



JEMBUPDATE

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Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

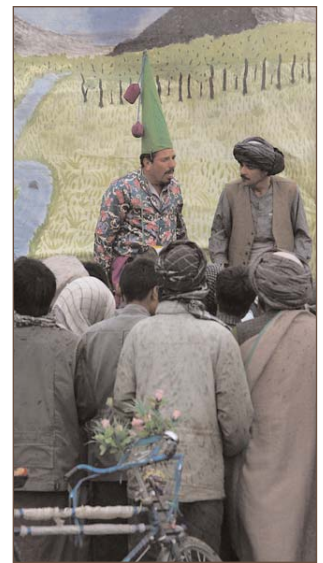
Joint Electoral Management Body



Civic Education in the Theatre

Khuda Baksh rocked back and forth in sheer delight with his hand pressed hard over his mouth - the 40-year-old blacksmith from Bamyan was like an excited child. Until this week he had never seen a play before, and now he's seen two - albeit the same play twice.

Farukh and is sponsored by The Asia Foundation (TAF) and implemented by the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society and Sayara. It focuses on issues that affect Afghans, such as poor roads, crime, the need for better health care and the need for the citizens to vote for candidates they



Communities of Bamyan gather to learn more about registration and voting through mobile theatre performances.

"I enjoyed myself very much," he said after watching the play, "New Hope," for a second time in the Central Highlands town of Bamyan this week. He has no television, or even a radio, and said he was "very excited and most happy" just to get some entertainment.

But the point of the play, apart from entertainment, is to educate Afghans about the upcoming September 18 parliamentary and provincial elections, and it was not lost on him. "I learned that I should vote for a good person," Khuda Baksh said. "I learned that it is important that we vote for good people to help us with the problems that we face."

"New Hope" was written and directed by the well-known Afghan playwright Qader

believe will help them address those problems. The JEMBS Public Outreach Department advises the group on content and strives to provide civic educators at each performance in order to brief the audience on the upcoming elections.

The program has been extremely successful in raising awareness of the process of democracy in a country where few people have access to media and there are high rates of illiteracy.

There are seven different troupes of actors who have been touring throughout Afghanistan and, according to TAF, almost 90,000 people have seen 132 of the 218 scheduled shows this year. Many of the

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Building Ramps to the Elections

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actors were well-known in Afghanistan prior to the Taliban and some are household names, as actors on the popular BBC radio drama, "New Home, New Life."

In a similar program last year for the presidential elections, more than 300,000 Afghans turned up to watch the plays.

In Bamyán, civic educators from the JEMBS spoke before and after the play to remind voters that they need to have their voter registration cards if they want to vote in the upcoming elections. Voter registration begins on 25 June and runs for one month.

Eighteen-year-old Bamyán school student Mohammad Ali was too young to vote last year, but says he will register to vote this time around.

"It is important that we vote so that we have good leaders," he said after a performance of "New Hope" this week. "Me and my friend will be registering and we have learned today how we can register." ■



Participants gather for the first all-candidate meeting in Bamyán.

Candidates Meet in Bamyán

The first all-candidate meetings were held in Bamyán on 4 June to explain the Challenge and Display period to Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council candidates in the Central Highlands region. Nearly two-thirds of the candidates, from all seven provinces of the region and some having traveled for three days, attended one of two meetings.

The candidates asked questions related to how and when they could begin campaigning and what the role and responsibilities of the Electoral Complaints Commission are. Smaller technical questions covered whether a candidate could withdraw and complaints about the quality of the black-and-white photographs on the provisional list of candidates (the photographs will be in colour on the actual ballots).

The sessions were planned to last for one hour, but lasted for three hours in order to address all of the candidates' questions. ■

According to a JEMB policy decision, five percent of the vacancies at the Joint Electoral Management Body are intended for persons with disabilities. The JEMB is the only organization in Afghanistan to promote the employment of disabled people to such an extent.

Sayed Hamed has recently joined the JEMB Secretariat as the Regional Liaison Officer for the Disabled of the Central Region. He describes one of his primary responsibilities in this position as ensuring the recruitment and employment of disabled people.

"We want to let people know that the disabled are not a burden on society but a part of it," says Hamed. "They should not be ignored but considered. Equal rights for all human beings means equal rights for people with disabilities too. Voting is one of these rights."

