GOVERNANCE CONTENTS

Key Issues and Events	147
U.S. Reconstruction Funding for Governance	149
Electoral Reform Challenges	149
Quarterly Highlight: U.S. and Afghan Governments Launch the Kabul Compact	150
Reconciliation and Reintegration	152
U.S. Assistance to the Afghan Government Budget	158
National Governance	164
Subnational Governance	167
Rule of Law and Anticorruption	168
Human Rights	175
Refugees and Internal Displacement	176
Gender	178

GOVERNANCE

KEY ISSUES AND EVENTS

On August 21, President Donald Trump announced the Administration's strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia. President Trump said a "fundamental pillar of our new strategy is the integration of all instruments of American power—diplomatic, economic, and military—toward a successful outcome" in Afghanistan. He acknowledged that "nobody knows if or when" a political settlement with the Taliban might occur. Additionally, President Trump described a new approach to Pakistan, saying "we can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond." President Trump also announced that the U.S. will further develop its strategic partnership with India. While President Trump said that "conditions on the ground—not arbitrary timetables—will guide our strategy from now on," he also called on the Afghan government to produce "real reforms, real progress, and real results," saying "our commitment is not unlimited, and our support is not a blank check."[334]

During testimony on October 3, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., indicated that the DOD has intelligence showing that the Taliban faces a greater challenge in motivating their fighters following the U.S. move from a time-based to conditions-based strategy for Afghanistan. General Dunford acknowledged, however, that he does not know whether it is sufficient to prompt Taliban peace negotiations.[335]

Several emerging opposition movements confronted the Afghan government this quarter. According to the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, a variety of Afghan political figures were increasingly vocal in their opposition to the national unity government and have been more active in mobilizing supporters following the announcement of 2018 parliamentary elections. These coalitions coalesced around criticism of the government and the deteriorating security and economic situation, as well as perceptions of a growing concentration of power within the presidential palace. The UN Secretary-General noted a marked rift in the relationship between President Ashraf Ghani and key members of the Jamiat-e Islami party. Jamiat-e Islami—one of the oldest and largest political parties in Afghanistan—backed one of its key members, current Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, when he was the runner-up in the 2014 presidential election.[336]

In late June, First Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum, Balkh Province Governor Atta Noor, and Second Deputy Chief Executive Mohammad Mohaqiq announced the creation of a new political coalition (the "Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan") and accused President Ghani of monopolizing power. According to the UN Secretary-General, this coalition is notable for the cooperation between the Jamiat and Junbish political parties that have had a long and occasionally violent rivalry. The coalition has mobilized its northern support base of Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara communities while attempting to forge links with other opposition figures. In August, Balkh Governor Noor—who is also the chief executive of the Jamiat-e Islami party—led a rally in Mazar-e Sharif, which was attended by some 3,000 people. Other Jamiat-e Islami figures, such as Chief Executive Abdullah and Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani, did not attend the rally. The UN Secretary-General observed the creation of other opposition coalitions this quarter, including one featuring a number of cabinet ministers from the former Karzai administration.[337]

On August 14, there was a shoot-out in Mazar-e Sharif between forces loyal to Balkh Governor Noor and armed Hezb-e Islami affiliates, who supported Asif Momand (a member of the Balkh provincial council reportedly suspended for excessive absence). Following the shoot-out, Momand was transferred to the custody of the National Directorate of Security, where he remained until his release on August 17. A few days before the incident, Momand had held a press conference in which he accused Governor Noor of embezzling tens of millions of dollars. A spokesman for the Attorney General's Office (AGO) announced that President Ghani had ordered an investigation of Momand's arrest. Relations also remained tense between President Ghani and the Junbish-e Milli party, whose leader, First Vice President Dostum, remains under indictment for the alleged arbitrary detention and sexual assault of a political rival in November 2016.[338]

In mid-September, Chief Executive Abdullah traveled to Mazar-e Sharif for a martyr's celebration and met with Governor Noor for the first time in months since Noor claimed to have cut all ties with his fellow Jamiat-e Islami party member. Governor Noor met Chief Executive Abdullah at the airport in Balkh Province before the two held closed-door talks. Afterwards, Chief Executive Abdullah called the recently created Council for the Salvation of Afghanistan legal and suggested that the government and opposition hold talks. Governor Noor, meanwhile, claimed that a monopolization of political power is paving the way for "tyranny" in Afghanistan.[339] President Ghani has rejected accusations that he is monopolizing power.[340]

Despite high-level political challenges, the UN Secretary-General reports President Ghani appears to have consolidated some of his authority within the National Unity Government. President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah—a Jamiat-e Islami member and President Ghani's partner in the National Unity Government—reached a consensus on high-level

appointments, which had previously been a source of contention between the two leaders.[341]

On October 5, the Afghan government, international community, and representatives from Afghanistan's civil society and private sector met to discuss progress and achievements in Afghanistan's reform agenda, and to reaffirm their partnership and commitment to Afghanistan's long-term development. The Senior Officials Meeting was held one year after the October 2016 Brussels Conference on Afghanistan.[342]

Participants raise their hands during the October 5 Senior Officials Meeting. (UNAMA photo by Fardin Waezi)

U.S. RECONSTRUCTION FUNDING FOR GOVERNANCE

As of September 30, 2017, the United States had provided nearly $33 billion to support governance and economic development in Afghanistan. Most of this funding, nearly $19.9 billion, was appropriated to the Economic Support Fund (ESF) administered by the State Department (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

ELECTORAL REFORM CHALLENGES

Overhauling the electoral process was a central part of the power-sharing deal brokered by the United States between President Ghani and his election rival, now Chief Executive Abdullah, after the troubled 2014 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 next parliamentary elections—intended for 2015, but never held—and to distribute electronic identity cards to all Afghan citizens as quickly as possible.[343] The UN Secretary-General said this quarter that holding credible parliamentary and presidential elections as scheduled—in 2018 and 2019 respectively—is important for Afghan political cohesion.[344] As the deputy special representative of the UN Secretary-General said this quarter:

> If elections do not take place [as scheduled], you go back to square one and you're asking, how do you actually do the division of political power? […] It's to drive that longer term agenda that the international community is so absolutely focused on the electoral agenda.[345]

This quarter, State reported that the Independent Elections Commission (IEC) has committed to registering voters using a polling-center-based registration process. This process seeks to reduce ballot stuffing by limiting the number of blank ballots delivered to each polling station. According to State, they are encouraging the IEC use a paper-based voter registration process, rather than a full biometric voter-registration (BVR) system.[346]

Also this quarter, the IEC conducted a polling-center assessment that involved procuring electronic tablets, developing an application to describe

U.S. AND AFGHAN GOVERNMENTS LAUNCH THE KABUL COMPACT

This quarter, the U.S. and Afghan governments announced the launch of the "Kabul Compact," an Afghan-led initiative designed to demonstrate the government's commitment to reforms. The Compact specifically delineates Afghanistan's existing commitments under the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA), said State. According to State, the development of the compact and its ultimate implementation by the Afghan government were important considerations in the development of the U.S. government's new South Asia strategy.[347]

The Kabul Compact process consists of four U.S.- and Afghan-chaired working groups covering governance, economic development, peace and reconciliation, and security issues. Each working group has a matrix of benchmarks to chart reform progress for the next three years.[348] The four Kabul Compact matrices contain 82 governance benchmarks, 64 economic benchmarks, 17 peace and reconciliation benchmarks, and 257 security-related milestones across 37 action areas.[349] According to State, these benchmarks are not ranked by importance, but many benchmarks have different timeframes. A number of benchmarks are sequential.[350]

The Kabul Compact was officially launched in August. However, State reports that President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah consider these matrices to be "living documents" subject to amendment by the working groups. These bilateral working groups will meet on a regular basis (every few weeks, according to State) to review progress and make adjustments as necessary. The Executive Committee—including Embassy Kabul and USFOR-A—will meet on a quarterly basis to receive reports from the working groups.[351]

According to State, the U.S. government will better be able to hold the Afghans accountable and better calibrate U.S. diplomatic and assistance efforts by tracking Afghan government progress in implementing the Kabul Compact reforms. Additionally, State reports that a number of benchmarks are tied to global standards of good governance put forward by the World Bank and other leading institutions.[352]

President Ashraf Ghani signing the decree launching the Kabul Compact in August. (Khaama Press photo)

Unlike the August 2015 New Development Partnership (NDP), the Kabul Compact is not a signed or legally binding bilateral agreement. According to State, the Kabul Compact reflects a series of commitments to which the Afghans are holding themselves. Additionally, no foreign assistance monies are directly tied to the Kabul Compact, unlike the NDP which tied $20 million in USAID assistance to each of the 40 development results.[353]

The Kabul Compact shares some commonalities with previous multilateral agreements between the Afghan government and international community such as the July 2012 Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), the September 2015 Self-Reliance through Mutual Accountability Framework (SMAF), and the October 2016 "SMART" (Specific, Measurable,

Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound) SMAF agreements. According to State, while the Kabul Compact benchmarks are intended to align with other commitments—such as SMAF and NDP—the Kabul Compact comprises far more benchmarks than those other frameworks. The TMAF, SMAF, and SMART SMAF agreements articulated a number of Afghan government reform targets, but did not define financial consequences for failing to meet these goals. For example, when asked about the practical consequences of Afghan government noncompliance with the reform targets outlined in the TMAF and its successor the SMAF, USAID responded that Afghan government noncompliance could erode donor confidence and potentially impact donor contributions. No specific donor funds were identified, however.[354]

