



JEMB UPDATE



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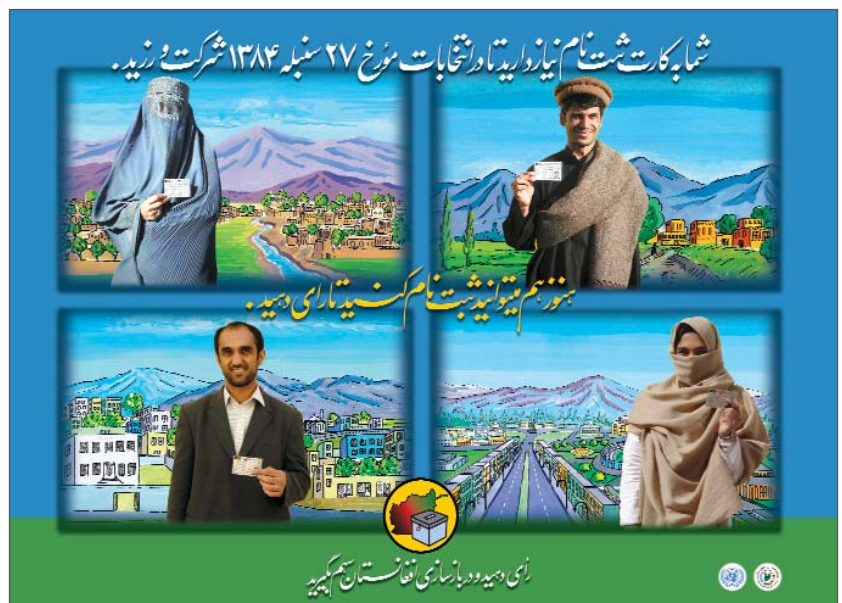
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Joint Electoral Management Body

Spreading the word

Reaching out to Afghan communities and governmental and non-governmental institutions in order to create public understanding and encourage participation is an integral part of preparations for the 2005 Elections. This enormous task falls largely into the capable hands of the Public Outreach Department of the JEMB Secretariat. The aim of Public Outreach is to provide Afghan communities with accurate, culturally sensitive and timely election information; to encourage and promote the involvement of Afghan women in the election process; and to contribute to capacity building of Afghan civil society and JEMBS staff. In order to achieve this, the Public Outreach campaign uses a multi-faceted grassroots approach: direct encounters with Afghan communities; material distribution; traditional (newspaper, radio and television) and non-traditional (mobile radio, cinema and theater) public information channels; and coordinated relationships with external public outreach partners.

The Materials Development and Public Information Section of the Department is charged with the development of all messages for civic education material and the creative production and implementation of messages. The Section develops core materials including backgrounders, fact sheets and Frequently Asked Questions, as well as messages for posters, leaflets, and flip charts. Materials and messages are then creatively disseminated through radio, television and newspaper. Radio programs, in particular, are central to the public information campaign. Radio spots consist of short Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and longer programmes, dialogues, roundtables and dramas. Spots will be broadcast on both government-owned Radio Television Afghanistan as well as international radio and local stations. Spots made for radio will also be played on mobile radios in the provinces, especially where radio networks are inacces-



sible. Recent television spots and newspaper advertisements have informed voters that they can vote for their Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Representatives, and that they need a registration card to vote.

Messages are constantly changing to coincide with the different phases of the electoral process. The Field Liaison Section supports the implementation of the Public Outreach campaign phases - the first being the Candidate Nomination phase. Regional and Provincial Public Outreach Officers (RPOOs and PPOOs) have received training and are currently deploying. They will depart to each of the 34 provinces and will immediately begin to recruit National Public Outreach Officers (NPOOs)- many of whom have worked on the civic education campaign in their local communities during the 2004 Presidential Election. The number of educators recruited will depend on demographics and geographic features of the province. NPOOs will train civic educators, who will be responsible for conducting the

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Into the field

face-to-face meetings with the communities. First, NPOOs and civic educators will make contact with local leaders and authorities by holding Community Mobilization Events (CMEs). Materials produced by the Materials Development Section, such as printed fact sheets and backgrounders, will be used. This first phase of the campaign will rely heavily on media to disseminate its messages to broad audiences.

During the second phase, which corresponds to the four-week Additions and Corrections period taking place from late June to late July, national educators will return to the communities with flip charts and other printed materials to inform the constituencies about who should visit an Additions and Correction Center. Eligible voters will learn where to go to register and how to update the information on their registration cards - as they will only be able to vote in the province listed on their registration cards. In addition to CMEs, educators will conduct "Face-to-Face" activities, which provide an intimate atmosphere conducive to a more nuanced discussion.

