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# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

This Special Report addresses the lack of clarity on which programs best foster stability in fragile and conflict-affected areas. It is the result of a collaboration of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), and the Empirical Studies of Conflict Project at Princeton University to assess the impact of USAID's stabilization programs on Afghanistan. The report does not reflect the views of USIP, USAID, or any U.S. government agency.

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## Aid and Stabilization in Afghanistan

### What Do the Data Say?

#### Summary

- Stabilization programs generally have only a modest impact on violent conflict and other key outcome measures. Policymakers and implementers should not expect to generate large or persistent effects.
- Smaller projects can be targeted at specific gaps in particular communities and may be less likely to fuel instability.
- Despite the potential benefits, the U.S. government would find it difficult—given its current management structure—to manage hundreds of smaller projects.
- Program design needs to account for the role of antigovernment elements.
- Data collection is a crucial part of program design and needs to be integrated from the outset.
- Evaluating the impact of complex stabilization programs in ways that can improve future programming is critical to economic development and national security.

#### Introduction

After spending billions of dollars on foreign assistance in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, donor organizations, policymakers, and academics are still uncertain about which programs best foster stability in fragile and conflict-affected areas. This lack of clarity has serious political, social, and economic consequences, affecting decisions on how much and in what to invest to support counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and economic development programming. Moreover, ongoing conflicts in Syria, West Africa, and other parts of the world raise the questions of what worked and what did not. In particular, some aid programs in Afghanistan focused on stabilization, meaning that the objectives included reducing vio-

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lence, increasing support for the government, and undermining the insurgency. Were such programs effective in meeting those goals?

The most common types of stabilization programming include

- efforts to improve local government capacity for service delivery to increase legitimacy and strengthen ties with communities;
- community-led small infrastructure projects to improve community cohesion and resilience to conflict;
- youth training and education to increase positive engagement with their communities and reduce susceptibility to violent extremism; and
- agricultural development to provide rural income and employment and provide alternatives to poppy cultivation while reducing local and transnational criminality.

The question for USAID's stabilization programs in Afghanistan (the focus of this report) is the extent to which these projects were associated with changes in key outcomes—including security, popular support for the government, popular support for antigovernment elements, community cohesion and resilience, health of the Afghan people, economic well-being of the Afghan people, and conflict events.

This report does not claim to estimate the causal relationships between projects and outcomes. Although many of the outcomes were likely influenced by project activity, project activity itself was likely affected by violence levels, population attitudes, population well-being, and other outcomes of interest. The possibility of reverse causation or many of the omitted variables that may come into play in such a complex setting are not addressed. In other words, what would have happened in the counterfactual scenario when the program was not implemented cannot be cleanly established. Instead, the objective was to establish conditional correlations and the magnitude of various effects associated with stabilization programs even in the absence of causal claims.

Given data limitations, it soon became apparent that an authoritative, quantitative study on the impact of USAID programming on stabilization was beyond reach. Three closely related objectives were therefore pursued instead: reviewing the research to date on the relationship between aid and stabilization in Afghanistan, extracting key findings for USAID and the U.S. government from the data and studies, and—finally—providing recommendations for data collection efforts in the future, in particular with respect to conflict zones.

In general, all of the indicators of interest show improvement over time—albeit modestly and with substantial regional variation. Violence is persistent and few programs have had a significant impact on it. Some of the smaller programs—such as the Community Cohesion Initiative of the USAID Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and the U.S. Department of Defense Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP)—seem to be correlated with increases in support for the Afghan government. For its part, the USAID Local Governance and Community Development program is robustly associated with improvement in health outcomes. Although the World Bank-administered National Solidarity Program (NSP) and the USAID OTI-administered community cohesion programs were only associated with small, but statistically detectable, improvements initially, they were also the only programs among those analyzed that were still correlated with desirable outcomes over the following six to eighteen months.

At the same time, interviews reveal that most project managers found it difficult to answer the question of how to define success for stabilization programs generally. They were quick to enumerate specific project outcomes, such as improved delivery of seed and increased participation in local councils, but the lack of a specific and consistent definition of the term *stabilization* made it difficult for many to collect metrics or assess the broader

impact of their activities. This lack highlights just how critical initial program design, including measurement and evaluation mechanisms, is to allowing specific program evaluation and broad panel analyses.

