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As of March 31, 2016, the United States had provided nearly \$31.8 billion to support governance and economic development in Afghanistan. Most of this funding, nearly \$18.6 billion, was appropriated to the Economic Support Fund (ESF) administered by the State Department (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

KEY EVENTS

This quarter, James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence, questioned Afghanistan's political stability, saying that 2016 will see eroding political cohesion, assertions of authority by local power brokers, recurring financial shortfalls, and countrywide, sustained attacks by the Taliban. Clapper said political cohesion will remain a challenge as the government will confront larger and more divisive issues later in 2016, including the implementation of election reforms, long-delayed parliamentary elections, and a potential alteration of Afghanistan's constitutional order by a *Loya Jirga* grand national assembly.⁴³⁹

Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, similarly argued that 2016 will be a challenging year, saying "survival will be an achievement for the National Unity Government." Haysom identified a fractious political elite, the erosion of the sense of national unity, and reduced confidence in the future as significant political challenges. He also warned of political consequences if election reforms are not implemented expeditiously.⁴⁴⁰

In February, Democracy International (DI) released their survey of 215 Afghan parliamentarians. DI found that only 7% of parliamentarians believe Afghanistan is moving in the right direction. Respondents named poor governance (26%), neighboring countries' behavior or policies (25%), and insecurity (21%) as the main reasons for pessimism. Parliamentarians are generally dissatisfied with President Ashraf Ghani's performance, with nearly 45% very dissatisfied and 19% somewhat dissatisfied. Parliamentarians were also dissatisfied with Chief Executive

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Abdullah Abdullah, with more than half very dissatisfied and 20% somewhat dissatisfied.⁴⁴¹

In March, the federal Broadcasting Board of Governors and the Gallup opinion-research organization released the results of a survey of 2,500 Afghans that found deep public dissatisfaction with the Afghan government. Nearly 81% of respondents said they were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the performance of the National Unity Government, while 17% said they were somewhat or very satisfied. Additionally, nearly 69% said their lives had gotten somewhat worse or much worse over the past year and almost 46% predicted their life would get even worse in the next year.⁴⁴²

Pakistan's Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, Sartaj Aziz, conceded this quarter that Pakistan has some influence over the Taliban because "their leadership is in Pakistan, and they get some medical facilities, their families are here." He said one of the reasons the Taliban participated in the July 7, 2015, peace talks was because the Pakistan government restricted Taliban freedom of movement and access to hospitals, and threatened to expel the Taliban leadership from Pakistan if they did not participate. Despite this leverage, Aziz insisted, Pakistan cannot negotiate on behalf of the Afghan government because "we can't offer [the Taliban] what Afghan government can offer them."⁴⁴³

High-profile supporters of President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah feuded this quarter, revealing enduring tensions within the national-unity government. In March, supporters of vice president Abdul Rashid Dostum protested the removal of billboards featuring Dostum's photo in Mazar-e Sharif, Balkh Province. The protesters accused the long-time governor



Secretary of State John Kerry visited Kabul and met with President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, in April. (State photo)

of Balkh Province, Atta Mohammad Noor, of removing the billboards. Noor was one of Abdullah's main supporters during the 2014 presidential election, whereas Dostum supported Ghani. Ghani technically dismissed Noor—along with the other provincial governors—when the new government was established; however, Noor has refused to give up his position and the government has not publicly pursued the matter. In an April interview with the *New York Times*, Noor said that he would be willing to discuss vacating the governorship he has held since 2004 only after being formally reappointed to his position, arguing the government “cannot remove me by force.”⁴⁴⁴

On April 9 in Kabul, Secretary of State John Kerry met with President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah to discuss Afghan government reforms and the challenges to national unity. Secretary Kerry's visit came as the Afghan unity government approaches a September 2016 deadline for holding a Loya Jirga to amend the Afghan constitution and consider creating the post of an executive prime minister. This deadline was part of the political deal between Ghani and Abdullah that served as the basis for the National Unity Government. Secretary Kerry said that while there was a goal to hold a Loya Jirga at some point within the first two years of the agreement, he wanted to be “very, very clear” that the broader agreement for a government of national unity was meant to last the entire five-year presidential term.⁴⁴⁵ Kerry's comments prompted protests from former president Hamid Karzai and Senate chairman Fazel Hadi Muslimyar, who labeled the statements “major violation of Afghanistan's national sovereignty” and “clear interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs,” respectively.⁴⁴⁶

NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS

Refreshed Mutual Accountability

In September 2015, international donors and the Afghan government met in Kabul for the second Senior Officials Meeting (SOM). The meeting was a continuation of the annual high-level meetings to follow up on mutual commitments from the July 2012 Tokyo Conference. The purpose of the SOM was to review progress on the Afghan reform program, discuss key policy issues, and to jointly decide the way forward.⁴⁴⁷

As a result of the September SOM, the Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF) has superseded the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF). The SMAF helps guide the activities of the Afghan government and the international community at least to the end of the term of the present government. The SMAF covers six areas: (1) improving security and political stability (with three associated indicators); (2) anticorruption, governance, rule of law, and human rights (14 indicators); (3) restoring fiscal sustainability and integrity of public

finance and commercial banking (nine indicators); (4) reforming development planning and management, and ensuring citizens' development rights (three indicators); (5) private-sector development and inclusive growth and development (four indicators); and (6) development partnerships and aid effectiveness (eight indicators).⁴⁴⁸ In addition to the SMAF indicators, there are 39 short-term deliverables across the same six areas that are collectively due to be completed by the end of 2016.⁴⁴⁹

Three SMAF short-term deliverables were due to be completed by the first quarter of 2016. According to USAID, as of March 16, donors confirm that the Afghan government successfully approved a new comprehensive human-resources reform policy for the Afghan Customs Department (ACD) and established a new law-enforcement element within the ACD. While the Afghan government reports that it has successfully implemented an International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff-monitored program and negotiated subsequent financial arrangements with the IMF, donors are still awaiting confirmation from the IMF. Finally, the Afghan government was expected to issue a public-private partnership regulation but, as of March 16, USAID is only aware of a first draft of the regulation having been prepared and circulated to government ministries for comment.⁴⁵⁰

Overall, SOM donors reaffirmed their Tokyo commitment of sustaining support through 2017 at or near the levels of the past decade.⁴⁵¹ USAID said that although it cannot identify funds that may be awarded or withheld directly related to compliance or noncompliance with SMAF targets and indicators, noncompliance with SMAF indicators could erode donor confidence and reduce aid contributions.⁴⁵²

Electoral Reform Challenges

According to State, the U.S. government and other potential international donors are waiting for the Afghan government to present an electoral timeline along with a plan to achieve specified electoral reforms before committing to any funding or other support for elections. State is encouraging the Afghan government to announce its election timeline as soon as possible to allow for efficient planning by international donors. While the Independent Election Commission (IEC) issued a press release on January 18 asserting its authority for managing and overseeing elections and announcing October 15, 2016, as the date for parliamentary and district council elections, this date has not been officially confirmed by the Afghan government.⁴⁵³

On December 16, 2015, President Ghani issued a presidential decree announcing seven members of a selection committee to decide on the candidates for the IEC and the Central Complaints Commission (CCC) commissioners.⁴⁵⁴ The selection committee received hundreds of resumes, which it had begun to review. However, after both houses of parliament rejected President Ghani's September 2015 decree authorizing the

formation of the selection committee, the committee suspended its work on January 5. On March 5, President Ghani submitted a new decree reconstituting the members of the selection committee. This new decree reduced the number of civil-society representatives and added the speakers of the upper and lower houses of parliament to the committee.⁴⁵⁵