Some of the Kabul Compact benchmarks are similar to previous reform targets. According to State, this is, in many cases, by design as the Afghan government subsumed previously agreed-upon reform benchmarks into the Kabul Compact's four focus areas.[355] For example, one of the Kabul Compact governance benchmarks requires the Afghan government to "institute reforms to restore the credibility of the electoral system, reduce opportunities for fraud and manipulation, and provide transparency, openness and inclusiveness."[356] This appears similar to the 2012 TMAF requirement to "ensure that a robust electoral architecture is developed in a secure, participatory and transparent manner to enable successful and timely elections," the 2015 SMAF requirement that the Afghan government implement electoral reforms "to ensure that future elections in Afghanistan are fully inclusive, transparent and credible," and the 2016 SMART SMAF commitment to "ensure continued emphasis on democratic governance, leading to free, fair, transparent and participative elections."[357]

The need for elections reform was highlighted this quarter when the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Tadamichi Yamamoto, reported that "many Afghan politicians and citizens across the country told me repeatedly that the country could not endure another election like that of 2014."[358]

Similarly, the Kabul Compact calls for the Afghan government to pass and implement the subnational governance policy and provincial budgeting policy by May 2018. Similar goals existed in the TMAF (enact a legal framework to clarify roles and responsibilities of government agencies at the national, provincial, and district levels in line with the 2010 subnational governance policy) and the SMAF (cabinet approval of a subnational governance policy by March 2016 and cabinet approval of a provincial budgeting policy by the first half of 2016).[359]

and inventory the polling centers, and hiring and training temporary IEC workers. State reports that the IEC was able to access and assess 93% of the planned polling center locations, with the remaining centers deemed too dangerous to assess.[360] The IEC reported they are in discussions with local elders to convince armed opposition groups to allow IEC staff access to those centers.[361]

The IEC still appears to have plans to use BVR in future elections, but has not made much progress. The IEC requested the National Procurement Authority (NPA) issue a tender for BVR kits in August. The NPA issued a limited tender to 13 companies, but received only one bid. After a preliminary assessment in September, the IEC voted four to three to subject the bid to a technical review.[362] In October, the IEC announced that the bidder was not capable of handling the contract. As a result, the contract will now be released as a public tender.[363]

On September 20, the IEC hosted a National Elections Forum, attended by IEC and Elections Complaint Commission (ECC) leadership, political party leaders, ethnic and tribal council representatives, civil society organizations, and members of the diplomatic community. Event participants raised concerns on election preparations, asked questions of the IEC, and made suggestions for better coordination.[364]

Also in September, the MOD ordered all of its personnel "to cut off all [of their] political linkages." This order was in response to a presidential decree and referenced Article 153 of the Afghanistan Constitution which prohibits judges, attorneys, officers of the armed forces, police, and national-security officials from becoming members of political parties during their term of office.[365]

In October, a group representing several Afghan political parties and civil society organizations called for the Afghan government to remove the current heads and commissioners of the electoral commissions, claiming that these members were too aligned with the Afghan government. The protesting group said they may boycott the next election if their demands are not met.[366]

The U.S. government is supporting election reforms through a grant of up to $30 million to a legacy election-support project implemented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This project was originally meant to support the planned 2015 parliamentary elections.[367] However, the parliamentary elections were delayed until 2018.[368]

RECONCILIATION AND REINTEGRATION

The U.S. and Afghan governments agree that the best way to ensure lasting peace and security in Afghanistan is reconciliation and a political settlement with the Taliban.[369] However, according to the UN Secretary-General, there was no discernible progress on peace talks between the Afghan

government and the Taliban this quarter. State also reports that there have been no new developments in the Taliban's position on reconciliation.[370]

In late August, Associated Press reporter Kathy Gannon reported reviewing documents offered by a "senior Afghan security official" that allegedly covered conversations between Afghan government officials and Taliban leadership. According to the Associated Press, these documents described Taliban demands for peace including gender segregation in schools (while accepting female education at all levels), prohibitions on females serving in the supreme court or as president (while accepting female employment in all fields), the creation of special courts to review illegal land seizures since 2001, and the holding of elections after an interim government is established. The Taliban reportedly said that all sides should keep the areas they currently control until after the elections. Following the publication of the article, the Afghan national security adviser and the National Directorate of Security denied having contacts with the Taliban, who denied talking to Afghan government representatives.[371]

In an August interview with the *Washington Post*, General John W. Nicholson Jr., U.S. commander in Afghanistan, described reconciliation being, in large part, a function of expanding Afghan government control to at least 80% of the country. He said this would facilitate reconciliation as insurgents become increasingly marginalized and "either die or reconcile."[372] According to the bilateral U.S. and Afghanistan compact, the Afghan government should engage in outreach and peace talks with Afghan armed opposition groups by January 2018.[373] In an October interview with NPR, General Nicholson acknowledged that there are on-going discussions regarding the future of the Taliban's office in Qatar, which opened in 2013 to facilitate peace talks. According to General Nicholson, the Taliban office is not being used for the peace process. Instead, "it's being used for fundraising for the Taliban inside the Gulf, and again, they've not been advancing the peace process."[374]

In an October statement posted on their website, the Taliban said that "all channels of finding a peaceful solution for Afghan dilemma will be blocked" if the Taliban's office in Qatar is closed.[375]

In October, the deputy head of the High Peace Council (HPC) reported that the Afghan government is trying to determine whether the Taliban are willing to operate as a political party. If the Taliban are amenable to becoming a political party, the HPC will facilitate that.[376]

In September 2016, the Afghan government finalized a peace agreement with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) insurgent group.[377] When the peace deal with HIG was announced, some expressed hope that reconciling with Hekmatyar could facilitate a broader peace. President Ghani, for example, said on signing the agreement, "This day starts the subsiding of war in Afghanistan and the beginning of rebuilding it."[378]

According to State, however, the peace agreement with HIG thus far has had no definitive impact on the reconciliation calculations of other resistance groups, including the Taliban. Nevertheless, State considers the peace agreement with HIG as an important precedent that will influence other armed groups.[379]

The UN Secretary-General has previously reported that certain Afghan political actors are concerned by the prospect of Hezb-e Islami becoming Afghanistan's largest political party should the two factions of Hezb-e Islami unite. In July, Hekmatyar announced the unification of these two factions. He also stated that the new party would continue to support the political system.[380]

In late August, Afghan media quoted Balkh Governor Noor lashing out at the presidential palace (warning the central government not to conspire against him) and at Hekmatyar, labeling him a "puppet." Noor also predicted that his party, Jamiat-e Islami, will win the next elections.[381] Noor's comments were reportedly in response to Hekmatyar's critique of the Coalition for the Salvation of Afghanistan political coalition.[382]

In September, the U.S. Special Chargé d'Affaires Ambassador Hugo Llorens met with Hekmatyar. Ambassador Llorens reiterated the U.S. government's support for the success and continuing implementation of the peace agreement between the Afghan government and HIG. Additionally, Ambassador Llorens and Hekmatyar agreed that credible, inclusive, and transparent elections are crucial for peace in Afghanistan.[383]

Regional Challenges to Peace

This quarter, the UN Secretary-General said that the international consensus on Afghanistan is fraying. He noted with particular concern that despite numerous public pronouncements on the need for regional cooperation, regional actors are engaged in Afghanistan on behalf of their particular interests rather than the common interest in stability.[384]

During meetings at the UN this quarter, the Afghan and Pakistani governments offered their positions on the nature and primary causes of the conflict in Afghanistan. In his only direct reference to Pakistan during his comments to the UN General Assembly in September, President Ghani called on Pakistan to engage with Afghanistan on a comprehensive state-to-state dialogue on peace, security, and regional cooperation. President Ghani also said it was wrong to think of the war in Afghanistan as a civil war. Instead, he said "this war is not within our soil, it is over our soil."[385] Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi used his appearance at the UN General Assembly to say that Pakistan is not going to fight the Afghan war on Pakistan's soil, saying Pakistan refuses to be "anyone's scapegoat."[386] A few days later, during a UN Security Council meeting, Afghan Foreign Minister Rabbani made a thinly veiled reference to Pakistan, saying the war in Afghanistan is "the product of a long-standing policy by a neighboring

State to keep Afghanistan unstable." The Pakistani representative rejected Rabbani's "insinuations" and claimed the "fundamental sources of insecurity in Afghanistan lie inside the country, not outside."[387]

In an unusual interview with the *Financial Times*, Pakistani Prime Minister Abbasi reportedly acknowledged that those involved in a May attack in Kabul that killed 90 people possibly came from Pakistan, saying that Pakistan does not have full control of its border areas. After the interview was published, a Pakistani government press release rejected the media report as "simply baseless."[388] A few days later, Prime Minister Abbasi told the *New York Times* that Pakistan had regained control of the areas bordering Afghanistan, stating "there are no sanctuaries anymore […] none at all."[389]

In July, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to conduct coordinated, complementary security operations along their border. Later that month, however, an Afghan MOD spokesman criticized Pakistan for not providing information on their operations. The Pakistan government rejected the critique, saying information on a recent military operation had been shared with Afghan and Coalition forces.[390]

