



# AFGHANISTAN

## The Current Situation

Afghanistan faces an increasing number of obstacles to reconstruction and stabilization. Security is deteriorating as the country experiences a surge in suicide bombings and insurgent attacks. The Taliban continue to operate within Pakistan and cross the border to attack foreign forces in Afghanistan, leading to ongoing clashes with US-led forces in the southeast. The division of foreign military forces into US and NATO structures has made cooperation difficult, with some NATO allies refusing to send troops to the southeastern border. The lack of security feeds the opium trade, which continues to flourish despite US anti-narcotics efforts. Other civilian and military reconstruction efforts are seen as fragmented and ineffective. The slow pace of development and widespread government corruption is harming public support for the Karzai government.

## Going Forward

To ensure long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan, sustained action in several key areas must be taken. Security concerns need to be addressed, as reconstruction efforts cannot succeed if security continues to deteriorate. The rule of law must be strengthened, as Afghanistan cannot move forward without an effective judicial system. Investments in public education and civil society initiatives should include programs that develop indigenous dispute resolution and local capacities for peacebuilding. Public awareness of and dialogue about the challenges facing Afghan society are equally important within the international community of experts and policymakers. USIP is actively addressing these issues through a variety of programs.

## Promoting a Secure Environment

### ***Fortifying Afghanistan: The Role of US and Coalition Internal Security Assistance***

As security conditions in Afghanistan worsen, USIP is assessing how the international community's security assistance can be most effective. The Institute, in collaboration with the RAND Corporation, conducted a project to assess security threats in Afghanistan. The project maps present security assistance programs in Afghanistan that are attempting to confront those threats and analyzes where duplication and gaps exist. A small workshop, that included experts from the State Department, the NSC, Brookings Institution, Center for Strategic and International Studies, the British Embassy and experts from USIP, held at USIP on September 16, 2008 and the first draft of the report "Securing Afghanistan: Getting Back on Track" was presented and discussed. The final version of this report released in February 2009 and is now available on USIP website.

## Promoting Peacebuilding Through Public Education and Civil Society Initiatives

### ***Mediation and Peacebuilding Training for Afghan Religious Leaders***

In recognition of the critical role spiritual leaders play in the peacebuilding process, the Institute convened 50 Afghan ulama and religious scholars for two workshops on conflict resolution and peacemaking, the first of which was held at the Darul Uloom-e

Imam Abu Hanifa and the second at Darul Hefaz Madrassah in Kabul province. Religious leaders were taught peacemaking practices, mediation skills, approaches for using Islamic principles of nonviolence, and ways of helping communities confront histories of violence. There will be two more workshops for religious schools in the next few weeks. An international summit on reconciliation in Kabul will conclude this series of workshops. This gathering of religious scholars from Egypt, Jordan and Pakistan will focus on peacebuilding in the Muslim tradition and the responsibilities of mullahs in 21st century.

### ***Network of Afghan Conflict Managers***

In partnership with the Institute's local partner, the Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan (WADAN), USIP has conducted two "train-the-trainers" workshops for 36 Afghan professionals in Kabul in April and July 2008. The goal was to strengthen the skills of Afghan conflict managers and to develop a self-expanding network of Afghan facilitators working in all parts of the country. USIP will continue to work with the Afghan conflict management facilitators by conducting advanced conflict management trainings in April 2009.

### ***University of Kabul Center for Peacebuilding***

The Institute, in partnership with Kabul University and at the Center for Policy and Human Development (CPHD) in Kabul has helped create Afghanistan's first peer-reviewed academic research journal. The first issue of Sirana (Research), a journal of peacebuilding and human development, has been published in Dari, Pashto, and English. Two faculty workshops in "Textbook Writing" and "Teaching Peacebuilding" were held in July and August. USIP is negotiating with a local partner to run a series of conflict resolution and peacebuilding workshops at provincial universities. It is also working to expand available conflict resolution and peacebuilding materials in Dari and Pashto and is consulting with CPHD to develop a list of texts for translation. The Institute is sponsoring a peace fellow who will attend UPEACE Costa Rica next year for a masters degree in Peacebuilding.

### ***Civil Society Capacity Building for Dialogue and Conflict Resolution***

USIP is helping strengthen the capacity of local communities to analyze and resolve conflicts through peaceful means, integrating best-practice in negotiation and mediation with traditional means of conflict resolution. In this connection, two projects are currently being conducted in partnership with the Women Activities and Social Services Association (WASSA) and Sanayee Development Organization (SDO) in western Afghanistan. USIP is also working with the Cooperation for Peace and Unity in Afghanistan (CPAU), a local NGO, to promote public understanding of peaceful resolution of conflict through peace education programming offered to school children, their teachers and members of the wider community in the Northern city of Kunduz.

