



PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT

March to May 2016



H.E. Minister addressing First Year Students in KEU, during Orientation. May 03, 2016



H.E. Deputy Minister addressing the audience in OBE-SCL 2nd Advanced Workshop. May 03, 2016



HEDP Director giving a presentation in OBE-SCL Workshop

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Acronyms

AfgREN	Afghanistan Research and Educational Network	OBE	Outcome-Based Education
APQN	Asia Pacific Quality Assurance Network	OMST	Operation Monitoring and Support Team
APR	Annual Progress Report	PAD	Project Appraisal Document
DLI	Disbursement Linked Indicators	PPR	Project Progress Report
EEP	Eligible Expenditures Programs	QA	Quality Assurance
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework	QAAD	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate
GoA	Government of Afghanistan	RBF	Results- Based Financing
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism	SC	Steering Committee
HEDP	Higher Education Development Project	SCL	Student-centered Learning
ICT	Information and Communication Technology	SDC	Staff Development Center
IQUA	Internal Quality Assurance Units	SIDP	Strategic Institutional Development Plan
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education	TNA	Training Need Assessment
IT	Information Technology	UTM	University of Technology, Malaysia
KMU	Kabul Medical University	USD	United States Dollar
KU	Kabul University	USWDP	University Support & Workforce Development Program
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation	VC	Vice Chancellor
MENA	Middle East North Africa		
MoF	Ministry of Finance		
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education		
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding		
NA	Need Assessment		
NHESP	National Higher Education Strategic Plan		

Executive Summary

This report examines the progress of the activities undertaken by the Higher Education Development Program (HEDP)/ Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) since March to May 2016. In order to increase access to higher education and enhancing the quality of it in Afghanistan, the HEDP/MoHE have been facilitating the expansion of higher education in the country with a strategic focus on the future development. With the coordination and support of HEDP, the highlights of MoHE's achievements can be listed as of the following: promotion and expansion of students' enrollment especially females in priority degree programs; facilitating the reformation of the educational model of Afghan Universities to an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) with a Student Centered Learning (SCL) philosophy by introducing the model to faculty members; undertaking activities around framing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enhanced teaching and learning; awarding Master's level Scholarships to qualified university lecturers for the academic year 2016 considering 33% seats for women; and approving group and individual research proposals developed by eligible researchers on the topics mainly from priority disciplines to promote the culture of research in the higher education system of Afghanistan.

Similarly, in the technical side of the project, the staff of Operation Monitoring and Support Team have been providing HEDP/MoHE with technical support. Though the project's activities are in accordance with the planned targets, this project has faced particular challenges that are either implementation related, stakeholder related, and/or are due to external factors. These challenges encompass, difficulty in confirming the accuracy of provided data from MoHE; unavailability of data for need assessment required from MoHE, and mapping out the existing programs and activities in MoHE prevent duplication of tasks. For such challenges, reanalyze of the data is recommended to take place by the MoHE with the support of Operation Monitoring and Support Team (OMST).

Project Overview

Project Basic Information

Project ID	P146184
Project Duration	September 15, 2015 – Dec 31, 2020
Total Project Budget	US\$ 50.00 million (Component I :US\$ 40 m + Component II: US\$ 10 m)
Implementing Agency	Afghanistan Ministry of Higher Education
Donor	The World Bank
Project Director	Noor Ahmad Darwish

Project Background

Afghan policy makers perceive higher education as a vital engine of growth and development. The Government of Afghanistan (GoA) is fully aware of the strategic importance of human capital in the modern global knowledge economy. The higher education system produces the pool of high-level human resources, such as policy makers, professionals, managers, academics and technical experts, who are essential for economic development. Policy makers also recognize that the contribution higher education can make to the promotion of civic values and attitudes needed for a modern, enlightened democracy, and the development of a socially cohesive nation. In this context, the MoHE has prepared a second National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP II) to accelerate the development of higher education over the period 2015-2020. The NHESP II outlines a broad development framework to be implemented through a multi-year rolling plan.

