

GOVERNANCE CONTENTS

Key Issues & Events	83
U.S. Reconstruction Funding for Governance	83
Peace and Reconciliation	83
U.S. Assistance to the Afghan Government Budget	86
Quarterly Highlight: Successful Service Delivery Did Not Bolster Afghan Government Legitimacy, World Bank Concludes	89
Quarterly Highlight: World Bank Programming Faces Increased Pressures From Taliban	91
Subnational Governance	92
Rule of Law and Anticorruption	94
Counternarcotics	98
Refugees and Internal Displacement	105
Women's Advancement	106
Human Rights	109

GOVERNANCE

KEY ISSUES & EVENTS

President Ashraf Ghani and Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah visited Washington, DC, to discuss enduring U.S. support for Afghanistan with President Joseph R. Biden and other senior Administration officials.

After peace talks largely stalled this quarter, a high-level delegation of Afghan government officials and politicians met with the Taliban to expedite negotiations.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said the escalating conflict in Afghanistan presents a “looming humanitarian crisis” for those displaced by the fighting.

The Afghan government reported that the Taliban has destroyed 260 government administrative buildings in 106 Taliban-held districts.

U.S. RECONSTRUCTION FUNDING FOR GOVERNANCE

As of June 30, 2021, the United States had provided nearly \$36.3 billion to support governance and economic development in Afghanistan. Most of this funding, more than \$21.2 billion, was appropriated to the Economic Support Fund (ESF) administered by the State Department (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).²⁰⁶

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Senior Afghan Delegation Attempts to Revive Stalled Peace Negotiations

On June 22, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, said the peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban was stalled. “The drivers of conflict seem for now to overwhelm the reasonable and hoped-for modalities of negotiation,” Lyons said. She described the major trends in Afghanistan—including



U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad speaking with members of the Afghan government negotiating team in Doha. (Afghan government photo)

GOVERNANCE



A high-level delegation of Afghan government officials and political leaders met with the Taliban in Doha on July 17. (Afghan government photo)

The Afghan nation is in [its] 1861 moment, like President Lincoln, rallying to the defense of the republic, determined that the republic is defended. It's a choice of values—the values of an exclusionary system or an inclusionary system.

—President Ashraf Ghani

Source: White House, Remarks by President Biden and President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Before Bilateral Meeting, 6/25/2021.

the political, security, and peace situation—as either negative or stagnant.²⁰⁷ According to one Afghan government negotiator, the Taliban lacks the “sense of urgency” of the Afghan government side to reach a political settlement.²⁰⁸

Despite the unfruitful Doha talks, Taliban and Afghan delegations met in Iran for two days, declaring that continuing the war was dangerous for the country and all efforts must be made to find a peaceful solution. The Afghan government described this meeting as “a complementary initiative” to the main talks in Doha.²⁰⁹ Further, a spokesperson for the State Ministry for Peace was quoted in Afghan media on July 10, saying there have been a couple of meetings at night between the parties in Doha “on a number of important issues.”²¹⁰

In an effort to revive the stalled Afghan peace negotiations, on July 16, a delegation of Afghan government officials and politicians, including Chairman Abdullah Abdullah, traveled to Doha for talks with the Taliban. Abdullah described the team as authoritative. This “High-Level Delegation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan” met with the Taliban for two days. In a joint statement, the two teams agreed to expedite the peace efforts and continue high-level talks.²¹¹

According to State, the Afghan government has not officially shared a unified peace plan with the Taliban, but made “remarkable” progress this quarter in formulating its positions on power sharing.²¹² In early May, President Ashraf Ghani blamed the Taliban for the lack of progress in the peace process, saying “a political settlement and the integration of the Taliban into society and government is the only way forward. But the ball is in their court.”²¹³ Ghani proposed that the talks could benefit from a “credible and neutral mediator,” such as the United Nations, and that a ceasefire would require international monitoring.²¹⁴

The Taliban, however, have not taken steps to address core issues of power sharing or to develop their own vision of a political settlement, State said. Instead, the Taliban reportedly engaged the Afghan government team this quarter on other issues of mutual concern, such as the treatment of detainees and roadside abductions. Further, the Taliban said that progress in prisoner releases and sanctions relief needed to be addressed adequately for peace negotiations to move forward.²¹⁵ For example, on July 15, an Afghan government negotiator described the previous months’ talks as a limited number of “informal” meetings that failed to discuss serious issues such as ending the war or a peaceful settlement for a shared future.²¹⁶

Afghanistan’s foreign minister, Mohammad Haneef Atmar, told the UN Security Council on June 22, 2021, that for nearly 10 months, the Taliban have not engaged with the Afghan government’s plan for a ceasefire, power-sharing arrangements, and early elections.²¹⁷

State attributed the pause in peace talks partially to the extensive consultations this quarter between the Doha-based Taliban Political Commission (TPC) and the Pakistan-based Taliban leadership. Toward

the latter half of May, TPC leaders returned to Doha and have reportedly claimed to be prepared to present ideas on power sharing to their Afghan government counterparts.²¹⁸

However, and especially given its recent success on the battlefield, the Taliban may simply believe they can achieve military victory—a perspective President Ghani and Abdullah, head of Afghanistan’s National Reconciliation Council, have said would be a “miscalculation.”²¹⁹ USAID-funded monitoring of Taliban public communications found the Taliban’s tone to be resoundingly triumphant in April and May following the announced withdrawal of U.S. military forces.²²⁰ According to Abdullah, the Taliban have sought to use the withdrawal of international military forces to win on the battlefield.²²¹

In comments on July 8, President Biden said a Taliban military takeover or the collapse of the Afghan government was not inevitable, pointing to continued U.S. financial assistance to Afghanistan and the disparity between the capacity of 300,000 Afghan security forces and the 75,000 estimated Taliban fighters. Further, he called on Afghan leaders to “come together” and said the “only way there’s ultimately going to be peace and security in Afghanistan is that they work out a modus vivendi [arrangement] with the Taliban.”²²²

According to State, it is unclear how the U.S. military drawdown has affected the peace process. State noted that some say the Taliban are less likely to engage meaningfully in peace talks with the full troop withdrawal imminent.²²³ For example, one Afghan government negotiator said this quarter that the “Taliban are just waiting to get everything by military force [and] waiting for the collapse of the government of Afghanistan.”²²⁴ On the other hand, the prospect of instability and a long war could motivate the two sides to try to truly reach a political settlement, State said.²²⁵

Local and National Ceasefires Have Limited Impact

The Taliban and the Afghan government each declared unilateral three-day ceasefires this quarter to coincide with the Eid al-Fitr religious holiday. According to the UN, violence decreased during the May 13–15 ceasefire.²²⁶ The reduction does not appear to have had much enduring effect: the UN reported on June 22, 2021, that the Taliban had captured 50 of the country’s 370 districts since the start of May.²²⁷

Shortly after the Eid ceasefire concluded, Reuters reported on a district-level, month-long ceasefire in Alingar District, Laghman Province. The agreement was reportedly negotiated by local elders and agreed to by Afghan government and Taliban officials.²²⁸ This bottom-up attempted ceasefire, however, fell apart the next day with a local elder blaming the Taliban for attacking Afghan security forces.²²⁹



President Joseph R. Biden meeting with President Ashraf Ghani, center, and Chairman Abdullah Abdullah at the White House on June 25. (White House photo)

SIGAR AUDIT

On September 26, 2019, the Senate Appropriations Committee issued S. Rept. 116-126, accompanying the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2020. The report directed SIGAR to assess “the extent to which the Department of State and USAID have developed strategies and plans for the provision of continued reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan in the event of a peace agreement, including a review of any strategies and plans for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of such assistance and for protecting the rights of Afghan women and girls.” SIGAR initiated this work in May 2020.

We want peace from the bottom of the heart [...] but we are in a situation where we are saying peace and [the Taliban] are nearing the capital of Afghanistan.

