

FRONTLINES

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**In the Aftermath
of Pakistan's Floods**

**Civilians, Armed
Forces, and Afghans
Unite for Country's
Future**



Special Afghanistan-Pakistan Edition



INSIGHTS

From Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah

The following are excerpts from the Administrator's address to the National War College in Washington, D.C., Dec. 3, 2010.

PERHAPS THE BIGGEST challenge we face in areas of conflict or instability like Afghanistan and Pakistan is how we adjust the development endeavor—one that occurs on a generational timeline—to the political reality and military imperative that demand quick time horizons.

The type of funding situation presented by zones of conflict forces us into some pretty difficult circumstances—situations in which we have to spend large amounts of money in a very short amount of time, because we know the dollars simply won't be there tomorrow.

But spending this amount of money in a conflict zone is akin to carpet-bombing—it may hit its target but not without significant collateral damage.

Massive upfront investments can distort markets, incentivize power brokers or warlords to rise, and beget corruption; all of which can ultimately diminish the legitimacy of the state in a counterinsurgency environment.

So we are looking into budget mechanisms that allow us to distribute these funds out over time. Perhaps we

create a trust fund, perhaps we work with Congress to devise a new mechanism, but it is something we are giving thought to.

But more importantly, we need to adjust our tactics to the input reality. We need to be honest about the political nature of conflict and how that dictates our fiscal trajectory. And we need to work to make ourselves more relevant and helpful to that reality.

First, we must emphasize a long-term development perspective into the short-term stabilization and project-finance work that must occur.

In our short-term activities and programmatic planning, we must adopt a “do no harm” mentality, ensuring the work we do builds an enabling environment for long-term development, rather than leading to dependency, market distortion, or corruption.

We must use those funds to increasingly build local capacity, empowering Afghans or Pakistanis or whomever else to take responsibility for governance and social services.

To do this, USAID is rewriting and streamlining its contracting rules, changing the status quo of writing big checks to big contractors and calling it development.

We will increasingly fund smaller, local agents of change, who have the cultural context and in-country expertise to ensure our assistance leads to sustainable growth.

And, in a realm dominated by red tape, we're making the application for these grants far simpler, breaking down the barriers that stop smaller

organizations from working with us.

We must also fight hard against a Western long-term view that interprets every visible need as a driver of conflict. It's very easy for a commander or USAID staff member to arrive in Afghanistan, spot a dilapidated school, and demand it be retrofitted and rebuilt.

But what if there are no teachers to staff it? What if the Taliban are threatening the parents of those children who attend? What if you paid a local tribal chief for the work and he in turn used the money to weaken the status of rivals? Your good intentions would have now weakened the state and heightened tensions.

Therefore, we must strive to uncover the true drivers of instability in a region, based, again, on local perspectives. We must respond to the real needs of those we serve, not the needs we imagine.

What we've found is that it is generally not the case that a lack of schools or roads drives conflict. Often the situation is far subtler, having to do with local power dynamics or long-held grudges.

With this idea in mind, USAID worked closely with the Pentagon to create the District Stabilization Framework, a decision-making tool designed to get at the real sources of conflict in a given area.

And, we must remember that how projects are chosen and executed are ultimately as important as what is produced—again, how we do things is as important as what we do.

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“I realize that there are among us those who are weary of sustaining this continual effort to help other nations. But I would ask them to look at a map and recognize that many of those whom we help live on the ‘front lines’ of the long twilight struggle for freedom—that others are new nations posed between order and chaos—and the rest are older nations now undergoing a turbulent transition of new expectations. Our efforts to help them help themselves, to demonstrate and to strengthen the vitality of free institutions, are small in cost compared to our military outlays for the defense of freedom.”

—John F. Kennedy, Special Message to the Congress on Foreign Aid, March 13, 1962

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Afghanistan's Future

How schools, farmers, and midwives are overcoming war-zone challenges

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Cover:

A farmer from Shamangan province, Afghanistan, holds soil that is ready to be used for planting. The USAID-funded Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Program works with farmers throughout Afghanistan to introduce new strains of alfalfa with higher protein content to help livestock survive cold winters.

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Photo by Nicholas Robbins

In Midst Of War Zone, *Civilians And Armed Forces Converge For*



Photo by Robert Sauters, USAID

U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, left, poses with workers at the Tarakhil Power Plant in Kabul in a ceremony to transfer control of the facility to the Afghanistan government.

Afghanistan's Future

By Jim Carey

ON DEC. 1, 2009, PRESIDENT Barack Obama spoke before a packed auditorium at West Point, the country's premier military academy.

"Our overarching goal remains the same," he told the military men and women in attendance, "...to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.

"We must deny Al-Qaeda a safe haven. We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government. And we must strengthen the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for Afghanistan's future."

That speech initiated deployment of an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to the country, and also signaled that the United States' non-military response would also be needed. USAID, the State Department, and 14 other federal agencies had earlier undertaken a massive recruitment effort to deploy approximately 1,000 civilian specialists to Afghanistan.

USAID returned to the country in 2002, but the scale of resources and personnel devoted to Afghanistan today—eight years later—is unmatched. The \$4.1 billion 2010 allocation for Afghanistan was the largest in Agency history.

Development in a war zone—especially the longest war in the

history of the United States—comes with challenges. Development takes time and requires stable conditions to take root. Implementing projects and programs also frequently depends on the military providing security.

For the most part, the U.S. strategy calls for the military to secure key areas, while USAID and its counterparts promptly follow up with the "build" phase, helping Afghans construct or reconstruct the kinds of institutions and infrastructure that help diminish the threat posed by extremism.

This past year also marked a considerable shift as USAID redirected some of its efforts from Kabul to the regional, provincial, and district levels to reach communities in nearly all of the 34 provinces in Afghanistan. The shift responded to a need for increased cooperation with military counterparts at the provincial or district levels to more effectively address the myriad root sources of instability in a country whose development needs across regions are often as diverse as its geography.

"Much of what we do in Afghanistan focuses on stabilization," said Alex Thier, director of USAID's Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs. "In areas where extremism has taken root, we approach development by focusing on the root-cause issues, such as poverty and political alienation—directing attention to creating

a credible, legitimate government presence."

Thier said that many USAID programs, under an accelerated military schedule, are beginning to take stabilization to its next phase—to transition programs so that Afghans lead and take responsibility.

The AVIPA (Agricultural Vouchers for Increased Production in Afghanistan) project is a case in point. The project is intended to offer Afghans alternatives to extremism and opium cultivation. Its focus is four-fold: help Afghan farmers receive subsidized vouchers that can be exchanged for vegetable seed or tools to encourage self-sustenance; inject much needed money and jobs in areas that have not seen economic activity for years through a cash-for-work component; execute material grants to farmer cooperatives; and provide training in new farming techniques.

The AVIPA project is scaling back in 2011 as USAID's agriculture program transitions to more long-lasting agricultural development by making substantial investments in more sophisticated techniques and equipment. An estimated 85 percent of Afghans rely on agriculture for their livelihoods.

"The only way to create an Afghanistan that will stand on its own is to begin to help Afghans transition—even in this crisis stage—by giving them the tools and the



The USAID-sponsored Panjshir Highway passes through the Lion's Gate, Shutol District, Panjshir province.

confidence they will need to be able to stand up for themselves in the future,” Thier said.

The obstacles are not insurmountable, but they are formidable.

Long under the control of the Taliban, Afghans have struggled with one of the highest child mortality rates (one in six dies before the age of 5), one of the highest illiteracy rates (an estimated 90 percent of women and 60 percent of men in rural areas), a culture of corruption, and a history of violent war and conflict.

Despite challenges like these, USAID has celebrated significant successes in the last year.

The Agency helped increase enrollment in schools to its highest level with 7.1 million students—nearly 38 percent girls—and trained 2,800 journalists and 800 judges to attain higher working levels of objectivity and jurisprudence, respectively.

The Agency inaugurated the 105-megawatt Tarakhil Power Plant, which can provide electricity to more than 600,000 residents in Kabul, and incorporated and modernized the first public utility to more efficiently capture revenues. Travel became easier for Afghans with the completion of the 103-kilometer national highway in Badakhshan province.

In health, USAID continued support to polio eradication efforts through the World Health Organization, with polio vaccination coverage now at 91 percent nationally, and is changing the way Afghan women view pre- and post-natal care by training thousands of midwives—nearly 55 percent of all practicing midwives in the country.

Since January 2009, the U.S. government has increased the number of U.S. civilians in country from 200 to more than 1,100. The goal for 2011 has been increased to 1,400 civilians. USAID currently has an estimated 300 men and women on the ground.

U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, speaking in Kabul in December, said USAID personnel and other civilians in Afghanistan have “stepped forward in our nation’s and ... [Afghanistan’s] hour of need” and called civilians the “linchpin” of the president’s strategy.

For Thier, as well as USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah, these civilians are carrying out a strategy that will require focus, careful and targeted use of resources, a steep learning curve, and above all, time.

“We need to seize this moment to consider not only what needs to be done in the short term to bring relief to the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also to ensure the success of long-term development that will make both countries stronger partners with the United States to bring about a more secure world,” Shah said after a trip to Afghanistan last spring. ■

Art of the Deal

Kabul Fair Showcases Agricultural Bounty and Reaps Millions

By Robert Sauers

KABUL, Afghanistan

ONE OF AFGHANISTAN'S greatest economic strengths lies in its ever-growing agriculture sector.

For three days last October, nearly 35,000 international and Afghan visitors streamed into the Kabul International AgFair 2010, providing a strong indication that the world is ready for Afghanistan's cashmere, nuts, and fresh and dried fruit.

The event, sponsored by USAID, also attracted heavy hitters like Asif Rahimi, minister of agriculture, irrigation, and livestock; and U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, who shared opening ceremony duties.

"You have come at the perfect time," Rahimi told the audience. "Global demand for Afghan products is big and grows larger every day."

All told, the AgFair would go on to generate almost \$2 million in business deals and more than \$6 million in potential deals over three days. More than 40 business representatives from Argentina, Australia, China, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Singapore, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States participated in the event, all looking to make deals with Afghans.

The AgFair featured 136 Afghan and 40 international vendor booths

showcasing the country's crown jewels of agriculture: pomegranates, nuts, cashmere, grapes, dried fruits, and other high-value crops, as well as a range of agricultural services such as processing and production, textiles, livestock, renewable energy, transportation and logistics, packaging and printing, banking and finance, and leather goods.

These fairs help participants forge new business relationships in Afghanistan's growing agricultural sector and bring together hundreds of producers, buyers, packagers, cold storage technology companies, equipment vendors, international representatives, and government agencies to build stronger business linkages and partnerships.

Sponsoring AgFairs is just a part of USAID's \$1 billion portfolio of agriculture projects that focus on creating jobs and increasing both incomes and Afghans' confidence in their government. The projects improve productivity, regenerate agribusiness, strengthen key value chains, rehabilitate key watersheds and irrigation infrastructure, and strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock to deliver services effectively.