This is why Hamed is working to ensure that registration and polling centres are accessible to the disabled population. "We would like to work to create a barrier-free society," says Hamed. "This means that registration and voting should take place in a location that is accessible to all. If a polling centre is located on the third or fourth floor of a building, there should be facilities that are also accessible at ground level."

Four months after his birth, Hamed contracted polio. At that time the vaccine was available but proactive campaigns were not reaching out to the community with educational messages and mobile vaccination teams. Hamed's family sought treatment and tried rehabilitation, but these remedies did not yield positive results.

It is estimated that of Afghanistan's two million disabled citizens, 60 percent have been the victims of injuries or accidents related to decades of violent conflict.

At JEMB Headquarters in Kabul, Hamed would like to see ramps that can be used for all buildings with stairs at the entrance.

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Left: Abdul Khaliq Zazai is the National Liaison Officer for the Disabled at the JEMBS. Right: Sayed Hamed; Regional Liaison Officer for the Disabled of the Central Region

Commissioner Staffan Darnolf



Politics were predictable when JEMB Commissioner Staffan Darnolf was growing up in Sweden. Democracy was a given; elections ran smoothly; the issues were the same year after year; and political life was full of an elite of full-time politicians. Once in a while there were accusations of politicians misusing municipal funds, but the system had enough checks and balances to keep such corruptions small-scale.

Mr. Darnolf's first taste of a vibrant political life came when he went to Botswana and Zimbabwe while working on his Ph.D. in Political Science. Politics were colourfully unpredictable there: everyone was interested in the elections because basic infrastructure issues like roads, schools and hospitals affected them all. The politicians were teachers, nurses and farmers, who would leave their jobs at mid-day to go to their government offices. He noticed some similarities with Sweden-as a child, Mr. Darnolf would attend community gatherings and meetings like the Boy Scouts all the time, and he witnessed the same spirit of community gatherings and active consensus-building in Africa.

The lesson he learned in Botswana and Zimbabwe-like those he learned advising electoral commissions in a dozen other countries-is one he has brought to his work in Afghanistan. Afghanistan offers the strength of a citizenry that is actively interested in change: "They want fighting to cease, and they want education for their children," he says. "In some ways, they expect too much: they have high hopes for this system, and some will be disappointed. It's a slow process. It's a matter of explaining how this works, and telling them that you as an Afghan can speed up this process and take action."

After his time in Africa, Mr. Darnolf spent several years teaching Political Science in Stockholm and Washington, D.C., and doing consultancies for the Swedish Foreign Office on improving the electoral authorities in

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Since he left Stockholm in 1999, he has served as an electoral administrator or advisor to electoral commissions for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the UN and the European Union in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Nigeria and Iraq, among others.

Elections in Afghanistan

From a mission in Nigeria, Mr. Darnolf arrived in Afghanistan in November 2003 as the Senior Elections Administration Specialist for IFES. The plan when he arrived was that all of the elections-presidential, parliamentary and district-would be completed over the next six months. "But there was nothing in place," he says. "No election law, no budget, no field structure or Constitution defining the Provincial Councils or the Parliament. There were six Afghans [appointed to the Interim Afghan Electoral Commission, or IAEC], no national staff supporting them and very few internationals."

His first task turned out to be a lot like the teaching of university students he used to do. He focused on training the Commissioners, who had almost no electoral experience. They covered topics such as what is an election, what is the job of administrators, what are the best practices, what are free and fair elections and how to adapt an alien, Western notion of elections to an Afghan context. All of the Commissioners came from diverse backgrounds, but all were keen students. Some were deeply rooted in their traditions, which often gave a better sense of what things were like in the villages of Afghanistan.

He deems the presidential election a success. "There were lots of lessons learned, of course, but it was surprising how well things went considering the obstacles," he said. One of the lessons learned was the need to establish the Electoral Complaints Commission. Mr. Darnolf was one of the three internationals to serve on the Panel of International Experts, tasked with adjudicating complaints lodged by presidential candidates, many of which concerned the controversy over the indelible ink used to mark voters' fingers to prevent double-voting.

