

# **UN support to Capacity Building of National Institutions in Afghanistan**

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## **Major points:**

- **Human development challenges for Afghanistan.**
- **The UN role in post-Taliban Afghanistan. Bonn Agreement**
- **UNDP activities in the country**
- **UNDP supporting Afghanistan's historic elections**
- **Results to date. Conclusions.**

## **(I) Human development challenges for Afghanistan**

As a consequence of two decades of armed conflicts, the UN Human Development Index ranks Afghanistan 173 out of 178 countries worldwide, making it one of the six poorest countries in the world. Its MDG indicators place it below the majority of Sub-Saharan African countries. The depth of poverty in Afghanistan is reflected consistently in all human development indicators. The country has been identified as a global priority for addressing the Millennium Development Goals.

Some figures and facts from Afghan life:

- life expectancy 44.5 years, living to 50 is considered to be an old age
- education system suffered severely from wars: 80% of schools damaged or completely destroyed
- 4 million children (40% girls) started go to school after the fall of Taliban regime
- Afghans make the largest number of refugees and idp's in the world
- since the fall of Taliban 2.5 million refugees returned to the country from Iran and Pakistan
- while gender insecurity remains, the new Constitution grants men and women equal rights before law.
- in October 2004 over 8 mln people voted in presidential elections
- for the first time in the Afghan history a comprehensive census of the country's population will be undertaken in 2007.

Today UN Population Fund estimates population of Afghanistan of 22.7 million.

## **(II) The UN role in Post-Taliban Afghanistan. Bonn Agreement.**

The UN has a long history of diplomatic and humanitarian involvement in Afghanistan. With the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, the UN was given the lead role in guiding the country toward peaceful and stable self-rule. In December 2001, at UN-organized **conference in Bonn**, Afghan political leaders (representative of four different factions) adopted an agreement to end the conflict in their country, promote national reconciliation, and establish a transitional process, leading to a new democratic government.

In December 2001 the UN authorized the International Security Assistance Force to maintain security for the transitional authority. In March 2002 the SC established the UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) to manage all UN humanitarian, relief, recovery and reconstruction activities of its 19 agencies operational in the country. In the Emergency Jyrga (traditional Afghan Grand Assembly) established a transitional authority that was functional until the election of representative government. Hamid Karzai won the presidential elections in October 2004. **In ...** the Constitutional Loya Jirga was convened to adopt a new constitution, which amid all includes equal rights of men and women before the law. Afghan National development strategy (ANDS) was adopted **in ...**

The United Nations is playing a vital role in reconstruction and development in Afghanistan. Work of the UN agencies in the country is coordinated through the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). There are 19 UN agencies working together with their Afghan government counterparts and other international and NGO partners. I would rank WFP, WHO, FAO as the most active of them. All UN programs lend support to the Afghan transition process and recognize the lead role played by the Afghan administration. UN activities in Afghanistan are divided into two main categories: political affairs and relief, recovery and reconstruction.

### **(III) UNDP in Afghanistan.**

UNDP has been present in Afghanistan since 1952. It provided development assistance to the country and helped build the capacity of national institutions. During the Taliban rule, it continued to be operational and provide assistance to communities throughout the country from its relocated offices in Islamabad. During that decade some US\$200 million of assistance was delivered to Afghanistan. UNDP returned to Kabul in early 2002.

Since the Bonn Agreement, UNDP has delivered more than US\$1 billion of assistance to Afghanistan. In 2005, it delivered USD 349 million of development assistance, mainly for

- elections,
- disarmament,
- reconstruction and
- institution building.

Currently UNDP operates within the framework of the integrated United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) set up in 2001 and within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

In December 2005, UNDP signed a three-year Country Programme with the Afghan Government, which focuses on three development areas:

- state-building,
- democracy and civil society empowerment,
- sustainable livelihoods.

The Programme focuses on capacity development, national ownership and policy dialogue. It aims to enhance government institutional capacity to deliver public services in an equitable and sustainable manner and to create an enabling environment for legitimate livelihoods.

Expected results outlined in the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS):

(a) the Government development in the fields of

- security and the rule of law,
- administrative reform,
- transparency and accountability,
- local governance,
- political processes (elections and parliament),
- civil society empowerment,
- gender equality, human rights,
- environment and rural energy,
- the reintegration of former combatants into society,
- the implementation of the national counter-narcotics strategy,

(b) rural development planning and private sector development.

All UNDP activities are undertaken in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, sister UN agencies and other development stakeholders.

