



UNDP Afghanistan Newsletter

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Capacity Building at the New Afghan Legislature Goes Ahead in Full Steam

Now that the newly elected Afghan National Assembly is in business, there is much legislation to be produced and a lot to catch up with, and not only for legislators but also for the machinery that will allow them to work, that is the Secretariat of the Parliament.

Taking the opportunity of the current recess in the Assembly proceedings, the SEAL project has organized two more training courses for the staff of the Secretariat to prepare them for the upcoming busy schedule of the Assembly sessions.

The first training course, on Feb. 1 and 2, involved 50 staff members of the secretariat and focused mainly on the work of the Standing Commissions of the Parliament, which have a vital importance in the process of vetting the legislation to be submitted to the plenary sessions of both houses of the Assembly, Wolesi Jirga (the lower house) and the Meshrano Jirga (the house of the elders). 32 standing commissions, 18 in the former, and 14 in the latter will be functioning, and they will also perform the duty of oversight of the executive branch of the state, that is the government, including budget and public accounts.

5 A panel of resource persons including SEAL Project Team Manager Thusitha Pila-

patiya and team members Srinvasan Gopalan, Consultant, Monjurul Kabir, Advisor on Legislative Environment, Dennis Sammut, Advisor on Capacity Building, Tarek Sedik, National Programme Officer, Legislative Environment and Abdel-ellah Sediqi,

International Department of the Meshrano Jirga. The seminar was facilitated by Mr. Sammut, Advisor on Capacity Building, and covered topics such as Parliament's international relations and support for the international activity of members of parliament.



Afghan National Assembly staff in training in preparation for the upcoming session

Consultant, as well as Ville Varjola, Head of Sector, Delegation of the European Commission, Kabul and Enie Wesseldijk, Senior Parliamentary Expert, French Embassy, Kabul made presentations and answered questions from an eager and attentive audience.

On 5th February, SEAL Project also organized a training workshop for the staff of the

More than 200 members of parliament from both houses will, in the coming months, participate in seminars being prepared by the SEAL project both in Afghanistan and abroad as part of efforts to empower them to fulfil their duties of representation and oversight. Seminar topics will include, among other things, globalization.

SEAL project is supported by France, Denmark, EC, CIDA, GTZ and Italy.

Gun Law Steadily Advancing over the Law of the Gun

Four more Jihadi commanders committed themselves to the peaceful order in Afghanistan by surrendering their weapons between February 6 and 8, 2006, marking another step in the steady advance of the rule of law, in this particular case of the Gun Law, against the supremacy of the guns.

On February 6th, in Kapisa province, Commander Abdurahim, Commander Janaqa and Commander Shah Aqa, turned in 5 trucks of ammunition and 75 weapons - including 9 Russian missiles, 13 AK-47 and 14 heavy weapons - to the DIAG* weapons collection team, saying time had come to give up weapons and support the government.

One day later, on Feb 8, in Pol-e Kumri district of the Baghlan province, General Mustafa Mosseni, the Chief of Police of Logar and former Commander of the 20th Division, handed over 51 weapons and ammunition, including 19 missiles, to be verified by the DIAG* weapons collection team. Both ceremonies were attended by high level officials with the latter being observed by a delegation from Kabul, led by General Manan, the head of the Anti-

Terrorist Department of the Ministry of Interior.

General Mustafa Mosseni insisted that "peace has now come back to Afghanistan and therefore weapons should be handed over to the Government for the use of the Afghan security forces". He also called on other Commanders to follow his example and comply with the DIAG process.

The weapons are now stored in the provincial weapons collection point under the surveillance of the Afghan National Police (ANP). They will be either used by the security forces of Afghanistan or - if not serviceable - destroyed.

While weapons keep being transferred to government control, the hearts and minds campaign to win the former jihad fighters over to the side of the government is also steaming ahead with many seminars and meetings being organized throughout the country to explain the process of DIAG and how it will benefit the population in Afghani-



These missiles should not look so threatening now stan.

**DIAG: Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups*

The DIAG process was launched on 11 June, 2005 when officially announced by Vice President Khalili.

As of 9th February, 17,568 weapons as well as 25,667 pieces of boxed and 70,993 pieces of unboxed ammunition have been handed over to and verified by ANBP collection teams in Afghanistan. 4,857 of the collected weapons have been handed over by 124 candidates to the parliamentary and provincial council elections.



DIAG project is supported by UK, Canada, Switzerland, Denmark and Netherlands.

Good News for Children with Hearing Impairment

Thanks to a creative initiative by an Afghan delegation visiting Bahrain, up to 50 children under the age of five will be able to have their sense restored before the end of the year.

The team from UNDP's National Programme of Action on Disability (NPAD) and officials from Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled never thought they would be coming back with such good news when they set out for the tiny Gulf state in November in 2005. The occasion was an international conference on rehabilitation and the team was grateful for the opportunity

because it provided the ground for making the acquaintance of Dr. Ahmad Jamal, the skillful surgeon who could restore hearing sense of young kids by implanting a tiny chip between the skull and the skin just below the earlobe.