## Aid and Stabilization: The Connection

Numerous external performance and impact evaluations of stabilization projects by the U.S. government and military, other donor governments, and international organizations in Afghanistan have been conducted over the past decade. To take some examples, a small subset of USAID stabilization programs were evaluated in the Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) assessment, the NSP was evaluated in a randomized controlled trial, and the U.S. military's CERP was studied in a detailed independent evaluation and in an academic paper published in a leading political science journal.<sup>1</sup> Separately, a number of organizations undertook ongoing detailed collection of attitudinal data on stabilization and governance programs, as well as on perceptions of security and governance. These include the Asia Foundation's Survey of the Afghan People, the Afghan Center for Socio-Economic and Opinion Research and D3 Systems' Afghan Futures Survey, and Afghanistan Nationwide Quarterly Assessment Research.

Quantitative data was linked to information on stabilization efforts in Afghanistan to shed light on the relationship between programming and trends in key outcomes such as violence, public attitudes, personal health, and economic well-being. Over a six-month period, data from multiple sources on different programs that ran in Afghanistan were compiled and analyzed. These data included detailed information from the MISTI, NSP, and CERP evaluations, project-level records on OTI programs, tracking on the types and location of all USAID projects in the country from 2010 to 2015, a range of information from quarterly surveys, and newly analyzed satellite imagery that included measures of nighttime luminosity (a proxy for economic activity). In total, 110 studies related to the general topic of aid and stabilization in Afghanistan were identified. Of these, eighty-nine were reviewed (the others were dropped for methodological or other shortcomings). These studies were carried out by program evaluators, government agencies, academics, and think tanks.

Across these studies, nearly two hundred indicators were used in various combinations to measure and track what the literature implicitly or explicitly defines as stabilization, which indicates the difficulty the aid community has had in reaching agreement on an authoritative definition of the term. Most of these indicators are related to changes in security (the presence or absence of violence), public opinion (especially in favorable attitudes toward the Afghan government and negative opinions toward the insurgents), and perceptions of government capacity to provide such benefits as health care and economic opportunity.

The following questions provided the focal point for this analysis:

- What did USAID stabilization projects achieve?
- Over what period are these effects apparent and how quickly do any gains or losses fade?
- How does the presence or absence of military forces affect the outcomes of USAID stabilization projects?
- What types of synergies and confounding factors exist between the stabilization programs carried out by different actors?
- To what extent are the impacts of stabilization programs a function of contractual design or the sectors targeted?
- What common features emerge when looking across multiple stabilization projects, whether successful or unsuccessful?

## USAID Programming Impact

The first question homes in on whether USAID stabilization projects (and donor community stabilization projects more generally) achieved improvements in the key outcomes of improved security and fewer violent events, increased popular support for the government and turning against antigovernment elements, heightened community cohesion and resilience, better health for the Afghan people, and economic development and growth. Overall, analysis suggests overall, if modest, improvements in many parts of Afghanistan through (or up to) 2014: declining violence, increasing support for the Afghan government, and modest gains in some aspects of health and economic outcomes. Despite relatively high military presence in both areas, southwestern Afghanistan seems to have trended better in terms of stabilization outcomes than the country's south.

Evidence is substantial in the literature that USAID stabilization programming in Afghanistan had a small but positive, short-term impact on local security environments—that is, a reduction in violence and a higher proportion of the population reporting that they feel secure. Regional variation was considerable, however. Evaluations of specific programs provide evidence of micro-level impacts, largely in terms of changes in popular perceptions of the local security environment. The robustness of this evidence is mixed, ranging from the fully representative random probability surveys of the MISTI program to qualitative case studies to more anecdotal reviews of existing programs.

However, as is true in assessing nearly all outcomes of stabilization programming, significant gaps remain in our understanding of how sustainable these impacts are in the medium to long term. The academic literature on stabilization aid highlights the ambiguities associated with the effects of development assistance on conflict and security. For example, recent empirical studies suggest that development assistance may exacerbate or prolong civil conflict, either by providing insurgent groups the incentive to use violence to derail projects that may weaken their position or by increasing all combatants' uncertainty about the other side's relative strength.<sup>2</sup>

