

DISPATCHES

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Women in the Afghan Parliament: Good is not enough. We have to be brilliant

By: Trygve Olfarnes and Kumar Tiku

Afghanistan's 2004 Constitution called for a parliamentary election for the first time since 1969, and included a quota for women members, a process and result that UNDP played a key role in supporting. However, finding women who were ready, willing and able to run presented a different problem altogether.

This posed a critical challenge to Afghanistan's progress toward democratic rule, since inclusive parliaments are much more likely to lead to stronger civic engagement and democratic participation amongst citizens, especially women. For example, female leaders can serve as strong role models who are able to energize and organize women voters.

Fawzia Koofi, a two-term Member of Parliament in Afghanistan who also heads the National Commission on Women's Rights and Human Rights, recalls the challenges she and other women faced in the beginning trying to make the Parliament more gender inclusive.

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UNDP Signs MOU with EUPOL and Afghan Government – page 4-5.

A Time of Change – The Triple Transition and the Work of UNDP in Afghanistan

Alvaro Rodriguez – Country Director



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the first edition of *Dispatches*, the newsletter from UNDP Afghanistan that helps you connect with aspects of our work in the country. It will be our endeavor to bring you this newsletter on a quarterly basis.

Afghanistan is undergoing a number of fundamental changes that will impact the development context in the years to come. UNDP's support to the Government of Afghanistan takes note of such eventualities.

With its largest programme globally, UNDP is helping the government of Afghanistan become more effective and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Afghan people. In addition, with its unique network of regional advisors, UNDP provides technical assistance to several government agencies on essential issues including re-integration of insurgents, law and order, justice and human rights, gender equality, anti-corruption and elections.

We hope you will enjoy reading this inaugural issue. We will, of course, be very receptive to your feedback and suggestions on constantly improving our communication with you.

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“Getting more and more women to speak in Parliament was part of a grim battle that I had to wage every day,” says Koofi. “In my meetings with the Speaker of the House, it was my highest priority to lobby for giving women [Members of Parliament] the chance to speak on issues.”

Afghanistan had the opportunity to develop political institutions that included women in national decision-making. A simple quota is not enough. New and old members alike, male or female, require training in order to be effective lawmakers in an institution that is still relatively new and is traditionally male. For example, with 160 new members to Parliament – many of them newly-elected women – Parliamentarians’ ability to scrutinize and initiate bills is limited.

At the beginning of 2008, UNDP stepped in with a training series for Parliamentarians focusing on human rights and gender issues, as well as basic legislative skills in training members on how to draft a bill. UNDP did this with support from the Governments of Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden and the European Union. The UNDP project ensured that training and workshop sessions – in addition to organized study trips and mentorship programmes to learn from other country’s successful parliamentary systems, including Australia and India – almost always included women members.

As a result this new and critical segment of the Afghanistan Parliament received the kind of support and education they needed to begin speaking up and

initiating and passing legislation. “As women in the Afghan Parliament, ‘good’ is not enough, we have to be brilliant” in order to succeed, explains Farkhunda Zahra Naderi, who was elected to Parliament in 2010. Going forward, Naderi vows to spotlight the need to elect women to the country’s Supreme Court.

Five years after the initiation of UNDP’s support to Parliament and gender equality, women make up over one-quarter – 28 percent – of the lower house of the Afghan Parliament, the *Wolesi Jirga*.

Afghanistan ranks number 30, globally, in terms of its representation of women in politics and is among only a dozen countries worldwide in which the Constitution reserves a certain number of seats for women in the lower or upper houses of Parliament.



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24 Provinces Participate in UNDP-Supported Strategic Planning Initiative.



In a move that links a majority of Afghanistan's 34 provinces to the framework of strategic development planning. The Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) rolled out a three-day training workshop that will further consolidate the way forward for a harmonized, single planning system for the Government of Afghanistan. The initiative, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will help IDLG in rolling out Provincial Strategic Plans (PSPs) in ten provinces during 2013.

The PSPs, linking available budgets with people-centred needs, was first piloted in Herat and Balk provinces in 2010, followed by Bamyán, Laghman and Nangarhar. The PSPs of these five provinces have been approved by the respective Governors and endorsed by IDLG. They are expected to streamline and improve the quality of annual provincial planning and budgeting, which is presented in the form of Provincial Development Plan (PDP).

The Workshop was attended by over 40 government

representatives from 24 provinces across Afghanistan that are being initiated into the PSP process. The Deputy Minister for Local Governance to the Government of Afghanistan, Mr. Farid Mamundzai says, "There have been so many plans developed in the past but they often do not reflect the true needs of people. IDLG, along with the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Ministry of Finance, are committed to bringing more cohesion and accountability mechanisms to the current systems. Provincial strategic planning is setting out a vision and framework for subnational development."

