



QUARTERLY PROJECT REPORT 2nd Quarter 2007

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



“Bringing Parliament to the people” Defense Commission members
Addressing a gathering in Herat in April 2007

Project ID: 00043513
Duration: February 2005 – February 2008
Component (MYFF): Fostering Democratic
Governance
Total Budget: US\$ 15,501,906
Total Commitment: US\$ 15,141,272
Total Received: US\$ 14,211,926
Funding Gap: US\$ 306,634

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I. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

UPDATED PROJECT RISKS AND ACTIONS

Capacity Building Activities Delayed by Security Concerns

The increase in suicide bombings in Kabul in June/July has led to the withdrawal of exceptionally qualified candidates for 2 new international posts of Technical Advisor (Capacity Building). Recruitment of the two additional advisors was undertaken on the basis of the plan to expand the capacity building unit in the project to be able to adequately respond to the capacity building needs of the National Assembly. Withdrawal of the selected candidates has resulted in the halt of certain planned capacity building activities during the reporting period. A number of project's deliverables have been postponed and will be resumed in due course. The recent increase in the security incidents has negatively impacted on the recruitment of international staff in general. At the same time, a redoubled effort will require to fill these and future posts if the security situations deteriorates. One of the measures that the project is reviewing is to seek alternative ways of replacing international staff with quality national staff where possible. In the interim, actions have already been taken to re-advertise both international positions.

The security of the National Assembly premises and staff is of constant concern to SEAL and is itself a focus of very important capacity building activities.

UPDATED PROJECT ISSUES AND ACTIONS

Transition to new phase necessitates re-organization of management team

The project is moving into a transition phase. Firstly, a considerable re-organization in the management team has to take place consequent to the departure of several international staff—two advisers have already left, a third one is leaving soon, and the Project Manager has also finished his assignment. Secondly, the current project runs out in February 2008. Restructuring of capacity building unit and departure of staff members from the board of interpreters has also caused some vacant positions in the latter. The departure of the current Project Manager in mid July at the end of his contract period has necessitated the recruitment of a replacement. The recruitment is currently underway and the preferred candidate is likely to be in place in September. Meanwhile the national Deputy Project Manager together with the Finance Advisor and other project management members will provide management 'cover' in the interim period. The process for replacement of other vacated positions has already started.

In order to ensure SEAL's smooth transition into a new phase/project, a formulation mission has been fielded to assess the challenges that the National Assembly will face in the next several years. The mission focused in particular on two main areas which the National Assembly and stakeholders agree are priorities for long-term development: first, the mission conducted a general assessment of the impact of capacity building work conducted by SEAL during its first phase; and second, the mission drafted a document which outlines approaches that a potential SEAL II could implement to strengthen three core functions of the parliament (legislation, executive oversight, and democratic representation). The mission advised that any new SEAL project also continue to support the Secretariat of both Houses in developing the administrative systems which were initiated during SEAL I. The mission consulted with donor and government stakeholders in the design the potential SEAL successor project and to identify strategic niches for SEAL II.

The appointment of a new Assembly ICT Director as noted in the last report has borne fruit in a better standard of delivery of results in the reporting period. SEAL has sponsored a major training activity in Malaysia for the Assembly team in the quarter under review which is intended to

provide additional expertise and to provide an opportunity for strengthening the management of the Department further.

II. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

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

Task Force

The SEAL 'Task Force' representing the National Assembly, the donors, UNDP Afghanistan, and the project has been reconstituted and will oversee the transition phase. A consultancy has been implemented to draft a project document for 'SEAL 2008'. The first stage is a series of consultations with partner in Afghanistan from 14 July 2007 after which the team has been asked to present a draft project document by the close of the month. Once the project document is finalized the process of resource mobilization will begin.

Strategy of the National Assembly

The Assembly has devised a detailed strategic plan and SEAL looks forward to working with the senior management of the Assembly and stakeholders to support the implementation of the strategy in an efficient and effective manner. This will be of particular importance in SEAL's transition period. The project document for SEAL 2008 will need to outline an approach which focuses on strong coordination of activities in support of the strategy in order to avoid overlap and to play to the strengths of all National Assembly partners and stakeholders.

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

'Core capacities'

The well established SEAL training of Secretariat staff and parliamentarians in parliamentary 'core capacities' (oversight and legislation) has continued. During the reporting period, provision of capacity development activities for the Commissions' assistants and the Commissions of the Houses has continued with a range of training and support activities. The Assistants received additional training on subjects such as 'running a commission' and 'the role of a Commission Assistant'; while the commission members received advisory support on many external functions and workplace responsibilities. These include: legislative drafting, approaches/procedures for scrutiny of performance of government organs, and work plan formulation. As a result the Commissions' assistants are now in a better position to provide improved administrative services and, for the first time, substantive inputs to the day-to-day tasks of their respective Commissions. The commission members have also shown progressive improvement in their respective areas.