For example, Afghanistan is the world's third largest cashmere producer and has the potential to dramatically increase its production of the valuable commodity. Only 30 percent of the cashmere that goats produce is harvested every year, primarily because farmers are not aware of the value of the cashmere. In 2010, USAID launched an awareness

campaign to train more than 200,000 goat herders on the value of cashmere.

In another USAID-funded project, laborers in the Arghandab District of Kandahar planted 814,000 pomegranate, apricot, plum, and grape saplings to rehabilitate more than 6,000 hectares of orchards damaged as a result of a drought. Even with an uncertain security situation, strong output in agriculture was driven by increased donor spending and recovery from the severe drought of 2008-2009. As a result of those efforts, last year's harvest led to agricultural output growth of 36 percent.

To ensure that this season's harvest was exceptionally abundant, USAID provided farmers with agricultural knowledge to produce exceptional crop yields. The Agency's efforts resulted in more than \$22 million in increased sales and \$11 million in increased exports of Afghan agricultural products. The Agency also helped to create a network of 300 AgDepot farms stores across the country, which have generated almost \$6 million in gross sales.

This AgFair marked the first time that security for all three days was managed and provided by the Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, and National Directorate of Security—a sign that Afghan forces are more ready than they have been in the past to provide security for large public and commercial events.

The event also included seminars where participants could learn about the latest agricultural technologies

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Afghan Mothers Delivered into Good Hands

Increasingly, Midwives Are to Thank for Successful Births

By Abby Sugrue

FARANGIS SULTANI HAD her hands full.

A woman in labor had just arrived by way of a donkey to the clinic in Badakhshan province where Sultani works as a midwife. Sultani went to work delivering the baby, then learned the woman was pregnant with twins—and the sibling of that first arrival was not in the correct position to exit the birth canal safely.

As she relayed the story to a National Public Radio reporter in September, Sultani suggested a higher power may have had a hand in the baby turning on its own and being delivered successfully, as she had to turn her attention to the twins' mother. The woman was bleeding and in distress.

"After injecting some drugs and medicines, I finally managed to stop the bleeding," Sultani told NPR. "And at the end of the two days, she was completely healthy and she went home."

Happy endings like this are not the norm for Afghanistan, which has some of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. Approximately one out of every 60 women dies giving birth in Afghanistan, and 129 infants out of every 1,000 die in their first year of life.



Photo by Hassan Zakizadeh

A community midwife in Badakhshan uses postpartum family planning flip card during her counseling session in a basic health center.

But a concerted effort to train women as midwives is making progress in this war-ravaged country to extend the lives of some of its most vulnerable citizens.

USAID began working to cut the numbers of deaths of mothers and infants by providing some very basic services that Afghans lacked, but that are key to healthy deliveries: skilled midwives, well-equipped health centers that take the place of at-home deliveries, and community health workers who educate mothers on preparing for birth and proper infant care. The program also sought and received buy-in from Afghan women and men. All of these appear to be making an impact.

This year, the country's infant mortality rate has dropped by an estimated 22 percent since 2003, thanks in part to better midwifery.

"We've trained over 2,500 midwives since 2002 with support from donors like USAID, the World Bank, U.N. agencies, and the European Commission. Mobilizing over 1,600 Afghan Midwives Association members contributes to a reduction in infant and maternal mortality," said Feroza Mushtari, acting president of the Afghan Midwives Association.

Statistics also show that 77 percent of maternal deaths in Afghanistan can be avoided with proper health care. However, particularly in the most remote parts of the country, access to

reliable health services is limited due to a lack of infrastructure, education, and professional health providers.

USAID has worked with the country's Ministry of Public Health for eight years to support midwifery training for women across Afghanistan. Classes last 24 months and cover a range of both clinical and practical trainings, including in antenatal, natal, and postnatal care.

Dr. Nasratullah Ansari is an obstetrician and the technical director of the nationwide midwife project. He sees first-hand the difference this project makes to the women trained, the women treated, and beneficiary communities. "They are so proud to be a midwife. You are taking care of the whole village. And the ... other thing is they are so proud they can receive salary. It's a sort of empowerment of women."

As a result of multi-donor support—including the European Commission, the World Bank, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations—the number of midwives in Afghanistan has increased from 467 in 2002 to more than 2,500 in 2010.

USAID has helped train more than half that number, and developed a midwifery education program that is used in 34 specialty schools in 32 provinces. In addition, the Agency helped establish a National Midwifery Education Accreditation Board to authorize, supervise, and monitor all midwifery and community midwife education programs in the country.

USAID also supported establishment of the Afghan Midwives Association (AMA) in 2005. The organization has more than 1,600 current members and works to promote and strengthen the midwifery profession.

"Since I became a member of AMA, I have had the opportunity to improve my leadership by attendance in international events, sharing experiences, and participating in leadership and management trainings. Because the AMA is a well reputed association at both the national and international levels, as an AMA representative, I am benefiting from the respect of my management team in Cure Hospital," said Victoria Parsa, an AMA representative at Cure International Hospital in Kabul.

For new mothers, proof of the program's success is often laying quietly in their arms. "For the first time in my lifetime, I have seen a woman doctor [midwife] that has treated me with such tenderness and care," said a 35-year-old mother in Dahanae-Sabzak, a remote village in Bamyan province.

Though it appears there has been progress, U.S. and Afghan officials will get a better understanding of the country's health gains when the USAID-supported Afghanistan Mortality Survey now underway is completed in summer 2011. The survey report will provide data on the magnitude of maternal mortality, the main causes of death, risk factors, and barriers that affect women's access to care. ■

Afghanistan Fact Box

- Population: 29,121,286 (July 2010 est.)
- Percentage of people living below poverty line: 24% (FY05/06 est.)

Main development challenges:

- Despite gains toward building a stable central government, a resurgent Taliban and continuing provincial instability—particularly in the south and the east—remain serious challenges for the Afghan government.
- As the world's largest producer of opium, Afghanistan's poppy cultivation remains at a historically high level. The Taliban and other antigovernment groups participate in and profit from the opiate trade, which is a key source of revenue for the Taliban inside Afghanistan. Widespread corruption and instability impede counterdrug efforts.
- Afghanistan is extremely poor and highly dependent on foreign aid, agriculture, and trade with neighboring countries. Much of the population continues to suffer from shortages of housing, clean water, electricity, medical care, and jobs. Crime, insecurity, weak governance, and the Afghan government's inability to extend rule of law to all parts of the country pose challenges to future economic growth.

(Source: CIA World Factbook)

- Main assistance sectors: agriculture, infrastructure, health, education, democracy and governance, economic growth, and stabilization
- Year USAID began its current program: 2002

(Source: USAID)

Fashioning Female Entrepreneurs

With business grant from USAID, silk start-up is empowering Afghanistan's most destitute

By Anthony Reed

NOORIA AND NAZEERA are two of many Afghan female breadwinners in the Kabul area.

Nooria, a widow, is the mother of six children and the main financial support for her family. Nineteen-year-old Nazeera is the oldest of 10 children in her household. (Their last names are withheld for security reasons.) When her father lost his job in a car repair shop, Nazeera became the sole source of income for her large family.

Nooria and Nazeera work for Arzoe Zane Afghan (AZANA) or “hope of Afghan women,” a local Kabul company specializing in making silk scarves and shawls that has been subsidized by USAID’s ASMED project. Shaima Breshna is the company’s founder and president. Her vision for AZANA is to reinvigorate the silk industry and empower Afghanistan’s most destitute to live a life of dignity and self-sufficiency.

“AZANA seeks to help poor women interested in handicraft work, enabling them to work from or near their homes,” said Sakhi Karimi, a supervisor at the company. “In 2006, we started with seven workers, and now we have 19 (16 women) who are trained here to make quality scarves.”

Nooria has worked for AZANA for four years. For her, the company has lived up to its founder’s vision.



Photo by Anthony Reed

Although she has not attended school, 19-year-old Nazeera hopes to become a company designer after working with AZANA.

“It’s very good working here, I feel empowered. Economically, I can do much more for my children,” she said. “When my husband died, I depended more on my oldest son to help provide for my family. Now, I take care of my five youngest children without assistance from my oldest son, as he now has his own family to provide for.

“I am independent, and sometimes able to provide for my oldest child as well.”

With previous work as an embroiderer, coupled with her new trade, Nazeera has developed a keen eye for fashion in the six months she has been with AZANA.

“I am happy working here,” said Nazeera. “Now I make more money with greater opportunities to improve my future.”

As it began expanding, AZANA took advantage of USAID’s Global Development Alliances (GDA)—a way to leverage Agency and private sector funding. USAID invested \$110,000 to help AZANA purchase new equipment, display company products at major international trade shows, and increase hiring.

USAID’s ASMED project has awarded 49 GDAs in support of the small and medium private sector enterprises, contributing more than \$12 million to projects totaling more than \$95 million. It has also supported 378 associations (87 women-owned) and created 125 associations (27 women-owned).

GDA partners are expected to bring significant new resources, expertise, technology, and networks



Photo by Anthony Reed

Nooria is one of many Afghan widows whose life dramatically improved thanks to the USAID ASMED project.

to help develop the private sector in Afghanistan. Partners include domestically owned private businesses and multinational corporations, NGOs, foundations, business and trade associations, universities, donor agencies, philanthropic leaders, venture capitalists, and think tanks.

GDA partners also gain from alliances with Afghan businesses. Not only is there access to new markets, but effective alliances marry common interests, mobilize resources for development assistance programs, and promote program effectiveness.

Ultimately, GDAs address the problems of poverty, disease, inadequate education, depletion of natural resources, and limited economic opportunities throughout Afghanistan.

That means women like Nazeera, whose father never allowed her to go to school, now have high hopes for their future careers.

“Eventually I would like to do some of my own designs,” she said. “After I gain more experience, I think I would be allowed to be creative here.” ■

Show Takes Afghans “On the Road” to See Progress

By Kelly Ramundo and Robert Sauers

MUJEEB AREZ SEEMS perpetually amused as he dons a playful smile, and appears equally at ease shooing goats in Badakhshan, partaking in a sumo-style wrestling showdown in Balkh, making fresh cheese in Nangarhar, dirt-biking in Herat, or picking pomegranates in Kandahar.

His comic asides and looks of wide-eyed bedevilment as he interacts with denizens of his country make him instantly likeable.

It would seem then that the 23-year-old television actor was the perfect choice for host of *On the Road*, Afghanistan’s first travelogue and one of the country’s most popular television programs. Sponsored by USAID, the show has just entered its second season.

On the Road is more than just a weekly fix of homegrown entertainment. Each week, the 23-year-old Arez takes viewers to one of the 34 provinces to show off Afghanistan and the progress the country has made. On site, he interacts with locals and partakes in their customs while accompanying them to visit successful development projects by the Afghan government in partnership with the international community.

The television series highlights Afghanistan’s pivotal role in the region as a trade route and examines the historical relevance of roads and development to the country’s economic growth, education, and access

to services. It is at once a window to the country’s varied culture and geography, and a subtle educational and diplomatic tool.

