

**National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**  
**Self-Assessment Framework**  
**15 October 2014**

The questions in this framework are to guide each National Assembly of Afghanistan (NAA) unit and department in carrying-out its self-assessment supported by facilitators, experts and the UNDP Afghanistan ICSPA secretariat.

The questions are not exhaustive and additional questions and areas for review may be recommended to the Heads of Department and Directors by the facilitators and experts.

In addition to the below, Heads of Department and Directors should assess current and required staffing per department with a focus on existing and required staff skills and competencies to deliver efficient and effective services.

Duplications or inefficiencies in structures, processes or procedures should be highlighted in the self-assessment per department or unit.

Each department or unit will formulate recommendations towards improving efficient and effective service delivery to MPs to support them in realizing their constitutional mandates.

**I. Departments of Finance and Administration**

**1.1. Budget**

- Does the NAA internally prepare its annual budget without outside expertise and support and have past budgets realistically set out all expenses necessary for the NAA's proper functioning?
- Does the NAA have an institutionalized process and structure for development of its annual budget?
- How publicly acceptable is the system whereby MP and staff salaries are determined?

**1.2. Finance**

- Does the NAA have autonomy from the executive for management of its finances including accounts payable/receivable and bank reconciliation and does it have accounting policies and procedures meeting international public accountancy standards, including an internal control framework?
- Does the NAA have adequate controls and segregation of functions?

**1.3. Assets**

- Does the NAA have procedures and processes in place to manage assets including their depreciation and disposal as well as to safeguard against theft? This includes procedures for issuing equipment to MPs and staff.

#### **1.4. Procurement**

- Does the NAA have established internal structures and processes to permit it to effectively carry out procurement in accordance with national procurement laws?

#### **1.5. Transportation**

- Does the NAA have procedures and processes in place to manage and maintain its fleet, including vehicle maintenance, fuel consumption and any pooled transportation services?

### **II. Human Resources**

- Are NAA staff autonomous from the civil service? Do members of the Executive branch have authority to appoint or dismiss staff within the NAA?
- Are the conditions of service and salary scales for NAA staff appropriate to attract and retain the skilled and specialized personnel required to support MPs in the discharge of their duties?
- Are the Organogrammes for the departments and units in each house suitable for providing effective and efficient support to MPs?
- Are procedures in place to permit the recruitment, promotion and/or dismissal of NAA staff based on performance and free from the political interference of MPs or the Executive?
- Do the Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga have gender-sensitive human resource policies or strategies?

### **III. Audit**

- Does the NAA have an effective system in place to hold accountable those who make decisions on major spending and procurement?
- Is the audit unit within the NAA accountable to an independent and external body and are its findings and reports accessible to the public?

### **IV. Public Relations and Information**

- How open and accessible to the media and the public are the proceedings of the NAA and its committees?
- How free from restrictions are journalists in reporting on the NAA and the activities of its members?
- How effective is the NAA in informing the public about its work, through a variety of channels?
- How extensive and successful are attempts to interest young people and women in the work of the NAA?
- How adequate are the opportunities for electors to express their views and concerns directly to their representatives?
- How user-friendly is the procedure for individuals and groups, particularly civil society organizations, to make submissions to a NAA committee or commission of enquiry?
- How much opportunity do citizens and civil society organizations have for direct involvement in legislation (e.g. through citizens' initiatives, referenda, etc.)?
- How systematic are arrangements for members to report to their constituents about their performance in office?
- How systematic is the monitoring and review of levels of public confidence in the NAA?
- Is information on MP attendance, in plenary and within commission meetings, and their voting records published and readily accessible by the public? Are these published on the websites of each house?
- Are *Hansard* records available to the public?
- Is the public informed in advance about items to appear on Order Papers and brought before MPs in both houses? Are Order Papers published on the website in advance?
- Does the NAA issue regular Press Releases? Are there procedures and processes for preparation (including a template/format), approval and publishing of these by the NAA? What are the means of publication?
- Does the NAA hold regular press conferences? Are there procedures and processes in place governing who may attend and who presides? Does the NAA issue press corps credentials and if so on what basis?

- Does the NAA coordinate support from its international development partners, and if so, how often does it hold development partner coordination meetings?
- Does the NAA have a mechanism to ensure that all development partner support is aligned with its institutional priorities and sustainable?

#### **V. Archive, Library and Research**

- How adequate are the research, information and other facilities available to all members and their groups?
- Does the NAA have an effective and efficient electronic catalogue system; retain permanent archives, on and off-site; provide services to all MPs and staff, and if so, what is the delay for providing research support?

