Afghanistan Information Management Service (AIMS)

Information Management Workshop

Organized by UNAMA/AIMS/CAFÉ
Mazar-I Sharif, Afghanistan

Prepared By
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Aimal Maiwand

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United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
Presentation 1:
“Information Management for Development”

The presentation and handouts were prepared in local language. The content includes basics of data and information management. Why information is important for every works of life? Information need for our day-to-day work? How data can be converted into useful information for planning or decision-making process? How computer is used for processing information? What is computer hardware and software. How we can use computer for planning? Data collection process and how it is integrated with computer. What UN agencies collecting what information in Afghanistan. Hand out was prepared in “Dari” on information management for Development and the role of UNAMA and humanitarian agencies. It was distributed at the end the workshop.

Presentation 2:
“Who is Doing What Where?”

Second presentation also conducted by one local staff in Dari. Who is Doing What Where was presented to the audience to show them how, why and when computer is being used for this process as a case study. The presentation covers all the steps of the WDWW process from designing to outputs generation, like maps, reports and database. All the questions were answered after each presentation.

Sub-Group Discussion:
The participants were divided into two groups. All the departments were mixed together. Each group was asked to select a chairman and answer following questions based on discussion. Each group has one facilitator from AIMS and CAFÉ;

1. List of the information sorts that are required for governmental organizations for their development planning.
2. Make a priority list of information required for each departments.

Following are the result we received from each group:

List of the information sorts that are required for governmental organizations for their development plans. (Group No 1)

- Accurate population statistics
- Partnership and working relation among the NGOs
- Address of International and local NGOs
- Good Management
- Working Maps and Charts covering all the area belonging to the northern zone.
- Developing cartography department in order to product more efficient maps.
- To enhance reporting
- Having a list of professional and expert employees of government.
- Information on Power and Energy
- Business information
• Education in rural areas.

Priority List of Group No 1

• Education
• Health
• Agriculture
• Reporting & Planning
• Reconstruction and Renovation
• Business and Power Energy

List of the information sorts that are required for governmental organizations for their Development plans. (Group No 2)

For Planning Department

• Natural disasters occurred in different parts of Afghanistan (Full Information)
• Figures and quantities of humanitarian assistance delivered in different parts of Afghanistan, especially in the northern provinces.
• List of the areas that were front lines for long period and were destroyed.
• Epidemic Disease in Afghanistan
• Irrigation systems problem in Afghanistan
• Rural Reconstructions sites
• Education institutions
• Agriculture information
• Development Projects
• Information on operations against Narcotics
• Accurate population statistics considering the genders and human resources
• A complete list of all organizations with their relevant mandates and field of work.

For Education Department

• Regarding the donors that funding the educational programs.
• Figure of the expatriate teachers that were in Afghanistan before.
• Figure of the students that were sent to abroad by government for education in the past.
• Figure of the students that were educated in abroad by their own means.
• What and how much humanitarian assistance were delivered to all schools in Balkh province.

For Rural Reconstruction and Development Department

• Information about the different donors
• Road projects that were conducted and road projects that are going on or are planned for future and present condition of the roads.
• Agriculture and husbandry situations
• Irrigation problems and projects
• Handicraft production situation.
• Educational projects that were carried out and are planned
• Cartography and distance between the villages by KM
• Geographical information about the water levels in the villages.

Priority List for Group No 2

• Information about the different donors
• Figure of the students from Balkh province that are educated in abroad.
• Accurate statistics of population
• Epidemic disease in Afghanistan
• Development projects that has been carried out or development projects that are planned are being implemented or projects that are planned.
• Cartography and distances between the villages by km.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

Although this workshop was not part of the original project proposal of CAFÉ. With persuasion and timely intervention by AIMS it was materialize. The workshop covers basic understanding of the information management for the senior level officials who will be in charge of planning but may not now the various applications of computer.

The planning process of the workshop and the content preparation was done in close collaboration with the local counterpart of AIMS and CAFÉ. This was also beneficial for them to understand the concept and role of information management and presentation techniques to a larger audience.

The level of participation was very good. There were 17 participants attended the workshop. Most of them actively participate during the discussion group session. Several questions were asked about the history of computer and Internet.

