



Afghanistan Policy Page

A twice-weekly, one-page brief on a major issue concerning U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.

28 January
2010

Development: Challenges to Implementation

Take Aways

- Development aid is important in Afghanistan: humanitarian and development needs remain acute due to decades of war, and **Taliban militants often target development assistance projects.**
- **Poverty, unemployment, and uncertainty about daily existence and the future drive conflict in Afghanistan.**
- Development aid is being implemented by many different actors, but, **without coordination, development assistance could weaken linkages between the national and local Afghan governments.**
- Short-term projects designed to show results quickly could have **negative impacts on long-term capacity if they exclude the Afghan state**, undermining comprehensive efforts.

Key Issues

- Security** – Taliban militants target development workers and their projects, and local partners fear Taliban retribution for their participation.
- Coordination** – The many different governments and international organizations implementing development projects have differing mandates, incentives, and resources, often operating outside the Afghan government’s funding and awareness.
- Afghan Government Capacity** – The World Bank has concluded that: “Afghanistan and its donor community face a dilemma that demands to be resolved: how to channel foreign aid through the government’s budgetary system that lacks the capacity to properly administer such expenditure... The critical issue is not so much the amount of aid, but weaknesses in its mode of delivery and impact.” (28 January, 2010).
- Transparency and Accountability** – Many analysts believe that all levels of government in Afghanistan, as well as many international organizations and contractors must be more open in their operations in order to be held accountable to both donors and the Afghan people.
- Oversight and Measurement** – The GAO reports that billions of dollars have been spent with unknown effectiveness due to insufficient monitoring. Evaluation of effectiveness remains a significant challenge for international assistance due to the difficulties of the operating environment.
- Local Ownership and Community-led Initiatives** – Sustainable development requires greater Afghan ownership, ‘buy-in’ and understanding of local stakeholders at the point of delivery. This may be achieved via the use of local resources; or with properly coordinated public outreach and engagement activities.
- Regional Disparities** – Since poverty is perceived as a major driver of violence, many development actors focus their efforts on regions that are insecure, possibly leading to a “who do I have to shoot at to get some aid around here” syndrome in impoverished but less violent regions of Afghanistan.

In Quotes:

“[The United States] will seek a partnership with Afghanistan grounded in mutual respect ... to forge a lasting friendship in which **America is your partner, and never your patron.**” President Obama, Dec 1, 2009.

Possible Questions

- How is **development implementation monitored and evaluated for effectiveness?**
- What is being done to **coordinate implementation of development projects on the ground?**
- What is being done to **empower and incentivize** Afghanistan to **mobilize its own resources and people** for rebuilding their nation?
- What strategies exist to **encourage transparency and accountability** in development implementation?

Top Key Facts

- **92% of Afghans want aid to be spent through the government despite their acknowledgement that the government is often corrupt.**
- **\$39 billion appropriated by congress 2002-2009 for reconstruction of Afghanistan, including:**
 - \$18.67 billion – Afghanistan Security Forces Fund
 - \$7.7 billion – Economic Support Funding
 - \$1.64 billion – Commander’s Emergency Response Program
 - \$891.78 million – USAID Development Assistance
- In October 2009 Afghanistan’s development budget was estimated to have a **\$3.2 billion shortfall in Fiscal Year 2009/2010.**

In the News

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for a coherent political strategy to assist Afghanistan in its quest for peace, security and development, noting that the country’s challenges cannot be overcome by military efforts alone. “We must recognize that while security is a major element in the transition strategy, it must not be the main and only focus,” Mr Ban said at the 28 January London Conference. (UNAMA).

Further Reading

- [Secretary Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Quarterly Report to US Congress,” October 30, 2009](#)
- [World Bank Background Paper, 28 Jan, 2010.](#)

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