A senior consultant from the UK restarted dialogue with the Plenary Secretariat and the Legislative Research Departments on a legislative tracking programme which is designed to streamline the legislative process through the Assembly, and to ensure that bills and other legislative documents are processed professionally by both Houses. Currently the Houses have faced situations in the last session where the review or ratification of important bills was delayed for months because of tracking problems. To avoid the situation in the future, the assistance provided by the consultant will enable the Secretariat to achieve transparency in tracking parliamentary legislation. The overall impact will take some time to be felt.

Discussions took place with the Legislative Affairs Commission of the Lower House regarding the need for an 'Executive/Legislative' seminar. The Commission was receptive and the seminar is planned for the period after the new session of the National Assembly resumes at the end of July. This will aid the effort to assist the Executive and Legislative pillars of the State to implement their

respective roles and responsibilities with increased effectiveness. In particular, the seminar served as a forum for ministries and MPs to understand their separation of duties, to increase awareness and respect for the powers of each pillar, and in doing so, to improve a currently strained working relationship between the parliament and the ministries.

Special support for the Budget Commission of the Upper House was provided by the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit in collaboration with SEAL which presented on the aid arrangements for Afghanistan in a session entitled 'Aiding the State'. SEAL hopes to repeat this presentation to the Lower House's sister commission during the new session. This activity was a part of SEAL's efforts to 'demythologize' the machinery of government for the Assembly. Without this effort the Assembly will be unable to undertake its scrutiny responsibilities effectively.

SEAL's Budget Unit will receive renewed focus in the immediate future in the run up to the publication of the National Budget at the end of the calendar year.

While the end of the previous session on 6 June inevitably curtailed SEAL's 'Bringing Parliament to the People' programme, a number of commission in-country programmes to the provinces of Nangahar, Kunar, Badakshan, Loghar, and Takhar were facilitated. Many more such visits are planned for the new session. The initiatives have increased the parliamentarians' understanding of the local issues, which was demonstrated by increased advocacy and action on the part of several MPs to understand disability issue, the rights of prisoners, and refugees. It is more difficult to gauge what people in the provinces gained from their exposure to MPs at this stage, but sessions like the one which took place in June have demonstrated the need to expand the programme in a potential phase II and to identify a way to measure impact of the programme among the Afghan population.

Modernizing the Assembly's administration

As reported in the previous report, thirteen major recommendations to modernize the finance and administration of the Assembly were approved earlier in 2007. Modernization of the Human Resources and Payroll functions was identified as urgent priorities and is well underway.

In this context, implementation focus this quarter has been on the staff of the Upper House. This has required intensive coordination through a working group comprising representatives from the HR, ICT and Finance Departments. In addition, regular meetings and discussions were held with the Treasury Department of the Ministry of Finance. A number of activities were successfully achieved: customization of relevant software, completion of payroll registration for 250 staff members of the Upper House, computerizing and validation of the employee data; and the provision of a four-day intensive training on the computerized payroll software to a group of eight key staff members from HR, ICT and Finance Departments of the Upper House. Towards the end of the quarter, registration of the staff of the Lower House was begun and has been largely achieved.

After a review of banks, the Kabul Bank was selected to provide services for the Assembly. Efforts are being made to secure an appropriate space within or close to the Assembly for the bank and operations are scheduled to begin from the middle of September 2007. By that time the testing phases of the electronic payroll for the Upper House will be completed and the system will be implemented soon after.

Other initiatives completed during the reporting period include: completion of an extended training program for the Lower House on intermediate MS-Excel skills; customization and refreshing of the intermediary tool for budgeting and expenditure tracking for the Lower House; and a number of infrastructure improvements for the dedicated cash office created in the course of the previous quarter.

Focus on security

The main aim of the Security Unit is to define and implement all security related rules and regulations in order to ensure the security of the National Assembly. The intended outcome is a safe and secure environment for the Assembly and those who work with it.

During the quarter a number of presentations were given to the Heads of the Security Sub-departments, covering such topics as: 'identification of personnel', 'package material control', 'riot control', 'designation of restricted areas', and 'emergency standard operating procedures'. Training abroad has been arranged in July for two officers on explosives detection. Rules of Engagement were drafted.