On March 26, Ahmad Yusuf Nuristani resigned as chief of the IEC. He had been appointed chairman of the IEC in August 2013 and oversaw the controversial 2014 elections.⁴⁵⁶ In February, 16 months after the establishment of the government, Nuristani announced the results of the 2014 presidential election and accused the government of violating the law.⁴⁵⁷ Later in early March, Nuristani accused foreign governments, international institutions, and elements of the Afghan government of interfering in the elections process and called on the Afghan government to approve the IEC budget.⁴⁵⁸ Following his resignation, Nuristani insisted that election reforms are the responsibility of the IEC, not that of commissions created by presidential decree.⁴⁵⁹

Chief Executive Abdullah's office called for new elections commissioners in February, with Abdullah's deputy spokesman insisting that "no election will held" without reforms and new commissioners.⁴⁶⁰ A spokesman for Chief Executive Abdullah said movement on election reforms should intensify now that Nuristani has resigned.⁴⁶¹

Overhauling the electoral process was a central part of the power-sharing deal brokered by the United States between President Ghani and his former election rival, current Chief Executive Abdullah, after the troubled presidential elections. The September 2014 agreement that led to forming the national-unity government called for immediate establishment of a special commission for election reform. The intent was to implement reform before the 2015 parliamentary elections, and to distribute electronic identity cards to all Afghan citizens as quickly as possible.⁴⁶²

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BUDGET

Summary of On-Budget Agreements

To improve governance and align development efforts with Afghan priorities, international donors at the 2010 Kabul Conference committed to increase to 50% the proportion of civilian development aid delivered **on-budget** through the Afghan government.⁴⁶³ Donors, including the United States, reiterated this pledge at the July 2012 Tokyo Conference and again at both the December 2014 London Conference and the September 2015 SOM.⁴⁶⁴

The Afghan government and donors are currently discussing priority reform areas in preparation for the ministerial-level development conference scheduled to be held in Brussels in October, at which new

On-budget assistance: encompasses donor funds that are aligned with Afghan government plans, included in Afghan government budget documents, and approved by the parliament and managed by the Afghan treasury system. On-budget assistance is primarily delivered either through direct bilateral agreements between the donor and Afghan government entities, or through multidonor trust funds.

Off-budget assistance: encompasses donor funds that are excluded from the Afghan national budget and not managed through Afghan government systems.

Source: SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, 7/30/2014, p. 130; Ministry of Finance, "Aid Management Policy for Transition and Beyond," 12/10/2012, p. 8; State, response to SIGAR vetting, 1/14/2016.

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development assistance pledges for 2017–2020 will be made. These discussions include possible linkages between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) summit to be held in Warsaw in July and the Brussels conference, with a focus on the fiscal impact of security sector spending and the maximization of its contribution to development outcomes. As part of this preparation, on April 4, international donors and the Afghan government met for a special session of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB). The head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) called on the Afghan government to achieve immediate and tangible results in the anticorruption fight, while the European Union special representative said it is necessary for the Afghan government to implement reforms and improve governance to ensure continued exceptional levels of foreign assistance.⁴⁶⁵

As shown in Table 3.17, USAID expects to spend \$937 million on active direct bilateral-assistance programs. It also expects to contribute \$1.9 billion to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), on top of \$1.37 billion disbursed under the previous grant agreement between USAID and the World Bank. USAID has disbursed \$113 million to the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF).⁴⁶⁶

TABLE 3.17

USAID ON-BUDGET PROGRAMS							
Project/Trust Fund Title	Afghan Government On-Budget Partner	Special Bank Account?	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost (\$)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 3/31/2016 (\$)	
Bilateral Government to Government Projects							
Power Transmission Expansion and Connectivity Project (PTEC)	Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS)	Yes	1/1/2013	12/31/2018	\$725,000,000	\$84,260,062	
Sheberghan Gas Development Project (SGDP)	Ministry of Mines and Petroleum	Yes	5/15/2012	8/31/2016	90,000,000	21,895,875	
Kajaki Unit 2 Project (Installation of Turbine Generator Unit 2 at Kajaki Dam Hydropower Plant)	DABS	Yes	4/22/2013	5/31/2016	80,000,000	38,916,173	
Afghanistan Workforce Development Project (AWDP)	MOE	Yes	9/18/2013	4/3/2016	11,500,000	1,321,456	
Basic Education, Learning, and Training (BELT)-Textbook Printing and Distribution	MOE	Yes	11/16/2011	12/31/2016	26,996,813	24,970,742	
E-Government Resource Center (EGRC)	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MOCIT)	Yes	8/28/2013	6/1/2016	3,900,000	405,000	
Multi-Donor Trust Funds							
Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) (current award)*	Multiple	No	3/31/2012	3/31/2017	1,900,000,000	1,209,255,530	
Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF)	Multiple	No	3/7/2013	3/6/2018	113,670,184	113,000,000	

Note: * USAID had a previous award to the ARTF that concluded in March 2012 and totaled \$1,371,991,195 in disbursements. Cumulative disbursements from the two ARTF awards are currently \$2,581,246,725.

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 4/7/2016.

The U.S. government announced in March 2015 that it intends to seek funding to support the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), including the army and police, at the level of 352,000 personnel through at least 2017.⁴⁶⁷ The Department of Defense (DOD) was appropriated \$3.7 billion to support the ANDSF for fiscal year (FY) 2016.⁴⁶⁸

Previously, at the 2012 Chicago Conference, the United States and its allies reaffirmed their commitments to financially support the Afghan security forces, noting that the pace and size of a gradual, managed force reduction from the surge peak (330,000 army and police personnel at the time of the conference, expanded to 352,000 personnel later in 2012) to a sustainable level would be conditions-based and decided by the Afghan government in consultation with the international community. The preliminary model envisioned Afghan security forces of 228,500 personnel with an estimated budget of \$4.1 billion, to be reviewed regularly against the changing security environment. According to DOD, the peak surge force structure of 352,000 personnel has been sustained since 2012 due to the security situation.⁴⁶⁹ At the September 2014 Wales Summit, NATO allies and partners renewed their commitment to contribute significantly to the financial sustainment of the ANDSF through the end of 2017 and to financially sustain the ANDSF over the next 10 years. The international community has pledged an additional amount of almost €1 billion, or approximately \$1.29 billion, annually to sustain the ANDSF for 2015 through the end of 2017.⁴⁷⁰ At a December meeting in Brussels, Belgium, NATO foreign ministers agreed to begin steps to secure international funding for the ANDSF through the end of 2020.⁴⁷¹

For 2016, DOD expects to contribute \$110 million for police salaries to the Ministry of Interior (MOI) through the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA).⁴⁷²

DOD also expects to contribute approximately \$1.13 billion this year in direct contributions to the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and approximately \$412 million in direct contributions to the MOI.⁴⁷³

Civilian On-Budget Assistance

USAID provides on-budget civilian assistance through (1) bilateral agreements with seven Afghan government entities and (2) contributions to two multidonor trust funds, the ARTF and the AITF.⁴⁷⁴ According to USAID, all bilateral-assistance funds are deposited in separate bank accounts established by the Ministry of Finance for each program.⁴⁷⁵