As a follow up activities AIMS and CAFÉ will prepare some exercise for the participants based on need of each departments.

Smaller group will be formed from the participants to carry out the exercises. They will be involved for group discussion on deferent aspects of information management in the future.
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Golam Kamal</td>
<td>Field Coordinator</td>
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<td>02</td>
<td>Aimal Maiwand</td>
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<td>03</td>
<td>John McCoy</td>
<td>Info Specialist</td>
<td>CAFÉ</td>
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<td>04</td>
<td>Enayatullah</td>
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Annex II : Handout (Translated copy of this paper was distributed)

**Information Management Workshop**
Mazari Sharif, 24/11/2002

**Background:**

Afghanistan is probably setting on the top of the list of world’s lowest per capita computer, Internet and telephone uses. While people of Afghanistan were busy in a war to protect their country for more then two decades a revolution took place all over the world. It is the “Information Revolution” that has changed the world of conventional ways communication and business practices. Unfortunately it was not possible for Afghan people to participate in the bandwagon of information revolution, however the time has arrived and they have lot to catch up.

Many things have changed in Afghanistan since end of 2001. Afghanistan is an independent nation now. The country has a new interim government with a strong mandate of reconstruction and development directly supported by United Nations and all the major donors of the world. Positive environment has triggered millions Afghans to return home from refugee camps. The country rapidly changing it position from humanitarian crisis to development phases.

Highly visible government institutions are emerging in every provincial and district level. They will be the key actors for future development of the country. Information will play a key role for the new institutions for planning and monitoring the development process.

The Interim Administration realizes the importance of information management to ensure the effective functioning of government. This has been reflected various documents from the Government and UN agencies working for the development of Afghanistan. The operating principles of United Nations for transition period clearly reflect the need for capacity development on information management for local government.

1. **Developing the capacity of the Government**
   - Accelerate support for capacity development of national, provincial and municipal counterparts;
   - Accelerate agency secondments to key national and local government departments, and support human resource development in those entities; and
   - Improve information sharing – and an expectation that UNAMA will give priority to information management systems development with the Transitional Administration.

2. **Sub-national operations and enhanced integration**
   - Accelerated decentralization of resources;

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1 Based on the circular distributed by Nazel Fisher on 21st July. The UN System Operating Principles for Transition period
• Increased integration of programming sub-nationally around shared priorities agreed with national counterparts;
• Greater flexibility in decision-making on resource allocations, to facilitate prioritization at sub-national level with counterparts (Afghans, UNAMA and agencies);
• Where and when possible, procuring supplies locally as well as promoting the use Afghan contractors and operational counterparts.

3. A more efficient and integrated UN response
• Improved internal efficiencies, increasing cost-effectiveness and a move towards more shared systems, services and premises;
• Increased Afghanistan of positions currently occupied by expatriates;
• Greater inter-agency cooperation and cross-posting of staff between agencies; and

What is information management?

Better information helps make better decision. Information management helps any organization to improve their planning, implementation and monitoring capabilities. Information management also facilitates to share their information with other organizations on a more systematic basis. This leads decision makers to take accurate information based decision-makers more quickly, of any emergency situation, and creates a shared frame of reference that enables those decision-makers to co-ordinate their activities, based on clear knowledge of needs in the field and clear understanding of each organization’s capacities.

There is no straightforward definition for information management. In simple term, Information management is the range of processes by which individuals and organization handle information; these processes aim to define, collect, analyze, present, distribute and record information.

Information by itself is not useful, but must be applied in a variety of ways to generate useful knowledge for an organization. While improved information management should be an objective in itself for organizations, the real measure of success is how that improvement benefits the delivery of humanitarian assistance or making a sustainable development plan. A collection of information organized in such a way that a computer program can quickly select desired pieces of data. You can think of a database as an electronic filing system.

Traditional databases are organized by fields, records, and files. A field is a single piece of information; a record is one complete set of fields; and a file is a collection of records. For example, a telephone book is analogous to a file. It contains a list of records, each of which consists of three fields: name, address, and telephone number.