UNDP has built strategic partnerships with a number of government institutions. It would be interesting to name some of them. The list will give you an idea of the directions of the new Afghan government:

- Ministries of Finance and Interior,
- Min of Rural Rehabilitation and Development,
- Civil Service Commission,
- Independent Electoral Commission,
- Civil Service Commission,
- Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and
- Ministry of Women's Affairs.

I will highlight the two major development fields:

- I. State-building and democracy development
- II. Civil society empowerment Programmes

### **I. State-Building & Government Support Programme**

The reconstruction process in a country as poor as Afghanistan will take a long time. The National government was formed for the first time in the country's history less than two years ago. It lacks sufficient resources to meet all the priorities. UNDP works towards strengthening institutional capacity of the government for the latter to be able to enforce the rule of law and provide public administration services to Afghan people. In this field UNDP provides

- public sector management,
- information management,
- aid coordination and
- tracking of resources.

The nine Projects currently run by UNDP in Afghanistan:

- Afghanistan Information Management Service (AIMS)
- Bridging The Public Information Gap
- Support to the Civil Service Commission – Training and Development (IARCSC)
- Support to Public Administration Internship Programme
- Information And Communication Technology
- Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan
- Making Budgets Work
- Support to the Diplomatic Institute
- Civil Service Leadership Development

Shortly on each of them (in this paper, not as much in the presentation)

#### ***Afghanistan Information Management Service (AIMS)***

Information management in Afghanistan is limited and immature. Complex and often inappropriate processes do not promote transparency or sharing of information. Through UNDP programmes the top Afghan leaders learn to understand that transparency in management and sharing of information can

- improve efficiency and accountability in civil services,
- increase alignment of external resources with national plans and priorities
- help improve the effectiveness of reconstruction and development.

This program sits at the forefront of attempts to develop and harmonize information management. It has a mandate to build this capacity in the Government of Afghanistan and to provide information management services to broader community. For this the program promotes

- common data and technology standards as well as
- a free flow of information through focused customer service, product provision and other.

## ***(2) Bridging the public information gap***

Many in the Afghan society, devastated by wars and poverty, feel a certain frustration with the apparent lack of benefits from the reconstruction process so far. (Long term institutional development never gives immediate results) The Office of the President has to face this challenge and must be able to speak with its people. The government is now building up capacity to provide information on political and reconstruction matters to the citizens of the country. They have developed a comprehensive public information and communication strategy to ensure that the policies, messages and achievements of the Government are heard by Afghan people as well as by a broader international community. UNDP supports this infrastructure and helps to develop speaking and presentation skills of the Presidential Office. This support includes provision of tools and equipment, recruitment of personnel and training of public information officers, and establishment of the Government's website: [www.af](http://www.af).

## ***(3) Support to the Civil Service Commission – Training and Development***

A major challenge here is to overcome the fragmented and overlapping structures of the current administration, poor policy development, poor personnel management, and continuous exclusion of women.

The Afghan Government declares a vision of a civil service system that exhibits efficiency, transparency, and accountability. However, this will require a re-establishment of the existent merit-based civil service.

UNDP has supported the establishment of the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), which is the lead agency for the overall public administration reform process. It has developed a national training and development plan for the Afghan civil servants. It has also started a project to promote gender and equal opportunities in the civil service.

## ***(4) Support to Public Administration Internship Programme***

UNDP is implementing an Internship Programme for a small group of outstanding graduate and post graduate students. Within this programme 24 young graduates (every year?) get an opportunity to work directly in Technical Ministries of the Afghan Government, relevant to their field of study. Thus they complement their theoretical knowledge with practical experience through on job training and learning by doing. On the other hand, the young Afghan civil service gets benefits from qualified young professionals of various fields.

## ***(5) Information and Communication Technology (ICT)***

Afghanistan has a tremendous task to ensure functional state communication structures and their integration in regional and global communication platforms. In the meantime, there is a significant shortage of citizens and civil servants literate in information and communications technologies and systems. UNDP helps the Ministry of Communications expand access to information and communication technologies (ICT) and use them for development. This program aims to ensure that the Afghan civil servants are able to work in cooperation with international organizations and speak the same technological language.

In practical terms, so called Telekiosks have been successfully set up throughout the country to enlarge the population's access to computers and encourage people to use them. The current strategy includes capacity-building for the Ministry so that it could concentrate on development of e-Governance and advanced ICT training.