—Chairman Abdullah Abdullah

Source: TOLOnews, “Afghanistan’s Survival in Jeopardy: Abdullah,” 6/30/2021.

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 bilaterally from a donor to Afghan government entities, or through multidonor trust funds. (DOD prefers the term “direct contributions” when referring to Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) monies executed via Afghan government contracts or Afghan spending on personnel.)

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; DOD, OSD-P, response to SIGAR vetting, 1/15/2018.

U.S. Funding for Peace and Reconciliation

In July 2020, USAID/Afghanistan made an initial \$2.5 million available to the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) for its Peace Support Initiative.²³⁰ According to USAID, this short-term effort will help ensure that key stakeholders can participate in the Afghan peace negotiations, build awareness and support for the peace process among Afghans, and equip USAID and others with the tools and information to successfully promote peace at a local level.²³¹

USAID reported that while the initiative did not directly support the stalled peace talks this quarter, it did begin procuring equipment for the State Ministry for Peace to help connect the ministry’s offices and strengthen their strategic communications capacity.²³²

In 2015, USAID and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) entered a \$16 million partnership named “Strengthening Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, and Governance in Afghanistan.”²³³ This partnership was modified in October 2019 to support new activities for the peace process.²³⁴ According to USIP, many Afghans doubt America’s commitment to ensuring a sustainable peace. To inspire local peace activities and demonstrate how average Afghan citizens can promote peace at the grassroots level as a complement to top-down peace efforts, USIP commissioned a documentary on the People’s Peace Movement (PPM). The now finalized film will be submitted to a few international film festivals.²³⁵

PPM began in March 2018 as a series of sit-ins and a hunger strike in Helmand Province that eventually led to 70 marchers demanding that both the Afghan government and Taliban implement a ceasefire. According to USIP reporting from 2018, the movement garnered significant international and domestic Afghan attention.²³⁶ USIP’s current documentary effort is meant to “revive the PPM story” and change the peace discourse at the grassroots.²³⁷

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT BUDGET

Summary of Assistance Agreements

Security aid makes up the vast majority of current U.S.-funded assistance to the Afghan government. Participants in the NATO Brussels Summit on July 11, 2018, had previously committed to extend “financial sustainment of the Afghan forces through 2024.” The public declaration from that meeting did not, however, specify an amount of money or targets for the on-budget share of security assistance.²³⁸

At the November 2020 Afghanistan Conference, donors pledged at least \$3.3 billion in civilian development assistance for the first year of the 2021–2024 period, with annual commitments expected to stay at the same level year-on-year.²³⁹ The resulting conference communiqué and the

GOVERNANCE

Afghanistan Partnership Framework—a set of foundational principles to underpin a peaceful and democratic Afghan society, and drive inclusive growth—included no reference to specific funding targets for the on-budget (Afghan-managed) share of civilian assistance.²⁴⁰

On June 25, 2021, President Biden met with President Ghani and High Council for National Reconciliation Chairman Abdullah in Washington, DC. President Biden promised the United States will sustain its support of Afghanistan through security assistance to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, development and humanitarian assistance, and diplomatic engagement in support of peace.²⁴¹

Civilian On-Budget Assistance

USAID provides on-budget civilian assistance in two ways: bilaterally to Afghan government entities; and through contributions to two multidonor trust funds—the World Bank-administered Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and the Asian Development Bank-administered Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF).²⁴² The ARTF provides funds to the Afghan government’s operating and development budgets in support of Afghan government operations, policy reforms, and national-priority programs.²⁴³ The AITF coordinates donor assistance for infrastructure projects.²⁴⁴

According to USAID, all bilateral-assistance funds are deposited in separate bank accounts established by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) for each program.²⁴⁵

As shown in Table 2.15, USAID’s active, direct bilateral-assistance programs have a total estimated cost of \$352 million. USAID also expects to contribute \$700 million to the ARTF from 2020 through 2025, in addition to

SIGAR AUDIT

On September 26, 2019, the Senate Appropriations Committee issued S. Rept. 116-126, accompanying the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2020. The report directed SIGAR to assess “the internal controls of multilateral trust funds for Afghanistan reconstruction that receive U.S. contributions, to include any third-party evaluations of the internal controls of the Afghan government ministries receiving assistance from multilateral trust funds, and SIGAR is directed to report to the Committee if access to records is restricted for programs funded with U.S. contributions.” SIGAR has initiated this work and plans to issue multiple public reports in 2021, each examining a different trust fund.

TABLE 2.15

USAID ON-BUDGET PROGRAMS					
Project/Trust Fund Title	Afghan Government On-Budget Partner	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/8/2021
Bilateral Government-to-Government Projects					
Power Transmission Expansion and Connectivity (PTEC)	Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat	1/1/2013	12/31/2023	\$316,713,724	\$272,477,914
Textbook Printing and Distribution	Ministry of Education	9/15/2017	12/31/2021	35,000,000	4,333,950
Multilateral Trust Funds					
Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) (current award)*	Multiple	9/29/2020	12/31/2025	\$700,000,000	\$55,686,333
Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF)	Multiple	3/7/2013	3/6/2023	153,670,184	153,670,184

*USAID had previous awards to the ARTF that concluded in March 2012 and totaled \$1,371,991,195 in disbursements and in September 2020 and totaled \$2,555,686,333 in disbursements. Cumulative disbursements from all ARTF awards is currently \$4,127,677,528.

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/14/2021.

GOVERNANCE

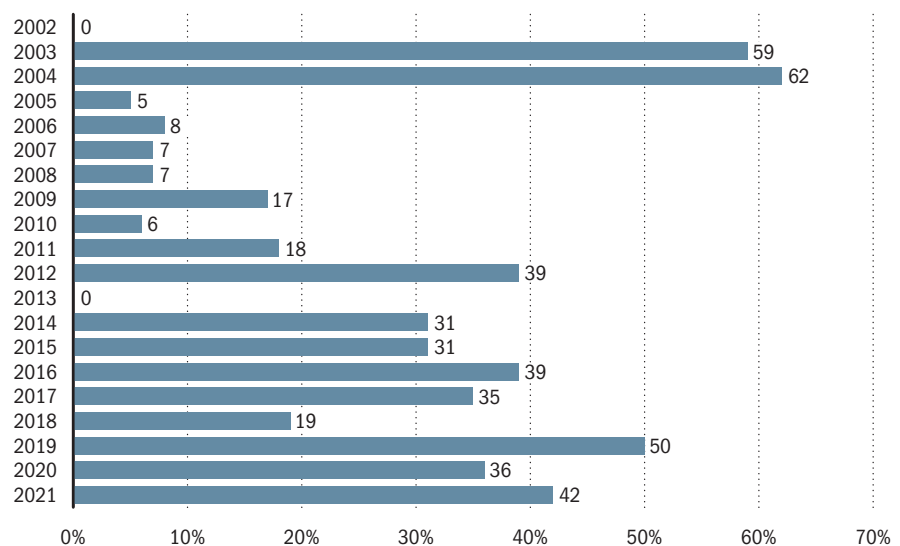
\$3.9 billion disbursed under the previous grant agreements between USAID and the World Bank (2002–2020). (USAID’s new ARTF grant of \$133 million per year is less than half the estimated total equivalent of \$300 million per year in the previous grant.)²⁴⁶

As shown in Figure 2.35, USAID’s disbursements to the ARTF are a significant percentage of its overall USAID/Afghanistan assistance portfolio.²⁴⁷

USAID has also cumulatively disbursed \$154 million to the AITF.²⁴⁸ As of September 2020, the United States was the second-largest cumulative donor to the AITF, (26% of contributions); the largest cumulative donor is the NATO Afghanistan National Army Trust Fund (34% of contributions).²⁴⁹ The last U.S. disbursement to the AITF was in April 2017.²⁵⁰

FIGURE 2.35

USAID’S YEARLY ARTF CONTRIBUTIONS (PERCENT OF TOTAL USAID DISBURSEMENTS FOR AFGHANISTAN BY YEAR)



Source: SIGAR analysis of USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/17/2021.

