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SUCCESS STORY

Parliamentary Intern Drafts Government Code of Conduct

In 2006, USAID grantee the National Democratic Institute, established Afghanistan's first-ever National Assembly Internship program.



Photo taken by Andalib Mushtari

Secretary General Hassan Gran in his office with parliamentary intern Mohammad Fahim Rostahi.

NDI National Assembly Intern Mohammad Fahim Rostahi drafts the government's Code of Conduct, outlining standards for behavior and communication among the National Assembly, the government and the judiciary.

Mohammad Fahim Rostahi, a fourth-year student of political science and law at Kabul University, was impatient with the slow pace at which the government was developing its Code of Conduct. A parliamentary intern through a program run by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), he had been assigned to take minutes at the special committee appointed to draft the Code. Frustrated with the committee's lengthy deliberations and lack of results, Fahim decided to draft his own Code. After conducting research on the internet and at various libraries, he completed a draft and submitted it to his supervisor at the Department of Legal and Professional Studies of the *Wolesi Jirga*. His supervisor quickly recognized the value of the draft and sent it to the secretary general, urging him to submit to the special committee.

At the committee's next meeting, Fahim's draft was circulated to the members—including parliamentarians, senior government officials and representatives of the judiciary—who consequently discarded their working draft in favor of Fahim's draft. Over subsequent meetings, with Fahim's help, the draft was debated, revised and sent to the President's Office for review. The draft was well received by Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Farooq Wardak. While President Karzai and the special committee have yet to finalize the Code of Conduct, Fahim is confident that his contribution was meaningful: "I feel very privileged to have had the opportunity to participate directly in such an important government process."

The parliamentary internship program is part of NDI's efforts to provide technical assistance to Afghanistan's National Assembly. NDI established the internship program in 2006 to provide additional capacity to parliamentary commissions and secretariat staff. The current cohort of interns comprises 31 students, 13 of whom are women, drawn from five faculties at Kabul University. Intern responsibilities include: conducting research, attending commission meetings, taking meeting minutes and drafting summary reports, performing administrative tasks, drafting press releases, and transcribing plenary session debates. Several graduates of the 2006 internship program were offered permanent positions on the legislative staff.