

Province Profile – Parwan (and Bagram)



Map Source: [USAID](#)

Key Facts

Governor of Parwan: Abdul Basir Salangi (since 2008). Salangi was a leading commander in the Afghan Civil War, aligned with the mujahedeen forces of Ahmed Shah Massoud. After the fall of the Taliban he was appointed police chief of Kabul. He was removed after the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission accused him of bulldozing 300 houses in a poor district of Kabul to make room for warlords' villas. ([Dept. of State](#))

Provincial Capital: Charikar

Size: 2,307 sq. miles (about the size of Delaware).

Location: Parwan surrounds Kabul City to the north. It is a popular destination for day trips from the capital.

Members of Parliament: 6 including 2 women, out of 249 total house members.

Total Provincial Population: 600,000

- Three quarters live in rural areas of province.
- Population is split between Dari-speaking Tajiks in the west, and Pashtuns in the east.
- Hazara, Uzbek and Kuchi minorities

Literacy and education:

- Around half of men and one-fifth of women in Parwan are literate – slightly higher than the overall national average of approx 28%.
- Just under half of children aged 6-13 are enrolled in school.
- Parwan has a number of higher education facilities, including a teacher training institute and an agricultural vocational high school.

Infrastructure:

- 25% of population has access to electricity.
- 32% has access to safe drinking water.
- 1% has access to sanitary toilet facilities.
- The majority of roads are car-worthy, though one-fifth of the province remains road-less.

Key Issues

Bagram Air Base

- Bagram Air Base, the main base for the US-led coalition force, is situated around 40km (25 miles) north of Kabul in Parwan province. It was originally built by the Soviet military during its invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s.
- In recent years, the number of U.S. personnel living inside the 6,000-acre compound has grown significantly; to currently approx. 20,000. Small contingents from seven other nations, including France, Poland and Turkey, are also deployed there.
- Bagram also houses the main prison facility for people detained by US forces in Afghanistan. Its operations have been the target of criticism and media scrutiny.
- Nearby Bagram village has boomed due to business from the base. Many village residents now work there; existing and future US military-funded construction and infrastructure projects are worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Lack of International Support

- As one of the most secure provinces of Afghanistan (just 5 IED attacks were recorded in 2009), Parwan has received little attention or sufficient resources to conduct large-scale reconstruction. Experts observe that under-resourcing has so far missed a prime opportunity to promote economic growth and prosperity in the relatively pro-government heartland surrounding Kabul.
- Most provinces in Afghanistan have their own Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) – but Parwan has not had a dedicated PRT, having shared one with Kapisa Province on its eastern border. The US and South Korea share responsibility for leading the PRT, based out of Bagram. The Korean Army is sending a 320-strong contingent to Parwan in July 2010 to protect and assist Korean civilian contribution to the PRT.
- The vast majority of the 2,000-strong US task force in Parwan is logistical and support units, leaving only 300 combat-ready troops to patrol the province, resulting in situations such as a 400-square-mile area, the size of a typical American county province, being serviced by a force of just 26 men.

Strategic Location and Economic Potential

- The only direct route from Kabul to the northern provinces of Afghanistan passes through Parwan, whilst the province also sits at the crossroads to Bamyan Province in the west and Panjsher Province in the east, making it a key trade and transit point.
- The route to the north crosses over the Hindu Kush Mountains via the 3800m Salang Pass that is vulnerable to blockages and avalanches that can effectively cut off the northern part of the country from the south.
- Parwan's fertile Shomali Plain receives significant water and snowmelt from the mountains, allowing farmers to cultivate cereal crops, fruits, and vegetables with nearby Kabul providing a large and accessible market.
- Medium sized industries also have the potential to expand in the province. Light engineering, warehousing, textiles and pottery are already established and benefit from good infrastructure links to Kabul combined with lower operating costs.

A Battered Legacy

- The Shomali Plain was once known as the "garden of Afghanistan", but due to its proximity to Kabul it suffered terrible fighting during Soviet and civil wars that destroyed entire settlements, infrastructure and agriculture. Under the Taliban, all vineyards producing high-value grape crops were destroyed on account of their potential for making wine.
- Significant areas of Parwan remain covered by minefields left by both Soviet and mujahedeen forces, inhibiting movement and cultivation of land. The task of mapping and clearing mines is complicated by overlapping minefields that create a confusing and deadly mesh of unnavigable strips.