On October 1, President Ghani met with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, in Kabul. According to an Afghan government statement, Ghani viewed the meeting as representing a new season in the Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. The two discussed regional security, anti-terror efforts, business and transit relationships, and mid- to long-term bilateral relationships. Pakistan reportedly agreed to cooperate with Afghanistan in counterterrorism efforts, recognizing the joint threat posed by terrorism, and added that they support the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process. Both sides said they should forget the past and work toward a better future.[391] According to a Pakistani statement, General Bajwa also offered to provide training and capacity-building support to the Afghan security forces.[392] A spokesman for Chief Executive Abdullah announced that Afghanistan and Pakistan will restart bilateral talks.[393]

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif claimed that while Pakistan has some influence over the Taliban, this influence has decreased following the 2016 U.S. drone strike that killed Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour. He said that the Pakistan government faces a trust deficit with both the U.S. and Taliban.[394]

On October 12, President Trump said that Pakistan's cooperation in securing the release of a U.S.-Canadian couple and their children who had been held by the Taliban-linked Haqqani network signaled a new respect for the United States by Islamabad. The Pakistani government "worked very hard on this and I believe they are starting to respect the United States again," President Trump said.[395]

The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) announced plans for a quadrilateral meeting involving representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan,

China, and the United States. They met on October 16 in Oman. The participants planned to discuss counterterrorism and Pakistan's progress in fulfilling its promises.[396] Shortly thereafter, the Russian and Afghan governments co-hosted a contact group meeting on Afghanistan for members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Afghan's proposal to receive full SCO membership was unanimously supported by the SCO members, which include Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan. Afghanistan also requested that SCO member-states use their leverage and influence over militant groups to bring these groups to peace talks.[397]

Meanwhile, the Afghan and India governments issued a joint statement this quarter, saying "we remain united in overcoming the challenges posed by cross border terrorism and safe havens and sanctuaries to both our countries."[398] In an interview with Indian media, Chief Executive Abdullah said that Afghanistan will continue to discuss Indian support for Afghanistan's security needs.[399]

Also this quarter, the leaders of the emerging market BRICS countries—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—condemned the Taliban and other BRICS-designated terrorist groups operating in the region, stating that "those responsible for committing, organizing, or supporting terrorist acts must be held accountable."[400] In reacting to the BRICS statement, Pakistani Defense Minister Khurram Dastagir Khan claimed "no terrorist organization has any complete safe havens" in Pakistan.[401] The Afghan Ambassador to the United States, Hamdullah Mohib, reacted to the BRICS statement, saying "it is a clear indication those [Afghan] diplomatic efforts are working" as countries "come to the realization that Pakistan has been harboring terrorists, providing sanctuaries, providing [training] facilities and helping them raise funds."[402]

When asked about Russian and Iranian support for the Taliban this quarter, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis responded that it would be "extremely unwise to think that [Russia and Iran] can somehow support terrorists in another country and not have it come back to haunt them." However, Secretary Mattis declined to offer any details on Russian or Iranian support for the Taliban.[403]

The Successor to the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program

On March 31, 2016, the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) closed following a decision by APRP donors, the Afghan government, and UNDP.[404] The APRP was an Afghan-led program to reintegrate low-level insurgent fighters and their commanders into Afghan civil society.[405] The APRP was the only institutional mechanism within the Afghan government with the capacity to pursue both high-level reconciliation negotiations and provincial-level reintegration of insurgent fighters.[406]

The Afghan government launched a successor to the APRP in the form of the Peace and Reconciliation in Afghanistan (PRA) strategy. According to State, the PRA strategy was formally announced in June and unanimously approved by the HPC on July 17. The PRA strategy is expected to shift from the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration focus of the APRP to negotiating political settlements with armed opposition groups, forging national and international consensus on a peace process, and promoting and institutionalizing a culture of peace, according to State.[407]

This quarter, State obligated $3.9 million to support the PRA strategy through a UNDP-managed pilot that launched in September. Up to $2.5 million of these funds will be used to support a three-and-a-half-month UNDP-managed PRA pilot that will last through the end of 2017. The remaining funds are intended for future PRA strategy implementation, pending a post-pilot accountability review and the development of a UNDP project.[408] While State had intended to disburse the $3.9 million in early 2017, this did not occur since the ANPR strategy was not yet finalized and approved by the Afghan government.[409]

According to State, the UNDP-managed pilot provides support for the Afghan government's High Peace Council (HPC) to initiate activities that will begin to build consensus for peace throughout the country and develop Afghanistan's institutional capacity to facilitate reconciliation. Through the UNDP-managed funding, the HPC, its 34 Provincial Peace Committees (PPC), and a supporting technical Secretariat will be staffed and begin outreach activities to assess social attitudes toward reconciliation, document challenges, mobilize support for reconciliation, and develop the capacity to facilitate this process.[410]

State hopes that the HPC and PPCs will have generated sufficient baseline information by the end of 2017 to determine whether continued activities and funding are justified. If so, State—in coordination with donor countries and supporting actors including UNDP and UNAMA—intends to use the 2017 data to develop a detailed, longer-term PRA implementation plan. The UNDP-managed pilot will focus only on two of the five PRA strategic objectives, namely PRA objective 2 (develop a national consensus and public mobilization to garner support for Afghan-led solutions) and objective 5 (institutionalize and reinforce Afghan capacities for peace). The remaining PRA strategic objectives—(1) reconciling armed oppositions to a peaceful political and social life through inter-Afghan dialogue and negotiations, (3) enhancing community security and stabilization through community-based peace and stability initiatives, and (4) implementing peace agreements with armed opposition groups after negotiated settlements—are not covered by the UNDP-managed pilot.[411]

This quarter, the HPC added six women as members, bringing the total number of women on the HPC to 13 out of 52 members (25%). Also this quarter, the Joint Executive Commission, responsible for the

implementation of the peace agreement between the Afghan government and Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin, has been integrated into the HPC.[412]

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BUDGET

Summary of Assistance Agreements

State and USAID are currently reviewing its assistance portfolio to ensure alignment with President Trump's South Asia Strategy. According to USAID, future levels of U.S. government on-budget assistance will be determined based on what is most appropriate to advance the U.S. government strategy in Afghanistan.

Source: USAID, OAPA, response to SIGAR vetting, 10/20/2017.

According to recent World Bank estimates, the Afghan government is projected to increase its revenue collection to 12% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2020. Even with this level of revenue, however, the Afghan government would only be able to cover 40% of budgeted expenditures. The Afghan government will require the equivalent of 18% of GDP in non-security, on-budget assistance to fund basic social services and development programs.[413] This quarter, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan called for Afghanistan to "demonstrate to its donors that it has taken not just steps, but *strides* towards self-sufficiency."[414]

At the Brussels Conference in October 2016, the United States and other international participants confirmed their intention to provide $15.2 billion between 2017 and 2020 in support of Afghanistan's development priorities.[415] Although the United States did not commit to a specific amount, then-Secretary of State John Kerry promised to work with Congress to provide civilian assistance at or near the 2016 levels through 2020.[416]

On-budget assistance: encompasses donor funds that are aligned with Afghan government plans, included in Afghan government budget documents, and included in the budget 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.

In several conferences since the 2010 Kabul Conference, the United States and other international donors have supported an increase to 50% in the proportion of civilian development aid delivered on-budget through the Afghan government to improve governance, cut costs, and align development efforts with Afghan priorities.[417] As of October, USAID said future levels of on-budget assistance will be reviewed.[418] In October, however, the Afghan government reported that on-budget assistance provided by all donors in 2016 represents more than 65% of total development aid, noting a significant increase over the past two years.[419]

As shown in Table 3.8, USAID expects to spend $726 million on active, direct bilateral-assistance programs. It also expects to contribute $2.7 billion to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) through 2020 that includes the $800 million New Development Partnership, in addition to $1.37 billion disbursed under the previous grant agreement between USAID and the World Bank. USAID has disbursed $153 million to the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF).[420]

For fiscal year (FY) 2017, Congress appropriated $4.26 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) to support the requirements of the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF). The White House 2018 budget request includes $4.94 billion for ASFF. According to DOD, approximately $1.01 billion of the FY 2017 ASFF will be provided

TABLE 3.8

USAID ON-BUDGET PROGRAMS

Project/Trust Fund Title	Afghan Government On-Budget Partner	Special Bank Account?	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost ($)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 9/30/2017 ($)
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	$154,270,363
Strategic Communication Support to the Palace (SCSP)	Ministry of Finance (MOF)	Unknown	7/18/2016	7/31/2017	627,833	427,877
Multi-Donor Trust Funds						
Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) (current award)*	Multiple	No	3/31/2012	7/31/2019	2,700,000,000	1,755,686,333
Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF)	Multiple	No	3/7/2013	3/6/2018	153,670,184	153,670,184

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 is currently $3,127,677,528.