The literature indicates that the impact of aid on security depends heavily on levels of government control and insurgent presence in districts where projects are implemented: stabilization aid reduces violence only when administered in districts controlled by pro-government forces.<sup>3</sup> That physical security itself is a key determinant of successful program implementation, and sustainability complicates assessments of the independent impact of development aid on security as an outcome.<sup>4</sup> This is particularly salient when considering how integrated many potential insurgents were in the general community. Indeed, broader studies find that humanitarian assistance in conflict settings does not have uniform effects and that the impact of violence on changes in civilian attitudes depends on whether the perpetrator is viewed as part of their in-group.<sup>5</sup>

Evidence was largely inconsistent on the relationship between stabilization programs and support for either government or antigovernment elements. In many cases, how much the programs influenced attitudes was driven by activities outside the program's control.<sup>6</sup> One key factor was the degree to which projects were implicated in government corruption. This evidence supports the often-stated assumption that the fundamental conflict drivers in Afghanistan are inherently political: ethnic grievances, inter- and intra-tribal disputes, fights over shares of resources, and the like.

A considerable proportion of Afghan citizens believe the main cause of insecurity to be their own government, which they perceive as massively corrupt, predatory, and unjust. A stabilization theory that relies on using aid to win the population over to such a negatively perceived government would inherently face an uphill battle.<sup>7</sup> Evidence is too scant to justify the claim that the Taliban or other antigovernment elements were perceived as more

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effective in addressing the people's highest priority needs of security and access to justice. Evidence is contradictory as to whether individuals viewed support for the Afghan government or the Taliban as zero-sum and the extent to which such support can be won through the actions of external actors.<sup>8</sup>

Creating a sense of national identity, or even any regional or political identity beyond one's immediate in-group, is a tall order in a country like Afghanistan. Although Afghans have a form of national identity (the country has never had a strong secessionist movement), it is subsumed under prevailing local, tribal, and ethnic identities that constitute the primary modes of social organization. Yet social cohesion beyond the local, tribal, and ethnic level would seem to be a prerequisite for stabilization. It is therefore surprising that so little literature explores the extent to which stabilization programs promote cohesion. Some studies noted the impact of conflict in disrupting ongoing social engagements and activities.<sup>9</sup> The degree to which social and community cohesion is important for well-being and stability remains an important gap in the existing research.

Based largely on a handful of program evaluations, the literature highlights the degree of regional variation in the impact of stabilization programs on community cohesion and resilience. Social capital and local leader satisfaction indices from the final wave of the MISTI evaluation survey indicate perceptions of resilience are strongest in southern districts targeted by Stability in Key Areas-South project activities, which fostered small-scale development projects and the capacity of local governments to deliver them. Respondents in those districts are likely to say that their community is able to work together to solve problems that come from outside their village. They are also most likely to believe the interests of ordinary people and the interests of women are considered when local leaders make decisions that affect their village or neighborhood. Although districts in the Kandahar Food Zone (KFZ)—a program to encourage farmers to grow products other than poppy—are also in the south, those living in KFZ districts perceive the lowest levels of community resilience and cohesion. Because KFZ districts were selected for inclusion in USAID stabilization programming precisely because of their high poppy cultivation rates, the corrosive effects of the drug trade may explain some of the lack of community resilience and cohesion.<sup>10</sup>

The limited evidence of stabilization programming on improvement in health and economic outcomes remains a significant gap in the literature. Some studies focused on improvement in health services, but offered limited evidence on whether improvements in access were sustained and the extent to which such access improved actual health outcomes.<sup>11</sup>

Research on economic outcomes is slightly more extensive, providing limited evidence that economic conditions improved to some degree during the period of the stabilization activities.<sup>12</sup> In most cases, this appears to be driven by the direct creation of jobs, but job-training programs also had a positive impact.<sup>13</sup> The literature remains contradictory on whether this focus on economic outcomes is desirable. Some research suggests that lack of opportunity is a source of frustration among the general population and that ensuring stable economic conditions for Afghans is a prerequisite for stabilization. Others argue that the focus on economic conditions distracts attention from the political and social issues fundamental to generating grievances and driving conflict.<sup>14</sup> Absent empirical evidence linking economic conditions to instability and conflict in these settings, whether addressing economic conditions should be a necessary element of stabilization activity remains unclear.