The ARTF, administered by the World Bank, provides funds to both the Afghan government's operating and development budgets in support of Afghan government operations, policy reforms, and national-priority programs.⁴⁷⁶ The AITF, a multidonor trust fund administered by the Asian Development Bank, coordinates donor assistance for infrastructure

SIGAR AUDIT

Last quarter, SIGAR initiated a follow-up audit of the ARTF. In July 2011, SIGAR found that the World Bank and the Afghan government had established mechanisms to monitor and account for ARTF contributions, but that several limitations and challenges should be addressed. This audit will assess the extent to which the World Bank and the Afghan government (1) monitor and account for U.S. contributions to the ARTF; (2) evaluate whether ARTF-funded projects have achieved their stated goals and objectives; and (3) utilize and enforce any conditionality on ARTF funding.

projects in Afghanistan.⁴⁷⁷ According to USAID, the majority of on-budget funding has been and will continue to be directed through the multidonor trust funds, particularly the ARTF.⁴⁷⁸

On-Budget Assistance to the ANDSF

A large portion of on-budget U.S. assistance is for the Afghan security forces. DOD provides on-budget assistance to the Afghan government through (1) direct contributions from the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) to the MOD and the MOI, and (2) ASFF contributions to the multi-donor LOTFA.⁴⁷⁹ Administered by the UNDP, LOTFA primarily funds Afghan National Police (ANP) salaries and incentives.⁴⁸⁰ Direct-contribution funding is provided to the Ministry of Finance, which allots it incrementally to the MOD and MOI, as required.⁴⁸¹

In February 2011, the Under Secretary of Defense Comptroller authorized the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) to provide direct contributions to the Afghanistan government from ASFF to develop ministerial capacity and capability in the areas of budget development and execution, acquisition planning, and procurement. CSTC-A administers all contributions of ASFF resources to the MOD and MOI. CSTC-A monitors and formally audits the execution of those funds to assess ministerial capability, ensure proper controls and compliance with documented accounting procedures, and compliance with provisions of the annual commitment letters.⁴⁸²

Thus far in the current Afghan fiscal year, CSTC-A has provided \$233.1 million to the MOD and \$109.5 million to the MOI. Of the \$109.5 million for the MOI, \$80.9 million were direct contributions and \$28.7 million was provided via LOTFA.⁴⁸³

Ghani's effort to reduce procurement-related corruption has slowed procurement and created what CSTC-A has labeled the [Afghan fiscal year] "1394 Procurement Crisis." According to CSTC-A, the procurement crisis resulted in many MOD contracts not being fully executed by the end of the previous fiscal year. This delay meant that a large number of contracts need to carry over into the new fiscal year. Additionally, there were over 150 MOD contracts that were approved but not awarded by the end of the previous fiscal year. This means that a large amount of CSTC-A's 1395 funds will be used to cover the 1394 contracts. Despite the slowdown in procurements, however, CSTC-A reports that the impact was minimized to ensure that critical supplies and services (such as fuel and food) were prioritized. In some cases, sole-source contracts that complied with Afghan laws and procedures were used.⁴⁸⁴

The MOI procurement directorate, however, has not yet fully adopted President Ghani's procurement reforms and maintains a "business as usual" mentality. According to CSTC-A, MOI staff lack sufficient knowledge of procurement laws. Additionally, MOI personnel are timid about

signing procurement-related documents for fear of being removed and/or reprimanded.⁴⁸⁵

NATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Capacity-Building Programs

USAID capacity-building programs seek to improve Afghan ministries' ability to prepare, manage, and account for on-budget assistance. These programs also provide general assistance to support broader human and institutional capacity-building of Afghan government entities.⁴⁸⁶ USAID also seeks to increase civil-society capacity through the Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP). As shown in Table 3.18, active programs include the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) Organizational Restructuring and Empowerment (MORE) project, a \$14 million project that, among other things, assists the ministry to improve its financial management, as required for future on-budget assistance.⁴⁸⁷ MORE has provided 76 scholarships for MOWA staff to attend 25 Afghan universities. As of March, six MOWA staff have graduated from undergraduate programs and 24 are scheduled to graduate by the end of 2016. MORE is also sponsoring English-language and computer training for MOWA staff who did not benefit from scholarships.⁴⁸⁸

TABLE 3.18

USAID CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL					
Project Title	Afghan Government Partner	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost (\$)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 3/31/2016 (\$)
Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP)	N/A	12/4/2013	12/3/2018	\$70,000,000	\$29,791,294
Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan (ALBA)	Parliament	3/28/2013	3/27/2018	24,990,827	14,344,993
Ministry of Women's Affairs Organizational Restructuring and Empowerment (MORE)	Ministry of Women's Affairs	12/20/2012	12/19/2015	14,182,944	8,759,900

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 4/7/2016 and 4/10/2016.

USAID has also provided \$5 million for the \$150 million ARTF-managed Capacity Building for Results (CBR) program. CBR aims to improve the capacity and performance of Afghan government ministries through the provision of skilled civil servants to implement ministries' reform programs. CBR provides Afghan government ministries with the opportunity to recruit high capacity staff into critical posts at salaries closer to the market rates. The aim is to increase on-budget service delivery and reduce reliance upon the so-called "second civil service" wherein Afghan consultants, instead of civil servants, performed government functions.⁴⁸⁹

According to the World Bank, CBR has made limited progress over the past three years. Last year, the Afghan government mandated that individual

ministries are now responsible for hiring senior civil servants, a move the World Bank says should help improve CBR implementation. The World Bank reports that 682 out of a planned 1,500 CBR-supported Afghan government positions—reduced from the original target of 2,400—have been advertised and are in different stages of screening and recruitment. USAID does not expect to see Afghan government capacity improvements until CBR civil-servant positions are filled and the new civil servants begin to exercise their responsibilities.⁴⁹⁰ Additionally, the World Bank now questions whether CBR will be able to ultimately improve service delivery as this CBR objective may not be measurable, attributable to the program, or achievable within the remaining implementation period. According to the SMAF, at least 800 civil-service positions are to be filled through CBR by December 2016.⁴⁹¹

National Assembly

The Afghan parliament was on winter recess, January 20 to March 6, for much of the quarter.⁴⁹²

USAID funds the \$25 million Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan project (ALBA) to help Afghanistan's parliament operate as an independent and effective legislative, representative, and oversight body.⁴⁹³ In January, ALBA supported an outreach trip to Helmand Province by the upper house's internal-security and defense commission. The parliamentary delegation met with local government and security officials, provincial council members, and community elders. The commission heard of problems including insufficient coordination among Afghan security forces, insufficient equipment and munitions, and insufficient numbers of military personnel. In February, ALBA facilitated a parliamentary



Members of the upper house of parliament visit an industrial park in Herat Province. (USAID photo)

study tour to Bangladesh by the lower house's women's affairs commission and an oversight trip to Herat Province by the upper house's public-welfare committee.⁴⁹⁴

Civil Society

The Afghan Civic Engagement Program's goal is to promote civil-society and media engagement that enables Afghan citizens to influence policy, monitor government accountability, and serve as advocates for political reform. ACEP aims to achieve this goal through five program areas: (1) regular civil-society organization (CSO) engagement with the Afghan government, (2) increased CSO and media-thematic expertise in democracy and governance, (3) expanded civic engagement, (4) improved access to independent news and public affairs information, and (5) increased CSO organizational capacity.⁴⁹⁵