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 10/15/2017.

directly to the Afghan government ($796.5 million for the Ministry of Defense [MOD] and $212.5 million for the MOI) to fund salaries and incentive pay, equipment being procured on Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) approved Afghan contracts, and facilities maintenance. The other $3.25 billion of the FY 2017 ASFF will be executed by DOD. The remaining $1.46 billion of ANDSF costs will be funded by international donors ($152 million for Afghan National Police salaries, information technology, aviation training and maintenance, uniforms, and medical supplies) and the Afghan government ($544 million, primarily for food and subsistence).[421]

At the 2012 Chicago Conference, the United States and its allies affirmed commitments to support the Afghan security forces with an estimated annual budget of $4.1 billion, to be reviewed regularly against the changing security environment.[422] At the September 2014 Wales Summit, NATO allies and partners reaffirmed their commitment to financial sustainment of the ANDSF through the end of 2017. Non-U.S. donors 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.[423]

In July 2016, NATO allies and partners met in Warsaw and committed to extend the financial commitments made at the 2012 NATO Summit in Chicago. Some 30 nations renewed pledges to sustain the Afghan security forces through 2020 at or near the then-current levels. According to DOD, the average combined financial contribution of NATO member states and Coalition partners (excluding the United States) is approximately $900 million per year in 2018, 2019, and 2020.[424]

DOD has not yet finalized the agreements governing its Afghan FY 1396 (FY 1396 runs from December 22, 2016, to December 21, 2017) direct on-budget contributions to MOD or MOI.[425]

Civilian On-Budget Assistance

USAID provides on-budget civilian assistance through (1) bilateral agreements with Afghan government entities and (2) contributions to two multidonor trust funds, the ARTF and the AITF.[426] According to USAID, all bilateral-assistance funds are deposited in separate bank accounts established by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) for each program.[427]

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.[428] The AITF, a multidonor trust fund administered by the Asian Development Bank, coordinates donor assistance for infrastructure projects in Afghanistan.[429] 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.[430]

As of August, the United States remains the largest donor to the ARTF (31.1% of actual contributions) with the next largest donor being the United Kingdom (17.4% of actual contributions).[431] According to the World Bank, the ARTF is the largest single source of support for the Afghan government budget, cumulatively providing $9.1 billion as of September 2016.[432] The ARTF recurrent-cost window supports operating costs, such as Afghan government non-security salaries. The recurrent-cost window pays 16–20% of the Afghan government's non-security operating budget.[433] As of August, the ARTF recurrent-cost window has cumulatively provided the Afghan government $2.6 billion for wages, $600 million for operations and maintenance costs, $819 million in incentive program funds, and $553 million for ad hoc payments since 2002.[434]

The World Bank recently commissioned an external review of the ARTF, the fourth such review since the fund's inception in 2002. The review will consider the role of the ARTF in supporting the Afghan government goals expressed in the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF), national priority programs (NPPs), and SMAF indicators. Additionally, the review will assess and make recommendations on ways to address World Bank-identified challenges. According to the World Bank, these challenges include weak Afghan government discretion over all the ARTF funds due to donor preferencing, lower donor contributions to the ARTF, minimum programmatic and sectorial approaches to development, lower budget execution, poor performance within some of ARTF-financed projects, weak Afghan government ownership in governing the ARTF, and complex designs of projects for a fragile environment.[435]

SIGAR AUDIT

SIGAR has an ongoing 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 new audit is assessing 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.

For the previous external review of the ARTF in 2012, the same firm that is conducting the present external review concluded that the "overall structure and functioning of the ARTF is seen as very good" and that "the ARTF remains the mechanism of choice for on-budget funding, with low overhead/transaction costs, excellent transparency and high accountability, and provides a well-functioning arena for policy debate and consensus creation."[436]

In August, USAID OIG issued an audit that assessed USAID's practices related to (1) policy, criteria, and plans to guide the use of ARTF contributions; (2) data collection and reporting on ARTF's performance; and (3) oversight of ARTF-funded activities. The audit found that USAID lacked adequate guidance and plans for making ARTF contributions. USAID did not have policies and procedures for verifying that ad hoc payments were used for their intended purposes, increasing the risk of funds being disbursed without prudent safeguards. USAID used an outdated and less rigorous planning process than the current one to guide ARTF contributions. Also, USAID has not adequately measured or reported how ARTF assists in achieving development objectives, despite requirements for each mission to collect, maintain, and review performance results. In short, USAID OIG concluded, USAID has not defined, measured, or linked ARTF performance results to its development objectives, limiting the mission's ability to assess progress in meeting its objectives, identify and examine performance trends, and establish reasonable expectations for succeeding years.[437]

While USAID's agreement with the World Bank stipulates that any donor may review or evaluate activities financed by ARTF, the audit found that USAID has not formally evaluated ARTF activities (unlike other top ARTF donors). According to USAID OIG, USAID considered merely giving funds to ARTF as accomplishing a significant purpose of the award, while regulation made monitoring and performance reporting inapplicable after disbursement. USAID officials did not meet essential oversight responsibilities, such as monitoring the progress of investment window projects and maintaining adequate files.[438]

As reported in the July 2015 *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, USAID was already aware two years ago of monitoring challenges and the loss of control over pooled U.S. on-budget funds delivered via multidonor trust funds like the ARTF. USAID said a benefit of using multidonor trust funds is that this reduces the burden on USAID staff and transfers financial and programmatic risk to the public international organization (such as the World Bank in the case of ARTF).[439]

On-Budget Assistance to the ANDSF

More than 60% of total U.S. on-budget assistance goes toward Afghan security forces' requirements.[440] DOD provides on-budget assistance to the

Afghan government through (1) direct contributions from the ASFF to the Afghan government to fund MOD and MOI requirements, and (2) ASFF contributions to the multidonor Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA).[441] Administered by the UN Development Program (UNDP), LOTFA primarily funds Afghan National Police salaries and incentives.[442] Direct-contribution funding is provided to the MOF, which allots it incrementally to the MOD and MOI, as required.[443]

CSTC-A monitors and formally audits the execution of those funds to assess ministerial capability and ensure proper controls and compliance with documented accounting procedures and provisions of the annual commitment letters.[444]

For Afghan fiscal year 1396 (December 2016–December 2017), DOD plans to provide the equivalent of $801 million and $216 million directly to the Afghan government to support the MOD and MOI respectively.[445] As part of efforts to reduce corruption, DOD is currently reviewing the on-budget funds being provided to the Afghan government and considering alternatives. Such alternatives include relying on U.S. contracts to providing the resources required by the Afghan security forces. As an example, U.S.-managed contracts are now being used to provide fuel to the Afghan security forces.[446]

Despite the Afghan fiscal year's beginning in December 2016, CSTC-A's commitment letters for the current Afghan fiscal year have not yet been signed by all parties. Therefore, the conditions defined by CSTC-A for FY 1396 are not being enforced. CSTC-A continues to enforce the previous year's conditions, however.[447]

For the current Afghan fiscal year, as of August, CSTC-A has provided the Afghan government the equivalent of $395.3 million to support the MOD.[448] Additionally, as of August, CSTC-A has provided the equivalent of $88.6 million to support the MOI. Of these funds, $20.8 million was delivered via the UNDP-managed LOTFA, while $67.8 million was provided directly to the Afghan government.[449]

This quarter, an independent audit assessed 23 conditions deemed necessary by donors to transfer police payroll administration from UNDP to MOI. Of these conditions, three applied to the MOF and 12 to the MOI.[450] According to the audit, the MOF has successfully met their targets, including paying 90% of police and prison guard salaries through electronic funds transfers or mobile money (an increase of one percentage point from the baseline of 89% of salaries being paid in this manner).[451] While the MOI was found to be on track for all of the donor conditions assigned to it, CSTC-A reported that they did not see sufficient progress in the conditions designed to increase transparency. There two conditions required that the MOI conduct regular personnel and payroll data audits and take administrative, disciplinary, or legal action in response to payroll anomalies. According to CSTC-A, donors are disinclined to support the transition

of payroll responsibilities until the MOI shows improvements on these two conditions.[452]

According to CSTC-A, the MOD and MOI have extremely limited capability to effectively manage ASFF funding. Both ministries fail to understand the needs of soldiers and police officers. The MOD and MOI procurement processes are unnecessarily delayed, with multiple reviews often within the same ministry offices that create unnecessary delays. As of August, MOD and MOI take, on average, 169 days to obtain the necessary approvals for a procurement. Contracts average 220 days to award. With only four months left in Afghan fiscal year 1396, the MOD has approved 23% of its planned projects and executed 24% of its planned budget. The MOI has approved only 1% of its planned projects and executed 16% of its planned budget. In order to speed up procurement, CSTC-A is seeking to delegate MOD and MOI purchase authorities—such as facility and equipment repairs—to Corps-level commanders.[453]

CSTC-A reports that the involvement of the National Procurement Authority (NPA) and the National Procurement Commission (NPC) in MOD and MOI procurements has a negligible impact on procurement timelines. The NPC is responsible for approving approximately 93% of ASFF-funded Afghan government contracts for the MOD and MOI while requiring only about 14 days to complete the necessary reviews. According to CSTC-A, all MOD and MOI projects that are first reviewed by the NPA are subsequently approved by the NPC. However, only 20% of MOD and MOI projects that are executed without NPA procurement facilitation are returned for further work, resulting in project delays. CSTC-A concludes that NPA- and NPC-reviewed project awards benefit from being in compliance with Afghan law and policy for only a negligible impact on the time necessary for approval.[454]

DOD reports that they are resuming the procurement of fuel for the MOD and MOI. Previously, CSTC-A provided funds to the MOD and MOI to procure fuel using Afghan government contracts. DOD expects that all MOD and MOI fuel will be procured off-budget through U.S. contracts next year after the MOD and MOI conclude existing on-budget fuel contracts.[455]

This quarter, CSTC-A discovered that the MOF immediately transferred all CSTC-A-provided on-budget funds to the Afghan government's Treasury Single Account (TSA). A TSA is a bank account or a set of linked accounts through which the government transacts all its receipts and payments. According to CSTC-A, this MOF practice reduced traceability and auditability of CSTC-A-provided funds. In previous years, DOD was informed that this practice enabled the Afghan government to temporarily cover its overall funding needs using ASFF. In response, CSTC-A has reached an agreement that forces the MOF to keep all CSTC-A-provided on-budget funds in separate bank accounts until MOD and MOI expenditures reconciled with CSTC-A.[456] This is not the first time CSTC-A has requested that the MOF use such bank accounts, however. As reported in the Governance

section of the October 2014 *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, CSTC-A reported three years ago that they had requested that MOF establish special bank accounts for CSTC-A-provided funds after an audit found that MOF would immediately transfer CSTC-A-provided MOI funds into the TSA.[457]

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.[458] As shown in Table 3.9, active programs include USAID's Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP) that seeks to increase civil-society capacity.