After the election, he took a month-long vacation in "cold, dark" Sweden. Upon his return to Kabul in December 2004, Mr. Darnolf was seconded by IFES to the UN to assist in planning the parliamentary elections. He was appointed to the JEMB in May. Most national staff from the presidential election have stayed on this year, and the Chairman has become the leader and point of contact for all issues, he said. "It's been a challenge, but it's heartening to see Afghans leading the process." ■

News in Brief...

"Building Ramps to the Elections" continued from Page 2

- **Death of a civic educator:** This week saw the unfortunate murder of a civic education worker employed by Afghan Development Association, one of the JEMB's partner organisations delivering public outreach messages for the election. It is unclear at this stage whether the murder was related to involvement in the election process.
- **JEMB actions:** The JEMB decided upon the most effective method of using voter marking ink to prevent multiple voting. Following recommendations from the Secretariat, the JEMB approved the list of voter registration sites to be established throughout the country. The JEMB discussed and approved the list of members of the Provincial Election Commissions, the JEMB Sub-committees Rules of Procedure and the Media Accreditation Regulation.
- **Display and Challenge period:** After a successful Candidate Nomination period closed on 26 May, the Display and Challenge period ran from 4-9 June in all provincial offices. The ECC will review and adjudicate all received challenges over the next month.
- **Press conference:** As part of its on-going efforts to maintain full transparency in its operations, JEMBS held a press conference on 5 June covering the final candidate nomination totals, the Display and Challenge period and the disarmament of candidates. 35 members of the national and international media attended.
- **Voter registration preparations:** In preparations for the voter registration period from 25 June-21 July, 60% of the registration kits have been delivered to provincial offices, with the rest scheduled for delivery over the next ten days. Starting next week, new Public Outreach programmes will focus on voter registration, using an integrated media campaign strategy.
- **Training sessions:** The Training Section is currently teaching registration procedures to all regional training teams, which will in turn train provincial staff. All Provincial Logistics Coordinators and Provincial Administration Officers were also in Kabul last week for procedural training.

"Being a disabled person, I know the many problems that disabled people face," Hamed said. "We want to make sure there are equal rights and opportunities. That disabled people are considered. And that they are able to be self-sufficient."

Abdul Khaliq Zazai is the National Liaison Officer for the Disabled at the JEMBS. At age 11 or 12, he was playing with friends when he accidentally walked into the line of gunfire. But rather than allow his disability to hinder him, Zazai saw an opportunity to work in a field of personal interest to him - rights of the disabled. "I understood that I would never let a disability get in my way of my rights and role in society," Zazai said. "I completed my education which opened paths for me to be a good example for other people with disabilities." ■



JEMB support team deliver registration kits to Daikundi.

National Assembly Elections: Financial Status as of: 11 June 2005

Received (funds transferred to UNDP)	
DONOR	AMOUNT USD
USA	12,000,000
Greece committed in 2004 transferred in 2005	678,426
Switzerland committed in 2004 for 2005	1,754,386
Netherlands (carry over from CLJ)	844,712
Australia (exchange gains from 2004)	35,190
New Zealand (exchange gains from 2004)	48,616
Netherlands	5,284,015
UK	7,786,691
Denmark	1,996,531
New Zealand	729,927
Switzerland	1,000,000
Australia	1,545,578
Norway 1	793,650
Total received to date	34,497,722

Committed (agreement signed)	
DONOR	AMOUNT USD
Finland	2,600,000
Canada	6,400,000
Total committed	9,000,000

Pledged (letter received)	
DONOR	AMOUNT (USD)
Republic of Korea	500,000
EC	11,050,000
Italy	5,200,000
USAID	20,000,000
Belgium	1,000,000
Germany	3,900,000
Norway 2	1,120,000
Spain	1,250,000
Luxembourg	-
China	1,000,000
Total pledged	45,020,000

Total Project Budget	148,665,087
Effective Carry Over from 2004	16,027,851
Total Received 2005	34,497,722
Total Committed (agreement signed)	9,000,000
UNFUNDED	89,139,514

For further information about the JEMB Update please contact: Jiffer Bourguignon at jifferb@unops.org.af or visit our website www.jemb.org.

Photography: Marie Frechon/Greg Bearup/Alister Laird/JEMBS