This quarter, ACEP initiated the 2016 Emerging Civil Society Leaders (ECSL) program for 34 participants, including 15 women. The ECSL program will focus on civic activism, public speaking, research, advocacy and leadership, and includes an international study tour to further support the development of young Afghans and their links with civil society. ACEP also launched an ECSL alumni network to connect participants from the 2013 to 2016 ECSL classes.⁴⁹⁶

ACEP hosted its annual Afghan Media Conference in March. This year's theme was women in the media. The conference was designed to promote networking, information sharing, and learning, and featured speeches by media representatives from Kabul and the provinces, panel discussions, thematic presentations, information sessions, and group work.⁴⁹⁷

SUBNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

Rural Stabilization Programs

USAID has conducted several stabilization programs aimed at helping the Afghan government extend its reach into unstable areas and build local governance capacity. Last quarter, the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) ended operations.⁴⁹⁸ CCI—which ran from March 2012 to December 2015—implemented 1,321 activities totaling approximately \$41 million. USAID does not plan a follow-up program.⁴⁹⁹

Community Cohesion Initiative

USAID's Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) program supported creating conditions for stability and development in conflict-prone and other priority areas of Afghanistan by (1) increasing cohesion within and between communities, (2) supporting peaceful and legitimate governance processes and outcomes, and (3) countering violent extremism.⁵⁰⁰

SIGAR AUDIT

SIGAR has an ongoing audit of the MISTI project. This audit plans to (1) assess the extent to which the MISTI contractor provided third-party monitoring services in accordance with the terms of the contract; (2) assess the extent to which USAID considered MISTI program results in planning and implementing stabilization programs; and (3) identify challenges in MISTI, if any, with USAID using third-party monitoring to evaluate stabilization reconstruction programs, and the extent to which USAID has addressed those challenges.

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As of December 2015, CCI closed and all staff were demobilized. CCI implemented 1,321 activities, disbursing \$41 million for these activities. According to USAID, there is no planned follow-up program.⁵⁰¹

In February, USAID released the CCI final evaluation. The evaluation relied on 33 focus-group discussions and 263 interviews of local stakeholders, USAID officials, and CCI staff and grantees.⁵⁰² The evaluation concluded that CCI programming made important contributions to the political and security transitions in Afghanistan. In particular, the evaluation credited CCI's mobilization of 40 international election-audit observers during the 2014 presidential election with "creating time and space for the two sides in the election dispute to reach a power-sharing agreement and avert state collapse by eventually establishing a new unity government." The evaluation highlighted CCI's strategic communications efforts in support of peaceful elections that led to high enthusiasm and participation in the elections and effectively overwhelmed antidemocratic voices (until the situation descended into crisis due to allegations of fraud).⁵⁰³

According to the evaluation, the power-sharing arrangement that resulted is unconstitutional, and the government that emerged after a long period of negotiation is politically weak and internally divided. The evaluation concluded that the political weakness of the Afghan government means community-driven programming—such as that implemented by CCI—is unlikely to create the situation in which Afghan government legitimacy is consolidated and the insurgency is marginalized. In comments to SIGAR, USAID clarified that the conclusional language represented the views of the third-party evaluator and were outside the scope of the CCI evaluation. USAID subsequently asked the evaluator to remove this conclusion in a revised version of the evaluation.⁵⁰⁴

According to the evaluation, CCI's goal to strengthen community reliance was poorly understood by CCI local staff, whereas the goal to increase cohesion was better understood. "Resilience" has no easy translation into Dari or Pashto, and the English usage of this term had multiple variants that complicated its explanation. CCI documents used the term resilience variously to describe influential individuals, abilities to cope with shocks arising from violence and economic exigencies and/or natural phenomena, links with the Afghan government, and resistance to the insurgency. The evaluation found that local stakeholders understood resilience mainly in terms of their ability to meet basic needs and cope with external shocks that were unrelated to the insurgency.⁵⁰⁵

In contrast to "resilience," "cohesion" was a better term for communicating the intent of the program because it is easily translated into Afghanistan's local languages and was well understood by local stakeholders and CCI staff. The cohesion terminology was better suited to convey the objectives of the program, and changes to the objectives, to

local staff and stakeholders. Interviewees variously described cohesion in terms of coordination, cooperation, communication, unity, and mutual understanding between different communities and people from different areas, between members of the same community, between communities and the government, between youth and elders, between women, and also between local communities, the government, and former and current sympathizers or members of armed opposition groups, such as the Taliban. Cohesion, rather than resilience, was understood by CCI local staff and community stakeholders as the key factor that empowered communities to resist the insurgency by presenting a united front in the face of Taliban opposition to the project activities in their communities.⁵⁰⁶

Despite greater clarity surrounding the cohesion objective, the evaluation found that the extent to which CCI contributed to cohesion between the Afghan government and local communities was limited by local perceptions of Afghan government official corruption.⁵⁰⁷

In certain insurgent-controlled or -contested areas, elders in CCI-supported communities were reported to have sought permission and/or security guarantees from the Taliban, including the Peshawar Shura leadership, to allow CCI projects to proceed. According to one respondent, Taliban leadership would allow the projects so long as they were not funded by the Afghan government. Despite these findings, the evaluation concludes that CCI programming in such areas was effective at improving security, linking communities to the Afghan government, and preventing the Taliban from controlling a district in Khowst Province.⁵⁰⁸ In another insurgent-influenced district in Helmand Province, the Taliban allowed some projects to proceed but blocked others. Local stakeholders and the CCI independent monitoring unit reported that projects that did not receive Taliban permission were not implemented; however, the evaluation found that the USAID CCI database reported the projects closed and all grants funds disbursed. When the evaluators spoke with the former CCI local project manager, the manager responded that “to do anything there, you had to tell the Taliban.” In comments to SIGAR, USAID noted that community negotiations with the Taliban were not part of the approved CCI process.⁵⁰⁹

Most respondents reported that links between the Afghan government and their community had increased as a result of CCI programming. The evaluation argued that the most lasting effect of CCI was a change in mentality that increased cohesion between people and willingness to work together to achieve common ends. The other major change in mentality surrounded people’s understanding of what to expect from the government and how to communicate their needs and expectations to the government. The evaluation noted, however, that a common frustration from stakeholders and CCI local staff was the short duration of the program and lack of a follow-on activity.⁵¹⁰

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Jobs for Peace

In November 2015, President Ashraf Ghani announced the first portion of the Jobs for Peace program, a 24-to-30-month jobs-focused stimulus and stabilization program that the Afghan government initially estimates will cost approximately \$1.18 billion, though some components of the program still require budget estimates. The program is meant to provide short-term, labor-intensive employment in rural and urban areas.⁵¹¹ It aims to create short-term employment, but will also focus on political aspects of unemployment by targeting areas and populations that are especially susceptible to destabilization and insurgent recruitment.⁵¹²

In December, the United States announced plans to contribute \$50 million to support the Afghan government’s job-creation efforts.⁵¹³ U.S. assistance for the Jobs for Peace program consisted of a \$35 million on-budget contribution to the National Solidarity Program and a \$15 million off-budget contribution for an apprenticeship program for educated women in urban areas.⁵¹⁴ USAID reports it does not know how the Afghan government intends to assess the Jobs for Peace program, particularly political aspects related to destabilization and insurgent recruitment.⁵¹⁵

Provincial and Municipal Programs

USAID has two subnational programs focused on provincial centers and municipalities: the Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA) and Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience (SHAHAR) programs. Table 3.19 summarizes total program costs and disbursements to date.