Thus, the overall objective of the HEDP is to increase access to and improve the quality and relevance of, higher education. The HEDP supports the NHESP-II 2015-2020, which aims to develop the higher education sector by expanding enrollment, improving quality, and orienting higher education to promote the future economic and social development of Afghanistan.

The HEDP's concept, design, and components have been prepared through an extensive process of consultation and collaboration with the MoHE, MoF, representatives of universities and higher education institutions from the state and non-state sectors, public and private employers, the academic community, and major development partners active in higher education in Afghanistan. There has also been close collaboration and synchronization between the GoA team in charge of developing the NHESP-II, and the Bank team responsible for designing the HEDP, to ensure alignment and consistency.

HEDP is organized into two components: (a) a Higher Education Development Program component; and (b) a Program Operations and Technical Support component. These components are different in nature, but complementary. The first component (US\$ 40 million) is comprehensive and has been designed to directly support NHESP-II. The flow of funds under this component follows a results-based financing arrangement. Disbursements are linked to a specific result that would contribute to the achievement of the overall objectives of the NHESP-II and the HEDP. They finance Eligible Expenditures Programs (EEP) selected from the MoHE's budget, rather than against specific investments. The second component (US\$ 10 million), assists the implementation of the first component through coordination, technical assistance (TA), capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, innovation and pilots, and research and communication. The flow of funds under this

component will be provided by specific investments, as normally done under the Bank's Investment Project Financing modality.

Component 1: Higher Education Development Program

This component supports the implementation of the NHESP-II through a Results-Based Financing (RBF) modality. Disbursements are associated with specific results called Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs). Financing is provided against Eligible Expenditures Programs (EEPs) selected from annual MoHE budgets, rather than against specific inputs. The following key themes are supported under the component.

Component 2: Component Two: Program Operations and Technical Support

This component strengthens the capacity of MoHE and universities to implement the reforms of the NHESP-II. Support under this component covers coordination, capacity building, innovations, monitoring and evaluation, research and communication. The technical assistance and capacity building activities of this component assist the MoHE to implement the development initiatives of the NHESP-II. Policy studies include beneficiary feedback surveys of staff and students of institutions and programs supported by HEDP. Communication enables higher education authorities to disseminate development initiatives to political authorities, policy makers, academics, students, and the general public. The component also helps MoHE to support innovative approaches such as the orientation of the universities in provincial towns to support the economic development of their provinces. This component also finances incremental operating costs for an OMST in the MoHE.

Project Financing Modality

The HEDP uses an Investment Project Financing (IPF) instrument based on Results-Based Financing (RBF) modality. Under the RBF component, Project funds are disbursed against selected line items in MoHE's annual budgets (EEPs) up to capped amounts and conditioned on achievement of the agreed set of DLIs. This component supports the reforms initiated through the NHESP-II and focuses on outcomes and results rather than inputs. In case these indicators are not achieved the World Bank will not grant the money allotted for that particular indicator.

Progress Overview

Overall Progress [Component I]

Overall, the Higher Education Development Project has had a solid progress in its relevant activities during the third quarter of the project from March 2016 to end of May 2016. This section of the report represents a recap of the activities undertaken by the first component of the project; while the detailed activities are bulleted, in the next section of this Project Progress Report (PPR).

Similar to the previous activities, the undertakings, especially those delivered by academic and learning department, in the third quarter of the project have been to facilitate access to and improvement of the quality of higher education in Afghanistan.

In respect to the Gender development-related activities, HEDP was successful in conducting the first round of “First Year Students Orientation” in Kabul Education University and Kabul University. Reports are enclosed in [annex 1](#) and [annex 2](#). The Gender department of OMST was able to clarify seats offered for the number of students during Kankor examination in 2015



Figure 1 KU First Year Students during the orientations' campus tour on May 21

and 2016. However, the actual enrollment is to be disclosed, once the process of data collection from all universities in Afghanistan finishes, probably by August 2016.

As part of the academic and learning department, OMST successfully delivered two advanced training, where 175 faculty members were trained to facilitate reforming the educational model of Afghan Universities to an Outcome Based Education with a Student-Centered Learning philosophy in April-May 2016. This training, similar to the one held in November was facilitated with Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). A full report of the workshop is available in [annex 3](#) of this report.