TABLE 3.9

USAID CAPACITY-BUILDING PROGRAMS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Project Title	Afghan Government Partner	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost ($)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 9/30/2017 ($)
Afghan Civic Engagement Program (ACEP)	N/A	12/4/2013	12/3/2018	$70,000,000	$52,309,826
Assistance to Legislative Bodies of Afghanistan (ALBA)	Parliament	3/28/2013	3/27/2018	24,990,827	22,223,350
Rasana (Media)	N/A	3/29/2017	3/28/2020	9,000,000	613,100

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 10/15/2017.

Last quarter, USAID launched the $9 million Rasana program. This program aims to support and train female journalists, drive substantive policy discourse about salient development issues in Afghanistan, and advocate for protection of Afghan journalists. Rasana will also build local capacity by providing training, material support, and advocacy to expand media opportunities for women, work with local women's groups to advance women's causes in the media, and support gender-sensitive content production and programming.[459] This quarter, Rasana identified 17 radio stations managed or owned by women who will employ female producers. These radio stations will produce radio content to broadcast with Rasana support. The Rasana program also worked with three Afghan media outlets to identify investigative-report topics that these outlets will develop and disseminate with Rasana support.[460]

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 by providing 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 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, perform government functions.[461]

At the October 2016 Brussels Conference, the Afghan government committed to recruit 1,200 government personnel by December 2017 and to fill the remaining positions by 2018. Previously, the Afghan government had committed to recruit at least 800 of 2,400 planned CBR positions by December 2016.[462] In May, donors assessed the Afghan government's progress in meeting its original SMAF obligations to fill 800 CBR positions by December 2016. According to the European Union (EU), while the Afghan government reported that it had filled 819 positions via CBR, the World Bank reported that only 289 contracts had been signed. According to USAID, this SMAF deliverable has not been achieved, as more than 500 CBR-supported job candidates are reportedly still awaiting vetting by the Afghan government, particularly by the offices of the president and national security adviser.[463]

As of October, the Afghan government reported that 680 CBR posts have been contracted. Additionally, the government reported that 1,213 positions have completed the recruitment process. In June, however, the government reported that 83 CBR-hired individuals have resigned from their positions. The hiring process for 415 CBR-supported posts is in progress.[464]

National Assembly

For most of this quarter, July 23 until September 6, the upper and lower houses of parliament were in recess.[465]

In November 2016, the lower house of parliament passed no-confidence votes for seven of 16 ministers summoned to explain why their ministries executed less than 70% of their development budgets (projects and investments are funded from a ministry's development budget). From parliament's perspective, these votes of no-confidence mean that the ministers are dismissed.[466] President Ghani, meanwhile, ordered the ministers to continue working.[467] According to the UN Secretary-General, the dispute is related to the legislature asserting its prerogatives against the executive branch.[468]

This quarter, Chief Executive Abdullah announced plans to nominate replacements for five of the seven ministers who received no-confidence votes. The ministers of foreign affairs and education did not receive replacement nominees.[469]

In September, the first deputy speaker of the lower house of parliament accused the speaker and first secretary of the lower house of parliament of corruption. The first deputy speaker said that parliamentary corruption is at an all-time high and called on the Attorney General's Office (AGO) to take action. Both the speaker and first secretary rejected the accusation.[470] Four parliamentary commissions have been assigned to investigate the corruption allegations.[471]

A delegation of parliamentarians during a USAID ALBA-sponsored visit to Kapisa Province. (USAID photo)

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.[472] ALBA recently supported a number of parliamentary oversight visits to provinces. The most recent trips include Balkh and Samangan Provinces by the upper house's legislative and judicial affairs commission, Kapisa Province by the upper house's complaints commission, and Panjshir Province by the upper house's national economy commission. During the visit to Balkh Province, the delegation heard how insecurity in the districts makes it difficult for Afghan legal personnel to perform their duties. Some districts reportedly lack courts, legal staff, and detention centers. Additionally, the delegation heard how the police do not cooperate with Afghan justice officials.[473]

During the visit to Kapisa Province, the delegation provided the governor and 35 directorate representatives a briefing on the FY 1396 development-budget allocation of projects for the province. The delegation also visited the site of a government-contracted, 100-bed hospital that was planned to be completed in three years but remains only half complete after 10 years. The province governor and Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) representative reported that they had brought up the matter with the president's office as well as the MOPH, but still awaited resolution. The delegation also visited a recently contracted high-school construction project that appeared to be on schedule. The delegation that visited Panjshir Province also provided a briefing on the province's FY 1396 development-budget allotments. The delegation visited a cold-storage project, a high-school construction project, and a canal project.[474]

Civil Society

The Afghan Civic Engagement Program's (ACEP) 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 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.[475]

This quarter, ACEP finalized the development of reporting guidelines for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) operating in Afghanistan in coordination with the Ministry of Economy. The guidelines were prepared based on the law for domestic and international nongovernmental organizations operating in Afghanistan. ACEP believes that these guidelines will help to ensure better implementation of the law in terms of NGO reporting requirements and will improve NGO coordination with government departments.

ACEP also completed a 20-day session on street-painting skills in Takhar Province. The training was aimed to build the capacity of 20 youth (17 women, three men) on street-painting art that include paintings and messages on government and nongovernmental buildings' walls. The messages contain slogans against narcotics use and gender-based violence and for social engagement and a number of other social issues.[476]

SUBNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

In September, the only remaining female provincial governor was replaced by a male. Masooma Muradi, the now former governor of Daykundi Province, faced strong resistance from religious conservatives and political opponents after being appointed in 2015. The Afghan government gave no explanation for her removal.[477]

On July 30, the Afghan government issued the Provincial Council Oversight Regulations, which laid out an enhanced role for the provincial councils in monitoring government departments and other entities. These regulations reversed a 2014 decision by the lower house of parliament that removed the oversight power of provincial councils. President Ghani agreed to improve coordination with the provincial councils by conducting regular regional meetings and inviting a representative of the councils to attend cabinet meetings.[478]

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 3.10 summarizes total program costs and disbursements to date.

TABLE 3.10

USAID SUBNATIONAL (PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL) PROGRAMS

Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost ($)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 9/30/2017 ($)
Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience (SHAHAR)	11/30/2014	11/29/2017	$46,000,000	$38,162,540
Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA)	2/1/2015	1/31/2020	62,364,687	20,121,946

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 10/15/2017.

Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations

The $62 million 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, leading to services that

more closely respond to all citizens' needs in health, education, security, justice, and urban services.[479]

According to USAID, one of the key provisions of the Afghan government's provincial budget policy is to link the provincial development plans with the provincial budget process. ISLA has supported this process by delivering training to all 34 provinces, not just the 16 ISLA is designed to assist. According to USAID, ISLA's training curriculum has been endorsed and adopted by the MOF. This quarter, USAID reports that all 16 of the ISLA-supported provinces submitted their provincial development plans to the Ministry of Economy on time. Additionally, all but one ISLA-supported province submitted their initial budget requests to the Ministry of Finance. Once the province budget requests are finalized, ISLA will be able to determine how many ISLA-identified province priority projects were actually funded and implemented by the Afghan government.[480]

The Lashkar Gar deputy mayor opening a complaint box established with assistance by USAID's SHAHAR program. (USAID photo)

Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience

The objective of the $46 million SHAHAR program is to create well-governed, fiscally sustainable Afghan municipalities capable of meeting the needs of a growing urban population. The urban portion of Afghanistan's population has risen from 22% in 2004 to an estimated 25% in 2016–2017. Targeted support to municipal governments, as well as to the Deputy Ministry of Municipal Affairs and municipal advisory boards, aims to improve municipal financial management, urban service delivery, and citizen consultation.[481]

In August, SHAHAR reported that partner municipalities increased their revenue by 39% compared to the same period in the previous year. Expenditures increased by 16% compared to the previous year. Also this quarter, SHAHAR assisted the deputy mayor of Lashkar Gar in Helmand Province with opening a complaint box. The Lashkar Gar mayor has reportedly tasked the deputy mayor with a weekly inspection of the complaint box for complaint letters and suggestions.[482]

RULE OF LAW AND ANTICORRUPTION

Project Summary

The United States has assisted the formal and informal justice sectors through several mechanisms. These include State's Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP) and Justice Training Transition Program (JTTP). These and other rule-of-law and anticorruption programs are shown in Table 3.11.