Some Issues in information management

Technology
Information system designers should consider explicit and proactive efforts for making systems relevant and easy to use, particularly in remote areas. This includes
bridging the technological divide by building capacity, promoting the exchange of knowledge and skills between local and international actors and making information available through a variety of means in a variety of formats. Human judgment, rather than technology, is the basis for operational decisions.

**Inventory**
One of the most important aspects of information management is preparation of inventory. Inventory is a list of products and resources available in a particular province. Computerized inventory creates a database. Once inventory is done the database is ready for any analysis and cross-referencing. Queries can be made any time to generate accurate information in a timely fashion. Preparedness for any humanitarian crisis or natural disaster could be done based on accurate information. Measures such as base data preparation for high-risk areas, population in any disaster prone area or better monitoring for IDPs and refugees.

**Collect and analyze base data**
Gather, organize and archive data is a standard process in information management. A well maintain database always provide timely most recent information for any kind of planning or preparation for emergencies. Maintain and enhance data sets during emergency responses. Document and archive data so that it is easily accessible for future use.

**Maintain and promote data and information standards**
Follow generally accepted standards for information exchange, such as the Structured Who is Doing What Where database and Geo-code prepared by Afghanistan Information Management Service (AIMS). This will enable integration of data from multiple sources and enhances verifiability, assessment, analysis and accountability.

**Maximize resources by expanding partnerships**
Recognize the contribution of database that are collected and managed by a variety of actors including different government departments; UN agencies and NGOs are crucial for a comprehensive information base. Pre-establish inter-agency relationship plays a important part in this regards at the national and local levels. Establish an ongoing process of personal interaction to create partnerships for information management and exchange. Provincial Coordination Board (PCB) and Provincial Sectoral Groups could be a best platform for collection, shearing and promote linkages to avoid duplication of effort.

**Engage local and national actors**
Develop networks of local communities and national NGOs, civil society groups and the private sector and address the issue of local participation as part of overall information management for emergency and development planning. Build and strengthen the national/local capacity in information management.

The provincial government department will gradually increase their respective role in planning and management of local resources. To establish a skill efficient workforce for the government would be the greatest challenge for all the stakeholders.

Capacity building for the Afghanistan government has become the number one priority for UN agencies and International Non-profit agencies. Information
management would be a vital part for the government departments as the country is moving towards the development phase from humanitarian. In addition, there is a lack of information and communication between international agencies working in the regional level with the local government. As a result, there needs to be awareness rising on both sides to ensure that they can work together. Information management is one way of encouraging this process.

Nigel Fisher noted that information management is important for reporting and accountability. There have been a number of initiatives attempting to fill the gaps in our knowledge – notably, AIMS attempts to set up the Who’s doing What Where (activity tracking database) and the Survey of Surveys (a list of surveys and assessments being carried out). To make this information available to the government official and teach them how to maintain them would be the first step of a long journey. With the computer-training project each department would be able to start compiling the information from the field and use them for the planning and monitoring purpose.
Annex III: Programme

Information Management Workshop
Mazari Sharif, 24/11/2002

Information Management Workshop will be the part of on going capacity building project implementing by CAFÉ, UNAMA and technical support from AIMS. Under the project two persons from each of the department of Education, RRD, Planning and the Governors office will be trained on various computer packages.

The half-day workshop is designed to give an overview of information management in planning and coordination of the various government departments in Balkh Province. Five senior members from each department will take part in the workshop. Emphasis will be given on the role of computer in planning, data management and coordination activities.

Objective:

- Raise awareness on information management to the senior members of the government departments
- Present various applications of computer in information management
- Understanding the perception of participants on information management to design follow up activities

Venue: Governor’s office, Balkh Province

Date: 24/11/2002

Schedule of the workshop

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome speech by Golam Monowar Kamal in absence of Michele Lipner, Area Coordinator UNAMA, Mazar

9:10 – 9:20 John McCoy, Information Specialist, CAFE

9:30 – 10:15 Information Management for Development

10:15 – 10:30 Case study (computer application in development planning)

10:30 – 11:30 Sub-Group discussion

11:30 – 12:00 Group discussion

12:00 – 12:05 Sum up/Future Plan/thank note by Golam Monowar Kamal, Field Coordinator, AIMS
Presentation of Group Discussion Results
Discussion

Presentation by Enayeet
Question and Answer