SUCCESSFUL SERVICE DELIVERY DID NOT BOLSTER AFGHAN GOVERNMENT LEGITIMACY, WORLD BANK CONCLUDES

In a recent evaluation of the ARTF’s \$5 billion in recurrent and capital costs support to Afghanistan from 2002–2018, the World Bank said the trust fund failed to achieve its objective to foster Afghan state legitimacy despite improvements in service delivery and social outcomes. According to the evaluators, Afghanistan has made little progress in building state legitimacy and conflict intensity remains at record levels.²⁵¹

The World Bank evaluators do not consider it reasonable to have expected ARTF support to have significantly impacted overall state legitimacy, but note that records from the period under review assumed a direct and unproblematic relationship between financing service delivery and increased state legitimacy.²⁵² Success in delivery of services was assumed to be sufficient to establish state legitimacy, and therefore to contribute to the broader statebuilding project.²⁵³

The evaluators called for “realism” in achieving state-building objectives through foreign assistance, starting with a clearly articulated, more sophisticated, and empirically verified intervention logic between service delivery and state-building goals.²⁵⁴ They did not elaborate on how to best implement these suggestions.

The Bank’s conclusion that service delivery does not necessarily improve state legitimacy raises important questions for donors, particularly when governmental legitimacy remains an overarching objective justifying generous outlays of foreign assistance. As USAID OIG reported in 2017, the “ultimate goal of [USAID’s on-budget commitments, principally channeled through the ARTF, was] to build up the legitimacy of the Afghan Government and diminish the insurgency.”²⁵⁵

USAID’s current Afghanistan country strategy also uncritically links service delivery to stability, asserting that all USAID efforts in Afghanistan “address key drivers of conflict that have enabled the Taliban to make gains, including corruption, unemployment, and a lack of government legitimacy.”²⁵⁶ Beyond Afghanistan, the United States continues to value governmental legitimacy as an ultimate objective for foreign assistance. For example, the 2020 interagency *United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability* calls for strategic investments to anticipate and prevent violent conflict with foreign assistance meant to reinforce “inclusive, participatory, and legitimate governance.”²⁵⁷

The Afghanistan experience has challenged foundational assumptions on service delivery and state legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected environments. In light of these findings, donors would do well to further elaborate the specific mechanisms and empirically test the limits of these assumptions in such environments. So long as donors describe their assistance as uncritically advancing recipient state legitimacy, the burden of proof rests on them.

On-Budget Assistance to the ANDSF

Approximately 70% of total U.S. on-budget assistance goes toward the requirements of the Afghan security forces.²⁵⁸

DOD provides on-budget assistance through direct contributions from the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) to the Afghan government to fund a portion of Ministry of Defense (MOD) and Ministry of Interior (MOI) requirements.²⁵⁹ For the multidonor Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), total U.S. contributions have decreased significantly from 2016 (\$114.4 million) and 2017 (\$26.7 million) to between \$950,000 to \$8.8 million for the years 2018 to 2021.²⁶⁰ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) administers LOTFA primarily to fund Afghan National Police salaries and incentives.²⁶¹

DOD provides direct-contribution funding to the MOF, which allots it incrementally to the MOD and MOI.²⁶²

For Afghan fiscal year (FY) 1400 (December 2020–December 2021), DOD plans to provide the Afghan government the equivalent of up to \$841.6 million to support the MOD. Of this amount, approximately \$653.0 million (78%) is for salaries.²⁶³ As of June 12, DOD provided the equivalent of \$289.4 million for FY 1400, most of which (87%) paid for salaries.²⁶⁴

To support the MOI, DOD plans to provide up to \$174.4 million in FY 1400. Of these funds, approximately \$6.9 million (4%) is for salaries, with the remaining funds for purchase of goods, services, or assets.²⁶⁵ As of June 12, DOD had disbursed the equivalent of \$9.5 million directly to the Afghan government to support the MOI for FY 1400.²⁶⁶ LOTFA received \$8.8 million from DOD in 2021 principally to support the dissolution of the Afghan Local Police.²⁶⁷

DOD Withholds Approximately \$13,000 for Gross Violation of Human Rights

In August 2020, DOD told the MOD that the 215th Corps in Helmand Province had violated the Leahy Laws. Federal statutes 10 U.S.C. § 362 and 22 U.S.C. § 2378d, commonly referred to as the “Leahy Laws,” generally prohibit the Departments of Defense and State from providing assistance to a unit of a foreign security force if there is credible information that the unit committed a gross violation of human rights.²⁶⁸ DOD is withholding approximately \$12,590 from the FY 1400 MOD budget pending resolution of this matter.²⁶⁹

In its 2017 Congressionally mandated report on the implementation of the Leahy Laws, SIGAR questioned whether minimal monetary withholdings constituted sufficient incentive for the Afghan government to fully comply with Afghan and international law on human rights.²⁷⁰ As SIGAR reported in 2017, DOD has previously withheld (or threatened to withhold) some of its funding when the Afghan government took insufficient efforts to investigate reports of gross violations of human rights. For example, in 2016, DOD withheld the MOI’s travel budget and recommended the withholding of general officer and senior ministerial officials’ pay until MOI provided more complete reporting on 24 reported cases of gross human rights violations.²⁷¹

WORLD BANK PROGRAMMING FACES INCREASED PRESSURES FROM TALIBAN

The Taliban and other antigovernment armed groups have escalated their demands on World Bank-funded health services in Afghanistan in recent months, World Bank officials told ARTF donors this quarter. The Taliban demands and deteriorating security caused 20% of all health facilities supported by the Bank's Sehatmandi program to close.²⁷² (Sehatmandi funds Afghan government-contracted health services in 31 provinces.²⁷³)

According to one World Bank official, the Taliban accused some Sehatmandi health care providers of failing to meet their contractual obligations to fully staff and supply health facilities, delaying payment to health workers, and not maintaining health facilities. Further, the Taliban demanded that all health facilities have surgeons and ambulances—impossible achievements, the official said. The Taliban warned that if their demands are not met, they will take action against the service providers in what they call their judicial system.²⁷⁴

In order to ensure that health-care service providers are not making payments to antigovernment elements, the World Bank tasked its ARTF third-party monitor to review service provider financial transactions in at-risk provinces.²⁷⁵

Another World Bank official told donors that Taliban demands have impacted a number of other World Bank-supported programs, including the \$280 million COVID-19 Relief Effort for Afghan Communities and Households (REACH) project, the \$628 million Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP), and the \$100 million Emergency Agriculture and Food Supply Project (EATS).²⁷⁶

Representatives from the Ministry of Women's Affairs implementing the \$100 million Women's Economic Empowerment Rural Development Project (WEE-RDP) told donors this quarter that armed opposition groups controlled a significant number of community council sites in Baghlan, Badakhshan, Zabul, Uruzgan, Wardak, Logar, Ghazni, Paktika, and Kunduz Provinces.²⁷⁷ Of the planned 1,293 community councils for these nine provinces, 59% have not been established because the communities are controlled by armed opposition groups. Worryingly, these proposed community council sites are not concentrated in the remote districts of these provinces. Instead, 78% of the community council sites that were under the control of armed opposition groups are located in districts containing the province capital.²⁷⁸ The armed groups prevented the free movement of female project staff and opposed the creation of female self-help groups. Efforts to negotiate a solution through local leaders have thus far failed as the armed groups do not support these women's mobilization and empowerment activities.²⁷⁹

GOVERNANCE



The Taliban recently destroyed 260 government administrative buildings, according to the Afghan government. (Afghan government photo)

SUBNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

On July 15, Afghanistan’s Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) said that the Taliban had seized control of government office buildings in 29 provinces, destroying or setting fire to buildings in 106 Taliban-held districts and looting government assets in 149 districts. According to the IARCSC, 50,000 Afghan civil servants are unable to perform their duties and nearly 4,000 have been harmed or displaced.²⁸⁰

Provincial and Municipal Programs

USAID recently concluded its two subnational programs focused on provincial centers and municipalities: Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA), and Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience (SHAHAR). Table 3.16 summarizes total program costs and disbursements.