When the Ministry of Public Health welcomed the visiting team's idea to invite him, Dr. Jamal immediately confirmed his availability and arrangements are now being made for the surgeon to come to Afghanistan and examine some 50 kids with a view to restoring their hearing.

When he arrives in May 2006, Dr. Jamal will visit Kabul and Mazar and will work with a

number of organizations that care for the hearing impaired children such as Hearing Impaired Foundation HIFA, Afghan National Association of the Deaf ANAD, SERVE, CRF, and Swedish Committee for Afghanistan SCA).

Not only skillful, but also generous, Dr. Jamal will perform all the implant surgery on the young kids free of charge. The task now is to raise funds, and to raise them in time, to be able to purchase the chips to be implanted to make life meaningful again for the young ones, who have a lot to contribute to the future of Afghanistan.

UNV Devotion Creates A Functional School Building in Badakhshan

When Toshiko Kitahara was first assigned to Afghanistan in March 2002, she did not know what a big contribution she was capable of making to the cause of education of girls in this country, but through tireless efforts and unbending dedication, she

most 700 girls of school age in the district she was assigned to as "Education Consultant" were unable to receive any education despite the fact that there was a government decision to allow the girls to be sent to school.

Furthermore, the Department of Education within the local administration had already given the green light for a building in Ragh to be used as the girls' school. There was, though, one "minor" problem: The building was in a state that could be described best as a "ruin".

Toshiko took up the task of fundraising for the reconstruction of the school and started a campaign that reached territories as far away as, guess, Australia: Toshiko's Australian friends working in Afghanistan organized a party when they went back to their country on leave and brought back US \$ 2400.

Of course it was important but a symbolic contribution to the \$180,000 effort, which Toshiko

took to all she thought could be interested: She asked for funds from the Japanese Embassy and she got \$80,000; two individuals, US citizens, donated a total of \$20,000; and with the contributions from other organizations and individuals she could collect a total of \$140,000.

BANA, a Badakhshan-based NGO, took up the task of implementing the project. Vitaly important was the WFP's "Food for Work" programme, which allowed the recruitment of the workforce for the construction; businesses and organizations also lent construction materials that made it possible for the construction to be completed by October 2005, two and a half years after the project started, and in time for the start of the 2006 school year.

Toshiko now says still \$40,000 is needed to pay back the loans in the form of construction material and workforce. Even though there is still debt to be paid, everybody involved in the project, foremost among them Toshiko, is now feeling the satisfaction of having something worthy done for the young girls of Ragh.



Thanks to Toshiko...



...these young girls...



...this school building will accommodate...

helped create a school for them in Ragh, Badakhshan, and is now looking forward to the start of the next school year in March to celebrate her success with the young girls that will benefit from the project.

Upon her arrival in Ragh, Toshiko was sad to learn that al-

VCCT Staff in Jalalabad and Herat Receive Vital Training

Although the country is not in a situation even remotely resembling an emergency, the Government of Afghanistan is mindful of the fact that one can never be too early in taking measures against HIV/AIDS, the most devastating epidemic affecting developing countries for the last two decades.

Despite the fact that there have been only a few declared cases of HIV infections in the country, cognizant of the possibility that many more could have already been infected or become so soon, The Ministry of Public Health has gone ahead and established the Department of National AIDS

Control Programme within the Ministry and UNDP has reciprocated to this prudent step by committing \$200,000 to a Preparatory Assistance project.

As with many other issues in war-ravaged Afghanistan, the human resource potential is key to tackling the vital problems and the UNDP project has been addressing this issue in earnest.

Voluntary Counselling and Confidential Treatment Centres (VCCT), which are being gradually established throughout the provinces, are now also having their staff trained in how to address the culturally sensitive issue of encouraging potential HIV patients both to come out and to accept treatment.

UNDP has organized a training session for the ten government employees, hired by the Department of Public Health to staff the VCCT training centres in Herat and Jalalabad. The training, between January 27 and 31, was conducted by experts hired by the UNDP in an effort to equip the VCCT staff with skills to deal with both the medical

and social aspects of the issue.

The presence of Dr. Mohammad Amin Fatemi, the Minister of Public Health at the ceremony of distribution of certificates was a welcome indication of the importance attached to the issue by the country's leadership.

The first phase of the Preparatory Assistance, to conclude by the end of March, will mainly address the issue of capacity development while the second phase is planned to focus heavily on the special vulnerabilities of women, be they sex workers, women refugees and migrants and wives of migrants.

The overall goal is to create an enabling environment in Afghanistan for a sustained and comprehensive multi-sectoral response to HIV/AIDS.



Minister Dr. Fatemi presenting the certificate to a participant

NABDP Project Stops Flooding, Increases Agricultural Output

After decades of war and destruction, what the people of Afghanistan desperately need are peace and prosperity, and the need is urgent.