Once the Additions and Corrections period is complete, Phase Three will commence. The polling phase will incorporate the use of "mock elections" - small groups will be given mock ballots and will learn how to use them. Familiarization with the ballots and practice in polling procedures will instill voter confidence and increase transparency. Civic educators will use flipcharts, as well as loud speakers, mobile radios, public announcement systems, theater performance and mobile televisions in heavily trafficked areas of towns and villages to ensure the broadest audience possible.

Public Outreach works closely with other civic education stakeholders: partner NGOs (such as the Afghan Civil Society Forum and IFES), who assist with direct outreach; other NGOs who conduct civic education and public information activities; the Afghan authorities; and the international military forces.

Local organizations play an important role in the dissemination of civic education messages and election information through events and gatherings organized by Afghan civil society and community groups. By providing grants from \$50 to \$1000 for such events, the Small Grants Program (SGP) of the Public Outreach Department simultaneously strengthens Afghan civil society and increases public outreach to the communities.

The work of the SGP and all sections of the Department is supported by the Graphic Design Section. Graphics and its team of illustrators create the posters, flip charts, leaflets and all other printed materials used in the various phases of the educational campaign. In addition, candidate symbols and ballots are developed, the newsletter is laid out and the website is produced by this talented group of artists and designers.

The multi-faceted and multi-talented Public Outreach Department will play an essential role in the successful administration of the 2005 Elections. ■

In order to spread essential information to eligible voters about 69 elections running simultaneously in 34 provinces, the JEMB Secretariat has assembled a team of highly qualified individuals - the Provincial Public Outreach Officers (PPOOs).

S.K.L. Walia was an International Civic Education Officer based in Herat last year. She has recently completed the Public Outreach training and is preparing to deploy to Gardez.

"I think things will be much more difficult this year - with so many candidates on the ballot and two different elections at the same time," said Walia. "Then again, in other ways it will be easier this year because we all fall under UNOPS. This will make communications and logistics much more efficient."

Our conversation is interrupted by a phone call from one of her former national colleagues in Herat. "We had an amazing group of people in Herat," Walia said. "That was one of our drivers. They are always calling to check on me, see how I am doing and when I am coming back."

Augustus Davies, a former civil servant from Sierra Leone, is also returning to the program. Davies acted as a Civic Educator in Ghor province during the 2004 Presidential Elections. He will be working in Kabul this year. "Every province has its own unique challenges," Davies said. "Because the population of Kabul is so large, we need to hire more National Provincial Public Outreach Officers (NPPOOs) than any other province in the country in order to reach all of the communities."

Some challenges are not province-specific. "I think it will be a huge challenge to explain the electoral system," Davies said.

For some PPOOs, this week's deployment will be their first foray into civic education in the Afghan context. Carla Alves Lopes, a Portuguese national, will be heading to Faisabad in Badakhshan province.

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India lends expertise



If anyone has a rich background to lend to the JEMB, it is Noor Mohammad.

From the largest democracy in the world geographically and by population, JEMB International Commissioner

Mohammad brings from his native India nearly three decades of experience in electoral administration.

The Election Commission of India is committed, under a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the UN Electoral Assistance Division, to provide electoral management expertise to promote democracy worldwide. Mohammad's appointment to the JEMB falls under this MOU. Mohammad's work has taken him across Europe, North America, Africa and Asia where he has acted as an observer, conference participant and now, a Commissioner.

Informally, India has used various democratically-based systems for centuries. Following the establishment of the Indian state in 1947, and the adoption of the constitution in 1950, the first democratic election was held in 1952.

India has one of the largest voting constituencies in the world - with a population of one billion people, India boasts 670 million registered voters. This figure is impressive, in a country where electoral administrators face hurdles such as security concerns, illiteracy, a vast territory, and numerous languages.

"There are hundreds of spoken dialects in India," said Mohammad. "Out of 22 official languages, we printed ballots in 16 of them." The Indian Commission relies on transliteration software which uses the Indian Standard Code for Information Interchange (ISCII) as its basis, making it possible to convert data in one language to another electronically.

India uses a party-based system; as such, the number of necessary candidate symbols is significantly reduced due to fewer independent candidates. Mohammad recalls, however, an instance when the Commission was challenged by an overwhelming number of independent candidates. "During one of the elections in a southern province in 1996, people purposely tried to disrupt the elections by registering en masse as candidates," Mohammad recalls. "There were over 1,033 candidates on one ballot! They didn't think we would be able to come up enough symbols; we struggled, but we did. The ballot turned out to be a booklet - but the election was held as scheduled."

Mohammad has experience with other challenges that are familiar to Afghanistan. The management of elections where the scale was

so large, not only from the perspective of voters, but also of logistics, security arrangements and compliance with Indian electoral laws and code of conduct for political parties was an issue that Mohammad has addressed to ensure successful elections throughout his country.

As a civil servant in India, Mohammad became increasingly involved in electoral administration. In one of his early assignments as a District Election Officer, he oversaw the preparation of voter rolls, nomination of candidates, monitoring the poll campaign and poll expenses, printing of ballot papers, training of poll personnel, deployment of polling staff and security forces, conduct of elections, counting of votes and declaration of results.