Figure 2 OBE SCL 2nd Advance Workshop, Group 2. May 03, 2016

Likewise, to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in universities, and so to help learners to achieve better outcomes, activities around framing Information and Communication Technology-enhanced teaching and learning are undertaken by HEDP.

Furthermore, to improve the qualification of the public universities' academics, MoHE awarded Master's level Scholarships to 108 qualified university lecturers for the academic year 2016; the awardees accepted the awards and are now waiting for the admission which is in its final stages.

Moreover, for Chancellors, Vice Chancellors or high-level managements of universities to gain advanced skills needed to make quality decisions and implement strategy through effective management of resources, HEDP is in the process of organizing leadership and management courses. So far, 8 universities are under the plan and data collections are going on to further attain knowledge on the areas where training are needed. Four of these universities are Kabul-based i.e. Kabul University, Kabul Medical University, Kabul Polytechnic and Kabul Education University; the other four target are the universities in the four zones of Afghanistan, Herat University, Kandahar University, Nangarhar University and Balkh University. In addition to that short-term training and workshops are projected for the mentioned 8 universities' technical staff members such as ICT technicians, laboratory technician, and librarians.

On the other hand, to improve the quality of teaching and to promote economic and social development and culture of research in Afghanistan higher education system, out of the 30 research projects approved, 28 have signed the contracts and the allocated money is being processed so they will start their research as soon as possible.

Furthermore, to manage the quality assurance activities at the university levels, four Internal Quality Assurance Units (IQAU). In Kandahar University, Kabul University, Kabul Education University, and Kabul Medical University have been established. MoHE has also started its peer reviewing processes, where 8 universities (4 public and 4 private) have been selected to be reviewed. A team has also joined APQN members' coordination conference in Fiji in May 2016 under the name of "Conference on Sustainable Development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education", to further strengthen the ties with this network.

Moreover, to enhance the knowledge of the IQAU managers, two training at MoHE level in Kabul and one in Delhi, India were conducted. In respect to External Quality Assurance, 8 public universities have been peer-reviewed.

Additionally, to improve the system within the higher education institutions, apart from quality tools, a strategic planning is required to focus the efforts of each institution as a whole. In order to lend stability to the Afghan universities, in spite of increasingly frequent leadership changes, HEDP conducted a workshop where the Chancellors,



VCs, and faculty deans were trained on how to develop a strategic institutional development plan, using the predeveloped SIDP and Annual Progress Report (APR) templates. A full report of the workshop is available in [annex 4](#).

Overall Progress [Component II]

In the operation section of the project, the human resources and admin department is engaged in the recruitment process, hitherto with respect to recruitment, most of the key positions in both program and operations sections, OMST and HEDP respectively. The team working on the second component has been successful in developing the annual work plan and training plan for 2016, however, the work plan may need revision.

Similarly, the Information and Technology department has been active in developing an official website for HEDP with the address: www.hedp.af. This department has also developed fixed asset inventory. The component 2 also received the \$7 million to perform the component I-related undergoing activities.

Moreover, it is to be mentioned that environmental and social safeguard department's activities as crosscutting actions are implemented shoulder to shoulder to other activities of the project; nevertheless, the department has also started planning for activities like capacity building to specific audiences as well.

Project Activities

The following is the details of activities undertaken from the beginning of the project to February 15th, 2016. Each table encompasses the relevant theme and the activities under it, the accomplished activities, outputs, the activities in progress, challenges encountered and the proposed solutions for each challenge is included in the table too.

Component I

Theme 1.1 - Increasing Access to Priority Degree Programs for Economic Development

With the activities being performed under this theme, MoHE/HEDP aims to expand enrollment in degree programs that are of direct relevance for future economic development. Special attention is given to increase female enrollment in priority degree programs.

1.1: Expanding Enrollment in Priority Degree Disciplines and Promotion of Female Enrollment in Priority Degree Programs

Outputs:

- Kankor data were analyzed and data on the number of students offered admissions were calculated. However, this did not confirm the data for enrollment.
- A draft for Kankor guideline was prepared and furnished to the Bank for their comments.
- Two First Year Students' Orientations were conducted in the month of May in Kabul Education University and Kabul University respectively.
- An assessment of the counseling systems in four Kabul-based universities took place.