During the first season, Arez criss-crossed Afghanistan, chatting with a pomegranate farmer (the prized fruit of Arghandab District) in Kandahar province, witnessing the launch of a newly repaired turbine at the Kajaki Dam powerhouse in Helmand province, and exploring the social, cultural, and historical aspects of Badakhshan province through interviews with community leaders and citizens.

Through Arez’s interactions with farmers, doctors, workers, youth, and community leaders, television viewers see the changes within their country and the impact recent development efforts have had—in the unscripted words of their countrymen.

Jeremiah Carew was the deputy director of USAID/Afghanistan’s infrastructure office and the project officer for *On the Road* during its first season, which began airing the first of 26 episodes in November 2009. One of the challenges of the project, he said, was to create something Afghans would want to watch but that also was able to convey the positive impact of USAID-sponsored development projects in the war-torn country.

“Our objective was to produce an entertaining TV show and stop around and see some development projects—just weave that in very naturally. I think if you do it right, and it’s coming from the right place, with the right objectives, that’s very

honorable—and people respect that,” he said.

Because maintaining credibility with the Afghan public was a crucial component to the program’s success, branding proved a thorny issue, especially considering the show was being produced by Tolo TV, Afghanistan’s largest private TV station.

“There was maybe some trepidation on the part of the television station of whether to be branded,” said Carew. “Partly based on our branding regulations, we said it needs to be branded. So we came up with an agreed-upon text at the end—something along the lines of, ‘this show was brought to you by the Afghan government in cooperation with the U.S. government through USAID.’ And we went ahead. We had that for a few seconds at the end.”

It was the right decision, Carew said. Halfway through its first season, USAID commissioned an independent viewership survey that found that, even though around half of all viewers knew the U.S. government was behind *On the Road*, they also rated the program’s credibility as one of its main assets.

“It didn’t seem to impact the credibility of the program. And I, as a program manager, felt that was the right decision. We took some risk with it because we didn’t know how people were going to react,” said Carew.

The survey, he explained, had two main objectives. “One was to see just how many people were watching it, regardless of what they came away with. The second was to see

Photo by USAID



On the Road host Mujeeb Arez works on location in Paktya province, Afghanistan.

what messages they were hearing on the show.”

It turned out that viewership was surprisingly high: the probability sample survey estimated that between a third and half of the Afghan population had watched the program at least once, a number that grew to nearly 75 percent in urban provinces like Herat and Kabul. Viewers were loyal to the program as well; most viewers—82 percent—watched every week or every other week. The second objective was also being met, the crew found out from both surveys and focus groups.

“People seemed to hear that the show was about improvements in Afghanistan’s infrastructure, improvements in the lives of women, educational opportunity for kids. And these are the development objectives,” Carew said.

But of most interest to locals, *On the Road* provided entertainment that was both of high quality and sensitive to local customs.

“There are a lot of scenes that reinforce traditional Afghan values,”

Carew said. “So visits to a mosque or visits to what I call ‘Muhammad tourism’—places where Muhammad had been or that have relics or artifacts or local shrines. So that also reinforces that this is an Afghan program. This is

a healthy thing to be watching.”

The survey cited that 97 percent of viewers wanted to continue watching the show and the top recommendation was to lengthen each broadcast.

While highlighting development milestones, the show was also promoting national unity—not an easy feat in a country divided by decades of civil animosity between ethnic groups.

“Especially in focus groups, people hit upon the fact that this show informs about other areas of Afghanistan [...] so people definitely understood that that was something—we were trying to promote a culture of tolerance and identification of Afghanistan as a country,” said Carew.

The show may also be expanding local horizons. While *On the Road* took ample precautions to be culturally sensitive, it did push the envelope, if only slightly.

“If you’re an Afghan villager, you’re seeing women without a family member on TV. That’s radical to them.

And it opens your world and it opens your mind. So this little TV show fits into that overall trend of people being exposed to modern ideas, being exposed to different people and places and concepts. I think it can be a very influential and benign influence on people’s lives,” said Carew.

The show’s producer, Tolo TV, is also proud of the result. “The most exciting aspect to emerge from the success of *On the Road* is that, as a first of its kind for this format of programming in Afghanistan, it has enabled everyday Afghans to get to know each other better,” said Saad Mohseni, chairman of MOBY Group, the umbrella company for Tolo TV.

Based on Arez’s star reception wherever he travels to shoot, there is evidence that he has touched a chord with the Afghan public. This is helping unify the country around positive messages of development, optimism for the future, and pride in Afghan culture and history.

“The show is an attempt to introduce Afghans to their culture and country,” said Arez.

And Carew thinks this chord can be amplified beyond Afghanistan.

“This format is pretty easy to produce because you only have one paid actor,” he said.

“I think that building national unity is something that you could do in a lot of places. Stopping by USAID projects along the way could be woven in very easily, as we have here. It’s a public diplomacy tool as well.” ■

Reading and Writing a Better Future

“Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery.” —Horace Mann

USAID and Afghan government focus on turning modest education gains into lasting achievements

By Robert Sowers

AFGHANISTAN HAS ONE OF the highest illiteracy rates in the world. Out of a total population of almost 24 million, more than 11 million Afghans over age 15 cannot read or write. And in rural areas where three-fourths of all Afghans live, 90 percent of women and more than 60 percent of men are illiterate.

Eighteen-year-old Muzamil was once armed and recruited by local commanders as a fighter. After enrolling in an accelerated learning class with eight other students, he has traded his gun for a pen and a notebook.

“It is not time for fighting,” said Muzamil, who’s last name is withheld for privacy purposes. “It is time to study and build the country and help the people of Afghanistan.” He thanked USAID for establishing the class and paving the way for education in his village.

Though the statistics are dismal now, literacy is getting attention from the highest levels in the Afghan government. In September, President Hamid Karzai, attending an event to mark progress on increasing literacy rates in his country, cried openly as

he called on Afghans to “come to their senses” and move towards peace, or risk seeing the next generation flee abroad and lose their Afghan identity.

“Only through our efforts can our homeland be ours,” he said.

The upshot is that the country’s officials and education advocates believe literacy, numeracy, and work skills programs—many of them run by USAID—ultimately can translate into improved livelihoods for Afghan women and men.

The United States is a major contributor to literacy education in Afghanistan, providing technical and financial support to the Ministry of Education (MoE) and working closely with other international stakeholders to achieve national education goals. One of the goals is to ensure that by 2020, children throughout the country, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

With USAID assistance, the Afghan government has made strides in its literacy push during the past five years. One example is USAID’s Learning for Community Empowerment Program, a five-year joint USAID/MoE project that provides reading and work skills training to 250,000 illiterate youth and adults in rural and urban settings in 20 provinces of Afghanistan.

“Bringing the skills to read is one of the most important gifts we can bring to Afghans,” said Education Minister Ghulam Farooq Wardak. “Our work

with the international community to fight illiteracy is one of the single most important causes around which all Afghans can unite.”

In addition to literacy, USAID’s education program is helping the Afghan government improve education quality, while also aiming to meet the urgent need for textbooks, school buildings, and trained teachers. Programs are also expanding access to basic and higher education, literacy, and employment skills training.

“USAID, beginning in 2002, put substantial resources in the educational sector,” said former Mission Director William Frej, who counts an exponential jump in school enrollment since that time as one of the Agency’s major accomplishments in the country.

Since 2002, and in conjunction with the MoE, USAID has built or refurbished more than 680 schools throughout Afghanistan. As a result, nearly 7 million students—37 percent of them girls—are now enrolled in primary and secondary schools, compared with fewer than 900,000 boys and no girls enrolled in 2001 under the Taliban.

In an interview with *FrontLines* last summer, Frej described taking one of the last trips of his tenure to visit a small village in Bamyan province, around 10,000 feet up in the Hindu-Kush mountains and nearly a four-hour-long trip in a jeep from the city

of Bamyan through an isolated valley. There he witnessed children of both sexes hard at work learning to read. It was a scene that would have never been possible during the six years of Taliban rule.

“I was struck at this completely isolated village, and there were both boys and girls in a classroom that had a trained teacher—learning math, learning reading skills, learning English,” he said, adding that USAID and its implementing partner on the project were the only development groups who had ever visited that particular village.

To help get students up to speed who could not attend school when the Taliban was in power, USAID introduced Afghans to an accelerated learning project, which allowed 170,000 students to complete two years of study in one year.

USAID also supports the MoE’s in-service teacher education program for more than 50,000 teachers in 11 provinces to improve teacher quality. To date, USAID projects have trained nearly 10,500 teachers in an accelerated learning program and more than 2,600 university professors on modern teaching methods.

The Agency is also building two large secondary schools in Kabul, six education facilities at Afghan universities to train secondary school teachers, and three provincial teacher training colleges around the country.

In remote areas where government schools are not yet established, USAID’s community-based education project supports 43,800 students each

year. Partners recruit volunteers from the community to be teachers. After receiving six weeks of training and some textbooks, the volunteer teachers begin teaching with coordination and monitoring by the MoE. Depending on the location, classes are often held behind mosques, in backyards of large homes and buildings, and even under trees.

The country’s university system is working to regain its reputation from the 1970s as among the strongest in the region when there were several universities with an international perspective, strong faculty, and good reputation. USAID is working with the education ministry to improve pre-service secondary teacher education at 18 universities and medical education at five medical schools, and has helped more than 100 professors obtain master’s degrees in agriculture, business administration, engineering, and computer science at U.S. universities. Afghans are developing their own master’s degree programs in education, public policy and administration, and public health.

And vocational education hasn’t been slighted. Through the Skills Training for Afghan Youth project, USAID funds the Afghanistan Technical Vocational Institute in Kabul, a coeducational vocational school that provides a two-year post-secondary program in fields needed to support Afghanistan’s economic growth. Current enrollment is 2,300 students. Graduates go on to technical jobs in the construction trades, information and communication technology, and computer programming.

FACT BOX:

- Between 2002 and 2010, USAID printed more than 97.1 million textbooks in Dari and Pashto covering such subjects as language, math, biology, and geography for Afghans in grades one through 12.

USAID’s concerted effort, beginning in early 2002, to channel “substantial resources” into the country’s education sector through diversity of education programs may just become the U.S. government’s lasting legacy in Afghanistan, according to former Mission Director Frej and others.

