have its own printing press in place and functional. It appears however that a suitable site within the as-yet unfinished MPs' office site has finally been found by the Assembly and that installation will be possible in the near future. This is one of SEAL's flagship procurement items as the equipment is essential to ensuring that all of the Assembly's publications will be produced in-house.

As noted in the previous quarter's report, the split of the Assembly Secretariat between the Houses has resulted in a division of resources which has necessitated additional support from SEAL in particular for ICT equipment and furniture. It may be that further splits of presently joint departments will occur. This activity, coupled with some increased staff strength and the relocation of departmental offices outside the Assembly's crowded main premises, meant that SEAL bore some consequent operational costs. SEAL is discriminating in acceding to requests for payment of such costs however and we proceed invariably on the basis of case by case consideration.

**OUTPUT 7: MANAGEMENT TEAM FULLY OPERATIONAL**

The project lost a few key staff during the reporting period but a recruitment drive has been launched to appoint replacements. The staffing position will be reviewed once these posts are filled and a decision taken as to whether more capacity is required. There is a high probability that further appointments will follow. The bias will be toward recruiting Afghans with potential and restricting the services of internationals, particularly on a medium term (three month) consultancy basis.

On the credit side, the project was successful in recruiting for several key posts, recruiting a candidate with significant experience in parliamentary environment and in addressing the capacity building needs of the women parliamentarians and gender issues. In May SEAL hopes to welcome back 2 consultants on short-term mission; Sir Michael Davies, formerly Clerk of the Parliaments in the House of Lords, Westminster from the UK who has completed a successful visit this Quarter; and in June, Mr Ronny Mees, Director of the Belgian Parliament's Hansard Department, who has worked extensively with SEAL and the Assembly previously.

The much needed restructuring of the Finance and Administration unit, begun with the appointment last Quarter of the international Technical Advisor (Finance and Administration), has been completed. Various procedures and protocols were reviewed and clarified. Taken together, these measures should provide a structure and working practices which conform to 'best practices' in procurement and the Accountability Framework of the UNDP, and also make the service provided to the project of a higher standard. There is an on-going dialogue between the unit and Country Office colleagues on how to improve communications and efficiency. One French speaking staff member, Mr Abdul Wahab Firoz, took advantage of a month long, fully funded studentship on parliamentary practices offered by the French Government for study at the Ecole Nationale d'Administration. Mr Tariq Sediq of the Capacity Building team attended the conference 'Integrity in Action' in Cambodia organised by the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok. A number of national colleagues are considering enrolling in post graduate degree courses which will complement their project work. The project enthusiastically supports such initiatives.

### III. FINANCE

Quarterly expenditure figures are provisional and subject to future adjustment.

TABLE : 1					
MARCH QUARTER 2007 - EXPENSES AGAINST BUDGET FOR THE YEAR - UNDP SEAL PROJECT					
					USD
DONOR	ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	Budget for the 2007	Expenditure during the Quarter	Balance Budget for the year
CIDA	ACTIVITY1	Capacity Building and Institutional Support		4,259	(4,259)
	ACTIVITY3	ICT, equipments, services and systems	1,052,632	6,384	1,046,248
		GMS 5%		532	(532)
<b>CIDA TOTAL</b>			<b>1,052,632</b>	<b>11,176</b>	<b>1,041,456</b>
DENMARK	ACTIVITY6	Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament	99,750	8,489	91,261
	ACTIVITY3	ICT, equipments, services and systems		3,075	(3,075)
	ACTIVITY4	Parliament Outreach	342,883	80,031	262,852
	ACTIVITY6	Programme support	492,764	113,680	379,084
		GMS 5%		10,264	(10,264)
<b>DENMARK Total</b>			<b>935,397</b>	<b>215,539</b>	<b>719,858</b>
FRANCE	ACTIVITY1	Capacity Building and Institutional Support	162,750	244,325	(81,575)
	ACTIVITY3	ICT, equipments, services and systems		2,643	(2,643)
	ACTIVITY2	Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready	192,268	18,575	173,692
	ACTIVITY4	Parliament Outreach		(1,000)	1,000
	ACTIVITY6	Programme support		2	(2)
		GMS 5%		13,227	(13,227)
<b>FRANCE Total</b>			<b>355,018</b>	<b>277,773</b>	<b>77,245</b>
GTZ	ACTIVITY1	Capacity Building and Institutional Support	318,878	1,254	317,624
	ACTIVITY6	Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament	376,500	2,289	374,210
	ACTIVITY2	Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready	382,653	-	382,653
	ACTIVITY4	Parliament Outreach	530,652	990	529,662
	ACTIVITY6	Programme support	293,430	107,756	185,674
		GMS 5%		5,615	(5,615)
<b>GERMANY Total</b>			<b>1,902,112</b>	<b>117,905</b>	<b>1,784,207</b>
EC	ACTIVITY1	Capacity Building and Institutional Support		138	(138)
	ACTIVITY3	ICT, equipments, services and systems		51,495	(51,495)
		GMS 5%		2,582	(2,582)
<b>EC Total</b>			<b>-</b>	<b>54,215</b>	<b>(54,215)</b>
SIDA	ACTIVITY6	Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament		-	-
	ACTIVITY4	Parliament Outreach	301,175	-	301,175
	ACTIVITY6	Programme support	123,547	-	123,547
		GMS 5%		-	-
<b>SIDA Total</b>			<b>424,722</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>424,722</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>			<b>4,669,880</b>	<b>676,607</b>	<b>3,993,274</b>

## Contact Information

If you have any questions about this report, please contact:

John Patterson  
Project Manager, SEAL  
United Nations Development Programme  
Tel. no. 0799-058451  
E-mail: [patterson.john@undp.org](mailto:patterson.john@undp.org)

Abdel-Ellah Sediqi  
Deputy Project Manager, SEAL  
United Nations Development Programme  
Tel. no. 0700-242010  
E-mail: [abdel-ellah.sediqi@undp.org](mailto:abdel-ellah.sediqi@undp.org)

Hiroko Takagi  
Programme Specialist  
United Nations Development Programme  
Tel. no. 0799-025411  
E-mail: [hiroko.takagi@undp.org](mailto:hiroko.takagi@undp.org)

Masood Amer  
Programme Officer  
United Nations Development Programme  
Tel. no. 0700-282316  
E-mail: [masood.amer@undp.org](mailto:masood.amer@undp.org)

Eugena Song  
Donor Relations and Reporting Officer  
United Nations Development Programme  
Tel. no: 0700-011374  
E-mail: [eugena.song@undp.org](mailto:eugena.song@undp.org)