Activities in Progress:

- Planning for the conduct of a Gender Focal Points' training is in progress.
- Enrollment data are being reanalyzed getting the raw data from a more reliable source.
- Cooperation with USWDP, MoHE Gender Unit on the launch of the Gender Strategy.
- Planning on the establishment of Counseling Units in Kabul Based universities as a pilot.
- Planning on establishing ties between MoHE, Private Partners and MoLSAMD for child care facilities in a Kabul-based university.

Challenges and proposed solutions:

- Although the project is on track to achieve its targets in the aforementioned theme, there are difficulties in information and data collection. This can be solved through reanalyzing the received data by Kankor directorate, policy, and planning database technical team. And would definitely be time-consuming.

Theme 1.2 - Modernizing and Enhancing the Quality of Teaching and Learning

HEDP/MoHE through the activities under this theme assists universities in introducing modern OBE and SCL in line with current international trends in higher education and establish ICT centers and train faculty members' accordingly.

1.2.1: Outcome Based Education and Student-Centered Learning**Outputs:**

- The OBE- SCL manual was completed and translated into national languages.

- Two back-to-back advanced OBE-SCL workshops were held in late April for 175 University professors, with the help of trainers from the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).
- OBE and SCL Workbooks are received from the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).
- As a mean to monitor the OBE-SCL related activities of the professors and the implementation of this philosophy in classes, creating portfolios by professors has been marked obligatory.
- MoU with UTM has been signed.

Activities in Progress:

- An OBE-SCL strategy document is under work.
- OBE-SCL action plan has to be developed.
- A collection of all portfolios created by the trained professors.
- Selecting the Champions (master trainers) and sending them for another advanced training to Malaysia.

Challenges and proposed solutions:

- A large number of participants that are set as target affects the quality negatively.

1.2.2: Information and Communications Technology-Enhanced Teaching and Learning

Outputs:

- Developed basic ICT manual.
- Conducted the Third E-Learning Conference at MoHE.
- 2 Trainers Introduced from each university (Khust, Faryab & KEU) have been introduced.

Activities in Progress:

- Establish ICT centers for Kabul Education, Faryab, and Khost universities in the year 2016.
- Strengthening AfgREN.
- ICT assessment of universities
- ICT capacity building training for teachers
- ICT training for ICT technical staff (July)
- Purchasing ICT equipment for universities that do not receive ICT Centers.

Challenges and proposed solutions:

- In general, activities related to AfgREN take longer than anticipated mainly due to coordination challenges. Strengthening and sustaining AfgREN involves the engagement of different stakeholders such as Ministry of Communication and Information, Ministry of Higher Education, TEIN-4, donor community and universities and timely coordination needs to take place between all these parties.

Theme 1.3 - Improving the Qualifications and Skills of University Staff Members

Under this theme, the number of academic staff members who are qualified to at least Master's Degree level is substantially increased. Special attention for support is given to **(a)** academic staff from degree programs identified as priorities for economic development, and **(b)** female academics. Scholarships target faculty staff of public universities and are restricted to full-time, regularly employed faculty staff.

1.3.1: Scholarships for Masters Degrees in Priority Disciplines and sub-disciplines**Output:**

- Successful Candidates were contacted.
- Award Letters were sent and signed acceptance letters were received.
- Totally, **108** participants are awarded the scholarship: 35 Female and 69 Male.
- The first drafts of MoUs are prepared and shared with Universities.
- Student's passports are issued for the awardees.

Activities in Progress

- Countries are identified. Talks are going on with Universities in India, Thailand, and Malaysia for admission.

Challenges and proposed solutions:

- Due to the traditional culture of Afghan families, it is very difficult to find female professors accepting to go to the Masters. Most of the time they have the family restrictions as a number1 excuse for rejecting the scholarship.