TABLE 3.19

USAID SUBNATIONAL (PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL) PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost (\$)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 3/31/2016 (\$)
Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience (SHAHAR)	11/30/2014	11/29/2017	\$73,499,999	\$15,062,189
Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA)	2/1/2015	1/31/2020	62,364,687	5,798,105

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 4/7/2016.

Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations

The ISLA program is meant to enable the Afghan government to improve provincial governance in the areas of fiscal and development planning, representation of citizens, and enhanced delivery of public services. ISLA aims to strengthen subnational systems of planning, operations, communication, representation, and citizen engagement. This should lead to services that more closely respond to all citizens’ needs in health, education, security, justice, and urban services.⁵¹⁶

During the quarter, ISLA deployed 46 personnel to provincial governors’ offices to begin work. ISLA is also preparing strategic communications training for 34 provincial spokespersons.⁵¹⁷

Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience

The objective of the SHAHAR program is to create well-governed, fiscally sustainable Afghan municipalities capable of meeting the needs of a growing urban population. Targeted support to municipal governments, as well as to the General Directorate of Municipal Affairs and municipal advisory boards, aims to improve municipal financial management, urban service delivery, and citizen consultation.⁵¹⁸

In February, the 20 SHAHAR-supported municipalities registered a total of 165 new businesses and issued 2,243 new business licenses. These efforts resulted in approximately \$68,427 in new municipal revenue for the month and a total of \$117,092 in new revenue for the year. SHAHAR-supported municipalities also registered 263 properties in February and collected \$299,866 in property taxes, bringing the year-to-date total to \$564,279.⁵¹⁹

SHAHAR should soon begin construction of the initial batch of Competitive Urban Service Delivery Mechanism projects for 16 eligible municipalities. SHAHAR-supported municipalities submitted 194 project ideas that were later reduced to 66 proposals that met SHAHAR eligibility criteria. During the first year, SHAHAR and the municipalities will follow a cost-sharing scheme in which SHAHAR funds 75% of the project cost (up to \$120,000) and the municipality funds the remainder. Examples of the first batch of projects include a bus and taxi station, renovation of a stadium, construction of a cattle market, and construction of a women's park. SHAHAR plans to contribute \$1.4 million to 17 of the initial projects while the municipalities plan to contribute \$483,425.⁵²⁰

RECONCILIATION AND REINTEGRATION

According to the United Nations Secretary-General, the peace process gained regional momentum though the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) consisting of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, and China, but the commitment of the Taliban to a possible peace process remained uncertain.⁵²¹ In March, Nicholas Haysom—Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan—reported he had met with the Taliban Political Commission and been told that the Taliban was not yet ready to engage in direct peace talks with the Afghan government.⁵²²

In early December 2015, Pakistan hosted a Heart of Asia summit attended by President Ghani, senior Chinese officials, and a U.S. delegation led by the Deputy Secretary of State. The summit was a forum for regional players to discuss their commitments to an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process.⁵²³

Following the Heart of Asia summit, the QCG met four times between January 11 and February 23. According to State, the meetings were important steps in forging a regional consensus in support of Afghan-led peace

talks. QCG members pledged to advance the peace process and seek direct talks with the Taliban. The Ghani administration has demonstrated a willingness to work with the Pakistani government on coordinated reconciliation objectives, which marks a departure from previous attempts at reconciliation. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan have made repeated, public calls for the Taliban to participate in direct talks with the Afghan government.⁵²⁴

In spite of the QCG process, the acting head of the National Directorate of Security accused the Pakistan government of supporting the Taliban. During a briefing to Afghan parliamentarians, he said the Pakistani military intelligence service is “completely supporting” the Taliban.⁵²⁵

Concurrent with the QCG meetings, the nongovernmental organization Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs organized a “track II” dialogue in Doha, Qatar, on January 23 and 24. This unofficial meeting included Afghan politicians attending in their personal capacities and representatives of the Taliban. Participants declared peace an urgent need and rejected Daesh (a transliteration of the Arabic phrase often rendered as “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” or ISIS) as a foreign phenomenon. Additionally, participants felt that the Taliban should have an office and address and be able to travel freely to facilitate peace talks. There was disagreement over the current Afghan constitution; some participants preferred amending it, while others argued it should be substantially rewritten. President Ghani has voiced his opposition to track II efforts that facilitate dialogue outside of the official process.⁵²⁶

In March, the Hezb-e-Islami insurgent group met with the High Peace Council after publicly announcing they were ready to join political reconciliation talks with the Afghan government. Meanwhile, the mainstream Taliban, under leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansour, issued a public statement in early March rejecting the QCG’s call for talks in Pakistan. QCG members, however, are continuing efforts to persuade the Taliban to the negotiating table.⁵²⁷

According to James Clapper, Director of National Intelligence, and General Joseph Votel, the new Commander of U.S. Central Command, the Taliban remains relatively united despite the announcement of Mullah Omar’s death and some dissatisfaction over the rise of Mullah Mansour as the new Taliban leader. Votel further stated that the degree of fracturing which has led to the emergence of intra-Taliban opposition groups is unlikely to impact near-term reconciliation efforts.⁵²⁸

In March, the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies released the results of a survey on perceptions toward the peace talks from 1,540 respondents in 15 provinces. The majority of respondents (76.8%) believe that the Taliban’s behaviors are not acceptable. Additionally, 28.4% of respondents believe that the main reason the Taliban fights the Afghan government is to further the interests of Pakistan and almost 13% believe the reason is

to further the interests of unspecified foreign countries. Another 25.9% believed the Taliban was fighting for power. Despite these views of the Taliban, respondents were mixed on whether the Taliban are a part of Afghan society and whether it is important to share power with them; 55% disagreed and 40.7% agreed.⁵²⁹

Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program

The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) is an Afghan-led program to reintegrate low-level insurgent fighters and their commanders into Afghan civil society.⁵³⁰ The APRP is the only institutional mechanism within the Afghan government with capacity to pursue both high-level reconciliation negotiations and provincial-level reintegration of insurgent fighters.⁵³¹

As of March 15, the APRP has facilitated a total of 11,074 reintegrees, 1,050 of whom were reportedly “commanders.” A total of 154 reintegrees were documented recidivists.⁵³² This quarter, the APRP processed 100 reintegrees in January, February, and March.⁵³³ The insurgency has an estimated strength of between 20,000 to 40,000 fighters.⁵³⁴

According to State, the APRP has faced several challenges including: (1) inadequate security assurances for reintegrees—184 of whom have been killed by insurgents—and inadequate protection for APRP staff and members, 40 of whom have been killed, including former HPC Chairman Burhanuddin Rabbani; (2) the lack of a cease-fire and/or peace agreement that has severely limited the numbers of insurgents willing to demobilize and reintegrate; (3) the long-term vacancies of APRP senior leadership positions that were only recently filled; (4) the low priority the Afghan government used to assign the APRP; (5) and the lack of regular long-term donor funding that has created operational challenges for the program.⁵³⁵