TABLE 3.16

USAID SUBNATIONAL (PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL) PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/8/2021
Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience (SHAHAR)	11/30/2014	3/31/2021	\$73,499,999	\$73,232,987
Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations (ISLA)	2/1/2015	3/31/2021	52,500,000	52,436,746
Citizens’ Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP)*	3/31/2012	12/31/2025	N/A	97,110,000

*This includes USAID contributions to ARTF with an express preference for the Citizens’ Charter Afghanistan Project. Data as of 4/20/2021.

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/14/2021; World Bank, Administrator’s Report on Financial Status, 4/20/2021, p. 5.

Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations

The concluded \$53 million ISLA program sought to help the Afghan government improve provincial governance through fiscal and development planning, citizen representation, and enhanced delivery of public services.²⁸¹

According to the final report, ISLA’s claimed to have created more systemic, inclusive, and evidence-based provincial planning and budget processes, as well as improved service delivery in Afghanistan.²⁸² ISLA highlighted a number of lessons learned, such as how close coordination with Afghan government ministries helped program implementation, the need for ministries to provide formal instruction and pressure on provincial entities to ensure better project implementation, and the need to continue serving as an interlocutor between government entities at the central and provincial levels.²⁸³

While ISLA-supported provinces demonstrated better budget execution and project completion compared to non-ISLA-supported provinces, the program faced a number of challenges.²⁸⁴ The project faced difficulties in aligning ISLA to Afghan government priorities, particularly as the Afghan government continually revised its subnational governance policies during

the life of the project. (For example, in May 2018, the Afghan government released its updated subnational governance policy that appeared to remove provinces from development planning.²⁸⁵) According to ISLA, while key Afghan government policy documents kept changing, ISLA remained bound to its scope of work and contract. ISLA said there was a clear disconnect between the central and provincial government entities and there was no common understanding of policies among government counterparts or even development partners. Decentralization was also slowly implemented, at times leaving provinces seeking more information, direction, and even motivation.²⁸⁶

At the provincial level, the main challenge ISLA faced was the Afghans' lack of motivation to participate in trainings, fora, and workshops unless there was monetary compensation. When multiple donor-funded projects conducted similar trainings or workshops, participants would go to events where they would get higher per diem or transportation allowance. Unless lunch was served, at town halls, people would not participate.²⁸⁷

Strong Hubs for Afghan Hope and Resilience

The objective of the \$74 million SHAHAR program was to create well-governed, fiscally sustainable Afghan municipalities capable of meeting the needs of a growing urban population. SHAHAR partnered with municipalities to deliver capacity-building for outreach and citizen consultation, improve financial management, and enhance urban service delivery.²⁸⁸

One challenge SHAHAR experienced over its six and a half years of implementation was attracting and retaining qualified staff. According to SHAHAR, the Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program for individuals employed by or on behalf of the U.S. government resulted in staff-retention difficulties for SHAHAR as Afghan personnel employed by the program left after receiving the visa. In total, 65 SIV-related resignations occurred during the program's lifetime, including those of the Kabul-based senior technical director, senior advisors, and four senior technical directors. In addition, USAID's requirement that implementing partners compensate staff in line with the Ministry of Finance's National Technical Assistance (NTA) salary scale implemented in late FY 2016 made attraction and retention even more difficult. In combination, the SIV program and the NTA requirement resulted in numerous open staff positions and multiple rounds of recruitment for positions.²⁸⁹

Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project

In October 2018, USAID began explicitly contributing a portion of its ARTF funds (\$34 million of its \$300 million contribution) to the Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project (CCAP). The Afghan government said CCAP, which began in 2016, is the centerpiece of its national inclusive-development strategy for rural and urban areas. CCAP works through Community

GOVERNANCE

Development Councils (CDCs) to implement community projects. CCAP defines a suite of minimum basic services for each community covering health, education, and their choice of an infrastructure investment (such as road access, electricity, or small-scale irrigation for rural communities).²⁹⁰

Both the World Bank and Afghan government have proposed expanding CCAP in the event of peace.²⁹¹ In November 2020, the World Bank proposed to donors that CCAP initiate peace pilot programs involving local conflict analyses, local-level peace dialogues, peace grants, and conflict and dispute-resolution training activities.²⁹² The Afghanistan Partnership Framework target for rolling out the CCAP peace pilot to 300 communities is 2022.²⁹³

The World Bank says the peace pilots have made considerable progress. The urban team will work in 75 communities in two of Jalalabad City's districts; the rural team will work in 304 communities in Nangarhar, Laghman, and Kunar Provinces. In addition to the regular CCAP budget to build infrastructure and strengthen local institutions, peace pilot communities will also receive a \$10,000 grant to be used for peace-related subprojects, such as sports competitions, cultural events, art competitions, and small infrastructure construction and/or repairs for community wide projects.²⁹⁴

As of March 2021, CCAP has reached 13,028 rural and urban communities (the end target was 11,750 communities) across Afghanistan, covering 13.6 million beneficiaries and with almost 50% participation of women in CDC elections.²⁹⁵

RULE OF LAW AND ANTICORRUPTION

Summary of rule-of-law and anticorruption programs

As shown in Table 2.17, the United States supports a number of active rule-of-law and anticorruption programs in Afghanistan.

TABLE 2.17

RULE OF LAW AND ANTICORRUPTION PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/8/2021
Assistance for Development of Afghan Legal Access and Transparency (ADALAT)	4/18/2016	4/17/2022	\$68,163,468	\$48,800,689
Afghanistan's Measure for Accountability and Transparency (AMANAT)	8/23/2017	8/22/2022	31,986,588	15,281,234
Corrections System Support Program (OASIS CSSP) Option Year 3*	6/1/2020	5/31/2021	18,021,588	10,048,581
Justice Sector Support Program OASIS Contract*	8/28/2017	8/27/2022	49,616,576	44,633,851
Transferring Professional Development Capacity (TPDC)*	8/31/2020	8/31/2023	12,500,000	12,500,000

*Disbursements as of 6/17/2021.

Source: State, INL, response to SIGAR data call, 6/17/2021; USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/14/2021.

Afghanistan's Measure for Accountability and Transparency (AMANAT)

In August 2017, USAID awarded a \$32 million contract for Afghanistan's Measure for Accountability and Transparency (AMANAT) program to support the Afghan government's efforts to reduce and prevent corruption in government public services.²⁹⁶ According to USAID, AMANAT supports select Afghan government institutions with technical assistance to plan for and implement recommended procedural reforms.²⁹⁷

In September 2020, the program was modified to remove certain anticorruption-related program tasks, such as conducting vulnerability-to-corruption assessments of Afghan government bodies and assisting Afghan government institutions to self-identify their corruption risks. Instead, AMANAT is now tasked with assisting the Access to Information Commission (AIC) in the implementation of the Access to Information Law.²⁹⁸ (Access to information is supposed to enable citizens to exercise their voice and to monitor and hold the government to account. Afghanistan's Access to Information Law came into effect in 2014, but has faced challenges in its implementation and enforcement.²⁹⁹) On December 14, the AMANAT program and the AIC signed a letter of agreement to facilitate capacity-building activities.³⁰⁰

AMANAT cited numerous challenges this quarter as it operated in uncertain security conditions, lack of progress of intra-Afghan peace talks, as well as targeted killings that have prevented programs from operating at their optimum capacity.³⁰¹ AMANAT continued to adjust its activities as COVID-19 variants, as well as vaccine skepticism, resulted in an increase in COVID-19 cases.³⁰² AMANAT worked on institutional development, capacity building, streamlining processes, as well as holding meetings to obtain more in-depth information about any problems regarding projects.³⁰³