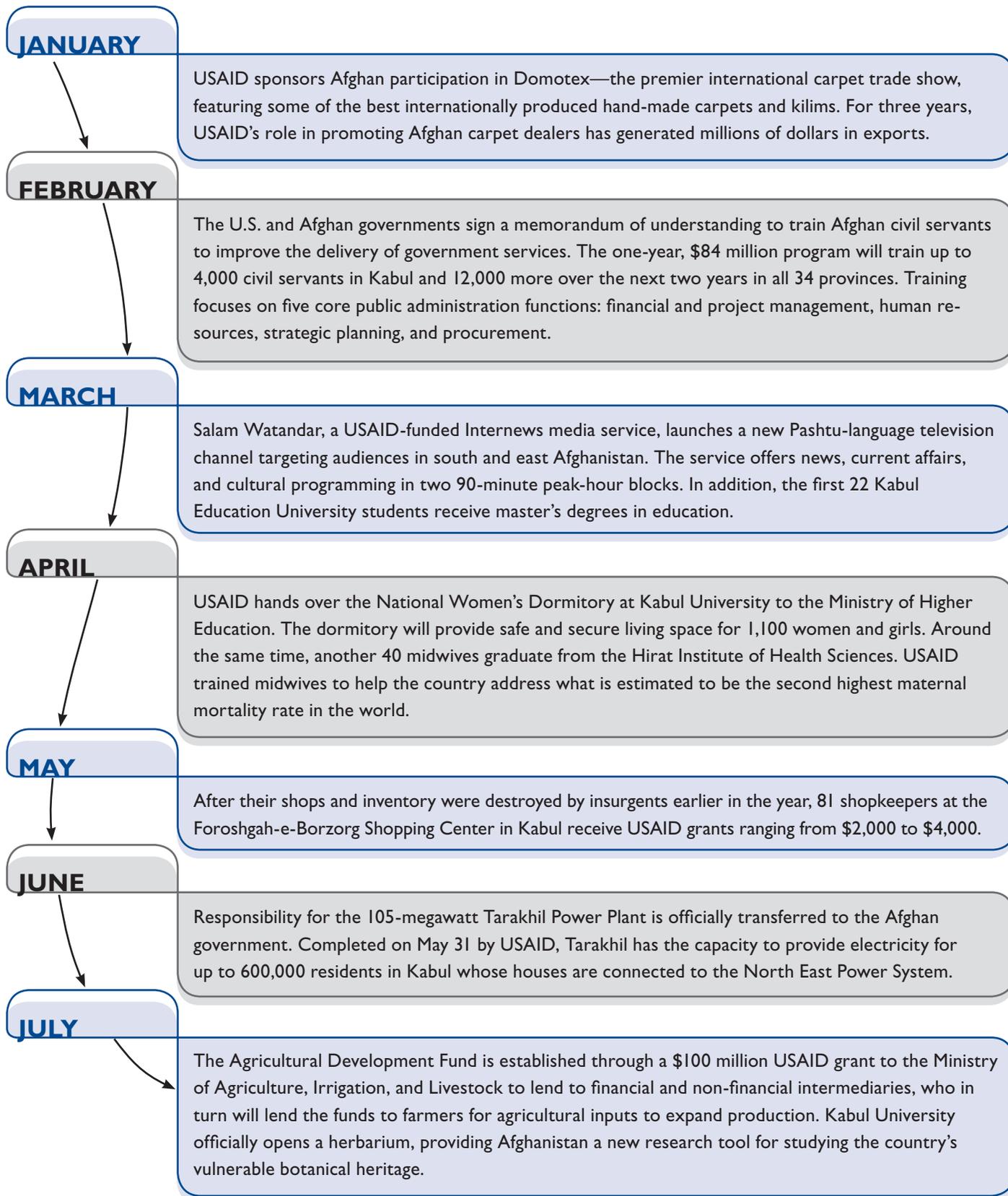
“This has been a remarkable transformation in this country, which I think will have a long-term positive impact on Afghanistan by engaging women in a process that they had no opportunities [to engage in] before,” said Frej.

USAID’s education director, David Barth, called USAID’s work getting children, particularly girls, into school “a virtual miracle,” and an investment that will increase its value over time. “You’re not going to have viable democracies unless you’ve got people who can read and understand, who will know how to distinguish between political parties, who are then capable of meaningful participation in civil society,” he said.

The message seems to be getting through to local Afghans. When 24-year-old Wahida (her last name withheld for security reasons), wanted to become a teacher at a nearby high school for girls, her brother objected

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2010—The Year in Review



AUGUST

The USAID-sponsored National Civil Society Conference in Kabul brings together more than 150 government officials, parliamentarians, and representatives from the media and civic and international organizations to discuss civil society progress and challenges. In addition, the Kabul Women's Farm Service Center opens as one of seven centers in Afghanistan, the only one tailored for women farmers. More than 10,000 Afghan women will benefit, and the center will offer high-quality seed, fertilizer, animal feed, tools, machinery, greenhouse supplies, and other products.

SEPTEMBER

On Sept. 18, Afghanistan holds the first *Wolesi Jirga* (parliamentary) polls since 2005. At stake are 249 seats in parliament in the country's first Afghan-led parliamentary polls since the fall of the Taliban. According to the Independent Election Commission (IEC), approximately 4.3 million Afghans cast valid votes. These elections, although marked by substantial levels of fraud and operationally limited by high levels of insecurity in certain parts of the country, mark a positive progression for the institutional independence of Afghanistan's electoral bodies, the IEC, and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC). The IEC is Afghanistan's body mandated to conduct free and fair elections and referendums; the ECC is the country's ad hoc independent body (made up of three Afghan and two international commissioners, one from South Africa and the other from Iraq) charged with adjudicating election-related complaints. USAID supports both institutions, and additionally funds over 400 observers (295 Afghans, 142 internationals). The observers cover 32 out of 34 provinces on election day. In total, over 6,000 Afghan observers are mobilized to monitor all provinces.

OCTOBER

The 2010 national wheat seed distribution begins for the first of 260,000 farmers in 31 provinces, funded through USAID's Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture project. Local farmers receive vouchers entitling them to significant discounts on and access to certified wheat seed and fertilizer in an effort to improve the quality and production of Afghanistan's wheat. USAID also helps organize an agricultural fair at the Badam Bagh Farm in Kabul to build awareness of Afghanistan's agricultural sector, to link buyers and sellers, and to boost sales of Afghan products nationally and internationally.

NOVEMBER

On Nov. 24, the IEC announces parliamentary election results for 34 out of 35 constituencies (33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces plus the Kuchi constituency). Certification for one constituency (Ghazni) is deferred by the IEC. USAID continues its support to both the IEC and the ECC throughout the process.

DECEMBER

On Dec. 1, the IEC certifies the Ghazni province results, concluding the certification of the 2010 *Wolesi Jirga* elections results. Also in December, the Obama administration publishes an annual review of its military strategies in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, the administration references an "urgent need for political and economic progress" to match what is described as significant military success in offensives to clear Taliban strongholds in the southern part of the country.

Voices from the Field

Kim Kim Yee is the team leader for USAID/Afghanistan's southern programs in the Office of Agriculture. Yee joined the mission in July 2006, and will complete her tour in January 2011. Prior to Afghanistan, she worked for USAID's Global Development Alliance Secretariat for two years.



Kim Kim Yee

FRONTLINES

What is the one thing you wish someone had told you, and that you can now share with newbies, before moving to the country in which you currently serve?

YEE I've seen a lot of change since I got here several years ago. During this time, there are three pieces of advice that I find have helped me—temper expectations, be open-minded, and expect the unexpected. Yes, they are clichés but they've helped me weather a lot of uncertainty and understand that there's a lot beyond my control so I just have to do the best I can.

FL **What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?**

KKY Afghanistan is a tough place to work—lots of pressure, varying levels of insecurity, and an intense interagency and international environment. But USAID's activities have enormous impact on the average Afghan citizen and that is

gratifying to see. I am also excited to be a part of history, and I hope that my small part has helped shape things in a positive way. I am constantly amazed at the level of dedication and hard work out there, despite the challenging environment. Not only are you yourself working hard, but pretty much everyone else around you is also working just as hard!

FL **How do you deal with the hazards posed working in a critical priority country? That is, what helps you to work in an environment amid high threats and high security?**

KKY I think it's really important to put things into perspective. Yes, it's insecure, but the dangers are largely known, so you're better prepared both mentally and physically (through equipment, etc.). I make informed decisions, and if something doesn't feel right, I trust my gut. I also

make sure to have people I can always bounce ideas and frustrations off of to see if I am on track. Fundamentally, I have always told myself that the moment I feel too scared to be here, it's time to leave. That threshold is different for different people and no one has to prove anything to anyone here.

FL What has been the most difficult experience at your job?

KKY The biggest challenge of work here is the constant turnover of personnel, not just at the mission, but also in the military and at the other international agencies/organizations here. With every new group comes new energy and new ideas. That's generally a good thing—to keep things invigorated and fresh—but tough to see things through beyond one rotation and the constant justification of decisions that were already justified with the previous group. It's also tough to say goodbye so many times—I have met really wonderful people and it's hard not knowing when you'll cross paths again.

FL How has your work with USAID changed the way you view the world? Has your view of the United States and its relationship to other countries changed?

KKY These are tough questions because I think that USAID/Afghanistan is unlike any other mission. I think our experience here will be telling as to how the Agency will evolve because of our relationships with other agencies and departments in Afghanistan. It seems the U.S. is expected to take the lead on virtually every topic; I recognize how much weight our country carries. Yet I see that there is a consistent message of engaging our friends and allies because we are more powerful that way and can share resources.

FL What is your favorite thing to do in your residence country on your days off?

KKY Hours are long and we work virtually every day so it seems there are not too many days off! But the little time I do have is precious. I'm a fairly private person so living in "hoochville"—many of us live in containers that are about the size of a dorm room with a tiny shower, toilet, and very limited closet space—where nearly every single activity is done with a few hundred of your closest USG colleagues is a little tough. So on my Fridays off I like to spend time connecting with my friends and family at home by catching up on e-mails, and doing very unglamorous things like my laundry and cleaning my hooch! I also spend time reading magazines and books to help me take my mind off of work. Over time I've realized it's very important for me to have some time by myself after being with people throughout the entire week.

FL What is the one thing you took for granted in the United States that you no longer would?

KKY Basic services—electricity, running water, potholes in the road seemingly fixed magically—that are provided by functioning government services.

FL What would you say is your "grain of sand;" what you will leave behind as your most important accomplishment in the country you served?

KKY I'm not sure what I will have left behind as the work will continue and evolve as new people come. In six months, no one will remember me, but that's OK—we are supporting a system, and it shouldn't be contingent on a single person. I'll just say that I poured many hours of hard work into Afghanistan and I hope that it made a difference somewhere, no matter how small. ■

Interview with Alex Thier

Photo by Patricia Adams, USAID



Alex Thier is Assistant to the Administrator and Director, Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs

They are neighbors, divided by some of the world's most majestic mountains and a complicated history of shared borders and ethnicities. At USAID, Afghanistan and Pakistan share an office, and occupy all of one man's time. Alex Thier, assistant to the administrator and director of the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs, joined the Agency in 2010 with a background spanning field postings with the United Nations and NGOs, and the Washington policy community. His work has focused on the two countries for many of the last 18 years. In fiscal year 2010, he oversaw a staff of nearly 500 Americans, a significant number of foreign nationals, and a \$5 billion budget. Many U.S. foreign policy goals in Afghanistan and Pakistan share familiar undercurrents: building sustainable institutions, supporting and empowering civilian

governments to provide for their people, and laying the groundwork for long-term stability and human progress.