On February 23, President Ghani announced major changes to the High Peace Council including a new chairman, six new deputy chairmen, five new executive advisors, and a new secretariat.⁵³⁶ According to State, the appointment of Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani as the new chairman of the HPC, along with other HPC leadership positions, is an important step for organizing peace talks with the Taliban.⁵³⁷ Following Gailani’s appointment as chairman of the HPC, a number of donors provided additional funding for reintegration. The APRP has approximately \$6.4 million for operations, including \$1.9 million remaining from the U.S. government’s most recent \$5 million contribution.⁵³⁸

RULE OF LAW AND ANTICORRUPTION

Project Summary

The United States has assisted the formal and informal justice sectors through several mechanisms. These include the State Department’s Justice

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TABLE 3.20

RULE OF LAW AND ANTICORRUPTION PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost (\$)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 3/31/2016 (\$)
Justice System Support Program II (JSSP II)	6/16/2010	2/28/2017	\$247,142,053	\$230,294,160
Advancing Effective Reforms for Civic Accountability (AERCA)*	7/13/2009	6/30/2017	51,302,682	38,465,138
Corrections System Support Program (CSSP III)	1/1/2015	2/29/2016	21,107,063	18,673,225
CSSP IV	3/1/2016	2/28/2017	10,000,000	-
Justice Training Transition Program (JTTP)	1/2/2013	3/31/2016	47,759,796	47,759,796
Delegated Cooperation Agreement (DCAR) with the Department for International Development (DFID) for Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC)	5/19/2015	8/31/2020	3,000,000	500,000

Note: *On November 1, 2015, USAID extended the AERCA award beyond the planned December 31, 2015, end date, added \$12.6 million in estimated costs, and incorporated additional anticorruption activities into the program description. The information in the table refers to the entire award, not simply the new anticorruption portion covered by the modification.

Source: State, INL, response to SIGAR data calls, 4/1/2016; USAID, response to SIGAR data calls, 12/28/2015 and 4/7/2016.

Sector Support Program (JSSP), and Justice Training Transition Program (JTTP). These and other rule-of-law and anticorruption programs are shown in Table 3.20.

In the area of anticorruption, USAID has a cooperation arrangement with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development to fund the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC). USAID support funds the MEC's monitoring, analysis, and reporting activities, including its vulnerability-to-corruption assessments.⁵³⁹ Last year, USAID facilitated an agreement between the MEC and the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) for the MEC to conduct a ministry-wide anticorruption assessment. This assessment will inform the MOPH's own anticorruption strategy and should be completed next quarter. USAID hopes this approach will be a model for other Afghan government ministries.⁵⁴⁰

USAID aims to improve public services by reducing corruption opportunities in Afghan government administrative and business processes. In November 2015, USAID modified the existing Advancing Effective Reforms for Civic Accountability (AERCA) project—previously the Afghanistan Electoral Reform and Civic Advocacy (AERCA) project—to address immediately identifiable corrupt practices. AERCA will lay the groundwork for a new, five-year project known as AMANAT (Afghanistan's Measure for Accountability and Transparency). Through a combination of its support to the MEC and AERCA project, USAID aims to (1) strengthen local Afghan capacity to identify corruption vulnerabilities and develop sensible recommendations in response, (2) provide technical assistance to target government agencies to plan for and operationalize those recommendations, and (3) strengthen civil society's ability to fulfill its watchdog function.⁵⁴¹

AERCA aims to increase the demand from civil-society organizations to spur the Afghan government's efforts to reduce administrative corruption while building a foundation of lawfulness that can over time chip away at what the World Bank has called "grand corruption." AERCA is in the work planning phase and is currently consulting with the Afghan government to plan specific interventions. Additionally, AERCA is working with civil society to prepare grants to track and monitor Afghan government reform promises.⁵⁴²

The State Department's JSSP objectives include continuing to develop a case-management system (CMS) to track cases throughout Afghanistan's justice system and to build the capacity and administrative skills of ministry officials.⁵⁴³

The CMS is used to monitor criminal cases on an individual or aggregated basis from the time of arrest until the end of confinement. All ministries in the formal criminal-justice sector have access to the CMS. The CMS is used to demonstrate inefficiencies in the criminal-justice system by identifying when cases are not being processed in a statutory manner. Ministries routinely utilize the CMS to analyze and understand the function of the formal justice sector. For example, the CMS can help identify an individual prosecutor's case load and conviction rates, information that is useful for determining promotion eligibility. In addition to using the CMS to conduct criminal background checks on internal and external employment applicants, the MOI generates a weekly report of arrests in Kabul by the type of crime.⁵⁴⁴

The State Department's JTTP provided regional training to justice-sector officials on a wide range of criminal-justice topics.⁵⁴⁵ JTTP aimed to increase the confidence of Afghan citizens in their justice sector and to achieve two outcomes: (1) increase the capacity and competencies of Afghan justice-sector professionals in delivering justice according to Afghan law, and (2) ensure that Afghan justice institutions are capable of managing the sustainable implementation of training programs.⁵⁴⁶ According to State, JTTP ended on March 31 with a follow-on project starting April 1.⁵⁴⁷

The Supreme Court and the Formal Justice Sector

In March, President Ghani ordered the newly appointed attorney general to reopen the Farkhunda Malikzada case after the Supreme Court upheld a lower court's decision to reduce the sentences of 13 men convicted in her murder. Farkhunda was beaten to death by a mob in March 2015 after being falsely accused of having burned a Koran. Human Rights Watch said the handling of the case thus far represented a failure by the Afghan criminal-justice system.⁵⁴⁸

According to USAID, the Supreme Court has taken initial steps to address judicial performance and corruption through administrative measures. In early 2016, the court reassigned just under 100 high-ranking judges

and administrative heads—including all 34 provincial chief judges—to advisory and lower ranking positions.⁵⁴⁹

According to the SMAF, short-term deliverables related to the justice sector include the launch of a justice-sector reform plan and a draft of a revised penal code, both to be completed by December 2016. This plan has been drafted but not yet finalized.⁵⁵⁰

Afghan Correctional System

According to State, the inmate population of Afghanistan's prisons managed by the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Centers (GDPDC) has increased by an average of 6.51% annually over the past five years. As of January 31, the GDPDC incarcerated 26,867 males and 751 females, while the Ministry of Justice's Juvenile Rehabilitation Directorate (JRD) incarcerated 915 male juveniles and 112 female juveniles. These incarceration totals do not include detainees held by any other Afghan governmental organization, as INL does not have access to their data.⁵⁵¹

Overcrowding is a persistent, substantial, and widespread problem within GDPDC facilities for adult males, although state-funded prison construction has added some new prison beds and presidential-amnesty decrees have reduced the prison population significantly. As of January 31, the total male provincial-prison population was at 200% of capacity, as defined by the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) minimum standard 3.4 square meters per inmate. The total female provincial-prison population was at 55% of the ICRC-recommended capacity. The JRD's juvenile-rehabilitation centers' population was at 75% of ICRC-recommended capacity.⁵⁵²

This quarter, State through the Corrections System Support Program (CSSP) completed four small-scale renovation projects that will increase the safety, security, and humane treatment of those prisons that received limited renovation and reconstruction support. These included: (1) the replacement of an exterior wall that was on the verge of collapse at the Nangarhar provincial prison; the construction of two visitor canopies to provide shelter for prison visitors and additional canopies and fencing in the detainee recreation area to provide shade and protection from inclement weather at the Kabul Detention Center; (3) renovations to enhance security, improve visitation, and expand industries programs at the Kabul Female Prison and Detention Center; and (4) the rebuilding of three rooms for housing, refurbishment of the recreational area, installation of a new septic system, and reconstruction of a security wall at the Juvenile Rehabilitation Center in Samangan.⁵⁵³

