



Rebuilding Afghanistan

September 30 – November 3, 2004

Special Edition

United States Agency for International Development

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Highlights

On October 9, 2004 Afghanistan reached another historic milestone: the successful completion of its first ever democratic election. The willingness of ordinary Afghans to brave security threats, inclement weather, and long distances to make their voices heard and to choose their leader for the first time in the country's history was impressive. Observers reported Afghans lining up at 3:30 am in Farah, voters standing in 8 inches of snow in Bamyan, and Pashtun women in Kandahar defying both local convention and Taliban threats to overwhelm polling stations with their numbers.

Election Overview

- Voting occurred at **5,000 polling centers** encompassing about **22,000 polling stations** nationwide.
- Estimates put overall turnout at **8 million** or **70%** of all registered voters.
- **40% of women** who registered cast their votes, with some provinces reporting as high as 56%.
- **594,000 Afghans** who had registered to vote in Pakistan cast a ballot on October 9th, with another **260,000** voting in Iran.



Women's line at Kabul polling station. Photo by: Albana Vokshi

The Government of Afghanistan, the assistance community and the Afghan people are now positioned to sustain and build on Bonn process successes for the parliamentary elections. USAID is beginning new projects of parliamentary support, local government, and civil society. These new projects will complement existing programs in the rule of law. All of these projects assist Afghans in developing a political system that will help to make their desire for more peaceful and pluralistic life a reality.

Providing Assistance for the Elections

Although official ownership of the Afghan elections lies with the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) – a joint UN-Government of Afghanistan (GoA) entity, USAID was the largest donor in the elections process, contributing more than \$84 million. Collaborating with UNAMA, GoA, and other counterparts, USAID participated directly in early election planning efforts, helping with voter registration and other elections efforts. USAID interventions were strategically designed to strengthen key structural, organizational, and political aspects of the elections process, such as civic education, political party training, and support for observers.

Election Accomplishments

- Reached **1.3 million** Afghans through voter education activities such as training sessions and mobile theatre troops.
- Registered **41% of all women**, in coordination with the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA).
- Monitored over **1,673 polling centers** on Election Day, or approximately 1/3 of the total centers.
- Provided election support in the form of **10,000 observers**, as well as printing and distributing **50,000 field manuals**.

Ongoing Activities

- Preparations for securing successful parliamentary, provincial and district elections in 2005 are underway.
- Civic education programs are underway in preparation for the 2005 elections.
- In the coming months, a survey funded by USAID will assess the attitudes of voters.



Voter education posters. Photo by: Marie Frenchon/UNDP

Supporting the Bonn Process

Afghanistan set this historic course almost 3 years ago with the signing of the Bonn Accord. USAID was one of the earliest and largest supporters of the process. USAID was the only donor to support the Emergency Loya Jirga which convened in June 2002. USAID also initiated programs bolstering the major political pillars of Bonn including Justice Reform, Human Rights, and the Constitutional Commissions.

Pre-Election Accomplishments

- Provided critical financial and logistical assistance for the **Emergency Loya Jirga**, which successfully established an interim Afghan government.
- Provided critical, technical and logistical support for the creation of the Afghan constitution by supporting the **Constitutional Loya Jirga**.
- Rehabilitated nine **provincial courthouses** and various **government ministries**.
- Improved **communication links between the central and provincial governments** through the funding of a radio network, which is under process.

Related Ongoing Activities

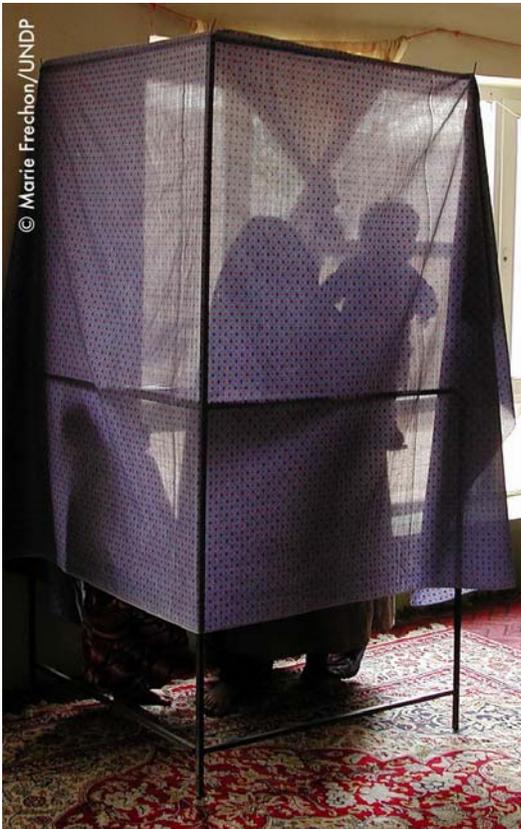
- Continuing construction of **18 additional judicial facilities** in 13 provinces.
- Supporting the Afghan **Human Rights Commission**.
- Funding the **establishment and effective operation** of the upper and lower **houses of Parliament**.
- Supporting the effective and transparent implementation of the **Afghanistan Stabilization Program** that rehabilitates district government infrastructure and conducts training for public administration.
- Training **judicial personnel** including judges, lawyers, and court staff.



JEMB workers on Election Day.



Election worker preparing ballots. Photos by: Albana Vokshi



*Woman with her child in booth.
Photo by: Marie Frenchon/UNDP*



*Election worker helping elderly voter into booth.
Photo by Marie Frenchon/UNDP*

Promoting a Free and Independent Media

Breaking news was broadcast throughout the election from correspondents calling in by mobile from major cities throughout Afghanistan, as well as regular updates from official sources such as the Electoral Commission. Radio Killid is one of two vital FM stations broadcasting in Kabul, part of a network of community radio stations supported by USAID. In addition to the development of the private broadcast radio and television stations, USAID has also assisted with legal and regulatory reforms to enable free press. USAID worked to ensure that election results are determined and released in an orderly and consistent manner to the Afghan population. To ensure fair and balanced campaign coverage, USAID-funded experts helped to establish a media commission and media monitoring unit that collects and analyzes a representative sample of Afghan media as well as recommend appropriate actions to enforce media codes of conduct.

Accomplishments

- Establishing **27 independent FM radio stations**, including Arman FM in Kabul and Balkh, provincial community stations developed by Internews, women-run stations, and student-run university radio stations in Herat and Kabul.
- Distributing **70,000 radios** to vulnerable populations including women in remote areas across Afghanistan.
- Providing civic education and independent media coverage through support for **18 radio stations** that reach over **8 million Afghans**.

Ongoing Activities

- Planning development of an additional six to nine radio stations, scheduled to begin broadcasting in advance of parliamentary elections.



Journalists training for covering the elections. Photo by: OTI



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Unloading ballot boxes for counting. Photo by: Marie Frechon/UNDP

They want to keep Afghanistan from getting ahead. We have been waiting years for elections. We will not let anyone pressure us – not Taliban, not Al Qaeda, not warlords, nobody. We want our children to use pens instead of weapons, and only elections can bring that. –Hakim Mahmad, 55, Khost Province