Thier recently sat down with FrontLines Managing Editor Kelly Ramundo to talk about USAID's efforts in the two countries. Excerpts follow from their discussion.

Theories of Change

Afghanistan and Pakistan, respectively, are our two largest assistance missions in the world, by an order of magnitude. This year we have nearly \$4 billion for Afghanistan, \$1.5 billion for Pakistan. These are investments that we are making in these countries that are really, at the moment, unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

And so the first question you have to ask is, why are we making that investment? Part of the response is that these are national security priorities. But just because something is a national security priority doesn't mean that you invest civilian assistance dollars unless you think you can actually achieve some sort of bigger impact or effect by investing that money.

I think that we have two somewhat slightly different theories of change for Afghanistan and Pakistan that we hope to be able to accomplish by investing these resources.

Pakistan

In Pakistan, you have a country that, over history, has swung between corrupt civilian rule and corrupt military dictatorship. As a result, it has failed

consistently, for political reasons and others, to meet its economic and development potential.

If you compare Pakistan, for instance, with India—created on the same day from the same material—and you look at their development stories, they're dramatically different. It's not just political, but the politics is very important. In this new era of democracy in Pakistan, we are trying to partner with the government and society to create a much more solid frame for Pakistan's economic and political development.

The ways that we do that are really twofold. We are gravely concerned about Pakistan because of the threat of extremism that threatens to tear the entire state down, to turn Pakistan into a failed state. That's very dangerous for homeland security reasons, for regional security reasons, for the fact that there are 170 million people in Pakistan—it's a huge state—and failure would have catastrophic consequences.

So part of what we do is we focus on stabilization. In the areas where extremism is taking hold, we're trying to focus on root-cause issues: focusing on poverty, focusing on political alienation, focusing on the absence of a credible, legitimate government presence. This aspect of our programming is dedicated to try and work with the Pakistani government to improve that situation in those areas; to diminish the existential threat that Pakistan faces.

The broader portion of our assistance is trying to boost economic and

political stability in Pakistan as a whole. We do that by investing in things that will both support the Pakistani people and also support economic growth, like agriculture and irrigation and energy.

By doing these things, we're also helping to reinforce the fact that after another pendulum swing following eight years of military dictatorship, we don't just want to support a particular government; we want to shore up the notion that civilian government is actually the best way forward for Pakistan.

Thus we invest not only in the government itself, for example, supporting financial management in the Ministry of Finance and the development and strengthening of the parliament, but we also aim to strengthen governance more broadly, in the energy sector and the water sector. We do this so that government is actually more responsive and more effective, and supported by the population—so that democratic, civilian governance becomes more resilient.

The Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act (aka the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Bill)—which authorizes but does not yet appropriate \$1.5 billion a year over five years, so \$7.5 billion in total—is a key part of our strategy to get Pakistan to believe that we are in a long-term strategic partnership with them, and that we are working to overcome the trust deficit that exists between the United States and Pakistan.

We are using these resources to align ourselves with the objectives of

the government of Pakistan. Nearly half of our resources actually go through Pakistani institutions, supporting the development of the government of Pakistan's capacity and accountability.

Pakistan, Interrupted

The floods in Pakistan this year were among the great natural disasters of the last century. Twenty million people were displaced. Billions of dollars and economic productivity were lost, but particularly crops of poor farmers.

Millions of poor farmers were affected in a country that was already facing food security challenges; an internally displaced persons crisis; and a severe economic downturn. Pakistan was already struggling to get an IMF [International Monetary Fund] program back on track. The floods dealt a real blow to our and the Pakistanis' hopes for a strong year for Pakistan.

That said, the good news story is that the United States responded enormously to this crisis on the civilian and on the military side. Our OFDA [Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance] colleagues were amazing, and working closely with our military, the government of Pakistan, and the U.N. and other partners reached literally millions of Pakistanis who were without food, shelter, health care, delivering millions of pounds of assistance and over \$500 million in U.S. assistance.

Some of our investments paid off enormously. Everybody was expecting a public health catastrophe, with standing water and poor sanitary

conditions, and it hasn't happened—in part due to investments that we made well before the flood in early disease detection. The relatively minimal loss of life from these floods and their aftermath and the rapid delivery of assistance are a huge success story.

But we were only covering a portion of the suffering. We've had to look at our assistance plans, which were carefully crafted and negotiated over a long period of time, and say, okay, we're going to have to put some of that on hold so that we can respond to the recovery and reconstruction needs for the Pakistani people.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the violence, the insurgency, the impact of 30 years of conflict make it much more of a crisis with a lot more of our resources aligned with our military mission. Many aspects of our efforts are focused on stabilization and counterinsurgency. We are working hand-in-hand with the military in areas where they are working to clear out the insurgency. And we're working to strengthen governance and development in those areas so that the population sees a better future with the Afghan government supported by the international community than they do with the insurgency.

That's a key emphasis of our effort there. At the same time, the only way to create an Afghanistan that will stand on its own is to focus now, even in the crisis stage, on institutional development, capacity building, and the things that the Afghans will need

to be able to stand up for themselves in the future.

On the military side, they do that by building up the national security forces: the police and the army. On the civilian side, we're doing that by seeding community-level governance and development efforts; by training thousands of Afghan civil servants and expanding their ability to deliver services; by standing up an education system that has gone from a few hundred thousand to 7 million Afghan children in schools; by investing in a health-care system that's gone from virtually nonexistent to serving almost 85 percent of the population with basic health care.

You can't just focus on the crisis response. You also have to be developing a longer-term vision of how to transition Afghanistan from its current state of conflict into a sustainable and reasonably stable, gradually developing state and society.

Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. It was before the conflict. It's been through 30 years of conflict; it will continue to be a challenge. But if we don't put in place institutions and economic growth potential starting now, they will not be able to sustain the transition to long-term development.

A Year in Review

In December, the administration undertook a review of its strategy in the two countries. The purpose of this review was not to rethink current strategy. The purpose was to evaluate whether we are accomplishing that strategy.

We have undertaken an intensive examination of what's working and what isn't working and we've learned some important lessons that we will carry into the next year.

Clear, Strong Goals

One of our really critical lessons in Pakistan has been that where we have focused intensively on critical objectives, like resourcing our efforts in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas), we have seen success. We need to do more to focus our efforts, so that at the end of this five-year KLB [Kerry-Lugar-Berman Bill] period we can highlight some major accomplishments. There are many good things that we are doing, but we need to have some clear, strong goals.

With Dr. [Rajiv] Shah's leadership and increased dialogue with the government of Pakistan, we have been defining those goals. For example, for Pakistan, we were allocating funds to the health sector for a variety of programs. Good programs—but it can be hard to see how they amount to strategic impact. Now, we've focused and defined a goal of 90 percent immunization for all Pakistani children for basic childhood immunizations and polio.

We think not only is this going to create a critical goal that will make a big difference for Pakistan—saving literally hundreds of thousands of lives—but that it will also provide us accountability, so that we know that we have a clear goal that we're working towards. And it will provide us

focus, so that all aspects of our assistance mission are focused on achieving these goals. And we have a couple of goals like that. That's been a very important outcome of this process for us.

Local Context

In Afghanistan, I think that we have two pretty fundamental conclusions that are going to shape efforts in the coming year. The first is learning. We have undertaken an unprecedented civilian uplift in Afghanistan, literally tripling the size of our staff. And it's not just that we have increased our numbers, but we have been pushing them out to the local level. We have staff in regional platforms, provincial platforms, and district platforms, out there with the military in a way that we have never had before.

We have put a lot of programs in place that our field staff are able to utilize and program to the local context. And this is one of the most important realizations when you're working on stabilization. Context is everything. We can't have a cookie-cutter approach to how we do assistance at the district level in Afghanistan. It's very fluid; it's very varied across the country.

Having people at that level and having a strategy that requires them to focus on the sources of instability and then to use our programmatic resources to address those sources of instability is a fundamental shift for USAID and how we work on stabilization. That's going to be and has been a big focus of our effort this

year. We've learned a lot from it and we're going to intensify it.

Afghan Ownership

The second thing that is also really important is coming back to this issue of transition. With all of the assistance that we have today for Afghanistan, we need to make sure that the way we are using those resources is also feeding a longer-term transition to greater Afghan ownership and leadership and sustainability.

We must focus some of our resources into places where the Afghans are more in control of their destiny already—where security is better, where governance is better, and where we can do better, longer-term development work today. This will help to set the stage for transition, but it also creates immunity or a bulwark against the insurgency, because you are really demonstrating to the Afghan people what that future can look like, in a positive way.

Shared Vision

If we're ever going to do anything successful in these countries, we need to have and share a long-term vision of these countries, which is both a historical understanding of where they've come from and how we're aligned with them, to get to where they want to go. And if we're not supporting that vision, then we're going to fail.

It's not only about understanding where these countries are coming from, or having a historical perspective on assistance (why they view us

the way that they do; where they feel that we've been unreliable in the past; what types of things they think we can accomplish). It's about also making sure that we are really aligning our vision of where that country wants to go.

And that comes from them. We can support them in defining that, and we can support them in reaching it, but it really has to come from them.

A New Home

This year we transitioned from a temporary task force into a fully fledged independent office—the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA)—giving us independent budget and hiring authorities. This has been a great boost to our staff here in Washington and in the field—and we are excited to welcome many new members into our extremely dynamic (if sometimes a little too dynamic) teams. ■

Reading and Writing,

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because “girls of this village only perform household chores and nothing else.” However, the village elder convinced the brother that the opportunity would benefit Wahida and other women.

“People of our village do not understand that women and men have an equal right to study. It is the responsibility of people like you and me to take initiative and make girls' education available and eliminate illiteracy,” explained the elder. ■

Art of the Deal, *continued from p. 5*

and methods. And the event made room for fun as well while Afghan families enjoyed restaurants, playground activities, dancing, music, and live wool and carpet weaving demonstrations.

Since 2007, USAID has sponsored 11 international AgFairs in Afghanistan—six in Kabul—in partnership with the minister of agriculture, irrigation and livestock, and other partners to build awareness of Afghanistan's agricultural sector. Today, the fairs are recognized as one of the most important routes for introducing the world to Afghan goods and in turn attracting much needed investment in the country's agriculture sector.

Afghanistan's AgFairs also serve as an opportunity to exchange ideas on how to improve agricultural production and agribusiness in Afghanistan and to demonstrate improved technologies and products.

“Afghanistan's progress in the agriculture sector is helping lead this proud nation along the pathway to development and self-sufficiency by helping feed the Afghan people, opening markets, and stimulating economic growth and investment opportunities,” Eikenberry said.

As he shared childhood memories of Afghan raisins sold at U.S. supermarkets, Eikenberry lauded the country's agricultural comeback and said that the United States was proud to play a supporting role. ■



Photo by M. Ghani Khan, USAID

Punjabi farmers return home after receiving 50-kilogram sacks of wheat seed, fertilizer, and vegetable seed as part of USAID's \$62 million post-flood wheat distribution program.