With the peace largely in place, prosperity is very much in demand and that takes a lot of economic activity. People of Gulbahar village in the Jabel Saraj district of Parwan province had been trying hard to do what they could do in order to grow vegetables, fruits and other agricultural produce, but only to the extent that floods allowed them until the autumn of 2004. Repeated spells of precipitation in winter, exacerbated by the melting snow in spring, left them not only wretched and hopeless, but also poor and sometimes hungry.

But thanks to a 5-foot high, 960m long embankment, the villagers now say they are happy to report that they have started to earn a living on the produce they get out of land.

Ruhullah, the area commander, said: "Before the wall, not only our produce on the ground, but also our lives were in

danger because of the recurring flooding, now that we have the embankment, we have been able to increase both the amount and the variety of our agricultural produce."

"Thanks to this project, a lot of people benefited from increased stability in the water supply" he added.

The embankment was originally planned as a 518 m. long wall, was but later extended upon the wish of the village population.

Now that the safety for farming is in place, the villagers appear to have already set their eyes on the next tasks to be undertaken by NABDP, first the pavement of the road to Charikar, the provincial capital, which will allow the marketing of the agricultural produce, and later on the extension of the embankment to expand the cultivated land for increased food production.

NABDP project is supported by Belgium, Canada, Italy, Japan, EC, USAID and UNHCR.



Thanks to this embankment ...



Ruhullah (left) says their produce is safe .

Second Session of Computerized Payroll Training Concludes

Shafiq Ahmad was all smiles just 10 minutes before the ceremony started: He was feeling proud, justifiably so, as his trainees, having acquired the skills to use the software developed by a team that he had led, would now receive their certificates and then travel to their provinces to sit down in their desks to work on their computers.

The ceremony on Monday, February 13, was at the Ministry of Interior and the occasion was the completion of the second training course to the police officers from provinces on how to produce computerized payrolls for the police departments in Ghazni, Herat, Paktia, Khost, Laghman, Nengahar, Badakhshan and Juzjan under the LOTFA project.

The twenty-day training course was so successful that Hidayetullah, from Paktia, said he could now use the software flawlessly although he had not even touched a computer before the training started.

Shafiq said he believed the participants to the training course would play a vitally

important role in enhancing the efficiency of the police force in the provinces: "Until now, in one provincial unit, five staff members from Human Resources and Finance sections would be able to finish a monthly payroll in 15 days, now only one officer



Shafiq Ahmad supervising a trainee

will be able to produce it in one hour" he said.

The software, ESP, which he led the design and development of, can be used in three languages, in Dari, Pashto and English, allowing it to be utilized by all the trainees, regardless of their language

preferences.

Shafiq said, immediately after the end of this training, there would be a five-day "refresher" session bringing together the participants to the first training session in October, so that the first group of participants could be equipped with additional skills required, based on "lessons learnt" since the launch of the computerized payroll system.

He appeared a little angry speaking about the three civilians who were enrolled in the first course: Having learnt to use various word processing and spreadsheet applications alongside the ESP, they have left the Police Department to take employment elsewhere. "This is why", Shafiq said, "I set a condition that all the participants in the following courses will have to be police officers."

His insistence on having police officers trained for the task may have a point: In Parwan province Police Headquarters, the computer provided by LOTFA for the production of the payroll has been placed in a room smaller than 2 m², but with a dedicated and trained police officer, the system works perfectly.



UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.

Irreplaceable Loss of Japanese Family To Be Commemorated by Contribution to Kabul University

Eriko Ohara was one of the many Japanese citizens who had come to Afghanistan to contribute to the reconstruction effort following the ousting of the Taliban regime in 2001.

She played a major role in formulating a project aimed at supporting the Kabul University (KU) but was unfortunately diagnosed as having a cerebral tumor upon her return to her country and was immediately operated on. The surgery was not enough to cure her malady and she passed away in April 2004.

Then Ms. Ohara's family decided, as an act of praying for the repose of their daughter's soul, to donate funds to the work of rehabilitation of KU and asked the UNDP to manage the funds to be donated. The selection of Kabul University as the target of the donation was meant as a reflection of Eriko's commitment to and fondness of her assignment in regard to the University.

Michihiro Ohara, Eriko's father, signed the letter of agreement on January 27, allocating US\$ 8000 for the project and expressing his gratitude to Frederick Lyons, Director of UNDP Country Office in Afghanistan for his suggestion to place a memorial plaque at the University to remember Eriko's hard work and devotion to KU. He said in his letter "... if it would contribute even a little to Afghanistan people's [sic] good feeling to Japanese people, it may be great and very much honourable matter for my daughter and ourselves."

The funds will be utilized for the rehabilitation/renovation work undertaken at the Engineering Faculty of the Kabul University in the framework of the Urban Development Group (UDG) activities.



Renovation will receive a boost thanks to Ohara family donation

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An image of Afghanistan



***Glorious mountains
of Afghanistan***

Archive photo