USAID has a cooperation arrangement with the UK's Department for International Development to fund the Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC). USAID funds the MEC's

TABLE 3.11

RULE OF LAW AND ANTICORRUPTION PROGRAMS

Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost ($)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 9/30/2017 ($)
Justice System Support Program II (JSSP II)	6/16/2010	11/27/2017	$298,290,903	$279,969,144
Assistance for Development of Afghan Legal Access and Transparency (ADALAT)	4/15/2016	4/14/2021	68,163,468	7,990,263
Electoral Reform and Civic Advocacy (AERCA)*	7/13/2009	9/30/2017	51,302,682	49,998,320
Corrections System Support Program (CSSP IV)**	3/1/2016	8/27/2017	25,090,002	22,799,794
Justice Training Transition Program (JTTP) Follow On***	1/2/2013	11/30/2017	47,759,796	47,759,796
Corrections System Support Program (OASIS CSSP)**	6/1/2017	11/30/2022	13,574,083	1,500,402
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	2,000,000

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.
**Disbursements as of 8/27/2017.
***The follow-on project is a no-cost extension with funds having already been disbursed.

Source: State, INL, response to SIGAR data call, 9/28/2017 and 10/12/2017; USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 10/15/2017.

monitoring, analysis, and reporting activities, including its vulnerability-to-corruption assessments.[483]

USAID aims to improve public services by reducing corruption opportunities in the Afghan government's 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 project—to address immediately identifiable corrupt practices.[484]

AERCA had identified 10 services that are important to Afghans but are perceived as not working as well as expected: (1, 2) disability and martyr payments by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled; (3, 4, 5) driver's license issuance, vehicle registration, and national identification by the MOI; (6, 7) issuance of diplomas and transcripts by the Ministry of Higher Education; (8) small-business license registration by the Kabul Municipality; (9) property registration by the Supreme Court; and (10) high-school diploma issuance by the Ministry of Education (MOE).[485] In August 2016, USAID and AERCA decided to suspend AERCA's assistance to the driver's license service after determining that there was insufficient political will for reform in the MOI's traffic department to enable worthwhile collaboration.[486]

This quarter, AERCA reported that it had supported printing hundreds of booklets on the new standard operating procedures for the Central Population Registration Department (CPRD). These booklets were distributed to provincial CPRD offices across the country. The distribution of these booklets means that AERCA's reform activities with the CPRD

in Kabul and Nangarhar Provinces are now completed. AERCA is also nearing the end of their assistance to the Kabul municipality to support small-business license reforms. AERCA has completed the handover of a business registration database to the municipal government. Kabul municipality has also hired 32 of former AERCA surveyors to continue their AERCA-related work with the municipality. Also this quarter, an AERCA-hired contractor completed renovations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that allow for the installation of an electronic queue-management system. These upgrades should allow the ministry to process more than 2,000 customers daily, up from 700.[487] AERCA ended on September 30.[488]

State's Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP) is the largest rule-of-law program in Afghanistan. JSSP was established in 2005 to provide capacity-building support to the Afghan justice system through training, mentoring, and advisory services. The current JSSP began in 2010 and has an estimated cost of $298 million.[489]

During the past year, JSSP continued to provide support to the Supreme Court and Attorney General's Office (AGO) to roll out and integrate the Case Management System (CMS). CMS is an online database that tracks the status of criminal cases in Afghanistan, across all criminal justice institutions, from the moment a case is initiated to the end of confinement. As of May, JSSP maintains 535 Case Management System (CMS) offices in 33 provinces. Of these CMS offices, 449 cover criminal matters and 86 cover civil cases. A total of 291,916 unique cases have been entered into the criminal CMS database and 32,394 cases into the civil CMS database.[490]

This past year, JSSP budget staff prepared the Supreme Court's financial closing report, or *Qatia*, covering the Supreme Court's operation and development budgets. This report was submitted to the MOF and Supreme Audit Office of Afghanistan. MOF requires year-end closing reports from all budget units and, after an SAO audit, MOF submits these *Qatia* reports to the parliament.[491] JSSP also assisted the Supreme Court in advertising 340 vacancies with the appellate courts in Kabul and the provinces. A total of 669 eligible applicants, including 52 women, attended the entrance exam. Ultimately, the Supreme Court, with JSSP assistance, prepared employment contracts for 62 candidates for positions at the Supreme Court headquarters and Kabul Province appellate court.[492]

This quarter, State's $48 million Justice Training Transition Program (JTTP) finished administering institutional learning-needs assessments of the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and AGO officials. JTTP assisted the MOJ and AGO to develop draft training and budget plans based on the initial findings of these assessments. According to State, 51 trainings are thought necessary to meet the learning needs of the legal professionals working in the three MOJ departments. JTTP plans to meet with MOJ to discuss the draft training

plan, assess whether further items should be added, and discuss availability of funding, trainers and curricula, and develop an implementation plan.[493]

In April 2016, USAID launched the $68 million Assistance for the Development of Afghan Legal Access and Transparency (ADALAT) program. ADALAT aims to (1) increase the effectiveness and reach of the formal justice sector, (2) strengthen the linkages between the formal and traditional justice sectors, and (3) increase citizen demand for quality legal services.[494] This quarter, ADALAT began its coordination efforts with State's JSSP program through a discussion of JSSP's experience with embedded advisors at the Supreme Court to deconflict their activities. Also, after holding numerous meetings and developing plans over the past year to partner with the Afghan Independent Bar Association (AIBA), ADALAT reported this quarter that the AIBA ultimately declined to accept ADALAT's assistance. The AIBA reportedly did not agree to USAID-mandated reforms, including changing the organization's bylaws. After this rejection, USAID directed ADALAT to propose alternative activities to improve the legal and justice sectors.[495]

Afghan Correctional System

As of June 30, the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Centers (GDPDC) incarcerated 28,065 males and 922 females, while the MOJ's Juvenile Rehabilitation Directorate (JRD) incarcerated 888 male and 101 female juveniles. These incarceration totals do not include detainees held by any other Afghan governmental organization, as State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) does not have access to their data.[496]

Overcrowding is a persistent, substantial, and widespread problem within GDPDC facilities for adults, despite stagnant prison population numbers. As of June 30, the total male provincial-prison population was at 178% of capacity, as defined by the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) minimum standard of 3.4 square meters per inmate. The total female provincial-prison population was at 119% of the ICRC-recommended capacity. The JRD's juvenile-rehabilitation centers' population was at 72% of ICRC-recommended capacity.[497]

According to State, its joint efforts with the MOJ in implementing alternatives to incarceration for juveniles has led to an 11% reduction of the juvenile rehabilitation center population. This quarter, State and CSSP facilitated an alternatives to incarceration conference to review the progress of the past year. According to State, the ever-increasing strain on resources in juvenile rehabilitation centers makes it is imperative that JRD leadership expand the use of alternatives to incarceration. Conference participants (representing the corrections, law enforcement, and justice sectors) agreed upon a plan to expand the alternatives to incarceration program during the coming year and transition the program to the MOJ.[498]

Congress Directs SIGAR to Assess Afghanistan's Implementation of an Anticorruption Strategy

The Joint Explanatory Statement for the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2017 directs SIGAR to assess the Afghan government's implementation of an anticorruption strategy called for at the Brussels Conference on Afghanistan held October 4–5, 2016. SIGAR was further instructed to report its findings to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees no later than May 31, 2018. This congressional request is notable because it is the first time Congress has directed SIGAR to assess the Afghan government's performance, rather than that of a U.S. government agency, on a key reconstruction objective.

Anticorruption

At the October 2016 Brussels conference, the Afghan government agreed to draft and endorse an anticorruption strategy for the whole of government by the first half of 2017.[499] On September 28, the High Council on Rule of Law and Anti-corruption approved the National Strategy for Combatting Corruption. In commenting on the strategy, President Ghani said that the drive against corruption should be "measurable and vision-oriented." He also ordered that the government produce a comprehensive report every six months that covers the strategy's implementation.[500]

The anticorruption civil-society organization Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) criticized the new strategy for not creating an independent commission to deal with corruption issues, labeling it a "half-hearted attempt to fight corruption." IWA said the new strategy suffered from a "constricted strategy development process, weak institutional arrangements, and expanded timelines for achieving the benchmarks." In particular, IWA said that the Afghan government backtracked on its "most important anti-corruption commitment: the creation of an independent and strong anti-corruption commission." Instead, IWA reported that the strategy gives the central role to the AGO, the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC), and the High Council on Rule of Law and Anticorruption. IWA believes that this approach does not meet the UN Convention against Corruption or internationally accepted principals on the independence of anti-corruption agencies.[501]

According to this strategy, reformist government leaders with empowered teams and networks are necessary to overcome the corruption challenge. Among the causes of large-scale corruption, the strategy identified the lack of certainty about the political survival of the state leading to an emphasis on short-term goals; aid dependency resulting in a highly fragmented state system; limited incentives for government reformers; insufficiently developed political institutions connected to an elite settlement; and government capture by corrupt officials. The strategy critiqued previous anticorruption efforts that proposed a large number of discrete activities which lacked an overarching rationale and led to wish lists of well-intentioned, but ineffectual actions.[502] This perspective mirrors the statements President Ghani made at the G7+ meeting in March 2016. In that speech, President Ghani said at the time:

> The solution to fragmented and captured states is never going to be more consultants, anticorruption plans, or good governance projects. Reform will come when reformist leadership is fully equipped with the tools it needs to rebuild core state systems, above all an ability to recruit likeminded reformers into the system and to have the flexibility to use reform to deliver results.[503]

In a recent interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, President Ghani described the critical challenge of responding to high-level corruption as one of balancing the need to maintain a political consensus with reform. President Ghani describe corruption in Afghanistan as "the system," saying "every system has a breaking point […] you've seen how much reaction there is to reform."[504]

In August, Chief Executive Abdullah was quoted in Afghan media saying that the former minister of telecommunication and information technology, Abdul Razzaq Wahidi, was cleared by the AGO of charges of having manipulated the ministry's revenue statistics. State, citing DOJ reporting, says that the charges against Wahidi were misuse of office for personal gain and practicing nepotism. Additionally, State reports that Wahidi's case has reportedly been with the Supreme Court for consideration since July 2017. President Ghani had previously suspended Wahidi in January.[505]

Anti-Corruption Justice Center

In May 2016, President Ghani announced the establishment of a specialized anticorruption court, the Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC).[506] The ACJC brings together MCTF investigators, AGO prosecutors, and judges to combat serious corruption.[507] The ACJC's jurisdiction covers major corruption cases committed in any province involving senior officials or substantial monetary losses of a minimum of five million afghanis (approximately $73,000).[508]

Since October 2016, the ACJC has considered 313 potential cases, of which 243 potential cases involve civilians and 79 potential cases involve military personnel. Of these potential cases, 44 have been referred to the ACJC's primary court or primary prosecution office. The ACJC's primary court has concluded 21 trials, convicting 83 offenders.[509] Among the ACJC cases, a general was convicted and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for fuel fraud and stealing equipment.[510]

In August, the ACJC primary court sentenced five officials of Pul-e Charkhi prison (including a former prison commander) each to three-year jail sentences. The five were found guilty of having modified a list of prisoners eligible for release under a presidential decree so that a prisoner sentenced to 20 years in jail for smuggling 36 kilograms of heroin replaced a prisoner jailed for only one year and one month for keeping and using alcohol. The ACJC judge also ordered the investigation of three other Afghan government officials (from the AGO, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, and the National Directorate of Security) whose signatures were on the release form.[511]

Additionally, in August, the ACJC sentenced Abdul Ghafar Dawi—one of the most successful and politically connected businessman in Afghanistan and director of a large fuel company—to a nine-year and nine-month prison sentence for contract manipulation, embezzlement, and failure to repay

SIGAR INTERCEPTS $1.6 MILLION IN SMUGGLED GOLD AT BAGRAM AIRFIELD

This quarter, SIGAR Special Agents at Bagram Airfield (BAF) intercepted a traveler who had a large quantity of gold in his possession. The traveler could not show any documentation that authorized him to transport gold out of Afghanistan. But he did have papers indicating the nearly 92 pounds of gold he carried was worth about $1.6 million. SIGAR took possession of the gold while further investigation was conducted. Given likely violations of Afghanistan's laws, and pursuant to the U.S.-Afghan Status of Forces Agreement, SIGAR investigators requested that the gold bars be transferred from SIGAR to Afghan government officials.

President Ghani then formed a special working group to investigate the case. One of the working group's first tasks was to coordinate the transfer of the gold from SIGAR to the central bank. Once that was completed, the working group and SIGAR began a joint investigation of the source and transport of the gold.

Whatever its final outcome, the case stands as a sterling example of what can be achieved when U.S. oversight agencies like SIGAR maintain good working relationships with Afghan officials.

Kabul Bank loans. Additionally, two deputy-minister-level Afghan government officials were also convicted as part of this case. State views this case as a significant victory for the ACJC.[512]

Also in August, the ACJC primary court sentenced the former police commander of Helmand Province to three years in prison. The police general was accused of abusing authority, embezzlement of a government vehicle, and releasing two suspects from custody.[513]

Independent Joint Anti-Corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee

President Karzai established the MEC by presidential decree in March 2010. The institution was reauthorized by President Ghani in September 2016 with a new decree that provided full independence from the High Office of Oversight and Anticorruption (HOOAC). The MEC's mandate is to develop anticorruption recommendations and benchmarks, to monitor efforts to fight corruption, and to report on these efforts. Its board includes three Afghan members and three international members, and is led by an Afghan executive director.[514]

This quarter, the MEC published its assessment of corruption vulnerabilities in the AGO. According to the MEC, the AGO has historically been viewed as a major contributor to corruption in Afghanistan with "bribery, patronage, nepotism and deliberately weak oversight practices [being] the status quo." The MEC reports that the current attorney general has begun to implement a number of positive changes. These AGO-identified changes include dealing with public complaints, increasing the budget and salary of prosecutors, and establishing the ACJC. Despite these changes, the MEC found that bribery still occurs at all stages of the criminal process (although not as openly as in the past) and forms the main type of corruption. Also, the MEC found that communications between the AGO and detection and referring agencies, including the police and other agencies such as the HOOAC, Supreme Audit Office, MOF, could be improved as several agencies report that they are unaware of the outcome of cases that have been submitted to the AGO.[515]

The MEC also published a report on the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (summarized on pages 177–178 of this report).

Major Crimes Task Force

The MCTF is an elite MOI unit chartered to investigate corruption, organized criminal networks, and high-profile kidnappings committed throughout Afghanistan. This quarter, the MCTF opened over 40 corruption cases. However, the MCTF submitted only one case to the AGO this quarter.[516]

The size of the MCTF's Corruption Investigation Unit has increased in response to the increased number of corruption cases it is pursuing.

Additionally, the position of MCTF director has been upgraded from a brigadier general to major general billet. However, the current MCTF director has yet to receive a promotion to reflect this change and Resolute Support reports no indication that this will occur. In the past, Resolute Support has attributed MCTF improvements in part to the current director's "outstanding leadership" in the face of repeated threats against him.[517]

In October, a member of the MCTF died after being shot outside his house in Kabul. This incident follows the assassination of two MCTF investigators in April.[518]

According to Resolute Support, MCTF investigator morale is "at an all-time low." MCTF investigators reportedly feel they do not receive the support and protection from senior Afghan government officials necessary to operate without reprisal. MCTF investigators are afraid to work some high-level cases due to potential repercussions, which include being fired, transferred, or being put in jail for doing their job.[519]

HUMAN RIGHTS

This quarter, the chairwoman of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, Dr. Sima Samar, suggested that the International Criminal Court (ICC) launch an investigation into human-rights violations in Afghanistan. Dr. Samar said that in light of the weak state of the Afghan judicial system, the Afghan government could consider requesting assistance from the ICC.[520]

In August, the nongovernmental organization Save the Children (SCI) released a study on the knowledge, attitudes, and practices on violence and harmful practices against children. The study involved respondents from Balkh, Jowzjan, Sar-e Pul, Nangarhar, and Kabul (street working children only) Provinces. According to SCI, child respondents experienced high levels of all types of violence. The study considered various types of violence, including exposure to violence, psychological violence, physical and emotional neglect, physical violence, and sexual abuse. Only 9% of children reported not experiencing any type of violence, 21% experienced one to three types, 16% experienced four to six types, 10% experienced seven to nine types, 13% experienced 10 to 15 types, 9% experienced 16 to 20 types, 20% experienced 21 to 30 types, and 2.5% experienced more than 31 types. SCI was surprised to find that children from urban areas reported experiencing more violence (for an average exposure to 14 forms of violence) than children in rural areas (who reported experiencing an average of 10 forms of violence).[521]

REFUGEES AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The high rate of refugee returns in 2016 has stabilized. In 2016, a total of 370,102 Afghans registered as refugees returned from Pakistan, 2,290 returned from Iran, and 185 returned from other countries.[522] As of September, 87,700 people have returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan and 375,599 from Iran in 2017. Of these returns, 51,801 were recognized refugees. The number of refugee returns in 2017 stands at approximately 38% of the number of refugee who returned to Afghanistan between January and September 2016. According to State, approximately 169,000 undocumented Afghan migrants returned to Afghanistan, with 160,000 being deported from Iran.[523]

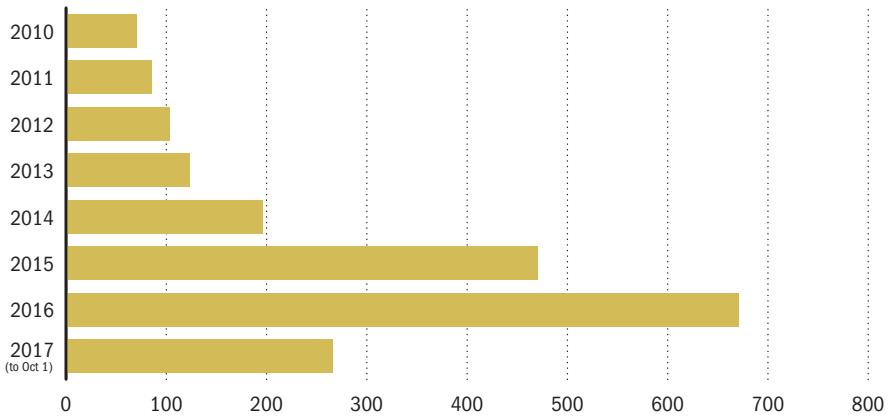
As shown in Figure 3.31, there has been a decrease in internal displacement this year compared to last. According to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as of October 1, 266,087 people have fled their homes due to conflict.[524]