Pakistan Tackles

a Flood of Thorny Issues

By Zack Taylor

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan

ON SEPT. 30, A FIFTH OF Pakistan was inundated with water and USAID was focused on flood relief. But there was other pressing business with the country that just couldn't be put off.

After a year of rising expectations, USAID finally signed a bilateral agreement committing the Agency to most of a \$1.06 billion budget for fiscal year 2010—the first funding for the Pakistan aid bill that has become known worldwide as Kerry-Lugar-Berman, or KLB.*

The agreement cemented a reinvigorated U.S.-Pakistan partnership that has most prominently taken the form of strategic dialogue sessions in Islamabad and Washington.

USAID has a long history with Pakistan, and has provided over \$4.5 billion in assistance since 2002. But in 2010, the mission found itself in the throes of major growing pains. The budget had jumped from \$400 million in fiscal year 2008 to \$1.1 billion in fiscal year 2009. Then the flooding put an entire year of planning and implementation into question.

Today, the water has largely receded. And with the help of USAID and other international donors, the displaced

received shelter and food, and epidemics were kept at bay.

Ironically, the water that inundated so much agricultural land left the fields rich in nutrients and primed for an excellent harvest if only seeds for the winter wheat crop could be planted.

In response, USAID took about \$62 million, mostly from KLB and augmented by funds from the Agency's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, to furnish wheat seeds via the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to the hardest hit provinces. The effort started in the north, where the water had receded and winter would arrive first, with a \$21 million program in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. That was followed by \$25 million to implement the program in Punjab and \$16 million in Balochistan.

All the while, USAID continues to work closely with the Pakistani government to ensure activities reflect mutual priorities, and are responsive to the most urgent needs, while building government capacity to pursue economic and political reforms with the help of international contractors and local institutions.

"Providing services in place of government institutions does little to help it provide the services after the programs close," said Acting Mission Director Denise A. Herbol. "Building capacity into governmental institutions helps them sustain delivery."

The approach echoes President Barack Obama, who in September 2010 signed a directive on development policy committing the United States to "invest in systemic solutions for service delivery, public administration, and other government functions where capacity exists. Public sector capacity and sustainability will be a core focus to the U.S. approach to humanitarian assistance."

Teaching someone to fish so they can feed themselves for a lifetime rather than giving them a fish so they can eat for a day, as the old saying goes, is a huge challenge given the public perception that such a large infusion of money should have an immediate positive effect on the quality of life for Pakistanis. That challenge is compounded by concern from American and Pakistani publics that the money be responsibly spent.

"We are excited about doing development another way," Herbol said. "But the reality is a lengthy process of helping the government put systems into place whereby they can effectively deliver meaningful public services in an effective, transparent, and accountable manner."

The Agency's mission in Pakistan must have a clear understanding of the existing capacity of federal agencies and provincial governments to account for funds they receive.



Photo by M. Ghani Khan, USAID

Pakistan Minister of Agriculture Arbab Ayub Jan, center, distributes wheat seed to flood-affected farmers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. USAID has assisted more than 400,000 households with a seed assistance program.

To that end, USAID is conducting extensive pre-award assessments for dozens of Pakistani governmental and civil institutions, and launching programs to help them build capacity and monitor the funded initiatives.

USAID has conducted more than 100 pre-assessment surveys of government agencies to identify deficiencies in accounting for funding, and in some cases, embedding accountants on-site. If deficiencies are identified, the assessments provide recommendations for how the institutions, whether they receive USAID funding or not, can improve their accounting and transparency mechanisms. An overarching monitoring and evaluation program is also about to be put in place.

“As stewards of the American taxpayers’ money, the mission must not measure success by how fast the money moves but by ensuring it’s

moving in the right direction, getting to where it needs to be, and not getting lost,” said Herbol.

The democracy and governance program, for example, is channeling nearly 80 percent of its portfolio through governmental or local organizations, including a program to provide services like clean water, drainage, and solid waste management to communities in all four provinces and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas; three small grants programs that focus on women’s rights and other community-based initiatives; and an anti-corruption initiative designed to expose any corruption in KLB funding.

In education, USAID’s work with the provincial government of Punjab expands on an existing “missing facilities” program being carried out with the World Bank, and will include \$10 million for the reconstruction and

resupply of flood-affected schools. Outside experts will train head teachers and district education office personnel.

USAID is also working directly with the Provincial Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement Authority (PaRRSA), a governmental body formed after large swathes of the Malakand Division were destroyed as security forces drove militants from the Swat Valley in the summer of 2009. Through PaRRSA, the \$36 million program has begun work on 44 of a planned 112 schools damaged by the conflict. For the first time, schools will be built to three standard blueprints, according to school size.

Energy projects announced last year continue to move forward with rehabilitating key dams that provide power to the national grid; upgrading 11,000 inefficient tube wells used for irrigation; improving performance of

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For Pakistan Teen, a Chance to Finish Childhood

By *Asim Nazeer and Zack Taylor*

KANJEER, Pakistan

BAKHTAWAR ABDULLAH was a good student in the fifth grade at the small school located in this southern Pakistan village.

She enjoyed learning, laughing with her friends, and spending time with her family. But one evening, as she sat nervously in a chair beside her parents at the local meeting hall, she knew that everything about her childhood was about to come to an end.

No more school, no more girlfriends, no more fun. At 15, Bakhtawar was to become engaged to be married.

But just as the betrothal ceremony was about to begin, a prominent man in the village walked into the hall followed by his wife, Jinnah. The room quieted down as the man approached Bakhtawar and her parents. He stopped in front of them and spoke.

“This girl is not mentally or physically ready for marriage and motherhood,” he told the wide-eyed parents. “You must wait for three years, until she is 18, before she gets married.”

The man, Muhammad Asif Soomro, was a member of the local village council and an influential member of the community. Jinnah, a community activist herself, seconded her husband’s decree.

Participants at the ceremony, including village elders and parents of the soon-to-be bride and 18-year-old groom, all listened intently as Soomro explained the negative impact that early motherhood would have on the girl’s health and well-being for the rest of her life.

The guests were completely unaware of the dangers Soomro described, but ultimately were convinced that the marriage, and others involving such young brides, should be postponed. Accompanied by other village elders, Soomro made a second visit to the families of the betrothed, and both sets of parents confirmed their willingness to postpone the marriage.

In traditional agrarian communities in Pakistan, a woman’s prime role in life is to be a mother. To assure the maximum number of fertile years to have children, fathers, especially heads of poor families, marry their daughters off straight after puberty.

Soomro may not have taken issue with the betrothal at all were it not for his role as a community volunteer in a neighboring district for a USAID program called Family Advancement for Life and Health (FALAH).

In the next few months, FALAH will train more than 1,600 community-based volunteers across Pakistan, spreading the word that not only do early and unspaced pregnancies leave girls vulnerable to reproductive health problems, but early marriage also deprives girls of the chance for an education.

Physically, girls who marry before age 18 have a higher incidence of maternal mortality and miscarriage. Deprived of education, they are less aware of issues surrounding their own reproductive health, and their emotional immaturity can lead to abusive relationships with their spouses.

Soomro had recently returned from a training session in a town

neighboring Thatta, the district capital, encouraging volunteers to spread important messages about the severe, long-term health risks of early teenage pregnancy.

“We did not realize the consequences of early-age pregnancies,” said Abdullah, Bakhtawar’s father, who uses only one name. “We do not want our daughter to face any complications having a child too young, so we have decided to postpone the marriage.”

Although Pakistan accepted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibiting child marriages in 1990, and current law forbids marriage before a girl is 16, it is rarely enforced, especially in rural areas. Communities are often not even aware of the risks involved with early marriage and motherhood.

“I didn’t expect to effect such a change in my community so quickly,” Soomro said. “But the elders came to agree with me completely. There will be no more marriage for our girls until they have reached a mature enough age.”

The impacts of early marriage are substantial not just for young women, but their children as well: Infants born to mothers younger than 20 face a higher risk of death shortly after birth up to age 5 than those born to older mothers.

The evening of Soomro’s intervention, Bakhtawar beamed when she learned that she could finish her schooling—and finish growing up before becoming a wife and mother. With 11 siblings, she understood the

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A Long-term Investment in Safer Schools

USAID building back better “so no community has to lose their children to an earthquake again”

By Virginija Morgan

BAGH, Pakistan

“I WAS STANDING BY THE bank of elevators at the USAID office in Washington,” says Bob MacLeod, remembering how he was recruited to come to Islamabad. “The earthquake had just hit Pakistan,

and USAID’s mission director for Pakistan, Mark Ward, asked me if I had a visa.”

Five years later, MacLeod is making his last visits to the schools and basic health units he saw being constructed by USAID throughout earthquake-destroyed areas of Kashmir in north-eastern Pakistan.

“Thank you Bob for the school you helped build,” says a handmade banner one of the communities sent him, and MacLeod is quick to respond that

it was a joint effort by the USAID team, the contractor, and the local people.

While Pakistan’s massive summer 2010 flooding has shifted attention away from the similarly devastating earthquake, that catastrophe has not been forgotten.

MacLeod arrived in the country on Oct. 22, 2005, two weeks after the earthquake struck Pakistan’s then North-West Frontier province and Kashmir, claiming 74,000 lives and leaving more than 2.8 million people homeless.

“In one community, 130 girls were killed at a girls’ college,” says MacLeod. “Their dead bodies were still there when we visited the site.”

Within a month, USAID’s mission in Pakistan presented a strategy that mapped out reconstruction efforts.

Four, five-year projects launched in 2006 with a budget of \$256 million. The projects keyed in on restoration of livelihoods, support for education and health systems, and reconstruction of schools and health-care facilities.

MacLeod was assigned to manage USAID’s Pakistan Earthquake Reconstruction and Recovery Program that focused on rebuilding key social infrastructure in affected communities.

Over the next five years, the program helped build or rehabilitate 74 primary, middle, and high schools for thousands of girls and boys across Kashmir and in Mansehra in Khyber Pakhtunkwa province. Basic health units were constructed and 20 more



A student in Dharian Bambian, Pakistan, reads to Gul Laila. Despite being illiterate herself, Laila is the head of the local school management committee, which received help from USAID after the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan’s Kashmir region.



Photo by USAID

USAID is reconstructing more than 100 schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that were destroyed when security forces drove the Taliban from the Malakand District last year.

schools and one 40-bed hospital would be built as well.

“But the best achievement is the engagement of local communities, teachers, and farmers in our work,” says MacLeod, “because this project belongs to them.”

Each school and health-care facility was designed by Pakistani firms in cooperation with an American construction company that is carrying out the project for USAID.

All the buildings now have large windows that flood the rooms with sunlight—and minimize the use of electricity. The roofs are pitched to meet international building codes and guidelines for earthquake-prone areas.

USAID also ensured that schools and health-care facilities have access for the disabled, an unusual approach for Pakistan.