While carrying out activities, AMANAT has had multiple proposed grants rejected by USAID, and was asked to provide significant justification regarding interventions for a specific activity.³⁰⁴ According to USAID, the intended purpose of the rejected grants was mainly to conduct anticorruption awareness-raising campaigns through radio messages, brochures, billboards, civic education, research surveys, and training. Although awareness raising is an element in fighting corruption, the grant proposals did not clearly explain how these interventions will reduce corruption, USAID said. AMANAT seeks more tangible outcomes and results instead of outputs; most of the rejected grants produced output-level results. Meanwhile, the lack of a mechanism to measure results was another key reason USAID rejected these grant applications.³⁰⁵

AMANAT is working with its local nongovernmental partners to improve project descriptions and reassess activities to ensure tangible outcomes resulting in sustainable impact are possible. AMANAT staff review the program description line-by-line to ensure these local partners understand

what improvements and changes need to be made to meet USAID's rigorous approval standards. These efforts are time-consuming and have slowed down the number of grants submitted to USAID for approval.³⁰⁶

Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP)

State's Justice Sector Support Program 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 contract began in August 2017 and has an estimated annual cost of \$24 million. The previous JSSP contract, which began in 2010, cost \$280 million.³⁰⁷

JSSP provides technical assistance to Afghan justice-sector institutions to: (1) build the capacity of justice institutions to be professional, transparent, and accountable; (2) assist the development of statutes that are clearly drafted, constitutional, and the product of effective, consultative drafting processes; and (3) support the case-management system so that Afghan justice institutions work in a harmonized and interlinked manner, and resolve cases in a transparent and legally sufficient manner.³⁰⁸

JSSP advises various Afghan government offices on how to use its Case Management System (CMS). CMS is an online database that tracks the status of criminal and civil cases in Afghanistan, across all criminal justice institutions, from the moment a case is initiated to the end of a subject's confinement.³⁰⁹

This quarter, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) independently established a CMS office for the first time, including office space, furniture, equipment, and staff. JSSP will provide training and mentoring to the staff. Separately, the JSSP development team completed foundational classes necessary for Afghan staff to manage CMS technology. Plans for piloting CMS 2.0 moved forward with agreement from relevant Afghan ministries.³¹⁰

JSSP local Afghan staff members are currently working from home due to increasing COVID-19 rates in Afghanistan and on the compound where the JSSP offices are located. At least five JSSP staff members have tested positive for COVID-19.³¹¹

Assistance for the Development of Afghan Legal Access and Transparency (ADALAT)

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."³¹² ADALAT collaborates with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) Department of the Huquq ("rights"). Huquq offices provide citizens the

opportunity to settle civil cases within the formal system before beginning a potentially lengthy court case.³¹³

During the most recent reporting quarter, ADALAT continued working with numerous MOJ directorates, including the training and human resources sections.³¹⁴ However, ADALAT faced numerous challenges such as lack of coordination between MOJ directorates, slow approval of staff participation in trainings, as well as inefficient recruiting, leading to fewer staff being available to be trained.³¹⁵ Despite these challenges, ADALAT updated its Huquq Reference Manual (HRM) to accommodate certain legal and regulatory revisions. These revisions were endorsed by the minister of justice.³¹⁶ ADALAT also developed a gender-based violence (GBV) manual to carry out trainings on GBV and children's rights.³¹⁷

ADALAT canceled activities such as Afghan Women Judges Association due to changing Afghan government priorities and lack of interest, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic.³¹⁸ Other initiatives such as increasing the number of female legal aid providers was discontinued as there was no interest in including the female legal aid providers in MOJ's organizational structure.³¹⁹ ADALAT has learned a number of lessons from its program activities, such as the need to develop alternative methods of conducting training when holding in-person training was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic.³²⁰

Transferring Professional Development Capacity (TPDC)

In August 2020, State launched Transferring Professional Development Capacity (TPDC) program, a follow-on to their Continuing Professional Development Support (CPDS) program that ended the same month. CPDS was itself a follow-on to the 2013–2016 Justice Training Transition Program. All three programs have used the same implementing partner, the nongovernmental International Development Law Organization headquartered in Rome. The TPDC program continues efforts to build the capacity of Afghan justice institutions to provide continuing professional development to their staff, with a special emphasis on Afghanistan's revised penal code.³²¹

In April 2021, TPDC collaborated with the AGO to conduct a second training for the AGO's International Crimes Department. Additionally, TPDC is working with the Supreme Court to extend similar training to its staff and judges. IDLO also assisted the Supreme Court in finalizing its annual training plan, which will consist of 29 TPDC-assisted penal code training courses. Similarly, TPDC is working towards transitioning training of master trainers to the AGO, Supreme Court, and MOJ's professional training departments. According to State, this will allow these institutional trainers to become master trainers and enhance the institutions' capacity to independently deliver training-of-trainer courses to their Kabul-based and provincial participants.³²²

SIGAR AUDIT

S. Rept. 116-126, accompanying the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill, 2020 directed SIGAR to assess “the Government of Afghanistan’s implementation, resourcing, and administration of the ‘Afghanistan National Strategy for Combating Corruption,’ including whether such government is making progress toward achieving its anti-corruption objectives, addressing impunity of powerful individuals, and meeting international commitments.” SIGAR has initiated this work and anticipates issuing a public report in 2021.

Corrections System Support Program (CSSP)

State’s Corrections System Support Program (CSSP) provides mentoring and advising support, training assistance, leadership capacity-building initiatives, infrastructure assistance, and nationwide case management for correctional facilities.³²³

According to State, a major accomplishment this quarter was inaugurating the first primary school in a female prison.

The school at the Kabul Female Prison and Detention Center and will provide educational and social programs for 98 children of female inmates. State will fund five female teachers for the first year, with Afghanistan’s Office of Prison Administration (OPA) committing to funding the school by April 2022.³²⁴

During the most recent quarter, State observed four prison hunger strikes, including 1,700 inmates of the Special Narcotics Prisons protesting their continued incarceration while COVID-19 cases have increased and 600 inmates of the Khost prison demanding no prisoner transfers to Pul-e Charkhi Prison, lower canteen prices, and an end to cell searches.³²⁵

As of May 31, 2021, a total of 5,330 national-security threat inmates are incarcerated in prisons run by the OPA. INL does not have access to data for such inmates incarcerated at prisons run by the National Directorate of Security.³²⁶

Anticorruption

According to DOJ, the Afghan government served 189 arrest warrants and summonses for corruption cases between April 1 and June 20, 2021. Of these, 22 corruption cases were referred to the Anti-Corruption Justice Center (ACJC).³²⁷ During this same time period, the ACJC investigated and prosecuted five generals, three members of the upper house of parliament, four mayors, and two members of provincial councils. All of these cases were high-profile, DOJ said.³²⁸

This quarter, Afghanistan’s Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) submitted a draft anticorruption strategy (an update to the previously expired strategy from 2017) to the High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption. The draft was rejected.³²⁹

COUNTERNARCOTICS

UNODC: Major Increase in 2020 Opium-Poppy Cultivation

Afghan opium-poppy cultivation in 2020 increased by 37% over the previous year, according to the executive summary for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s (UNODC) 2020 *Afghanistan Opium Survey: Cultivation and Production* report released this quarter; the full report had still not been issued as this report went to press. The new cultivation estimate tied

GOVERNANCE

with 2014 as the third-highest level since estimates began in 1994.³³⁰ No cause for the increase was given. UNODC earlier attributed a 2019 cultivation *decline* to falling dry-opium prices, yet the 2020 increase occurred despite record-low dry-opium prices (down 13% from 2019).³³¹ There was no indication that counternarcotics policy or other efforts influenced the increase.