- Starting with the selection of the universities to the placement of the candidates in universities to their delivery is an extremely complicated and time-consuming process. For next year, I would recommend that during the term April 2017 through August 2017, the Academic and Managerial Development Manager be solely focused on scholarships. The most time-consuming aspect of this DLI is communication with university professors. Some details had to be repeated multiple times and made sure every form and detail is submitted correctly to the university. On an average, I spend close to 3 hours a day explaining the process to them and their visits to the OMST Academic team office.

1.3.2: Short Term Courses for Technical Staff

Output 3.2:

- Training needs assessment is completed
- Capacity gaps are identified
- Data is collected from 8 universities (KU, KEU, KMU, KPU, Herat, Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Balkh)
- Training Plan, the first draft of the RFP, and TOR of the Trainers are prepared.

Activities in Progress

- RFP will be posted online.
- Consultancy firm will be recruited and training material will be developed.
- Training commencement will take place.

Challenges and Proposed Solutions:

- Regarding the technical training, the model of public university professors teaching the technical staff brings us certain issues. First of all, if the professors knew how to use the machinery, it should already be being used. Second, coordinating with professors to take a week off and train for a week is possible but the monetary incentive to train the technicians is very little comparatively. I am foreseeing multiple challenges with 2016. The lessons learned will be implemented for the year 2017.

Theme 1.4 - Strengthening Governance, Quality Assurance, and Accreditation

Through this theme, HEDP/MoHE promotes the substantive and procedural autonomy of universities, and to develop the quality assurance and accreditation system. Increased substantive autonomy empowers universities to take greater initiative and responsibility for the development of academic programs, research activities and community services.

1.4.1 Strategic Institutional Development Plans

Outputs:

- SIDP and APR template are finalized and distributed among universities.
- Universities were asked to form strategic planning committees.
- A workshop was conducted on developing SIDP for 3 universities.

Activities in Progress:

- SIDP experts are being identified to help in the process of developing SIDP.
- KEU, KMU, and KU to develop their SIDPs
- The SIDPs of the mentioned universities will be finalized by MoHE.

1.4.2 &3 Internal Quality Assurance and External Quality Assurance

Outputs:

- Assigned Head of IQAUs at KU, KEU, KPU and Kandahar Universities.
- QA scorecard was developed.
- Trained IQAUs' Heads on QA manual and scorecard.
- Developed QAAD plan.
- Collected universities' self-assessment.
- Internal QA of 4 public universities was held.
- QAAD plan on how to work with APQN has been drafted.

Activities in Progress:

- IQAU heads to send their work plans

- External quality review of 4 public universities.
- Consultant to be hired to help with the process of peer reviewing and external Quality assurance.

1.4.4: Leadership and Management Courses for Senior Managerial and Administrative Staff

Outputs:

- Data is collected from 8 universities (KU, KEU, KMU, KPU, Heart, Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Balkh)
- Training Plan is prepared again based on the advice of the Bank team.
- The first draft of the RFP and TOR of the Trainers are prepared.

Activities in Progress:

- RFP will be posted online.
- Consultancy firm will be recruited.
- Training material will be developed.
- Training commencement will take place.

Challenges and proposed solutions:

- Regarding the leadership and management training, we have designed the training which will be conducted wholly in Kabul for chancellors and vice chancellors (1 week) and deans (4 batches, four weeks). It will be hard for all of them to come to Kabul at once. The solution is that for 2017, the trainers train in the provinces. It will not only increase the participation but will decrease the cost as well, comparing the cost of a couple of trainers to the cost of all the trainees.

Theme 1.5 - Stimulating Development Oriented Research

HEDP/MoHE by undertaking the activities under this theme, develop a research culture in universities. The focus is on applied, development-oriented research Projects, mainly from the priority disciplines. However, research Projects from other disciplines, if clearly development oriented, are also eligible for resources. Both group research Projects and individual research are supported.

1.5: Stimulating Development Oriented Research

Outputs:

- New Research Committee members were assigned
- 108 group and individual proposals were received.
- After screening of Committee, MoHE and Bank 30 proposals were accepted.
- 20 Individual and 10 Group research proposals were awarded the grant.
- Contracts with 30 researchers are signed.
- The amount has been deposited to their accounts and the research work has been started.
- Monitoring mechanism in a monthly reporting format is created.