The designs proved popular among local communities, and now the Pakistan government is financing construction of similar schools in earthquake-affected areas in the north of the country.

“We are grateful to the American people for helping us erect this beautiful building that will serve our community for the years to come,” says Mahmood Sadiq Khan, chairman of the school management committee, a volunteer school support group that USAID helped organize for the girls’

college in Rerra Town, Bagh District.

Each USAID-built facility incorporated an activist committee to make decisions, communicate with local residents, and raise community donations to support the construction. In Rerra, residents donated land for construction crew offices, and supplied electricity and water for the construction free of charge.

Yet to MacLeod, the most valuable contribution by the committee was to solve all local issues related to the building process, so that only eight days of construction time were lost to any conflict, which often happens in Pakistan. Now that the schools are operating, the committee is raising donations for the school library and working to design co-curricular activities, such as sports classes.

“I am pleased that my three granddaughters can study within their own community,” says Sadiq Khan with a proud smile on his face.

Rerra’s girls’ intermediary college teaches 511 students today, more than a 100-student increase since before the earthquake, and plans to reach 1,000 students within the next five years. The school hopes to receive status as a degree-granting college soon, and has 60 students waiting to attend college-level classes, so that girls in the neighboring communities can continue their studies.

“Five years is a long time to rebuild, but it’s the only way to go if we want to rebuild better than it was, so no community has to lose their children to an earthquake again,” says MacLeod. ■

Maternal and Child Health Programs Deliver for Pakistan

By Zack Taylor

RAHIM, Pakistan

NAZIA BIBI WAS ENJOYING a wedding reception in her village when she heard a fellow guest cry out in pain. She looked across the yard to see a very pregnant woman in obvious discomfort.

“The baby is coming!” the woman shrieked. “Take me home.”

For Bibi, 25, this was her big moment. “No I won’t take you home,” she told her firmly. “I am a trained community midwife. You are coming to *my* house.” She led the woman into her modest home and put her on a maternity bed in the corner hidden by a stand-up curtain. Neatly laid out on a table next to the bed were a stethoscope, a new razor blade, a scale, and various instruments associated with childbirth.

Several hours later, there were cries of a healthy boy, delivered in the birthing suite set up in the midwife’s family home only five days earlier. The mother, looking down at the gurgling infant, wept.

Bibi had recently graduated as a community midwife from the School of Nursing Holy Family Hospital in Rawalpindi, a city of 3 million situated south of the capital, Islamabad. Her village of Rahim on the outskirts of the city previously had no available skilled birth attendant.

She is among more than 2,200 young women across Pakistan who have completed 18 months of training in midwifery, and have been equipped with close to \$1,000 worth of equip-



Photo by Zack Taylor, USAID

Nazia Bibi displays USAID-supplied equipment to community midwives in Pakistan at a midwife graduation event.

ment and supplies to ensure safe deliveries.

“The training and equipment allowed me to establish the midwife home has strengthened the belief and trust of the community in me,” Bibi said. “Now they recognize me as a skilled birth attendant. Pregnant women seek me out.”

The training was made possible through a USAID project, Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Newborns, or PAIMAN. For the last six years, PAIMAN has strengthened Pakistan’s health system by helping communities improve delivery of health-care services for more than 5.7 million mothers and newborns.

“We have trained a whole new cadre of community midwives, which in a few years’ time will bring huge changes,” said Dr. Nabeela Ali, PAIMAN’s director. “We’re not here to take the place of government services, but to build on existing systems according to their capacity. Flexibility is the name of the game.”

Since its inception, the \$92 million project has reached more than 70 percent of the population through a number of additional outreach efforts.

Working with nearly 100 community-based NGOs, PAIMAN helped strengthen management skills and improve the reach of government

health services personnel in remote communities of Pakistan. Trainings enrolled 120 district health managers.

In the rugged northern part of Pakistan, the project supplied the government with 76 specially equipped, four-wheel drive ambulances to transport women experiencing complications in childbirth to larger regional health centers.

A media campaign to promote newborn and maternal health included 36 hours of television programming, video-on-wheels, and puppet shows in rural districts. A key part of PAIMAN was its connection with more than 330 *ulama*, or religious scholars, who are tremendously influential in their respective communities, and who embraced the project's messages wholeheartedly.

The results speak for themselves. By the end of the project in January, the rate of skilled birth attendance jumped to 52 percent from a national average of 39 percent, and the number of pregnant women who had at least three antenatal visits increased by 29 percent.

A survey found that 97 percent of families now believe pre-natal check-ups are necessary in a country where some conservative beliefs hold that childbearing is a natural process not requiring medical attention. The rate of post-natal visits also rose 33 percent.

Infrastructure was another key element of the project—more than 100 community health facilities were upgraded and supplied, as well as 57 training centers and a nursing school dormitory. At these facilities, the



Photo by Margy Bailey, USAID

A nurse and baby at a USAID-supported Basic Health Unit in Jhelum, Pakistan.

project installed features such as Oral Rehydration Corners and Well Baby Clinics.

“The PAIMAN experience was critical to our delivery of maternal and child health services in a coordinated manner,” said Khushnood Akhtar Lashari, Pakistan’s secretary of health. “We are better equipped to continue to help safeguard the health of the mothers and children of Pakistan.”

The foundation PAIMAN has developed will continue to serve women, their families, and health-care providers long after the project ends.

“That was my first baby I delivered myself,” Nazia said, recalling the eventful wedding reception. “And I am sure it won’t be my last.” ■

For more on the PAIMAN project, visit: www.paiman.org.pk/mediaproducts/mediaproducts.php.

PAIMAN by the Numbers

PAIMAN helped build a trained cadre of health professionals who will continue to provide services to mothers and newborns long into the future. The project trained:

- 11,000 female health workers in communication skills and group counseling
- 6,500 female health workers in community-level integrated management of neonatal and childhood illnesses
- 2,282 certified community midwives in full 18-month trainings and refresher trainings
- 5,262 health facility staff in maternal and newborn health skills
- 569 private providers in maternal and newborn health skills
- 1,014 health managers in basic financial, logistics, and supervisory practices, and
- 5,953 health staff in health information systems and reporting

Source: USAID

Your Voice: Finding Hope Amid Flood's Devastation

By Naazlee Sardar

Your Voice, a continuing FrontLines feature, offers personal observations from USAID employees. Naazlee Sardar is an Islamabad-based senior education advisor who spent four weeks in the field monitoring USAID flood emergency assistance in three provinces.

AT THE USAID DISTRIBUTION site at a flood relief camp in Sindh province, a young woman queuing up with her teenage son to receive a food donation somehow stood out in the crowd and caught my attention.

It could have been the slippers on her feet—while most others were barefoot—or perhaps the dignified way she waited in line. I approached her, and she told me her name was Murada and that Larkana, her village, had been totally wiped out by flooding that began devastating Pakistan in late July. As she chatted about all the land she used to own and crops she had cultivated as if we were two neighbors having afternoon tea, a rush of emotions came over me.

“I miss my rifle the most, you know,” she said matter-of-factly, my eyes widening as she explained that she was a widow and her late husband had taught her to use the firearm.

“A Russian single barrel,” she added proudly, “to protect myself of course.” I shook my head as I contemplated that though Murada had lost her home, 15 acres of land—including 10 under cultivation—and six cows, she preferred to discuss her missing rifle.



Murada and her son received assistance parcels from USAID. The widow lost her home, 15 acres of land, and six cows as a result of the flooding.

Photo by Naazlee Sardar, USAID



Photo by USAID

USAID's Naazlee Sardar, right, inspects the contents of flood relief packages before they are distributed to Pakistan flood victims.

Amazing indeed that this woman, until recently comparatively wealthy, was now collecting a food sack marked "USAID," and recounting a heart-breaking story in such a sprightly manner.

It was only when I asked "so what about the future?" did the facade crumble, and a look of abject grief came over her face. My heart sank as I realized that, despite her sunny demeanor, she was just one more victim of this terrible tragedy.

From rugged Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the fields of Punjab, down to the coastal plains of Sindh, I witnessed the same horror and devastation of

total loss in three weeks of visits to monitor food distribution sites. Beyond their possessions, some Pakistanis have literally lost their land—washed away by the mighty Indus River after it breached its embankments for hundreds of miles.

Over and over I heard tales of hopelessness—no agency, representative, not even a landlord who was willing to take responsibility for their welfare and survival. In such a state, they were more than eager to voice their frustration to a representative of a donor agency in the hope of finding someone who might actually help them.

Through my work with USAID, I could offer some degree of help in the form of the thousands of donated relief kits that included two weeks worth of food, cooking utensils, buckets for collecting water, and soap. People were eager to narrate their harrowing experiences to someone working for the American government, which many called their savior.

As I opened each parcel to verify its contents before distributing the kits, I could see the appreciation in the recipients' eyes—gratitude that someone was concerned enough to ensure that they receive each and every item that was sent for them. It was my honor to lend them a sympathetic ear as well.

Aside from different regional languages and attire, my experience in three provinces was pretty much the same everywhere I went. Much as I tried not to cry, recurring scenes of poverty and helplessness invariably brought tears to my eyes.

Yet at the same time, I couldn't help feeling another emotion welling up inside: hope.

Women like Murada, who spoke bravely about her loss and even tried to stay well-dressed amid the squalor, seemed to me to represent the glimmer, however small, of a better future.

I was able to play a small part by promising those with whom I spoke that the American people would not abandon them in their hour of need. I was grateful the people of America provided a platform to help make a difference in the lives of so many. That difference brings hope. ■

2010—The Year in Review

FEBRUARY

More than 32 million Pakistani children under the age of 5 are immunized against polio during February's National Immunization Days. Since 2003, USAID has contributed \$1 million per year to both the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF to fund their participation in National Immunization Days. The WHO supports and monitors the polio campaigns and maintains a surveillance system to detect cases of polio; UNICEF conducts outreach and communications related to the campaigns.

MARCH

Administrator Rajiv Shah meets with Pakistan government officials on the best role for USAID and development during a Pakistan development roundtable. At the event, Shah and Shahid Rafi, secretary of Pakistan's Ministry of Water and Power, sign implementation letters confirming joint efforts to upgrade three Pakistani thermal power stations in Guddu, Jamshoro, and Muzaffargarh. Refurbishing the power stations will increase power to Pakistan by 315 megawatts, enough to power nearly 400,000 homes. The event is part of the first U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, co-chaired by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, to engage high-level participation between the two governments.

APRIL

During his first official visit to Pakistan from April 11 to 15, Shah emphasizes "a commitment that USAID, and on behalf of our entire portfolio of foreign assistance here, that we would do things differently going forward in order to be better partners, deeper partners, and more respectful partners of the government of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan and Pakistani institutions." Among the trip's highlights are a meeting with Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, and a press conference that draws more than 80 Pakistani and international media outlets.