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## Time Line of Effects

The second question driving this analysis focuses on the time over which any effects of stabilization programming were apparent. In many cases, programs focused on generating rapid results within a very short window (three to six months). Other programs were focused on medium-term (six to eighteen months) or longer-term outcomes (more than eighteen months). Some stabilization programs also considered the impact on key indicators over an even longer time frame, perhaps three to five years from implementation. Few impacts were seen over this longer period for two reasons, one that is inherent to studying stabilization programs and one that could be addressed. First, and unavoidably in conflict-affected settings, the dynamic environment makes finding any effects from programming after more than one year difficult. Too many other variables are shifting around and thus the signal to noise ratio is typically quite low after more than six months.<sup>15</sup> Second, programs are not implemented in ways that would enable measuring effects along different time frames. Doing so requires generating consistent measurement across multiple periods, including after implementation is complete. Such measurements were not budgeted for as far as existing studies indicate, nor have any studies looked back on effects of major efforts after a substantial period.

Nearly all well-designed studies—including experimental and quasi-experimental quantitative approaches, government-initiated evaluations, qualitative reviews, and historical accounts—consistently indicate that any impact (whether positive or negative) was short term and transitory at best.<sup>16</sup> This appears to be true of both civilian-led and military-led programs.<sup>17</sup> It also applies to the stabilization efforts of other foreign donors, such as Norway, Germany, and the United Kingdom.<sup>18</sup> Although several of these programs have generated shifts in the security environment, government capacity, or reported attitudes, no evidence indicates that these shifts extend beyond the lifetime of the program.

The literature is divided on the desirability of a short-term versus long-term focus for stabilization assistance. On the one hand, some reports emphasize that a focus on short-term objectives is essential to help the host nation get beyond its immediate security preoccupation and onto a sustainable path toward postconflict recovery.<sup>19</sup> Proponents of a short-term focus argue that quick-impact gains that address specific, pressing needs can build the foundation for other, longer-term activities (undertaken by either the Afghan government or international actors). The critique of a short-term focus centers on the assertion that rapid gains or quick wins result in outcomes that are unsustainable without continued foreign support, ultimately breeding dependency and resentment among the Afghan population.<sup>20</sup> Specifically, the focus on short-term gains does not address structural drivers of instability (especially in rural Afghanistan); as a result, quick-impact-oriented programs, such as CERP-funded projects, have tended to replace government capacity rather than grow it.<sup>21</sup> Some argue that the donor community should shift focus from quick wins to sustainability. Limited empirical evidence validates this assertion, however logically appealing it is.<sup>22</sup>

Although the short-term and transitory nature of impacts appears to be well documented for some key indicators, longer-term impacts are less well understood. Related research focuses on the reasons for lack of sustainability. These include projects being designed to achieve short-term stability rather than long-term, unrealistic goals and mechanisms to facilitate sustainable outcomes, too little focus on key drivers of conflict or issues relevant for change, the pervasive effects of certain factors on program implementation creating barriers for sustainable outcomes.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, most efforts for monitoring and evaluation were focused on oversight and implementation and did not continue to assess outcome changes after program comple-

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tion. This was especially true for the experimental and quasi-experimental evaluations of stabilization programming in this review. In large part, such assessments are costly and risk including other confounding factors that could make any results difficult to interpret. This lack of measurement also affected the design and evaluation of longer-term programs conducted with more traditional development objectives.<sup>24</sup>

## Military Presence

Given the prominence of the military and its expanded role in program operations generally, the interactive effects between military and civilian activities are critical to consider. How did the presence of the military influence the outcomes of USAID stabilization projects? On the whole, the literature suggests that the military provided baseline security to facilitate program operation and that some of the military's programs—namely CERP—were important stabilization programs in their own right. However, the differences in objectives, time lines, and cultures resulted in inefficiencies and sometimes limited the effectiveness of operations. At a more strategic level, an active debate centers on the degree to which the military should support or execute assistance programs.

At a purely tactical level, much of the literature recognizes the importance of military presence during program execution to assist in providing the basic security needed to carry out development projects.<sup>25</sup> Absent this support (and sometimes even with it), the security situation inhibited even basic tasks needed for program operation.<sup>26</sup> This vital function was acknowledged even among those critical of the military's role in stabilization. As one report puts it, "Security is still the major issue inhibiting project implementation in stabilization contexts. Donors need to find more innovative, effective, and varied ways to deal with security issues in aid delivery."<sup>27</sup> Although the empirical evidence of problems related to a lack of civil-military cooperation is largely qualitative, it is robust, widespread, and consistent.