Activities in Progress:

- New members to be assigned to the research committee from different disciplines. Since the current one does not encompass academics from different field to decide on the importance of each research proposal they receive.
- Calling for proposals for the second round of research.

Challenges and proposed solutions:

- It was difficult to contact some of the researchers who were in the provinces; at the final stage, HEDP had to replace one of the research projects with another one, since the researcher was not responsive to either email or phone calls.
- The members of research committees have to be from a variety of disciplines, so understanding of the topics would be easier and the judgment be transparent.
- The type of research proposal being funded should be negotiated with the Bank as we work in all priority disciplines, but the Bank is funding and accepting projects that have a direct economic impact while not all the priority disciplines are linked directly with economic development.
- The guidelines and proposal formats should be updated and changed based on the lessons learned. OMST can work on it and asks for Bank's confirmation.

Component II

Program Operation and Technical Support

Human Resource and Admin Related Activities:

Outputs:

- Completed recruitments procedure for the projects' positions include:
 - Quality Assurance and Accreditation Manger, Social Safeguard and Gender Development Specialists, Procurement Specialist, Financial Management Specialist and 22 University Operations Coordinators.
 - All 24 steering committee for public universities in Afghanistan are formed.
 - For Assigning Academic Experts for 18 universities that have SIDP, letters are sent to 18 eligible universities, to include: Kabul Polytechnics University, KU, KMU, Kabul Education University, Albiruni, Balkh, Bamyán, Herat, Kandahar, Khost, Nangarhar, Paktia, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Faryab, Kunduz, Laghman, and Afghan National Agriculture University. CVs are received; the candidates are shortlisted and interviews have been conducted for three universities (KU, KEU and KPU).
- A meeting room for the HEDP has been constructed.

Activities in Progress:

- Recruitments that are under process for the projects' positions include:
 - Teaching and Learning Manager, Strategic Planning and Research Manager, Internal Controller, and HR and Admin Specialist positions have been announced.
 - The University Operation Coordinators positions for Kandahar and Kunduz universities are re-announced. In Kunduz, both first and second candidate rejected the salary because of the NTA salary scale. In Kandahar, two had Education document problems and one did not want Kandahar as aduty station.

Challenges and proposed solutions:

- Having insufficient time in hand, the department is excessively engaged with recruitment processes. Some of the positions require highly technical and qualified candidates, which is

difficult to find in a short time. However, the team involved in this matters strives for the betterment and effectiveness of the work of HR and Admin department.

Procurement Department:

Outputs:

- Training plans are collected and cost breakdowns are prepared based on the comments received on the first draft of the document.
- The infrastructure/ program cost and resources plan has been updated for the year 2016.

Activities in Progress:

- Following up on need assessments of dormitories, water and latrines facilities for female students, transportation for females, lecture blocks for OBE- SCL, library supports, and research centers, for their design, estimated costs, and cost of required equipment. So far the status of each part of the plan is as of the following:
 - In respect to establishment of the ICT centers, KEU documents are completed and sent to the National Procurement Authority. For Khust and Faryab, the Need Assessment took place and the documents will be sent to MoHE Procurement department.
 - For the ICT Equipment, a list has been prepared by the directorate of IT, it will be sent to Procurement.
 - In regards to Dormitories, the bid opening for Kunar Dormitory has been started. For Bamyan and Badghis, evaluation process is going on.
 - For the Water and Lavatories project for females, the official letters have been sent to the Plan directorate, to provide the specification based on the budget and the characteristics of each university. This department shall send the specifications to MoHE Procurement.
 - Transport: It has been announced by the procurement, bid opening will start in last week of June, 2016.
 - Construction of Lecture Block: Bid opening has been started for the Ghazni lecture blocks, the soil test for Sar-e-pol is going on, while it has become completed in Logar. MoHE Plan directorate has to prepare the Map, and design and send them to the Procurement. For Herat Medical School the process of construction of lecture

blocks are pending since there is a local problem with a company working with the mentioned school.