LATE JULY

U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne W. Patterson issues a disaster declaration in response to extraordinarily heavy rainfall and flooding that begins in northern Pakistan in late July. The flooding drifts south to Sindh province, affecting an estimated 18 million people in every province. More than 75 percent of affected families are located in Sindh and Punjab provinces, and 1.7 million homes are destroyed. Widespread flooding is reported in 82 of Pakistan's 122 districts.

In coordination with the Pakistan government and other relief agencies, USAID responds quickly to the devastation wrought by the floods. USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) immediately sends water treatment units and Zodiac boats to help rescue stranded people. A Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) soon arrives to assess conditions, transport relief supplies, and help meet the immediate needs of millions of people affected by the floods in Pakistan.

AUGUST

Shah visits flood-ravaged Pakistan to assess the situation on the ground and determine the next steps for USAID. The first high-level U.S. government official to visit Pakistan, he travels on a C-130 airplane packed with plastic sheeting and other humanitarian commodities from OFDA, observes the USAID-supported World Food Program distributing meals, meets with donors, and consoles flood victims, including women and children who tell Shah that they have “lost everything.”

SEPTEMBER

The U.S. government signs an agreement with the government of Pakistan to begin using the first tranche of funds under the Kerry-Lugar-Berman Act, which pledged a \$7.5 billion, five-year assistance package for Pakistan. The agreement also launches USAID’s new business model to increase the role of local organizations in carrying out U.S. assistance programs. Over the lifespan of the Act, USAID expects to increase the share of programs implemented by local organizations to approximately 70 percent.

OCTOBER

October marks the 5th anniversary of a devastating 7.6 magnitude earthquake that struck Pakistan’s Azad Jammu and Kashmir region in 2005. USAID’s Earthquake Reconstruction Program has been critical in helping the region recover. The program helped “build back better” by constructing modern buildings that are earthquake-resistant, trained thousands of health and education specialists to deliver quality services for 2.2 million residents, and rallied the communities to participate in the management of their local facilities. USAID rebuilt 21 schools and 15 health-care facilities that provide basic health care to approximately 200,000 people in Bagh District. The program also created employment, helped businesses access microfinance, re-established markets, and expanded trade opportunities, thereby increasing the per capita income in the earthquake-affected areas by 81 percent.

NOVEMBER

Three months after the flooding, USAID and the U.S. government have delivered more than \$579 million in emergency relief to the flood-affected communities. Assistance includes materials for shelter, food, medical care, potable water, rescue operations, and basic commodities. As the flood waters begin to recede and communities start returning to their areas, USAID focuses on restoring livelihoods. Flood-affected people receive seeds and fertilizer for the planting season, cattle, cash for work, and a variety of other assistance to restore jobs, businesses, key services, and homes. USAID’s DART team stands down as flood-related assistance shifts from emergency relief to longer-term recovery and reconstruction efforts. USAID’s country office focuses its work on re-establishing Pakistan’s agriculture, infrastructure, energy, and economic development.

DECEMBER

Andrew Sisson is sworn in as USAID’s new Pakistan mission director to lead the Agency’s programs in the country and the piloting of new business models around the world.

USAID completes its six-year maternal and child health program that reduced neonatal mortality in Pakistan by 23 percent. The \$93 million Pakistan Initiative for Mothers and Children (PAIMAN) improved the health of more than 5.7 million Pakistani women and children from 2004 to 2010. The program trained more than 18,000 health specialists and upgraded 103 health facilities as well as 57 training facilities.

Voices from the Field

Zachary Orend is an economic growth adviser with USAID's mission in Pakistan, where he has been working since 2006. Although Orend's work currently focuses on private sector development and vocational training, he has served the Agency in other capacities, including as a development outreach and communications officer.



Photo by USAID

Zack Orend on a weekend getaway near Skardu, in the Pakistani Himalayas.

FRONTLINES

What is the one thing you wish someone had told you, and that you can now share with newbies, before moving to the country in which you currently serve?

OREND

Even though Pakistani-U.S. relations can be strained, if you give people the opportunity to voice their opinions, they are very open to talk. It took me too long to learn not to be taken aback by some of the stronger opinions of people I met. Now I appreciate the diversity of political and social opinion in the room at any social gathering. Some of the newspapers are just as open, with a breadth of political and social opinion that makes even the op-ed pages of American papers seem centrist and bland.

FL What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

ZO An assignment in Pakistan gives you the opportunity to work in a climate of pressing geopolitical significance. As a project designer and manager, I need to be prepared to rapidly move resources according to natural disasters or shifts in political circumstance. While this can be frustrating, it is also rewarding to be able to meet a pressing demand. I have developed in-depth, informed understandings about a place that people throughout the world, including friends and family back home, are intensely interested in.

FL How do you deal with the hazards posed working in a critical priority country? That is, what helps you to work in an environment amid high threats and high security?

- ZO** Compared to Baghdad, Kabul, Peshawar, or Karachi, Islamabad is a relaxed security environment. I drive, shop, hike, and eat out—while taking care to vary my routine. There’s relatively little street crime. Then a bomb goes off and everyone sends text messages to their friends to make sure they’re alright. It has been a while now, though. In the end, I see that the people and institutions actively protecting Americans in Islamabad are much more numerous and powerful than those seeking to harm us. Of course, Islamabad is a privileged piece of Pakistan and, at least of late, removed from the suicide attacks, targeted kidnappings and assassinations, ongoing conflict, and devastating natural disasters that are shaping daily life in other parts of the country.
- FL** **What has been the most difficult experience at your job?**
- ZO** The dramatic changes in Pakistan’s political environment, the series of natural disasters that have befallen the country, and the sustained attention that USAID programming receives from the U.S. government have impeded the sustained implementation of development-oriented programming. Programming works best if it is able to link a quick impact to longer-term development goals and if it’s linked to a Pakistani institution that can maintain high standards. This is why it is important that we continue to work closely with the government, civil society, and business interests. Better energy pricing, agriculture marketing policy, and textile sector growth will, in the end, contribute enormously to political stability in the border areas.
- FL** **How has your work with USAID changed the way you view the world? Has your view of the United States and its relationship to other countries changed?**
- ZO** I studied in Oregon and California and was friends with many international students—a few of whom were Pakistani. Come to Islamabad and you find a concentration of decision makers who studied overseas, predominantly in American colleges and universities. I’ve come to appreciate the immensely positive impression of the United States that our colleges and universities generate. USAID generates the same promise of excellence and expectation among many of our counterparts.
- FL** **What is your favorite thing to do in your residence country on your days off?**
- ZO** Eating ice cream at the Hot Spot, Islamabad’s kitsch center, where John Waters meets Lollywood and all of the hip kids look at each other. Trash-talking Saturday basketball games on the Embassy compound—an American tradition. Sharing grilled prawns with that special someone on Sundays in winter.
- FL** **What is the one thing you took for granted in the United States that you no longer would?**
- ZO** When I go back to the States, I wonder how long the American life of eating and shopping, shopping and eating will continue to excite me. While I’m on leave, it’s completely absorbing.
- FL** **What would you say is your “grain of sand”; what you will leave behind as your most important accomplishment in the country you served?**
- ZO** For better or worse, I’ve worked on at least a dozen projects during my time in Pakistan. Within that broad template, I would like to think that I’ve pushed the projects, Pakistani counterparts, my management, and myself to set realistic expectations and then meet them. ■

Pakistan Fact Box

- Population: 184,404,791 (July 2010 est.)
- Percentage of people living below poverty line: 24% (FY 2005/2006 est.)

Main development challenges:

- Decades of internal political disputes and low levels of foreign investment
- Severe electricity shortfalls
- Inflation (14.2% in 2009)
- Expanding investment in education, health care, and electricity production, and reducing dependence on foreign donors

(Source: CIA World Factbook)

Main assistance sectors:

- Agriculture, democracy and governance, economic growth, education, energy, infrastructure, health, and humanitarian assistance
- Year USAID began its program: 1951

(Source: USAID)

Insights from Dr. Rajiv Shah, *continued from inside front cover*

Building a dam may be a wonderful service to the community, but engaging locals in project design; consulting with stakeholders as to how it will affect river flows; contracting local workers to participate in the project; and training them to maintain it all produce something much more powerful than electricity; they produce a meaningful stake in society. ■

Thorny Issues, *continued from p. 24*

the largest electric distribution companies; and harnessing the power of the wind for a clean, alternative energy source.

In South Waziristan, USAID is working with the governmental Frontier Works Organization, the Water and Power Development Authority, and other local agencies to rebuild roads, develop water infrastructure, and improve power systems. USAID projects are implemented through the local governing body, known as the FATA Secretariat, to enhance and solidify its authority with the populace in the tribal areas. In mid-November, 30 out of a planned 81 kilometers of road were complete.

Much work, however, remains as the long-term social and economic effects of the flood become apparent. Painstakingly developed plans that once seemed appropriate have given way to a harsher reality faced by millions of Pakistanis. But flood or no flood, the U.S. goal is to partner with the federal, provincial, and municipal governments and support their efforts to provide Pakistani people with better services and a better quality of life.

“Helping Pakistan become a more economically vibrant country is ultimately in the best interests of the United States,” Herbol said. “Improving opportunity diminishes the appeal of extremism.” ■

*KLB was co-sponsored by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), and Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.).

Chance to Finish Childhood, *continued from p. 25*

financial reasons why her parents supported the marriage, but was nonetheless grateful for the delay.

“I have seven sisters and four brothers,” Bakhtawar said. “Because we are very poor, my parents wanted me to get married as early as possible, but I was not ready. Now I can go back to school.”

Bakhtawar is not the only girl in Kanjeer who will get a reprieve from child marriage. Soomro said that the decisive reaction by the two families to his advice has inspired him to deliver additional messages he learned at the training to other parents in the village, such as the importance of pre-natal care for pregnant women, a trained birth attendant at all deliveries, and proper birth spacing. ■

Looking for The **INSIDER?**

The Insider—that section of *FrontLines* devoted to employee-focused news, awards, events and photographs—has moved online to the Agency’s website.

Go to www.usaid.gov/frontlines to link to the latest news about what USAID staffers are working on throughout the world. This is also the new home for the popular “Where in the World” listings and for USAID obituaries.

If you have news you would like to see in this section, e-mail *FrontLines* at frontlines@usaid.gov.

Photo by Courtney Body, USAID



Above: The Ghazi Boys School principal stands by as Administrator Rajiv Shah meets with students during a visit to check on the reconstruction progress of the school in Kabul.



Photo by Virginia Morgan, USAID

Above: More than 500 girls from Rerra and neighboring villages study at a USAID-sponsored school in Pakistan.

Photo by USAID



Left: A farmer in Balochistan, Pakistan, displays wheat affected by wheat stem rust. USAID is working to develop agriculture in Balochistan and prevent the damage caused by the rust.

Right: A teacher demonstrates neonatal resuscitation to two students in a Badakhshan, Afghanistan, community midwifery school.



Photo by Hassan Zakizadeh

Pakistanis return home
with their belongings to
Bassera village in Punjab
province in August 2010
as flood waters recede.