According to the summary, an estimated 224,000 hectares (ha; one ha is about 2.5 acres) of opium poppy were cultivated in Afghanistan during 2020, up from 163,000 ha in 2019.³³² As seen in Figure 2.36, Afghanistan's southwestern region (Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabol Provinces) continues to dominate opium-poppy cultivation and accounted for 68% (152,935 ha) of the national total in 2020. In contrast to the southwestern region, southern Afghanistan (Ghazni, Khost, Paktika, and Paktiya Provinces) continued to have the least amount of opium-poppy cultivation with a mere 0.1% (290 ha) of the national total.³³³

Although opium-poppy cultivation increased 37% from 2019 to 2020, the value of the overall opiate economy (i.e., production, refining, and trafficking) has likely remained stable since 2018. In February 2021, UNODC attributed the opiate economy's 2018 and 2019 stability to traffickers' access to abundant stored supply and record-low farm-gate prices (the price a

UNODC Reports Major Increase in Opium-Poppy Cultivation

UNODC reports Afghanistan's opium-poppy cultivation increased in 2020 by 37% over 2019.

The new cultivation estimate tied with 2014 as the third-highest level since estimates began in 1994.

The southwestern region (Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Uruzgan, and Zabol Provinces) accounted for the largest portion of national cultivation (68%); the southern region (Ghazni, Khost, Paktika, and Paktiya Provinces) accounted for the least amount (0.1%).

Despite the increase in cultivation, the overall opiate economy has remained stable since 2018.

Drug interdiction and arrests continue to have a minimal impact on the country's opium-poppy cultivation.

Source: UNODC, "2019 Afghanistan Opium Survey: Socio-economic report," 2/2021, p. 4; UNODC, "World Drug Report 2020, booklet 1" 6/2020, p. 42; UNODC, "2020 Afghanistan Opium Survey: Cultivation and Production-Executive Summary," 4/2021, p. 4.

FIGURE 2.36

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF OPIUM-POPPY CULTIVATION, 2020



Source: UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2020: Executive Summary, 5/2021, pp. 6, 9.



Afghan women and children walk through a field in Achin District, Nangarhar Province. (U.S. Army photo)

farmer can expect to receive by selling directly from his farm).³³⁴ Although the full 2020 report is needed for more detailed analysis, the 2020 season again witnessed record-low farm-gate prices and the potential opium production of 6,300 tons was close to estimates for both 2018 and 2019 (6,400 tons each).³³⁵

The UNODC, in partnership with the Afghan National Statistics and Information Authority (NSIA), released the 2020 *Afghanistan Opium Survey: Cultivation and Production report* summary in May 2021 after multiple delays. The full report is scheduled for release later in 2021.³³⁶

State INL attributed report delays to challenges that the UNODC and NSIA experienced as they jointly developed a new satellite-imagery approach to estimate 2020 opium production in the absence of field surveys.³³⁷ These challenges have now been overcome. UNODC said that representative samples of previous years' data, in which both survey and satellite data were available, were visually ranked according to the quality of the crops in the field. The method was tested by using the visual rankings to predict average yields. The visual prediction was then verified against actual survey data. This method was then applied to 2020 satellite imagery to infer estimated yields in the absence of field survey data.³³⁸

INL reported that the UNODC's current plan is to stay in Afghanistan and continue to implement INL projects, despite the retrograde of U.S. military forces and contractors.³³⁹ INL has disbursed \$24.2 million since 2006 for the annual surveys.³⁴⁰

Interdiction Results

DEA reported this quarter that the value of narcotics intercepted from April 1 through June 14, 2021, was over \$20 million.³⁴¹ In total, interdiction activities resulted in seizures of 309 kilograms (kg) (681 lbs.) of opium, 84 kg (185 lbs.) of heroin, and 2,132 kg (4,700 lbs) of methamphetamines. Additionally, 11 arrests were made and 525 kgs (1,157 lbs.) of precursor chemicals and approximately 271 kg (597 lbs.) of hashish were seized by Afghan security forces during this period.³⁴² Table 2.18 contains interdiction results provided by DOD and DEA.

DEA reported that DEA-mentored, -partnered, or -supported counter-narcotics interdiction activities by the National Interdiction Unit (NIU) and the Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU) from April 1 through June 14, 2021, included 17 operations.³⁴³ Despite the improved capabilities of Afghan specialized units over the years, drug seizures and arrests have had minimal impact on the country's opium-poppy cultivation and production. For example, total opium seizures since FY 2008 are equivalent to approximately 8% of the country's 6,400 metric tons of opium production for the *single year* of 2019, as reported by UNODC.³⁴⁴

TABLE 2.18

INTERDICTION RESULTS, 2011–2021												
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020 ¹	2021 ²	TOTAL
Number of Operations	624	669	518	333	270	196	157	198	152	184	45	3,346
Arrests	862	535	386	442	394	301	152	274	170	263	34	3,813
Hashish seized (kg)	182,213	183,776	37,826	19,088	24,785	123,063	227,327	42,842	148,604	422,658	111,934	1,524,116
Heroin seized (kg)	10,982	3,441	2,489	3,056	2,859	3,532	1,975	3,242	3,507	585	287	35,955
Morphine seized (kg)	18,040	10,042	11,067	5,925	505	13,041	106,369	10,127	11,859	2	-	181,052
Opium seized (kg)	98,327	70,814	41,350	38,379	27,600	10,487	24,263	23,180	13,751	325	886	349,362
Precursor chemicals seized (kg)	122,150	130,846	36,250	53,184	234,981	42,314	89,878	22,863	81,182	30,849	56,075	900,572
Methamphetamine ³ (kg)	50	-	11	23	11	14	31	143	1,308	672	284	2,547

Note: The significant difference in precursor chemicals total seizures between 2014 and 2015 is due to a 12/22/2014 seizure of 135,000 kg of precursor chemicals.

- Indicates no data reported.

¹ Data covers January 1–December 8, 2020

² Data covers January 1–March 13, 2021, and from April 1–June 14, 2021

³ In crystal or powder form

Source: DEA, response to SIGAR data call, 6/16/2021.

Counternarcotics High Commission Stagnates

According to INL, no Counternarcotics High Commission (CNHC) meetings have been held or scheduled since its inaugural meeting in February 2020.³⁴⁵ The CNHC is Afghanistan's policymaking body and issues strategic directives while delegating day-to-day coordination and strategic development to the MOI.³⁴⁶ INL reported that CNHC directives remain in effect

and that ministries should provide progress reports at the next CNHC meeting (date not yet announced).³⁴⁷ One topic for discussion is the new two-year National Drug Action Plan (NDAP) to replace the one that covered 2015–2019.³⁴⁸ The NDAP still needs presidential approval. INL also said the president's office has been holding senior staff accountable for results, but provided no specific examples.³⁴⁹

CNPA Components and their Missions

INL reported that on May 20, 2021, leaders of the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) participated in a virtual International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) conference on methamphetamines as a global challenge. The conference had participants from 225 countries and international organizations. CNPA director General Abdul Sami Popalzai led Afghanistan's discussion with INL-funded regional cooperation advisor, Abdul Qayyum Samer. Popalzai highlighted the rapid increase in methamphetamine production in Afghanistan and Afghanistan's need for international counternarcotics support.³⁵⁰

CNPA personnel are located in all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces and comprise regular police as well as specialized units. The CNPA's counternarcotics operations include controlling precursor chemicals, airport interdiction, operating the forensic laboratory, crop eradication, and managing mobile detection teams. CNPA also coordinates with Afghan customs to stop drug trafficking.³⁵¹ INL provides support to specialized units within the CNPA through an interagency agreement with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).³⁵² INL will continue to provide support to the specialized units post-retrograde.³⁵³