#### **VI. Support to Committees**

- Are procedures in place governing the establishment of committees and their functioning?
- Do all standing committees meet and produce reports? If so with what frequency?
- Are the number of existing committees efficient to permit effective oversight?
- Do staff in the respective departments have the skills and competencies required to support committees? If not, detail the skills and competencies required for effective support.
- Do the support to Committees departments have standardized formats for the preparation of committee reports?
- Provide and assess statistics in regard to the number of committee reports finalized per NAA session since 2005

##### **A. Committee Oversight**

- How effective are specialist committees in carrying out their oversight function?
- How well is the NAA able to influence and scrutinize the national budget, through all its stages?
- How effective are committee procedures for scrutinizing and amending draft legislation?

- How effectively can the NAA scrutinize appointments to executive posts, and hold their occupants to account?
- How rigorous is the NAA oversight of the country's armed forces?
- How far is NAA able to hold non-elected public bodies to account?

## **B. Legislative Capacity**

- How adequate are the opportunities for individual members to introduce draft legislation?
- How effective is the NAA in ensuring that legislation enacted is clear, concise and intelligible?
- How systematic and transparent are the procedures for consultation with relevant groups and interests in the course of legislation?
- How careful is the NAA in ensuring that legislation enacted is consistent with the constitution and the human rights of the population?
- How careful are NAA committees in ensuring a gender-equality perspective in their work?

## **C. Involvement in International Policy**

- How effectively is the NAA able to scrutinize and contribute to the government's foreign policy?
- How adequate and timely is the information available to NAA about the government's negotiating positions in regional and universal/global bodies?
- How far is the NAA able to influence the binding legal or financial commitments made by the government in international fora, such as the UN?
- How effective is the NAA in ensuring that international commitments are implemented at the national level?
- How effectively is the NAA able to scrutinize and contribute to national reports to international monitoring mechanisms and ensuring follow-up on their recommendations?
- How effective is the NAA monitoring of the government's development policy, whether as "donor" or "recipient" of international development aid?

- How effective is the NAA in inter-parliamentary cooperation at regional and global levels?
- How far is the NAA able to scrutinize the policies and performance of international organizations like the UN, World Bank and the IMF?

## **VII. Plenary Session Management**

- Who takes the lead in deciding what business should be taken and when? How is this negotiated– informally through “business managers” or formally at a Bureau-style gathering of representatives? In circumstances where there may be no agreement, do procedures exist for a formal adoption of the order paper in plenary?
- What procedures exist for individual (private) members to propose agenda items for discussion e.g. bills, motions.
- How far in advance are MPs and staff informed about items brought before each house? Is there scope for differentiating between items tabled formally for consideration say a week ahead and a less formal longer term programme of several weeks? What conventions are there about timing? Are there minimum notice periods for the tabling of business in plenary? Are there rules and procedures in place governing the minimum time frame for papers to be submitted to MPs for their review prior to debate in each house, and if so, are these timeframes respected?
- How do the relevant departments within the parliamentary administration [plenary session management departments] contribute to the process of preparing Order Papers for each house, and the relevant documentation to support agenda items e.g. reports, draft bills, lists of amendments?
- How do the Plenary Session Management departments upload information pertaining to upcoming sessions directly to the websites of each house and communicate information and documentation (Order Paper, bills, amendments, committee reports, agreements concluded by the executive for ratification by the Parliament, etc.) electronically to MPs and staff in advance of plenary?
- What are the facilities for providing paper copies of all documents relating to parliamentary sittings? Should there be paper copies at all?
- Does the Parliament of Afghanistan produce an official report (Hansard) of plenary proceedings? What arrangements and rules exist for members to review the record of their speeches? What obstacles are foreseen regarding its production and publication? What timescale for publication is envisaged? Are there alternative forms of record to a verbatim record of proceedings?

- How do the Rules of Procedure (Standing Orders) facilitate the efficient functioning of plenary sessions and ensure the Parliament of Afghanistan delivers on its constitutional mandate? What changes to the rules might be suggested? To what extent can good practice supplement such rules as already exist, so that rules do not become over prescriptive?
- What procedures exist for the tabling of questions to government ministers? What rules govern the suitability and/or relevance of questions to be asked? By what mechanism will questions be selected for answering?
- By what mechanism will matters for debate on questions of public concern be brought forward and how will debates be requested? What rules exist for the conduct of debate in plenary, the order of speaking, time limits etc.
- How satisfactory are the procedures for subjecting draft legislation to full and open debate in each house or in the relevant committees?
- Is there a department with prime responsibility for organizing plenary sittings – a Sittings Office of some kind?

#### VIII. ICT

- Does the NAA use ICT systems and to facilitate voting; recording of MP/staff attendance; preparation of the *Hansard*; transmission of documents for review to MPs and staff; research, archives and documentation?
- Does the NAA provide internet access to MPs and staff sufficient to permit them to carry out their respective functions? [staff and MPs should be surveyed]
- Does the NAA store key records and documents off-site electronically and securely?
- Does the ICT unit update the website regularly, and if so, with what periodicity?