A range of studies consistently identified these issues and noted their role in affecting successful outcomes. In particular, International Crisis Group noted that

in their haste to demonstrate progress, donors have pegged much aid to short-term military objectives and timeframes. As the drawdown begins, donor funding and civilian personnel presence, mirroring the military's withdrawal schedule, may rapidly decline, undermining oversight and the sustainability of whatever reconstruction and development achievements there have been.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, many strategic plans and policy documents did not fully recognize the different objectives that civilian representatives and the military leadership pursued, which resulted in uncoordinated and sometimes conflicting efforts.<sup>29</sup>

A strategic debate is unfolding within the literature regarding the use of aid to support military objectives. The main critique is that it leads to a distortion of traditional mandates, especially for some donors who emphasize the humanitarian aspect of foreign aid.<sup>30</sup> These concerns may run counter to an argument that aid workers and the military should work closely together in structuring and carrying out stabilization programs.

## Synergies and Confounding Factors

Evidence is limited in the literature on what synergies beyond the civil-military partnership were effective. Several studies, however, have highlighted the importance of coordination between countries and the host nation in ensuring success.<sup>31</sup> In sum, "despite the scale of

international aid that has been poured into the country...conflicting agendas, poor coordination, lack of overall ownership, an absence of regional economic strategies, and an ignorance of local requirements have led to time, effort, and finances wasted on an industrial scale.”<sup>32</sup> Despite repeated observations on these issues, evidence is scant on ways to design or ensure international donor or implementer coordination that would enable or inhibit success. Future monitoring and evaluation efforts should focus on identifying programmatic features, as well as overall impact, to help address this gap.

## Project Features

Specific aspects of project design could also amplify or inhibit program impact. These include technical features such as the size and type of contract used to facilitate implementation as well as the sectors (agriculture, infrastructure, skills, and so on) of projects. The capacity of the implementing organization to operate in conflict zones and its technical competence would also likely influence outcomes. Some literature addresses these issues in the Afghan context, but it illuminates only some of these management issues.

Several studies highlight the notion that smaller projects can be targeted at important, specific gaps and seem less likely to fuel instability.<sup>33</sup> This points to an important albeit counterintuitive lesson: stabilization programs, if poorly designed, can become a cause of rent-seeking behavior and, in turn, instability. Small projects have a variety of benefits: they are easier to manage at the field level; they are less likely than large projects to attract attention from corrupt officials or to become targets for enemy sabotage; and outputs are small and less likely to become a source of conflict. For each of three reconstruction programs, project spending was not associated with statistically significant reductions in violence. The one exception was small-scale development aid made available conditional on information-sharing, which did appear to be somewhat effective in reducing violence.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Afghans reacted positively to large-scale programs populated by small, community-driven projects such as NSP because the funding dispersed was too small to be siphoned off by powerful interests but still provided meaningful benefits to communities.<sup>35</sup> This is important for minimizing the risk of unintended negative outcomes as well. For instance, any corruption that does affect community-driven, local projects is by its nature smaller in scale and thus less likely to delegitimize the national government.<sup>36</sup>

However, small-scale stabilization programs do not address the structural deficiencies in the rural Afghan economy, such as inadequate infrastructure and lack of economic opportunities, which can motivate local grievances.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, small-scale programs tended mostly to replace government capacity rather than to grow it, further exacerbating the center-periphery divide. Further, a challenge of developing and executing small-scale projects is that they rely on fairly in-depth knowledge of the local setting, which donors may lack. Although small-scale projects may be effective in terms of short-term outcomes, they are unlikely to have more permanent, sustainable impacts.

Larger programs were problematic for several reasons and less likely to have significant stabilization effects. First, they created unrealistic expectations among the Afghan population, many of whom were therefore disappointed when, in their view, these programs delivered nothing or not nearly enough.<sup>38</sup> Second, large programs appeared to be much more susceptible than their smaller counterparts to negative forces such as corruption and violence. This was especially true in the construction sector, which Afghans tended to view as low quality, corrupt, and highly criminalized.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, these large projects were subject to criminal and insurgent targeting for violence and other attacks.<sup>40</sup> Many large contracts also involved subcontracting that most Afghan respondents regarded simply as a legalized form of corruption.<sup>41</sup>

## Commonalities Across Projects

Examining a variety of projects executed by different implementers and in a range of sectors revealed certain common success factors. These include host-nation coordination and commitment, limiting the extent of corrosive corruption, ensuring baseline levels of security to facilitate basic implementation and oversight, and ensuring appropriate staffing in terms of both skills and longevity of deployment. The NSP perhaps best exemplifies this finding.