## ***(6) Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA)***

Security issues in Afghanistan stand very high on the agenda. If you remember the parliamentary (or presidential?) elections in 2005 (?) were postponed for security reasons. Clashes and explosions occur every now and then at various parts of the country. The Police (a state service which is also new in Afghanistan) often becomes the target for explosions on the one hand and, on the other, incapable to respond to or prevent challenges.

Re-establishment of the national civilian police force is essential for security in Afghanistan. The National Development Framework and Budget envisage a professional and disciplined police force loyal to the Ministry of Interior, visible to the public, capable to create trust and comfort among the population and to combat drugs trade.

The UNDP Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) aims to support priority police activities in Afghanistan. According to the agreement, the Ministry of Interior is responsible for formation of a new police force, while UNDP administers the Fund to provide the major police activities, police salaries, non-lethal (??) equipment procurement, renovating police offices, training for the police and their institutional development.

## ***(7) Making Budgets Work***

This program occurred in response to the Afghan Government's request to assist in budget management and coordination. The project aims to assist the Government, the Ministry of Finance in particular, to develop a unified national budget and establish comprehensive aid coordination mechanisms. This mechanisms includes:

- support to the National Development Budget,
- establishing a Donor Assistance Database, and
- capacity building in aid management.

The National Development Budget was adopted in June 2004. By now the Donor Assistance Database has been completely coordinated with it and it (who?) currently tracks over 85 percent of the total aid to Afghanistan.

Information on budgets, international and national aid flows is available on the Afghan Government's website: [www.af](http://www.af). The site displays information on aid flows to Afghanistan, and is maintained and updated with support from the project. The project also helped facilitate the Berlin donor conference in April 2004, at which US\$8.2 billion was pledged by international donors toward reconstruction of Afghanistan.

In future the project will establish a national team to provide guidance and support to the Government in administering grants and loans, and to assist with management of the National Development Framework.

## ***(8) Support to the Diplomatic Institute***

In 2003, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertook a major step to restart training for Afghan Diplomats by reopening its Diplomatic Institute (or University). The Institute is responsible for initial and in-service training and aims to bring Afghan diplomats to a level of Diplomatic service required by international standards. UNDP supports this initiative.

## ***(9) Civil Service Leadership Development***

The project aims to strengthen the capacities of key senior civil workers at the major governmental institutions. It is designed to assist IARCSC to implement the recently launched Civil Service Leadership Development Strategy. This includes design and delivery of a number of competency-based leadership development programs aimed to build up the capacity of top civil service staff

that will be efficient in implementing programs of national reconstruction, development and civil service reform.

## **II. Democratization and Civil Society Empowerment Programme**

Good governance is one of the most important factors in eradicating poverty and promoting development. In line with the Bonn Agreement and the Millennium Development Declaration, UNDP continues to support the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to consolidate its institutions, to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, and to promote human rights and gender equality.

Seven Projects

- *Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission*
- *National Programme for Action on Disability (NPAD)*
- *Constitutional Commission*
- *Juridical Reform*
- *Voter Registration and Presidential Elections*
- *Women in Governance*
- *Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature (SEAL)*

### *(1) Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission*

The Bonn Agreement contained a number of strong and specific human rights clauses, including the provisions binding the authorities to

- international human rights standards during the transitional period,
- securing political participation for women,
- providing for the establishment of an independent human rights commission,
- mandating human rights monitoring and investigations, and
- calling for a national programme of human rights education in Afghanistan.

All of these, under the terms of the agreement, were to be supported by the United Nations.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission was formally established by Presidential Decree in June 2002 and is now reflected in the Constitution under Article 58 as a permanent national human rights institution.

UNDP, UNAMA and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will continue supporting the Commission's institutional development and its programmes for human rights promotion and protection.

### *(2) National Programme for Action on Disability (NPAD)*

It has a three-year project formally launched in March 2005 in agreement with two ministries – Ministry of Martyrs (?) and of the Disabled (MMD) and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA). The primary objective of NPAD is to raise awareness and capacity and to develop government structures for policy development, implementation and coordination of disability-focused efforts in Afghanistan. The emphasis of the Programme is to ensure the rightful inclusion of disabled people through addressing and breaking down social, political and economic barriers faced by them in Afghanistan.

### *(3) Constitutional Commission*

Based on the Bonn Agreement and supported by a joint project between the Transitional Government, UNAMA and UNDP, the Constitution developing process in Afghanistan included three stages: first drafting the Constitution by the Constitution Drafting Commission; second, discussions, refinement, finalization and distribution of the first Draft by the Constitutional Commission; and thirdly, adoption of the Constitution by the Constitutional Loya Jirga.