As the Deputy Election Commissioner of India, Mohammad has been involved in all of the activities of the Election Commission of India for more than two years. Mohammad will rejoin the Commission as Deputy Election Commissioner upon return to India.

Prior to his appointment to the Election Commission, he served as Chief Electoral Officer in the most populous state of India for nearly nine years. The state comprised 83 districts having a total of 125,000 polling stations and a total population of about 150 million, of which 100 million were eligible to vote. In his role, he oversaw the preparation of electoral roles, printing of voter slips and mobilization of personnel for elections in the sometimes volatile and disputed state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Such varied experience at all levels has contributed to a developed competency in electoral management and a passion for being involved with the mechanism which makes the world's largest democracy help elect its leaders.

Mohammad believes that the key to a successful electoral system is absolute transparency in the electoral management process. It is important, Mohammad said, "that stakeholders have faith in the system and are willing to participate and engage themselves. Timely dissemination of accurate information with a credible grievance redressal mechanism is necessary to ensure a level playing field."

When asked whether or not he would accept another assignment as an International Commissioner, Mohammad paused to reflect. "Having witnessed several elections in India I understand how they have influenced change in my country.

"If I feel that I can be of assistance in an electoral process, then, yes, I would do this again."

Operational concept

"Into the field" continued from Page 2

The Operational Concept for the 2005 Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections was developed by the JEMB Secretariat and presented to various stakeholders during political party and stakeholder meetings over the last three weeks. The Concept presents an overview of the election administration component of the JEMB and JEMBS.

The key aspects of the Operational Concept are outlined below. It should be noted that a number of variables remain that are subject to the passing of the amended Electoral Law and decisions of the JEMB.

- **Infrastructure:** The JEMB Secretariat will administer the elections from Headquarters in Kabul, Regional Offices and Provincial Offices.
- **Voter Eligibility:** All Afghans over 18 on Election Day and in possession of a voter registration card will be able to vote for their representatives in the province of their residence.
- **Additions and Corrections Period:** A four-week Additions and Corrections period in district capitals allows voters that do not have the correct province noted on their voter registration card, those who did not participate in the 2003/4 registration or who participated and have since lost their card, and those who have returned to Afghanistan since the last election to receive a new card.
- **Electoral System:** According to the Electoral Law, the electoral system that will be used to elect members to the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Councils is the Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV).
- **Candidate Nomination:** Candidates will submit nominations at the provincial level. A preliminary candidate list will be printed and distributed for challenges.
- **Polling Period and Locations:** Polling will take place on September 18, 2005 in 30,000 polling stations located in an estimated 5,000 polling centres across the country. Voters will be able to vote in any polling station in the province stipulated on their voter registration card. Afghans will vote in exclusively male or female polling stations staffed by male or female staff respectively.
- **Count and Results:** Counting will take place in Counting Centres at the provincial level, where security permits.
- **Complaints and Appeals:** An Electoral Complaints Commission will be established to adjudicate electoral offences, complaints and appeals in a timely and transparent manner. Decisions of the Commission will be subject to appeal only to the JEMB.
- **Provincial Electoral Commissions:** Provincial Electoral Commissions will receive electoral complaints, advise on the eligibility of candidates and advise on polling centre locations, amongst other responsibilities.
- **Capacity Building:** Emphasis will be placed throughout the JEMB Secretariat on building the professional capacity of national staff to enable them to play a lead role in administering future elections.
- **Staffing:** Nearly 8,000 staff, Afghan and international, will be employed to assist in electoral preparations, with 180,000 more being employed around Election Day. ■

"I think one of the most important things is to become culturally acquainted with the region in which you live," Lopes said. "Public outreach presents a potential cultural minefield. In order to spread your message effectively, you have to understand the context you are dealing with."

Xortencia Lasin, a former Civic Educator in Samangan province who will be based in Panshir this year, agrees.

"It is important to go out into the field and see the smaller communities - this, to me, is the 'real' Afghanistan," said Lasin. "The community that I lived in in Samangan gave me an Afghan name, *Nafasgul jan*, it means 'beautiful flower.'

As a woman, Lasin finds that working at the community level is particularly important, as this is the most effective way to reach the female constituency.

"We are constantly thinking about how to engage women in the process and to get word out to women voters," Lasin said. "Last year we had 40 percent turnout from the female population - this year we should shoot for at least 50-60 percent."

With less than six months to disseminate such complex messages so far and wide, these Public Outreach Officers are anxious to get out to their respective provinces. "We are a group of ambitious and motivated educators," Walia said. "And that is the key." ■



Provincial Public Outreach Officers ready to deploy. Left to right: Xortencia Lasin, Augustus Davies, S.K.L. Walia and Carla Alves Lopes.

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