As noted, coordination with the host-nation is critical for effective project implementation. However, a real commitment to building capacity and reforming ineffective processes is equally critical to building a responsive, legitimate government.<sup>42</sup> One limiting factor that all donors recognize was the Afghan government's lack of capacity and willingness to reform at the local or national level. When it was committed to a program like NSP, success was more likely. When it was not, as with the Performance-Based Governor's Fund, the program faced more challenges. Tackling this political economy problem is a key challenge for donors.

Not surprisingly, corruption was identified across studies as a key issue, if not the single most important one, affecting support for the Afghan government, support for insurgents, and attitudes toward foreign forces.<sup>43</sup> Although "respondents...did report some short-term benefits of aid projects, it appears that corruption, tribal politics, and the heavy-handed behavior of international forces neutralized whatever positive effects aid projects might have delivered."<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Afghans consistently described development projects negatively; not only were projects failing to build support for government among civilians but they were increasing perceptions of corruption and distrust in government.<sup>45</sup>

The military plays a key role in providing basic security for program implementation and execution. More broadly, security is important to creating the preconditions for program success.<sup>46</sup> This is not to suggest that security alone is enough, however, as a number of critiques on the securitization of development assistance note. Nevertheless, most Afghans, when surveyed, identified security as an important factor when considering the effectiveness of development projects in their communities.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, in many cases, even though those surveyed had not themselves experienced violence, the perception of violence was an important determinant of attitudes toward the Afghan government.<sup>48</sup> Thus, in planning for programs, attention must be paid to not only how to establish security in an area but also what factors affect public perceptions of security among the local population.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Afghanistan has presented a challenging operating environment for all nations participating in the NATO-led mission. For the military, the country's terrain and its social, political, and economic structure have made bringing the insurgency to heel difficult. For donors, these features of the country, coupled with chronic insecurity and corruption, have made Afghanistan a difficult place to undertake development, much less stabilization, programming.

Given political instability in many parts of the world, and the continuing threat posed by terrorist and insurgent organizations, it is likely that in the future the United States will find itself once again trying to use its economic assistance as a tool for quelling conflict. That assistance will serve as part of a strategy aimed at stabilizing the local political environment and winning support for the government.

What lessons, then, can be drawn from this study for policymaking?

First, security is essential to effective programming. The military and the foreign assistance communities have made great strides in coordinating their efforts, but more needs to be done. The relationship is imbalanced in part because of the superior resources the military

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generally commands in conflict-affected settings. Ensuring that the development community also has a voice in strategic planning is critical.

Second, small may be better when it comes to donor programming in conflict settings. Smaller projects, designed and executed with community support, may be less likely to become targets of insurgent attack or of rent-seeking by corrupt officials. Implementing smaller projects over a wide area, however, may require different project design and skill sets than those usually found in the implementer community. The NSP program was the broadest application of small projects but took two years to design and implement. Large contracts can be issued more quickly, but their effects may be more diffuse.

Third, in developing stabilization programs, donors need to think carefully about assumptions and theories driving program design and whether supporting evidence is sufficient. A centralized database is essential, as are monitoring and evaluation components that ideally tap into new technology and real-time tracking. Baselines should be established early on. Relatedly, evaluations need to indicate in detail which programs work or fail. Program flexibility is critical, so that, should conditions change and the program not be able to deliver the intended benefits, shifting course is possible.

Fourth, even the best-designed programs cannot be effectively implemented or achieve the desired impact without appropriate staffing. A range of audits and evaluations have found consistent, substantial negative effects on program effectiveness due to understaffing for key programs, lack of appropriately trained staff, rapid turnover of staff, restrictions on the mobility of staff, and underuse of capable local staff.<sup>49</sup> As a result, programs were often not implemented as intended and could not be modified and adapted to meet requirements.

Finally, planners need to recognize any possible trade-offs and intertemporal conflicts among strategic objectives. Meeting the immediate needs of local populations, for example, may mean importing goods and services even if these could be produced locally. By not contracting with local producers, however, the longer-term development prospects of the country may be undermined. Thinking about these trade-offs and intertemporal conflicts is a critical part of good program design.

## Notes

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