Echoing the Minister, Mr. Farid Popalzai, Director of Afghanistan's National Development Strategy (ANDS) Evaluation of Ministry of Economy stated, "Plans are often prepared from thin air and end up on shelves. We should move beyond this practice and link the provincial planning with budgeting."

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The workshop built upon lessons learnt and best practices achieved from 7 existing PSPs based on national priorities and targets in governance, socio-economic development and security sectors articulated in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).

Mr. Chris Carter, Chief Technical Advisor of the Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme II (ASGP) of UNDP, says, "Provincial plans should be developed by Afghans and for Afghans."

Led by the Provincial Governor's Office (PGO) with the technical assistance of IDLG and Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP) of UNDP, the provincial strategic planning supports and respects local ownership and stakeholder engagement.

The three-day event provided a timely opportunity for the participants and officials of IDLG and Ministry of Economy, which is in charge of overseeing the PDPs, to review the subnational planning procedures and practices in helping generate a preliminary consensus on the way forward in realizing the vision of a harmonized, single planning system at the sub-national level in Afghanistan.

Women Police and Prosecutors Training to Fight Violence Against Women



Close to 80 women police officers, prosecutors and members of the legal community in Afghanistan will benefit from a new training package aimed at equipping the justice and law enforcement community with tools designed to curb violence against women.

A Memorandum of Understanding to enhance capacity of the Family Response Units (FRUs) was signed between the Ministry of Interior, the European Police Mission (EUPOL) and the United Nations Development Programme, in Kabul on March 11, 2013. The FRUs are part of the criminal investigation department of the police and play an important role in investigating cases of domestic violence.

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The training programme will build capacity among justice and security sector staff in dealing efficiently with investigating, preserving evidence and prosecuting authors of gender-based violence.

UNDP Country Director in Afghanistan, Alvaro Rodriguez says: "The lead role taken by the Ministry of Interior to coordinate this joint training is exemplary. It is essential to coordinate the local and national levels to ensure that the wheels of the justice system function smoothly, fostering a collaborative work environment between the Family Response Unit and Prosecutors for the benefit of Afghan women and men."



Violence against women remains a critical challenge for women and young girls in Afghanistan: development partners from different fields of expertise need to support the critical role played by security and justice sector to prevent and mitigate gender-based violence. All MoU partners bring together their capacities to support FRUs and prosecutors. Head of Mission in EUPOL, Mr. Karl Ake Roghe says, "By uniting the expertise of both EUPOL and UNDP/LOTFA and the Justice and Human Rights Programme

in Afghanistan (JHRA), we have the opportunity to reach out to Family Response Units and prosecutors not only in Kabul, but also in the provinces."



Through this initiative, UNDP will strengthen Programme synergies in Afghanistan between its Rule of Law work in Afghanistan with a particular focus on women and youth.

As part of the European Union's efforts to secure stability in Afghanistan, EUPOL ensures training and mentoring to strengthen the Rule of Law under Afghan ownership. This training contributes to the on-going reform process of MoI and professionalization of cadres from security and justice sectors. Lessons learned from this first training will inform the development and establishment of future sessions, in coordination with MoI and the General Prosecutor Office.

"In all our actions we will also try to ensure sustainability. Through the UNDP JHRA-LOTFA projects I am hoping that there will be continuity of these trainings through establishment of robust institutional mechanisms and strong coordination among various key stakeholders", says Mr Rodriguez.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Report of the Secretary-General on Afghanistan will be issued by 14 June, ahead of the Security Council debate schedule to take place on 20 June 2013.

Senior Officials meeting, to be held on 3 July, Kabul Afghanistan.



Recent Appointments



Head of Oversight and Compliance Unit.

Ms. Iris A. Hauswirth has many years of extensive experience in management. Prior to UNDP she was Chief of Staff and Senior Programme Development Officer in the office of the Director for Country Programmes, at the International Trade Centre (ITC) in Geneva. In these functions she addressed the improvement of structures and processes in ITC's project cycle management, from 2002 to 2008 she worked as a programme and project manager in ITC, designing and implementing projects in Central Asia, Asia and Africa.

Before embarking on her UN career, Ms. Iris worked for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Westminster University, and in consulting. Her academic publications cover the fields of public-private partnerships, results-based management, local and regional economic development, and include a book on 'Effective and Efficient Organizations'.

Ms. Iris A. Hauswirth holds a PhD in Institutional Economics from the London School of Economics and Political Science and has graduate degrees in Economics and Geography from Phillips University Marburg, Germany.

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