The convention began on 14 December 2003 and concluded with the adoption of the Constitution by consensus on 4 January 2004. President Karzai officially proclaimed the Constitution of Afghanistan on 26 January 2004.

#### *(4) Juridical Reform*

Access to justice is a central requirement to maintaining peace and stability, and ensuring the protection of fundamental individual freedoms. After many years of conflict, institutions of justice in Afghanistan have been left in disarray.

The Judicial Reform Commission was established following the Bonn Agreement to lead the justice and law reform. Through a joint program with UNAMA, UNDP has assisted the Commission in its operations since its establishment. This project has also supported such permanent justice institutions as the Supreme Court, Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General's Office.

A new project will increase access to justice at the district level. It includes rehabilitation of the existent infrastructure, training of justice professionals and bringing legal awareness to communities. The programme pays attention to the quality of legal education in Afghanistan, providing technical assistance to law curriculum reform and training Afghan students who participate in the annual Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition.

#### *(5) Women in Governance*

Particular UNDP support in this field is given to the Ministry of Women's Affairs - to bring about greater representation of Afghan women in government. This project includes promoting participation of Afghan women in the Constitutional Loya Jirga, in voter registration, and in the Government civil service. Currently the Ministry is providing gender training courses to eleven different ministries. This encourages development of gender awareness and policy reform.

In the late 2004, UNDP inaugurated a newly built Training and Advocacy Building at the Ministry, which will house a CISCO Networking Academy Programme to teach women in internet technologies and skills. A gender-training institute will be established at Kabul University.

#### *(6) Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature (SEAL)*

The elections for the Wolesi Jirga (House of People) are currently expected to take place on 18 September 2005. The constitution provides for the inauguration of both houses (Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga) at the same time. In this connection, there was an urgent need to assist the Government of Afghanistan in establishing a fully trained and equipped parliamentary secretariat to support the activities of the newly elected members. These members, in their turn, will need a capacity-building course to be able to work efficiently. To ensure the timely establishment of the Afghan National Assembly and provide strategic support to its functioning, UNDP Afghanistan, in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan has launched 'Support to the Establishment of Afghan Legislature' Project (SEAL Project). SEAL was launched in February 2005 and will work closely with the newly established National Assembly Secretariat and the members of the parliament that will be elected.

#### *(7) Voter Registration and Elections*

One of the most important steps envisaged in the Bonn Agreement was the development of an inclusive voter registry in Afghanistan and free, fair and credible elections. UNDP got the task to assist the UNAMA in designing and implementing voters registration in Afghanistan. UNDP provided UNAMA and the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) with funds management, recruitment, procurement and advisory support to the registration process.

The registration process lasted from the first week of December 2003 and to August 2004. Within those nine months, more than ten million people registered to cast their ballot in the elections. Afghanistan's first Presidential elections took place on 9 October 2004. I started my work in UNDP with this campaign and remember the mass participation and enthusiasm throughout the country, amidst only relative stability and security.

### **UNDP supporting Afghanistan's historic elections**

Over 10 million people signed up to vote in the October **2004 presidential election**, the first in the country's history. As many as 26 UN voter registration workers were killed in attacks during the registration drive and there were many reports on threats against those who planned to vote. But the registration effort penetrated even the most difficult and remote provinces of the country with 3,700 registration teams signing up as many as 150,000 voters daily.

The Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, the UNDP and their partners – UN Assistance Mission (UNAMA) and the Interim Afghan Electoral Commission (IAEC) – worked together to pave a new road towards democracy. UNDP supported in the areas of fund mobilization, staffing, procurement and policy advisory. It facilitated the work of Afghan electoral authorities in resource mobilization and donor coordination, out-of-country voting (refugees), civic education, media monitoring, developing environment of political inclusiveness, responsiveness and equity, national and international election observation.

UNDP Country Director Ercan Murat said: "The non-aligned civic education effort of UNFP and its partners was perhaps the most important element to this significant operation. Transparency, legitimacy and freedom of choice are corner stones to any democratic process. These can only stand with the support of a willing, informed and participatory electorate."