Anticorruption

This quarter, at the March ministerial meeting of the G7+ association of countries in Kabul, President Ghani spoke on corruption saying, "Our

grasp of corruption remains weak, trapped in the realm of definitions and denunciations but still lacking the framework that will let us define its contours and domains of action.” Ghani acknowledged that state corruption is the result of elite capture in which government institutions become the means to perpetuate corrupt behavior rather than the tool for development. However, he questioned the value of common responses, saying the “solution to fragmented and captured states is never going to be more consultants, anticorruption plans, or good governance projects.” Instead, he said improvements are driven by reformist leadership that (1) have control over their budgets; (2) use the state to build price-setting, resource-allocating markets; and (3) develop a partnership between the citizenry and the state.⁵⁵⁴

According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Afghan government has performed poorly on prosecuting major criminal-corruption cases. The Afghan government appears to have no political will to pursue corruption cases, with DOJ reporting that the predominant attitude of many of their Afghan government counterparts in the justice sector being one of defeat and anxiety.⁵⁵⁵

This quarter, Transparency International and Integrity Watch Afghanistan (TI/IWA) issued an integrity system assessment to establish a picture of Afghanistan’s institutional landscape with regard to integrity, accountability, and transparency. The report focused on the legal system, public sector and service delivery, and the integrity of elected leaders. The report found that the corrupt enjoy impunity thanks to a dysfunctional law-enforcement and judicial system. The authors say that Afghanistan’s anticorruption agency, the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOO), has also proven to be ineffective in the fight against corruption.⁵⁵⁶

The TI/IWA report also says the judiciary is seen as being manipulated by both the government and parliament with judicial decisions frequently biased in their favor. The overall result is a dysfunctional justice system in which corruption largely goes unpunished. This situation leads citizens to seek justice elsewhere, further undermining the legitimacy of the already fragile state. With regard to service delivery, widespread corruption and political interference in the public sector, combined with the highly centralized system of administration, has undermined the ability of the public sector to deliver basic services to citizens. Finally, the authors write that the lack of integrity of Afghan elected leaders erodes public confidence and reinforces the sense of impunity that prevails in Afghanistan.⁵⁵⁷

While the report found many areas of failure, the authors argue that progress is possible when there is strong political commitment for reform. In particular, the Afghan government has made progress in the area of public procurement. The new government established the National Procurement Authority (NPA) in October 2014 to oversee procurement activities in the public sector with a stated policy of zero tolerance for corruption. According to the Afghan government, the NPA has already saved more

than \$70 million of taxpayers' money and over 50 companies have been blacklisted. Nevertheless, the authors say concerns remain over the limited transparency in procurement processes and lack of cooperation with civil-society organizations. Another area of progress includes the introduction of an access-to-information law in December 2014, though a number of important weaknesses in the law still need to be addressed. According to the report, although the law obligates all Afghan government institutions to provide information upon request, civil society organizations report that implementation remains weak. Finally, the report cited the reopening of the Kabul Bank case as a positive sign; however, the fact that the former Kabul Bank chief executive was invited to participate in a large-scale Afghan government investment project was a worrying development.⁵⁵⁸

Afghan Attorney General's Office

On April 9, the lower house of parliament approved the nomination of Mohammad Farid Hamidi for attorney general. Hamidi, a graduate of Kabul University Faculty of Law and Political Science and Harvard University, served as a commissioner of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission for over 10 years before assuming the duties of deputy director in 2013. He served on the Electoral Complaints Commission in 2005 and is the co-founder of the Free and Fair Elections Foundation in Afghanistan. Hamidi has also served on various advisory boards to the government focusing on human rights and civil society.⁵⁵⁹ The appointment of a new attorney general by the end of 2015 was a SMAF short-term deliverable.⁵⁶⁰

Major Crimes Task Force

The Major Crimes Task Force (MCTF) recently lost its complement of National Directorate of Security (NDS) personnel—roughly half of the MCTF staff—and is now housed within the MOI's anti-crime police. Along with the reorganization, the MCTF deputy director replaced the previous director whom DOD had assessed as ineffective and potentially compromised. Following the leadership change, the MCTF immediately began to make arrests, some of which had been stifled under previous leadership. In January and February, the MCTF arrested an Attorney General's Office (AGO) prosecutor for extortion, an Afghan police colonel for extortion, two police colonels for weapons trafficking, two Ministry of Transportation & Civil Aviation officials for corruption at the entry points into Kabul, and numerous persons involved in illegal mining of gemstones that resulted in the seizure of almost 100 tons of stones. Politicians, including several members of parliament, have sought to pressure MCTF to release defendants or otherwise sabotage cases of those recently arrested.⁵⁶¹

Despite recent progress, DOD reports that the MCTF's effectiveness against high-level corruption will continue to be limited by external factors, such as AGO corruption and political pressure. Recently, the AGO released

several MCTF-arrested defendants in mid-level corruption cases including a police colonel and a Ministry of Transportation & Civil Aviation official. The latter bragged while in custody that he would soon be released.⁵⁶²

Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee

A presidential decree established the MEC in March 2010. Its mandate is to develop anticorruption recommendations and benchmarks, to monitor efforts to fight corruption, and to report on these efforts. It comprises three Afghan members and three international members and is led by an Afghan executive director. The MEC has approximately 20 staff, but USAID notes that the MEC may increase its staff since President Ghani has increasingly sought analytical products from it.⁵⁶³

The MEC is currently working on a three-year institutional strategic plan.⁵⁶⁴

High Office of Oversight and Anticorruption

The High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption (HOO) was established in July 2008 by presidential decree to oversee and coordinate implementation of the Afghan government's anticorruption strategy. The HOO collects corruption complaints through a hotline and complaint boxes installed in several ministries and other public-service delivery institutions, and conducts the initial investigation of corruption allegations that it receives before referring allegations to the Attorney General's Office (AGO) for further investigation and possible prosecution. According to USAID, these investigations seldom lead to prosecution. Mutual recrimination between AGO and HOO is common.⁵⁶⁵

In February, the HOO signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Hajj & Islamic Affairs to spread anticorruption messages through mosques. The head of the HOO said that raising public awareness against corruption is an important part of its strategy.⁵⁶⁶

Also in February, the HOO director accused the Afghan government of not making sufficient efforts to overcome corruption, making political compromises that hinder corruption cases, and lacking a single anticorruption policy.⁵⁶⁷ In March, the HOO director claimed that the delays in prosecuting the six senior officials from the Ministry of Urban Development fired for corruption last year by President Ghani was the result of ethnic and political meddling in the work of judicial institutions.⁵⁶⁸

Security Services

According to DOD, the Afghan government's anticorruption efforts lack tangible action beyond the much-publicized establishment of the National Procurement Commission and the reopening of the Kabul Bank case. MOD and MOI are still developing their respective anticorruption plans.⁵⁶⁹

Ministry of Defense

Three active forums are currently addressing corruption issues within the MOD: the Counter Corruption Working Group, the Senior High Level Committee on Anti-Corruption, and the Senior Leader Counter Corruption Panel.