## **Promoting the Rule of Law**

### ***Enhancing Capabilities for Transitional Justice in Afghanistan***

USIP is undertaking a series of interrelated initiatives to promote justice and accountability for serious abuses, including: developing a comprehensive documentation database framework to organize information on past crimes and human rights abuses; advising the Advisory Panel on Presidential Appointments on appropriate evidentiary standards to apply to its evaluation of candidates on the grounds of involvement with past crimes and human rights abuse; sponsoring a symposium of Islamic legal scholars to address the extent to which international standards of transitional justice are compatible with or supported by Islamic Law; and identifying and supporting grass roots civil society organizations seeking to represent the interests of victims.

### ***Relations Between Formal and Informal Justice Systems***

At present, some 80-90% of all legal cases in Afghanistan, criminal and civil, are resolved outside the formal legal system in community forums. Such forums are generally deemed more accessible, cheaper, less corrupt and more legitimate than the formal courts. USIP is working with the Ministry of Justice to finalize a policy document on relations between the formal and informal justice systems. Recently, USIP signed contracts with two implementing partners to launch a pilot program that will be carried out in four districts of Afghanistan with a focus on establishing concrete relationships between the formal and informal systems. The program will help develop models for collaboration between the two systems to improve the delivery of justice, resolve disputes, and protect rights.

### ***Constitutional Interpretation and Implementation***

In close consultation with USAID and other donors and building on previous work with the Chief Justice, USIP is organizing a series of workshops, which will include a review on the policy of access to the Supreme Court for constitutional and non-constitutional issues; the decision-making methodology of the court in constitutional cases, including those involving “Islamic” questions; the issuance and effect of legal opinions; and legal reforms that may be required to implement this vision. USIP will then work with the court to transform the results of these efforts into laws and policies of the court that regulate the judicial function. It is essential that the reform process be owned from the beginning by the Court and not by donors or their implementers.

### ***International Network to Promote the Rule of Law-Afghanistan***

It is essential that rule of law professionals working in Afghanistan are linked to each other and to outside resources that can help with the difficult challenges they face. USIP supports the rule of law community in Afghanistan through its International Network to Promote the Rule of Law (INPROL). Specifically, USIP has created a clearinghouse of documents related to rule of law challenges in Afghanistan that serves as a read-ahead and ongoing resource to deploying practitioners and as a means to create virtual handovers in a high-turnover environment. It also allows for virtual working groups to communicate on Afghanistan-specific issues.

### ***Priority Grantmaking Initiative: Rule of Law***

Any successful program to create accountable government and build broad support for the rule of law must engage the citizenry as well as the responsible institutions. The creation of bar associations, watchdog groups, human rights NGOs, and community ombudsman offices are all essential underpinnings of a strategy to create accountable government. USIP invests in civil society through grants that promote efforts to protect rights, educate the public, and create access to justice. USIP is currently working with the Tribal Liaison Office (TLO), a local NGO, to strengthen a key conflict mediation mechanism, the Commissions on Conflict Mediation (CCM), in Paktia and Khost provinces. This project will contribute to the emergence of an integrated justice system in which tribal institutions are able to fill gaps in existing state capacity and mediate conflicts.

## **Promoting Understanding in the US Policy Community**

### ***Afghan Fellowship***

USIP sponsored Mr. Masoom Stanekzai, an advisor to President Karzai, who recently completed a three-month fellowship program at the Institute as a senior Afghan Fellow. His research and subsequent report focused on peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts with a special focus on reconciliation. During his Fellowship at USIP, Masoom has published a Special Report “Thwarting Afghanistan’s Insurgency: A Pragmatic Approach to Peace and Reconciliation,” (September 2008); a USIP Peace Brief “Afghanistan is Not Lost, But Needs More Attention,” (June 2008); and Op-ed

posted on the Britannica Blog “The Food Crisis in Afghanistan: More than Band-Aids are Needed.” In addition, he has engaged with the think tank and policy communities in both Washington DC and New York and made numerous presentations both inside and outside of USIP. USIP also extended a three-month Fellowship to Mr. Ahmad Fahim Hakim, Deputy Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, in August 2008. The focus of Hakim’s fellowship was on the 2009 and 2010 elections in Afghanistan.

### ***External Expert Afghanistan Working Group***

USIP’s Afghanistan Working Group serves as a hub for top experts and US government personnel working on Afghanistan. The Working Group hosts meetings on current critical issues, disseminates information and creates an informal space for interagency and intergroup communication and collaboration, which ultimately leads to improved approaches and strategies in Afghanistan. In January 2009, the Future of Afghanistan Project, directed by J Alexander Thier, launched a new book of essays from the USIP Press entitled "The Future Of Afghanistan." The volume identifies weaknesses of early approaches and outlines a vision for success going forward.



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