As shown in Figure 3.32, as of September 16, approximately 6% of the estimated population of Uruzgan Province was displaced due to conflict. Badghis (4.93%), Kunduz (3.09%), Zabul (2.31%), Baghlan (2.12%), and Nangarhar (2.02%) Provinces registered more than 2% of their total estimated populations as displaced by conflict.[525]

Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU, reported 22,500 first-time Afghan asylum seekers in the EU in the first six months of 2017. As shown in Figure 3.33 on page 178, the number of Afghan asylum applications from April to June 2017 was 24.3% lower than the number for the previous three months.[526]

FIGURE 3.31

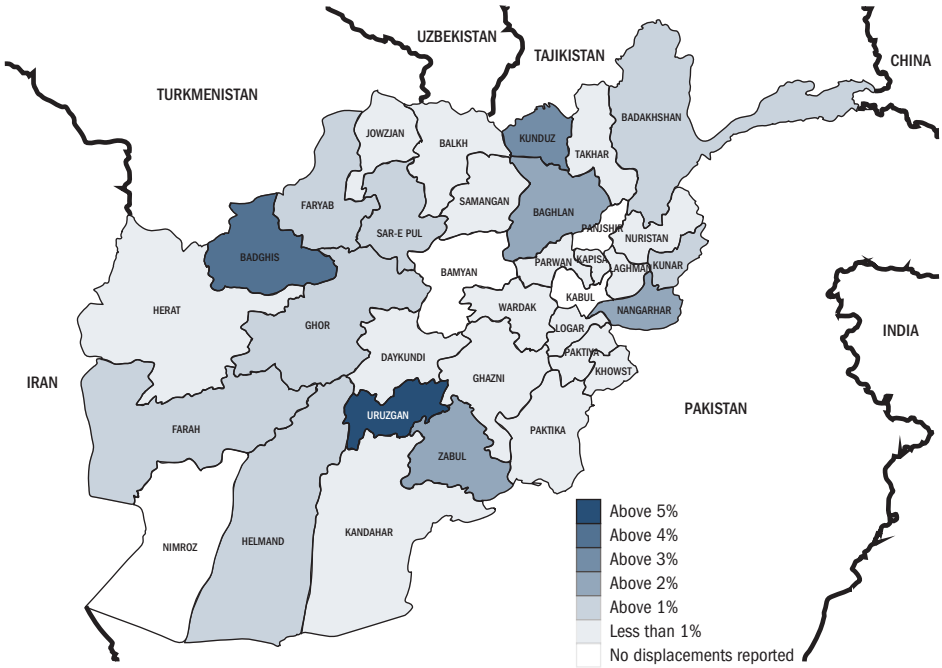
CONFLICT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENTS (THOUSANDS)



Source: UN OCHA, "Afghanistan: Conflict Induced Displacements in 2017 - Snapshot," 6/18/2017; UN, OCHA, "Afghanistan Weekly Field Report," 10/1/2017, p. 1.

FIGURE 3.32

PROVINCE POPULATION DISPLACED BY CONFLICT 2017



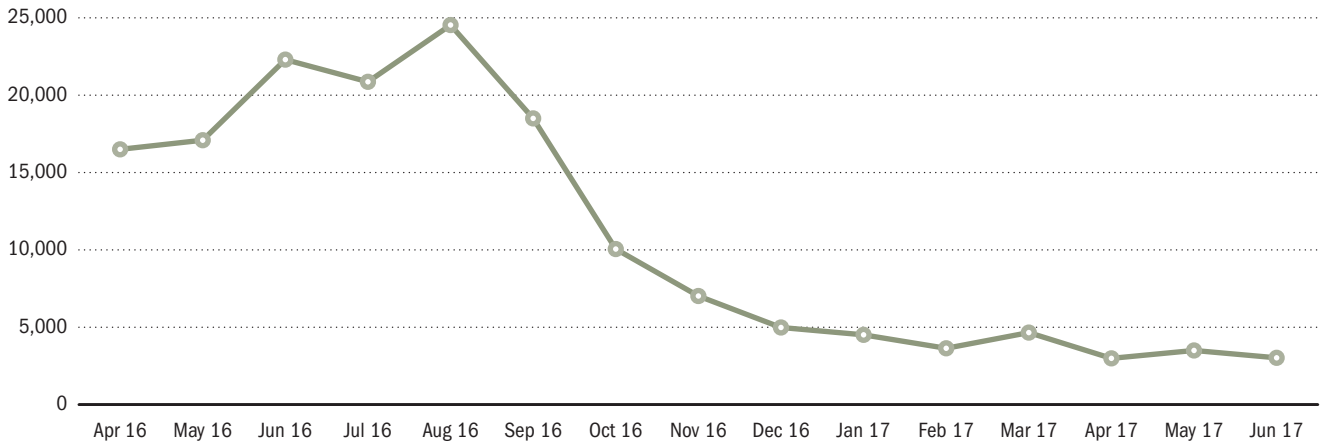
Source: Humanitarian Data Exchange, "OCHA Afghanistan: Afghanistan - Conflict Induced Displacements in 2017," 9/16/2017; Central Statistics Office, "Estimated Population by Civil Division, Urban, Rural, Nomidic and Sex-2017-18," n.d.

In August, the MEC issued their review of the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MORR). Following a 2005 presidential decree, the MORR was mandated to work with municipalities and local governments to provide land to Afghan returnees. However, the MEC found that land distribution suffers from massive bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement. According to the MEC, this decree has facilitated corruption. For example, while returnees are required to have valid documents in order to receive shelter, the decree does not specify which documents. Additionally, various Afghan government actors have exploited the decree's ambiguous language to insert themselves into the process of land distribution for the purposes of selling land or taking bribes.[527] The MORR has proposed rescinding the decree and has drafted ministry procedures for land distribution. These new procedures offer clear guidance, the MEC said.[528]

The MEC also found that humanitarian aid was plagued by the problem of fake beneficiaries. For example, MEC reported that some villagers living on the border with Pakistan will repeatedly cross the border for the sake of receiving refugee assistance. In response, the MORR and World Food

FIGURE 3.33

FIRST-TIME AFGHAN ASYLUM APPLICANTS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION



Source: EUROSTAT, "First time asylum applicants in the EU-28 by citizenship, Q2 2016–Q2 2017," 9/21/2017.

Program (WFP) have launched a data-collection initiative at the Torkham border crossing that will register every returnee and provide that person with an electronic card. MEC reports that the MORR and WFP plan to expand the initiative across the country and jointly run the program for three years.[529]

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.[530] USAID has committed $280 million to Promote.[531] Table 3.12 show the current Promote programs.

As of July, 1,675 women have or are receiving civil service training and internships through Promote's Women in Government program. So far, 42 interns have gained full-time employment in either the government or private sector after one year of training. The Women in Leadership Development program has provided 5,743 young women with training. The Women in the Economy program has or is in the process of facilitating internships or apprenticeships for 4,124 women. The program has helped 806 interns gain full-time employment. Finally, the Women in Civil Society program reports that they have civil society organizations with members totaling 1,306 persons benefitting from the program.[532]

TABLE 3.12

USAID GENDER PROGRAMS

Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost ($)	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 9/30/2017 ($)
Promote: Women in the Economy	7/1/2015	6/30/2019	$71,571,543	$21,646,950
Promote: Women's Leadership Development	9/23/2014	9/22/2019	41,959,377	24,140,885
Promote: Women in Government	4/21/2015	4/20/2020	37,997,644	13,759,096
Promote: Women's Rights Groups and Coalitions	9/2/2015	9/1/2020	29,534,401	9,208,197
Promote: Rolling Baseline and End-line Survey	2/21/2017	10/20/2020	7,577,638	1,016,098
Promote: Economic Empowerment of Women in Afghanistan	5/8/2015	5/7/2018	1,500,000	900,000
Promote: Scholarships	3/4/2015	3/3/2020	1,247,522	1,247,522

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 10/15/2017.

Also this quarter, the Women in Civil Society program reported that the implementation of the national technical assistance salary scale—a policy designed to reduce the disparity between Afghan government and donor-funded position salaries—continues to hinder the hiring of qualified staff since it has resulted in a significant decrease in salaries and benefits the program can offer. According to the Afghan government, international donors, including USAID, have directed their contractors to follow the Afghan government's national technical assistance salary scale to meet a SMART SMAF obligation.[533]

The SMAF includes several short-term deliverables related to women's rights, including the requirement for an implementation and financing plan for the National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security approved at 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.[534]

In June, the Afghan government reported on its progress in meeting the SMART SMAF obligation to launch a women's economic empowerment plan by first half of 2017. According to the Afghan government, President Ghani launched the plan in March and a unit was established in the Ministry of Martyred, Disabled, Labor, and Social Affairs. Over the next three years, the World Bank is expected to provide $5 million to support this unit.[535] Additionally, as of October, the Supreme Court established special tribunals for the elimination of violence against women in 15 provinces.[536]

SIGAR AUDIT

SIGAR is currently conducting a performance audit of Promote that will assess contract compliance, program performance, and implementation challenges for the five Promote programs. The audit team's work includes examining contract documents and interviewing USAID and Afghan government officials, the Promote contractors, and program participants.