According to DOD, despite anticorruption rhetoric at all levels, the MOD has pursued few corruption cases without Coalition prompting. The Afghan government rarely prosecutes senior MOD officials involved in corruption and often allows those accused to retire instead. DOD has observed administrative and technical capacity improvements across MOD anticorruption bodies; however, insufficient Afghan government political will and support has reduced the effectiveness of these anticorruption bodies.⁵⁷⁰

Ministry of Interior

The executive-level anticorruption Transparency, Accountability, and Law Enforcement (TALE) Committee, chaired by the MOI Inspector General (MOI IG), has met three times since its establishment. According to DOD, this committee enjoyed the full support of the MOI IG and is an effective forum for cross-coordination and development of anticorruption policy recommendations. In addition to the executive-level TALE committee, MOI has recently established province- and multi-province zonal-level TALE committees.⁵⁷¹

HUMAN RIGHTS

This quarter, State released its annual country report on human-rights practices in Afghanistan. According to State, the most significant human-rights problems in 2015 were widespread violence, including indiscriminate attacks on civilians by armed insurgent groups; armed insurgent groups' killings of persons affiliated with the government; torture and abuse of detainees by government forces; widespread disregard for the rule of law and little accountability for those who committed human-rights abuses; and targeted violence of and endemic societal discrimination against women and girls. Other human-rights problems included extrajudicial killings by security forces; ineffective government investigations of abuse and torture by local security forces; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, including of women accused of so-called moral crimes; prolonged pretrial detention; judicial corruption and ineffectiveness; violations of privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, religion, and movement; pervasive governmental corruption; underage and forced marriages; abuse of children, including sexual abuse; trafficking in persons; discrimination against persons with disabilities; discrimination and abuses against ethnic minorities; societal discrimination based on race, religion, gender,

sexual orientation, and HIV/AIDS status; and abuse of worker rights, including forced labor and child labor.⁵⁷²

State also found widespread disregard for the rule of law and official impunity for those who committed human-rights abuses. The Afghan government did not consistently or effectively prosecute abuses by officials, including security forces.⁵⁷³

Refugees and Internal Displacement

According to the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation, in 2015 approximately 180,000 Afghans left the country to seek asylum in Europe. In January, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) interviewed 191 Afghans arriving in Greece: 71% cited conflict and violence as their reason for leaving Afghanistan; 55% said they had been internally displaced before leaving; 19% said they were born in Iran and had not lived in Afghanistan.⁵⁷⁴

In an interview with BBC News, President Ghani said that he has “no sympathy” for Afghan refugees who have chosen to leave Afghanistan “under the slightest pressure.” President Ghani said that those leaving include members of Afghanistan’s educated elite who, by leaving, have broken the social contract with the state.⁵⁷⁵

The Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Sayed Hussain Alemi Balkhi, speaking before the upper house of parliament, reported that more than 250,000 Afghans sought asylum in Europe in 2015 but that approximately 40% would likely not be accepted. Balkhi took credit for preventing the expulsion of at least 100,000 Afghan refugees and said he had reached an agreement with European countries to prevent the forced deportation of asylum seekers.⁵⁷⁶

The Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said 300,000 Afghans were forcibly returned from Iran and Pakistan in 2015. In January, UNHCR recorded only 325 Afghans voluntarily repatriated to Afghanistan. According to State, harsh winter weather, combined with the news of insecurity and lack of livelihood opportunities in Afghanistan, have slowed refugee repatriation.⁵⁷⁷

State has previously reported that many returned refugees felt pressured to return to Afghanistan due to reported arrests, detention, extortion, and harassment by local Pakistani authorities following the December 2014 Peshawar school attacks and the Pakistani security response.⁵⁷⁸ Despite State and UNHCR concerns of increased harassment and uncertainty for the 1.5 million Afghan refugees holding temporarily extended proof of registration cards in Pakistan, there has been no statistical increase in detentions or recorded deportations of Afghans holding these temporary cards.⁵⁷⁹

As of November 2015, UNHCR recorded a total of 1,116,546 conflict-affected internally displaced persons. Most of the displaced left insecure rural areas and small towns seeking relative safety and government services

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in larger towns and cities of the same province.⁵⁸⁰ Between January 1 and March 31, the United Nations recorded 81,445 individuals fled their homes due to conflict. The provinces that have produced the highest number of displaced people are Baghlan (with over 25,000 displaced), followed by Uruzgan (over 12,000), Helmand (over 9,000), Kunduz (over 6,000), and Kandahar (nearly 5,000).⁵⁸¹

Gender

The largest gender-focused initiative in USAID's history is the Promote partnership that aims to assist over 75,000 Afghan women in achieving leadership roles over five years in all parts of society, including business, academia, politics, and public policy.⁵⁸² As shown in Table 3.21, USAID has committed \$216 million to Promote and hopes to raise an additional \$200 million from other international donors.⁵⁸³ However, no other donors have committed to contribute funds to Promote.⁵⁸⁴

TABLE 3.21

USAID GENDER PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost (\$)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 3/31/2016 (\$)
Afghan Women's Leadership in the Economy	7/1/2015	6/30/2020	\$71,571,543	\$4,123,909
Women's Leadership Development	9/23/2014	9/22/2019	41,959,377	9,268,803
Promote: Women in Government	4/21/2015	4/20/2020	37,997,644	3,435,533
Promote: Women's Rights Groups and Coalitions	9/2/2015	9/1/2020	29,534,401	1,258,515
Promote: Economic Empowerment of Women in Afghanistan	5/8/2015	5/7/2018	1,500,000	300,000
Promote: Scholarships	3/4/2015	3/3/2020	1,247,522	1,247,522

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 4/10/2016.

This quarter, Promote's Women in Government (WIG) program began a pilot program for 25 interns at the Afghanistan Civil Service Institute. WIG has also selected 200 interns for the next tranche of trainings.⁵⁸⁵ According to a memorandum of understanding negotiated between the WIG and the Afghanistan Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), the Afghan government will recognize WIG internship experience as equivalent to one year full-time job experience in the Afghan civil service. Additionally, IARCSC will instruct other Afghan government ministries and agencies to consider WIG internship graduates as priority recruits for vacant civil service positions.⁵⁸⁶

In February, USAID modified the Promote Women in the Economy (WIE) program by adding an extra activity to the WIE program, the placement of 7,500 interns or apprentices under President Ghani's Afghan Jobs Now initiative. Afghan Jobs Now's goal is to create paid apprenticeships for and enhance job skills of women, boost the Afghanistan economy by providing Afghan firms with temporary subsidized labor, and engender a sense of

social responsibility across public- and private-sectors around the issues of youth and women's unemployment. This modification will increase WIE's current target of 2,000 internships to include an additional 7,500 apprenticeships before January 2018, bringing the total number of planned WIE internships and apprenticeships to 9,500.⁵⁸⁷ USAID reports that WIE has placed 20 women in full-time jobs and 97 interns with employers in health-care, information and communications technology, media, education and other private sector industries.⁵⁸⁸

The SMAF includes several short-term deliverables related to women's rights, including the requirement for a national action plan for women peace-and-security implementation and financing plan approved by the end of 2015, with implementation starting by mid-2016; an anti-harassment regulation for improving working environments for public-sector women, to be issued by mid-2016; and dedicated violence-against-women prosecution units established in 26 provinces by December 2016.⁵⁸⁹



First Lady of Afghanistan Rula Ghani speaks during a USAID-sponsored graduation ceremony in Kabul. (USAID photo)