CNPA specialized units consist of three major components: the U.S.-supported National Interdiction Unit (NIU), the Sensitive Investigative Unit (SIU), and the UK-supported Intelligence and Investigation Unit (IIU).³⁵⁴ Additionally, the U.S.-supported Technical Investigative Unit (TIU) provides support to the NIU and SIU components.³⁵⁵

The NIU conducts interdiction operations and seizures, serves arrest warrants, and executes search warrants in high-threat environments. The NIU receives mentoring from DEA. The NIU typically maintains forward-based personnel in Kandahar and has access to facilities in Kunduz and Herat.³⁵⁶

The SIU's mission is to identify significant drug-trafficking organizations operating in Afghanistan and dismantle them through the criminal-justice system. The SIU receives mentoring from the DEA and consists of hand-picked, thoroughly vetted personnel.³⁵⁷ The SIU also has four officers responsible for administrative management of court orders obtained by SIU investigators to conduct Afghan judicially authorized intercepts.³⁵⁸

The Technical Investigative Unit (TIU) is a CNPA component consisting of 100 translators who work within the Judicial Wire Intercept Program

(JWIP). The JWIP is a State-funded project to provide technical systems associated with the wiretap program and is executed by DEA through an interagency agreement with State. JWIP supports DEA operations as well as SIU and NIU investigations.³⁵⁹

Other Afghan law-enforcement elements such as the special operations General Command of Police Special Units execute high-risk arrests and operations including counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and counter-organized crime.³⁶⁰ The Afghan Uniform Police and Afghan Border Police (ABP) also participate in counternarcotics activities.³⁶¹

U.S. Training and Funding of Afghan Counternarcotics Elements

INL reported that it has made no major adjustments to its implementation or oversight of projects and continues to monitor conditions in Afghanistan to determine if changes may be necessary due to the withdrawal of U.S. military and contractor personnel.³⁶²

INL did report this quarter that one funding adjustment included ending training-facility operations and maintenance support that assisted U.S. military teams to train and mentor the NIU. Prior to May 16, 2020, U.S. Special Forces were assigned to mentor the NIU at the Camp Bishop training facility. At that time, INL funded Camp Bishop operations and maintenance but did not otherwise fund U.S. Special Forces activities. Following the military retrograde, this INL support ceased.³⁶³

INL's counternarcotics efforts continue to support the ongoing peace process between the Afghan government and the Taliban to achieve a political settlement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.³⁶⁴

DEA likewise reported that it plans to maintain a long-term presence and mentoring role in Afghanistan, even after all U.S. forces are withdrawn. The only caveat DEA added was that a significant and permanent deterioration in the security situation may affect current intentions.³⁶⁵ DEA has noted that it has a long history in Afghanistan, predating September 11, 2001, and the arrival of U.S. forces, and intends to remain engaged in Afghanistan for as long as the Afghan government permits.³⁶⁶ DEA indicated that going forward, it will work with the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and relevant stakeholders on any required contingency plans to maintain its longer-term presence in the absence of U.S. military forces and contractors.³⁶⁷

Both INL and DEA noted that coordination continues within multilateral and bilateral formats, in accord with guidelines for mitigating COVID-19.³⁶⁸

INL said there have been no major changes to program funding, and estimates that it funds approximately \$21 million per year in operations and maintenance for INL programming in Afghanistan, including for the NIU and SIU.³⁶⁹ INL has disbursed \$44.2 million to DEA through an interagency agreement to support the specialized units as of February 2021.³⁷⁰

Costs directly attributable to NIU and SIU include \$6 million for two years of JWIP (not including other costs DEA and DOD may incur

in support of the wiretap system), \$9.6 million for two years of other interagency-agreement support, and \$825,000 per year for NIU salary supplements.³⁷¹ Salary supplements are used to attract and retain the most qualified and highly trained officers to join the specialized units rather than remain with the regular CNPA. A graduated scale of supplements is provided to all NIU officers, from police officers to unit commanders.³⁷²

INL said less significant funding changes this year included renewed support at a slightly reduced annual commitment of \$5.6 million to the DEA interagency agreement on April 1, 2021, down about \$600,000 from the prior level. On May 1, 2021, INL entered into a new interagency agreement with DOD to fund the \$1.4 million annual cost of JWIP linguist support. INL also reported completion of the Counternarcotics Justice Center well water project in Kabul and completion of the Regional Law Enforcement Centers' refurbishments in Herat and Kunduz.³⁷³

Eradication Update

INL reported that the Afghan government undertook eradication efforts in five provinces (including northern Jowzjan, northeastern Badakhshan, eastern Nangarhar, southern Khost, and southwestern Uruzgan), but that the UNODC has only been able to verify very small amounts eradicated in Nangarhar Province.³⁷⁴ Since 2009, INL has reimbursed the cost of UNODC-verified eradication at a flat rate of \$250 per verified hectare eradicated.³⁷⁵ INL reported that although eradication planning occurred in 2021, the effects of that planning effort are unknown. As in years past, MOI reported that flooding and insecurity negatively impacted its eradication efforts.³⁷⁶

Prior to the 2019 dissolution of the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN), INL provided direct eradication assistance through the Governor-Led Eradication (GLE) program. According to INL, the MOI now manages this ongoing program, with the CNPA implementing independent Afghan eradication and GLE. Since the MCN dissolution, INL has been unable to provide funding for the GLE program because it is required to vet the CNPA's financial-control mechanisms.³⁷⁷

INL reported that its financial-management risk assessment of the MOI was recently completed, and the final report is pending. The assessment was conducted based on USAID's Public Financial Management Risk Assessment Framework.³⁷⁸ Earlier, INL reported that the INL-funded MOI financial advisor, hired in September 2020, is a key actor in the effort to improve the MOI's and, specifically, the Counternarcotics Police of Afghanistan's (CNPA), financial capacity. These developments helped initiate MOI's internal technical review and the associated INL-funded CNPA financial audit, which is required for distribution of certain types of INL counternarcotics funding.³⁷⁹

In June 2021, INL received a draft assessment report that indicated no remediation was necessary to reimburse MOI and the CNPA for eradication

in 2021. Based on this information, INL prepared a draft agreement, modeled on implementing instructions from prior years, that would permit reimbursement to the CNPA for costs associated with UNODC-verified poppy eradication.³⁸⁰

REFUGEES AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

According to State, the Afghan government has limited ability to absorb returning **refugees** and **migrants**. While the government uses the Afghan Returnee Information System (ARIS) to register and collect data on returning refugees, the government does not consistently track returning migrants, State said. In addition to challenges posed by the ongoing conflict, refugee returnees and returning migrants have difficulty integrating into their communities of origin due to the high unemployment rate and a lack of sufficient services, including health services and lack of access to land.³⁸¹

Most communities are not prepared to absorb large numbers of returning refugees at one time. Therefore, State says the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Returnees (MORR) encourage returning refugees to resettle in 40 localities identified as priority areas, where UNHCR and other donors concentrate and coordinate humanitarian and development assistance.³⁸²

For internally displaced persons, State says the Afghan government has limited to no capacity to respond to internal displacement independent of intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations.³⁸³

Afghan Refugees

As of July 1, UNHCR reported that 1,150 refugees voluntarily returned to Afghanistan in 2021. Most of the refugees returned from Iran (708) and Pakistan (400).³⁸⁴ UNHCR estimated that approximately 2.6 million Afghans were refugees in other countries in 2020.³⁸⁵

This quarter, the Pakistani government, with the assistance of UNHCR, launched the Document Renewal and Information Verification Exercise (DRIVE), a country-wide campaign in Pakistan to verify the 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees living there. Taking place in areas across Pakistan that host large numbers of Afghan refugees, DRIVE aims to provide all registered refugees in the country with a new government-issued biometric smartcard, enhance protection, enable access to critical services, and increase the accuracy of population data.³⁸⁶

Besides providing legally recognized proof of identity and identity verification, including in the banking sector, this exercise will provide an opportunity to better understand the existing needs in the refugee community. DRIVE also supports the collection of data on the educational and professional backgrounds of refugees in order to assist those who may

Refugees: Persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection. According to the UNHCR, refugees have the right to safe asylum and should receive at least the same rights and basic help as any other foreigner who is a legal resident.