The Security Unit coordinated the passage of relevant security related information to the Security Department of the Assembly, UNDSS, other UN agencies, NATO led ISAF, the Afghan National Department of Security, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Defense. The Unit planned, coordinated, monitored and evaluated all crisis and emergency preparedness measures of the Assembly's Security Department.

Three vehicles equipped with modern radios were handed to the Assembly's Security Department in close collaboration with the Asset Management Board of the UNDP/ANBP project. SEAL provided and installed a basement (h 25.mr & w.60cm) for the repeater antenna of the Assembly security radios. A modern office environment for the secretariat of the Assembly's Security Department was provided.

The Unit reviewed the security of the new SEAL project office in Kart-e-Char and certain enhancements were made.

OUTPUT 3 – NECESSARY LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN PLACE

SEAL assisted with a number of amendments to the Lower House Rules of Procedure including amendments to Chapters 1 to 18 in the light of the practical requirements of the House. Input was also made to the Commission on Legislative Affairs, and the Special Ad-Hoc Committee on the Rules of Upper House.

The Capacity Building Unit forwarded ten drafts of proposed standing orders to the Administrative Boards of the Houses addressing various parliamentary issues for adoption. Assistance was extended to the Lower House in its formulation of the Code of Conduct for members of the Assembly. Written opinions were provided on the interpretation of the Rules of Procedure in relation to the conduct of elections for members of the Administrative Boards, and second round voting for interpellation and the impeachment of two ministers.

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

Training

The ICT Unit continued to work closely with ICT Department of the Assembly to enhance its professionalism and capacity, to ensure that it operates proactively and vigorously within the Assembly, and to develop the ICT capacity of parliamentarians. For example, a three-day training program on 'Usage of the Afghan National Assembly e-mail system' was provided to Secretariat staff, basic computer training for parliamentarians has continued, and large numbers of women parliamentarians attended the training at the Women's Parliamentary Resource Center. As a result, communication skills of the members and the staff have now improved in using computer applications and email. In the Lower House, most of the parliamentarians do conduct work via email, although literacy issues do impede some of the parliamentarians in both Houses from using email to conduct business.

To strengthen the managerial and technical Skills of the ICT Department, a training programme on the Network Security and Project Management was arranged at the Multimedia University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Strategy

SEAL has assisted the ICT Department to draft a new ICT Strategy which defines the aims and outputs for the exchange of information within the Assembly as well as between the Assembly and the public. This encapsulates the basic principle that the Parliament should be open, accessible and participative.

Hardware

SEAL also provided a number of ICT equipment/services for the Assembly. As requested by President of the Lower House, SEAL installed a sound and translation system for the refurbished 'State' meeting room of House. SEAL also installed a video conferencing system linking the Assembly to all provinces of Afghanistan. A 'Wifi' system linking the main Assembly site to outlying offices in Kabul has been established. The ICT department has successfully established e-linkages between parliamentarians and their constituencies outside Kabul. Due to the presence the ICT systems mentioned above, the ICT department is now better equipped to effectively provide communication support to the assembly.

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

Youth parliament – Afghan Youth Training Assembly

The first-ever youth parliament in Afghanistan was held in the Upper House of the Assembly from 10 to 14 June 2007 with the project's support. A prior, one-day orientation course for all participants was facilitated by SEAL in the Safi Landmark Hotel. The concept for the youth parliament was prepared by consultants working for the project and refined by a working group comprising the Independent Election Commission, the Ministry of Education, the National Assembly, SEAL, and the Ministry of Information and Culture. Delivery was facilitated by five international experts and a number of national experts. Participation in the delegate elections this year was limited to 90 Kabul high schools to test the organization and logistics of the working group. Next year, the intention is to draw the delegates from a range of provinces, and to reconsider the single chamber structure of this year's event.

Printing

The printing machine for the Assembly has arrived from Germany and is presently in storage awaiting the arrival of related machinery. Further work on rooms to house the printing shop is required. The recruitment of national consultants to train the printing staff is underway. Once these arrangements are fully in place, installation will take place at the site of the proposed parliamentarians' offices in Darulaman Road.

Capacity Development of Assembly Public Information Departments

Further technical training for the cameramen and photographers of the National Assembly was held in May and June. A fifteen-day Pashto training programme for non-pashto speakers of the Departments was held in addition to a fifteen day 'effective oral communication' course. These courses were held in response to specific requests by the Assembly staff.

Assembly Library 'partner libraries programme

A visit by Public Outreach staff was paid to the Governor of Bamyan province and the Chancellor of Bamyan University to discuss the housing of an Assembly 'partner library'. The concept received an enthusiastic response and further work to follow this up is underway.