- Science laboratory facilities: The facilities are divided into basic and advanced facilities, the basic ones will be provided for the small universities. A committee has been assigned to work on this. The advanced facilities will be allocated to large universities and the work in progress.
- Library Support: A committee comprised of four members from all Kabul-based public Universities, are assigned to check the list of the books requested by each university and make a summary of the list.
- Supply Equipment for Existing Lecture Blocks: For the year 2016, 12 universities have been identified to receive the five pieces of furniture for each lecture blog. The 5 pieces include, desks, Chairs for students, Chairs for teachers, cupboard and addressing table.
- Research Center: The Plan directorate is working on it and shall identify the type, and design of the center, and direct it to Procurement.

Finance Department:

Outputs:

- After requesting initial deposit withdrawal from MoF, the finance department has withdrawn the deposit for the component II.
- After requesting initial deposit withdrawal from MoF, the finance department has withdrawn \$7 million the deposit for the component I DLI activities.
- The operational budget for component II along with the budget breakdown for the year 2016 has been prepared.
- Interim Unaudited Financial Report (IUFR) was presented to the Bank.

Information Technology related activities:

Outputs:

- Created and purchased a domain name.
- Identity Cards for each of the project personnel have been issued and handed.
- Shared folders are created for the Staff of OMST/HEDP.

- Registered and developed website for HEDP.
- Created fixed asset inventory.

Activities in Progress:

- Logo and branding for HEDP are being developed.
- Official email addresses for the staff of HEDP is being finalized.

Audit, Control & M&E:

Outputs:

- Payroll Audit for the Fiscal Year 2015 has been prepared based on the audit report of three universities randomly chosen. The MoHE's audit report will be provided once the supreme audit report will be furnished in the third quarter of the year 1395.
- Action Plan for the salaries to be paid through direct deposit was developed. Based on the assessment only 1.7% of the staff of MoHE do not receive their salaries through Bank account. A Circular was issued setting the deadline as the end of May for all the staff to open Bank account.
- Internal audit report for the Component II of HEDP has been prepared and shared with the Bank.
- Developed internal audit work plan and internal audit charter.
- Furnished quarterly project progress report comprising the activities of the project in the first two quarters of the year. The PPR02 (current document) is being provided too.
- Furnished to the Bank the DLI verification report and M&E reports.
- Oversight of the compliance of the policies developed by the internal controller took place in a timely manner.

Activities in Progress:

- The M&E report is in progress.

Environmental and Social Safeguard

Gender and Social Safeguard and Environmental Safeguard:

Outputs:

- Launched social safeguard/ESMF introduction workshops.
- Launched ESMF social awareness rising session (workshop) for public universities and MoHE relevant departments.
- Developed GRM review report and plan to operationalize GRM
- Producing EMP brief outline document and ESMF checklists.
- Provide EMP/ESMF terms of reference.
- Conducted ESMF capacity building training for MoHE engineers and staff.
- Developed ESMF capacity building training plan/2016

Activities in Progress:

- Plan for provincial public universities SCBT/ESMF.
- Provincial public universities soil test review.
- ESMF/capacity building training for MoHE.
- Plan for NGO's staff training.

Challenges and Proposed Solutions:

- Lack of environmental knowledge (ESMF) at MoHE.
- Lack of appropriate unit or person to correspond to this important matter.
- Lack of close cooperation, and
- Lack of taken responsibility at MoHE and Plan and policy department.
- The solution for all these challenges should be ESMF introduction and understanding of it at the MoHE high authority level. Moreover, establishment of environmental safeguard department in MoHE *Tashkeel* as mentioned in the ESMF would help overcome the abovementioned challenges.

Concluding Note:

Hitherto, with the coordination received from OMST, the HEDP/MoHE appears to have its steps on the journey to success and effective project implementation. It has been heading toward success to increase access to higher education especially among women and in priority disciplines and sub-disciplines. Additionally effective work on raising the quality of the higher education system and facilitating the expansion of higher education in the country with a strategic focus on the future development has been going on. Overall, the HEDP/MoHE is on target for its planned activities. A new aide memoir has been received from the team in the Bank after their mission and visit from MoHE-HEDP. The new aide memoir is effective from mid-May and the progress of the HEDP based on this new plan shall be reflected in the next quarterly project Progress Report.