

International Agencies Cooperate

Afghan and foreign aid workers have left an imprint throughout the country with hundreds of projects improving lives of the Afghan people.

Jalalabad, Afghanistan

Traveling through this village in Nangarhar Province, one sees a sign stuck in front of a lush field of wheat: Afghan and American flags flank an announcement of a foreign aid program that supplies seeds and fertilizer.

In Mazar-i Sharif, a similar sign says a school was rehabilitated by U.S. aid. Other signs across the country tell of schools built, clinics under repair, canals dredged, ministries being refurbished. The donors are an alphabet soup of the world's non-governmental organizations, international aid groups, and foreign relief agencies, including WHO, UNOPS, DFID, USAID, UNESCO, WFP, UNICEF, CDC, CRS, CARE, and many others.

Coordinated through the interim Afghan

government, more than \$8 billion was pledged by 2007, a vast sum for a country with poor roads, a largely illiterate population, that lacks banks, accounting systems, teachers, and professionals.

The Ministry of Commerce, which should help get private business back on its feet, looks like a medieval excavation as staffers and officials carrying files and computer discs walk briskly past laborers patching crumbling walls and replacing glass.

The entire country is undergoing more than a facelift. It is an extensive rebuilding of the way the country functions. Foreign aid workers have fanned out to the most distant villages, where they train women in nutrition, avoiding infections, and keeping children healthy. Afghan army officers are taught by U.S. and British troops both to fire artillery and treat subordinates with respect. Midwives are trained to cut down infant mortality rates.

Because this massive aid is being delivered while some hostile groups remain active, often targeting aid workers to try to sow chaos and undermine the new government, a new concept was created to allow the military to protect aid workers—the Provincial Reconstruction Team or PRT.

American-led PRTs typically consist of

International Contributions

Berlin, Germany, March 31, 2004

Donor nations here pledged more than \$8 billion over for the next 3 years for Afghanistan, exceeding the Afghan Government's target of \$4.4 billion for their current fiscal year. Pledges included U.S. \$2.2 billion for 2004; Japan, \$400 million for next two years; Germany \$391 million over four years; EU \$850 million for 2004; U.K. \$900 million over five years. The Asian Development Bank offered \$1 billion in grants and concessional loans for 2005-2008.

Donors also pledged \$66 million to register 10 million voters and conduct presidential elections. German, U.S. and U.K. trainers are preparing the Afghan National Army, National Police and Border Patrol. Japan, the United States and the U.N. Assistance Mission to Afghanistan are helping disarm and reintegrate 100,000 Afghan troops by June 2005.

70-80 troops, a civil affairs team and civilian representatives from the Afghan Ministry of Interior, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and USAID.

At the PRT outside Ghazni, about 100 soldiers are based in a former Taliban school



Several United Nations agencies are actively at work in Afghanistan.



A CARE water truck. Funded jointly by USAID and the EU, CARE has been supplying water to 600,000 residents of the city since 1993.

inside a fortified compound in the desert.

On a typical mission, a team of a dozen vehicles escorted by troops in Humvees files out of the compound, through the city of Ghazni, to a village where medics treat 800 people, and veterinarians treat 2,000 farm animals.

At the Jalalabad PRT, aid workers fasten their bullet proof vests and ride in a small convoy of escort troops to the town of Kama, where USAID workers discuss with local officials progress on a district center under construction, a clinic that needs fans, and plans to pave the town center.

U.S. army civil affairs officers offer quick grants of up to \$25,000 to fix hospitals, repair roads, supply building materials, dig wells, and help in any ways the local residents and the aid workers agree on.

Some projects are massive: public buildings, water systems, power networks, and support for ministries to train and equip their staffs after decades of neglect. But others are small, so as to reach down to ordinary people and have immediate effect.

PRTs also maintain good relationships with government, tribal, military, religious, NGO, and UN leaders. They monitor political, military, and reconstruction developments and provide security for Loya Jirgas

(traditional grand councils), voter registration, and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of militia forces.

The PRT staff also assist Afghan National Army and police units and referee disputes between factions.

Impact of Aid

When asked, Afghans say they are very happy with the repairs and improvements of the last three years. But the need is almost endless. Some provinces still have no electricity, and drought continues to make life difficult in many parts of the country.

Malik Mohammed Ayub stood on the side of the dusty and pitted road leading through the village Akhund, halfway from Jalalabad to Kama, and said that many Afghans feel it is "normal" that the United States and other countries should help Afghanistan recover from decades of war.

"We destroyed our own country for the sake of the world—to remove communism," said Ayub, 50.

Another view was voiced by Ibrahim Shah, 18, a plasterer at a new Afghan National Army base built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"I feel very happy and optimistic. The situation is improving here," he said.

Results

- More than \$8 Billion pledged by U.S. and other governments over coming years to rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure, economy, health, education and other sectors.
- Civilian and military teams combine to provide protection to allow aid workers to deliver assistance despite threats by the Taliban.
- Beginning with the improvement of roads,

the 75 percent of Afghans who live in the countryside are being drawn into the network of services and opportunities.

- Assistance from the United Nations, NATO, multilateral banks and other agencies is delivered to Afghan people through non-governmental organizations.
- Afghans say the aid programs are sensitive to local traditions.

"I think the Americans will let us be whatever we want to be."

Ibrahim Shah, 18, a plasterer working on a new Afghan National Army base built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



In a village near Jalalabad in Nangarhar Province, a student stands by a school

which had its windows replaced and a latrine built with U.S. assistance.