Migrants: Persons who change their country of usual residence, irrespective of the reason for migration or legal status. According to the UN, there is no formal legal definition of an international migrant.

Source: United Nations, "Refugees and Migrants: Definitions," 2019; UNHCR, "Protecting Refugees: questions and answers," 2/2002.

GOVERNANCE

decide to return to Afghanistan in the future. The new biometric Proof of Registration (POR) cards will be valid from June 2021 to June 2023.³⁸⁷

Undocumented Afghan Migrant Returnees

As of July 1, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) reported that 604,176 undocumented Afghan migrants (spontaneous returnees and deportees) returned from Iran and 6,824 undocumented from Pakistan in 2021.³⁸⁸

Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement

As of July 1, 2021, conflicts had induced 267,260 Afghans to flee their homes, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). That count of conflict-induced internally displaced persons recorded is 101% more than for the same period last year, when OCHA reported 133,200 displaced persons.³⁸⁹ According to UNHCR, the escalating conflict in Afghanistan presents a “looming humanitarian crisis.”³⁹⁰

WOMEN’S ADVANCEMENT

Presently, USAID has only one remaining Promote program, which aims to strengthen women’s participation in civil society.³⁹¹ Table 2.19 show the current Promote and women’s-focused programs.

Promote’s Musharikat (Women’s Rights Groups and Coalitions) program is focused on advancing women’s participation in the peace process, political participation, and addressing gender-based violence (GBV).³⁹² Musharikat’s Women in Peace Process Coalition (WIP), continued its activities this quarter, with popular discussion topics revolving around the power of President Biden to preserve women’s rights, the low number of women at the international peace conferences, and delays in the peace talks.³⁹³ Musharikat hopes to continue surveying members to provide insights from participants to improve programmatic activities.³⁹⁴ Along with hosting these discussions, Musharikat also hosted trainings to improve persuasion skills, installing public murals, and theatrical performances.³⁹⁵

Along with these activities, Musharikat also arranged workshops to support Afghan women rights through advocacy and lobbying, as well as working with USAID’s SHAHAR program to identify women who are

TABLE 2.19

USAID GENDER PROGRAM				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/8/2021
Promote: Women’s Rights Groups and Coalitions	9/2/2015	9/1/2021	\$34,534,401	\$30,104,678

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/14/2021.



Women in the southern province of Helmand discuss the ongoing peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban. (UNAMA Photo)

working in civil service positions to take part in programs.³⁹⁶ Musharikat also arranged negotiation workshops with trainees learning how to negotiate with the Taliban with a focus on preserving certain rights and values while showing flexibility in others, such as being ready to wear a tighter head covering and “behaving accordingly” in negotiations with the Taliban in exchange for the recognition of due rights for women.³⁹⁷

According to USAID, increased violence and threats to civil society organizations continue to negatively impact Musharikat, resulting in the cancellation and postponement of several activities. Additionally, Musharikat civil society partners have reportedly been named as potential targets in the current trend of targeted killings, causing some activists to move from Afghanistan to Europe and other countries in South Asia.³⁹⁸

Report Discusses Rural Women’s Hopes and Fears

In July, the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) released a report on the hopes and fears of rural Afghan women that found varying perspectives on the security situation and what peace could mean. The researchers interviewed 23 women across 20 districts between June and November 2020 (around the start of the Afghan peace negotiations beginning in September 2020).³⁹⁹ According to AAN, many of the women said they hoped peace would result in greater freedom of movement and enable work or education. The interviewees hoped for greater peace of mind, more income and better investment opportunities, better health facilities, and a greater feeling of safety.⁴⁰⁰

Perceptions of the security situation varied and were highly localized. For example, three of the four women who lived in areas completely under Taliban control said the security situation had improved at the time of the interview due to a decrease in night raids, air strikes and drone attacks, and/or because Afghan government forces had retreated to more distant bases.⁴⁰¹ Of the three women interviewed in Ghazni Province, two said their areas suffered from violence due to ongoing skirmishes between the Afghan government and the Taliban, while the third woman said the situation had recently become much calmer since the government no longer ventured into the area.⁴⁰²

Most women interviewed said they left their homes only when it was strictly necessary, although their definition of “necessity” varied. For those who lived in insecure or conservative areas, necessity included family visits, weddings and ceremonies, and, to a lesser extent, medical reasons. Others also went out for work, shopping, or to school, although this usually depended on the security situation.⁴⁰³

When asked about their hopes for peace, the responses were similarly varied. Many of the interviewees hoped that peace would allow them to move around more freely, pursue work or education, and that the economy would improve. Others, however, said they thought things would probably stay the same or even worsen if there was peace. Several feared that an agreement could result in greater Taliban control and diminish their freedom to work, study, or leave the house. This was particularly the case for the women who had experienced a recent transfer of power to the Taliban in their area, and had the restrictions on their lives increase, as well as those with personal or family memories of the Taliban’s previous rule.⁴⁰⁴

SIGAR EVALUATION REPORT

On December 23, 2015, a bipartisan group of 93 U.S. Senators and members of the House of Representatives requested that SIGAR conduct an inquiry into the U.S. government’s experience with allegations of sexual abuse of children committed by members of the Afghan security forces, and the manner in which DOD and State implemented the Leahy laws in Afghanistan. The Leahy laws prohibit the U.S. funding of units of foreign forces that commit gross violations of human rights. SIGAR found that although DOD and State had received credible information regarding incidents of child sexual assault perpetrated by members of the Afghan security forces, the Secretary of Defense had used an exemption authority granted by statute to continue providing select training, equipment, and other assistance to some of the Afghan security-force units implicated in those incidents. Following SIGAR’s report, Congress removed the exemption authority—known as the “notwithstanding clause”—from subsequent funding provisions for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, through which the United States provides funding for Afghan security forces.

HUMAN RIGHTS

State Continues to Rate Afghanistan's Human-Trafficking Efforts at Worst Level

Last year, State downgraded Afghanistan's human-trafficking rating to the lowest level since State first rated the country in 2002.⁴⁰⁵ This year, State maintained this low rating, saying the Afghan government still does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and it is not making significant efforts to do so. State observed a government pattern of sexual slavery in government compounds (*bacha bazi*—a practice in which men exploit boys for social and sexual entertainment) for recruitment and for use as child soldiers.⁴⁰⁶

Despite the lack of significant efforts, the government took some notable steps to address trafficking, State reported, including prosecuting and convicting members of the security services for *bacha bazi*, removing some child soldiers from the armed forces, and indicting the chief of the Major Crimes Task Force for trafficking crimes (the highest-ranking government official to face such charges). A school headmaster was also indicted in connection with the 2019 Logar case, which included *bacha bazi*; he was the first government employee to be charged in relation to the case. The government increased antitrafficking trainings for security officials, the judiciary, and prosecutors, and finalized a national referral mechanism to increase the identification of trafficking victims and refer them to proper services.⁴⁰⁷

However, State said the government did not investigate or prosecute many high-level security officials or government employees for *bacha bazi*, despite continuing reports of complicity. The government reported limited efforts to address other trafficking crimes that were not *bacha bazi*. The government has never prosecuted any military or police officials for recruitment or use of child soldiers despite credible reporting of the practice. Authorities continued to arrest, detain, penalize, and abuse many trafficking victims, including punishing sex-trafficking victims for “moral crimes” and sexually assaulting victims who attempted to report trafficking crimes to law-enforcement officials. Due to inadequate victim protection, some non-governmental organizations would not assist trafficking victims in reporting their traffickers to law enforcement.⁴⁰⁸