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

Achieved.

OUTPUT 7: MANAGEMENT TEAM FULLY OPERATIONAL

The present Project Manager left at the end of his contract on 17 July. The recruitment for a successor is underway. In the interim the national Deputy Project Manager will act as Officer-in-Charge.

The appointments for the post of head of unit for the Capacity Building and Public Outreach units were completed. The new post of national Head of ICT Unit will be advertised at the end of the international ICT Technical Advisor's contract in August. A new Senior Translator post was advertised and an appointment was made. Recruitment is underway in the Translation and Interpretation Unit and the Finance and Administration Unit. Two national consultants are being sought to support the establishment of the national assembly printing shop.

As discussed in the risks section of the report, the posts for international Technical Advisors for the Capacity Building Unit have been re-advertised. Further subject based appointments to this Unit to support the Houses Commissions will be sought later in the year. Recruitments are underway for Technical Advisors to head the Security Unit and to assist the new national head of Public Outreach.

III. FINANCIAL STATUS AND UTILISATION

FINANCIAL STATUS.

Table : 1 : Contribution Overview (Start 1st Feb 2005 to 28th Feb 2008)

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	750,000	750,000	0
Germany	2,352,941	2,147,359	205,582
Denmark	2,000,000	2,000,000	0
CIDA	1,052,632	1,052,632	0
TOTAL	15,141,272	14,211,926	929,346

FINANCIAL UTILIZATION.

In the following table we need to add one more column to indicate expenditure of the first Q followed by the second Q and then the balance

Table : 2 : Quarterly Expenditure by Activity (1st January 2007 to 30th June 2007)					
Activity	Budget 2006	Quarter - 1 Expenditure	Quarter-2 Expenditure (Cumulative)	Balance	USD
					Delivery %
ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)	756,475	249,976	637,449	119,026	84%
ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)	249,762	18,575	69,614	180,148	28%
ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)	903,307	63,597	512,760	390,547	57%
ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	974,794	80,021	475,694	499,100	49%
ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)	358,333	10,779	75,654	282,679	21%
ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	1,204,834	221,439	560,265	644,569	47%
UNDP GMS (as per Donor agreement)	222,375	32,219	116,572	105,803	52%
TOTAL	4,669,880	676,606	2,448,008	2,221,873	52%

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

DONOR	Activity	2007 Budget	Quarter - 1 Expenditure	Quarter 2 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)		4,259		-	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)	903,307	6,384	531,339	371,968	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	99,199		84,986	14,213	
	GMS (5 %)	50,125	532	30,816	19,309	
Sub total - CIDA		1,052,631	11,176	647,141	405,490	61%
00095 - DENMARK	ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)				-	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)		3,075		-	
	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	469,412	80,031	403,398	66,014	
	ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)	95,000	8,489	19,331	75,669	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	326,442	113,680	211,011	115,431	
GMS (5 %)	44,543	10,264	31,887	12,856		
Sub total -DENMARK		935,397	215,539	665,427	269,970	71%
00112 - FRANCE	ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)	309,925	244,325	309,925	-	
	ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)	28,187	18,575	28,187	-	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)		2,643		-	
	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)		(1,000)		-	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)		2		-	
	GMS (5 %)	16,906	13,227	16,906	-	
Sub total - FRANCE		355,018	277,773	355,018	-	100%
00117 - GERMANY	ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)	446,550	1,254	310,163	136,387	
	ACTIVITY2 (Legal environment for the 1st session of the parliament ready)	221,574		39,187	182,387	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)				-	
	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	505,382	990	58,260	447,122	
	ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)	263,333	2,289	57,700	205,633	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	374,695	107,756	256,333	118,362	
GMS (5 %)	90,577	5,615	36,082	54,495		
Sub total - GERMANY		1,902,111	117,905	757,725	1,144,386	40%
00280 - EC	ACTIVITY1 (Capacity Building and Institutional Support)		138		-	
	ACTIVITY3 (ICT, equipments, services and systems)		51,495		-	
	GMS (5 %)		2,582		-	
Sub total- EC		-	54,215	-	-	
00565 - SIDA	ACTIVITY4 (Parliament Outreach)	-			-	
	ACTIVITY5 (Establishment & Running Costs of Parliament)				-	
	ACTIVITY6 (Programme support)	404,498		21,616	382,882	
	GMS (5 %)	20,225		1,081	19,144	
Sub total - SIDA Total		424,723	-	22,697	402,026	5%
Grand Total		4,669,879	676,606	2,448,008	2,221,871	52%

ANNEXES

- (1) **Annual Work Plan (or RRF)**