Within Afghanistan, UNDP and its partners made enormous efforts to ensure the best possible access to polling stations and the democratic process. A total of 5,000 were prepared across the country coordinated by eight regional electoral offices in Kabul, Bamyan, Herat, Gardes, Jilalabad, Kandahar, Kunduz and MSharif. On polling day 25,000 polling stations were available to the people at polling centers throughout the country. Separate stations were provided for men and women to vote. It was the first time they voted in a democratic election. The out-of-the country voting process was held in Iran and Pakistan (funded by UNDP, implemented by IOM)

The 2004 Afghanistan Elections project was the largest project of this kind executed by UNDP in the past decade in terms of number of people employed, contributions from donors, logistics and institutional arrangement to ensure free, fair and safe elections in a post conflict environment. UNOPS (UN Office for Project Service) and UN Volunteers played an important role in delivery of project assistance in many areas.

The total number of people recruited specifically to carry out the elections was over 138,000. Of them the vast majority were Afghans and less than 400 international staff. UNDP received \$ 76,072,056 for the elections project from the following donors: Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, US.

Scheduled for mid-September-2005, **elections for the Lower House of the Parliament**, as well as the district and provincial *shuras*, represent another important step towards democratization and civil society empowerment.

The Post Electoral Strategy Group, established in mid-2005, agreed that the newly Independent Election Commission still requires support in the following areas: 1) Capacity building; 2) Enhancement of legal capacities and 3) Development of a new voters registry.

The 2005 National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections represent enormous achievements for Afghanistan. Millions of voters across the country exercised their democratic rights to elect legitimate representatives to institutions that will govern the country at the national and provincial levels for the coming years. The elections were the first parliamentary elections in Afghanistan in decades, and they mark the end of the transitional period and the birth of a fully self-governed country.

While elections alone do not guarantee democracy, the electoral processes over the last two years do build a strong foundation for the future of a democratic country. It is with confidence that the Joint Electoral Management Body hands over to the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan and its Secretariat the task of implementing future elections in Afghanistan. Post-conflict elections are always difficult in both political and operational terms, but there can be little doubt that this year's elections were challenging even by post-conflict standards. The 2005 elections stand as a testament to the commitment of the electoral staff. This event will be historic for many reasons, but the memories of working together for a better future will be everlasting. We thank those involved for their dedication over the last year.

### *Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT)*

The 2004 Voter Registration and Elections Project helped establish the Electoral Secretariat of the Joint Electoral Management Body in order to provide Afghan citizens with experience and knowledge on legal and administrative aspects of election planning and delivery. An addendum forming an integral part of the 2004 Afghan Elections Project was signed **(by whom?)** on 28 March 2005 facilitated the elections of the Wolesi Jirga (House of People) and Provincial Council Elections on 18 September 2005. The UNDP Project facilitated the work of the newly established Independent Afghan Electoral Commission and the Joint Electoral Management Body in:

- Resource mobilization and management;
- Operational support, including additions and corrections to the register of voters;
- Polling;
- Risk management/security;
- Public outreach;
- Facilitation of international electoral observation.

Overall, the 2005 elections were a success, however their cost was high due to the complex operations that required a lot of international expertise. Special attention was given to women through nationwide civic education activities.

(Following the successful completion of the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections, a number of challenges had to be addressed immediately. Although the Afghan Government expressed its commitment to assume responsibilities for elections by allocating \$665,000 to the Independent Election Commission (IEC), the transfer of the budget to the IEC was a difficult issue. Therefore, the IEC requested further support from the international community for a transitional period of six months, (March to September 2006) while the administrative arrangements to receive the national budget were being established. During this period, UNDP secured salaries for the IEC Secretariat staff as well as the operational costs, to ensure that the headquarters and provincial offices remained functional. CIDA and USAID participated in this. All administrative issues regarding the IEC salary scales and the fiscal budget were properly addressed, and IEC has become a truly independent and government supported entity.)

**Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT) Project launched in January 2007.**

### **Challenges and Risks**

- Due to the relatively low government salaries, the IEC is confronted with pressures in implementing a retention policy while this is financially challenging;
- Changing government procedures endangers the structure of the IEC (i.e. recruitment/payment procedures);
- Inter-agency coordination enables the use of available resources in the best way possible, however with various organizations focusing on different areas there is a risk that some focus area will not be uncovered in case an organization fails to fulfill its responsibilities.

**Results of UN efforts to date:**

- Refugee returns exceeded expectations
- The 2002 return-to-school programme attracted 3 million boys and girls
- UN presence helped to adverse affects of natural disasters

**Some Future Priorities**

- Redistribution of electoral assets to relevant projects and national institutions;
- Financially close down VREP 2004/2005;
- A national seminar on lessons learned to be held in May 2007
- Finalization of the Civil and Voter Registration Pilot Project in October 2007
- Training of Commissioners and secretariat staff through study tours, exchange programmes and conferences.