



IN THE BALANCE

MEASURING PROGRESS IN AFGHANISTAN

July 2005



Summary Report



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For four decades, the Center for Strategic and International Studies has been dedicated to providing world leaders with strategic insights on—and policy solutions to—current and emerging global issues.

The CSIS team of 200 researchers and support staff focus primarily on three subject areas. First, we address the full spectrum of new challenges to national and international security. Second, we maintain resident experts on all of the world's geographical regions. Third, we are committed to helping to develop new methods of governance for the global age; to this end, CSIS has programs on technology and public policy, international trade and finance, and energy.

A private, nonpartisan institution, CSIS is headquartered in Washington, D.C. CSIS is led by Dr. John J. Hamre, formerly Deputy Secretary of Defense, who has been President and CEO since April 2000. We are also guided by a board of trustees chaired by former Senator Sam Nunn and consisting of prominent individuals from both the public and private sectors.

ABOUT THE POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

In the fall of 2001, in recognition of the U.S. government's inability to respond to the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction, CSIS President John Hamre and U.S. Army General Gordon Sullivan (ret.) established the Post-Conflict Reconstruction (PCR) Project. Initially a collaboration between CSIS and the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA), the Project has since become the leading source of authoritative recommendations and information on post-conflict reconstruction. The PCR Project continues to pursue reforms within the government to improve U.S. effectiveness in rebuilding post-conflict areas.

In the past several years, PCR Project experts traveled to Kosovo, Iraq, Sudan, Haiti, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan to conduct research for several influential reports. The project also published a major paper assessing the reconstruction of Iraq in September 2004. For information on these and other PCR studies, please contact Morgan Courtney (mcourtney@csis.org) or Rebecca Linder (rlinder@csis.org).

The Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project also produces a twice-weekly news brief of reconstruction news, events, and job opportunities. To subscribe for free, please send an email to pcrbrief@csis.org.



Logo Design by Ashley Douglas, © 2003, <http://www.ashleydouglas.com>
Cover Photo: Ahmed, a 19-year old Afghan in Kabul who sells gas and heating equipment.
"Life is better than before. We have peace. My business is doing well." February 2005, © Morgan Courtney.

This report is an abbreviated version of a larger, more comprehensive report due to be released on or around July 25, 2005.

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A report for the International
Organization for Migration



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Introduction

Afghanistan stands at a pivotal moment. Three years of steady reconstruction progress have yet to jumpstart the country's ability to function without significant international involvement. Warlords, or "commanders" in local parlance, continue to play a destabilizing role in post-Taliban Afghanistan, even though many have been brought into government service. Taliban attacks persist, many refugees and internally displaced lack shelter, and only the early foundations of political, economic, and social infrastructure have been established.

Opportunities exist, however, to consolidate the gains made by Afghans and the international community over the past three years—increasing security, widening political space, bringing war criminals to justice, and improving the average Afghan's social and economic well-being. In September, for instance, Afghans will go to the polls to elect a legislative national assembly. Will these elections be free and fair? Will commanders be sidelined? Will the new representatives deliver on tangible programs of change?

The international community, and the U.S. Government in particular, faces a choice in the weeks following the parliamentary elections. Will it begin to draw down its military presence in Afghanistan? Will it sustain the same level of financial support to the Afghan government and its citizens?

The U.S. presence in both Afghanistan and Iraq is predicated on the ability to play a catalytic role in the countries' journeys toward peace, democracy, and a functioning economy. The United States has viewed failed states and war-torn societies as a threat to its national security interests since September 11. No better example than Afghanistan exists to show that ungoverned territory has proven dangerous to the lives and interests of the industrialized world. Success in Afghanistan—just as in Iraq—must therefore be based on helping Afghans reach the point where they have a meaningful chance to sustain the progress that has been made over the past three years with minimal international involvement.

Knowing when this point has arrived in any post-conflict environment is not easy. Much of the debate in Washington today on Iraq has centered on how to know if progress has truly been made. Claims of success or failure are perceived as merely political spin. A number of senators and representatives on both sides of the aisle have called on the Administration to offer for Iraq a set of measurable benchmarks of progress. They want to know what progress and success will look like, and how much improvement is enough for the United States to draw down its troop levels and high levels of aid.

Although Afghanistan has not garnered the same level of attention or resources as Iraq from the U.S. Government, the very same need exists to develop a trusted way of measuring progress for its reconstruction effort. Because Afghanistan has

generally been viewed as a success story—at least in relation to Iraq—the absence of an effort to measure progress in a systematized way puts the United States at risk of a precipitous withdrawal, which could potentially plunge the country back into war and chaos. Measuring also helps the international community target resources to priority areas, allowing for more effective programming and more rapid success.

This study, *In the Balance: Measuring Progress in Afghanistan*, is an attempt to address this gaping hole in the international community's post-conflict response. It serves a dual function. On the one hand, it offers a baseline measure of Afghanistan today, providing an external check on claims of success or failure. It also seeks to advance thinking for how to measure progress in post-conflict interventions. A similar study of Afghanistan in six months or one year's time could more clearly show progress on the basis of this baseline assessment.

Building on the model the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Post-Conflict Reconstruction (PCR) Project developed for Iraq, set forth in *Progress or Peril: Measuring Iraq's Reconstruction*,¹ and drawing off the findings of the recent CSIS-USIP Working Group study on Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction,² we focused our research and analysis on the tension that exists between meeting the immediate needs and interests of Afghans and building a foundation for the establishment of long-term capacity for the Afghan state and society. Delivering on both can help Afghanistan reach the "viable zone" at which point progress is likely to continue with only minimal external aid.

Reaching the "viable zone," however, is no guarantee of success—countries in transition like Afghanistan survive in too volatile an environment to follow a linear path of progress. But experience in scores of post-conflict states shows that unless international efforts are making headway both with meeting short-term needs and building long-term capacity, trouble is imminent. If not, international assistance could be better spent, and the possibility of stumbling upon a winning strategy remains slim.

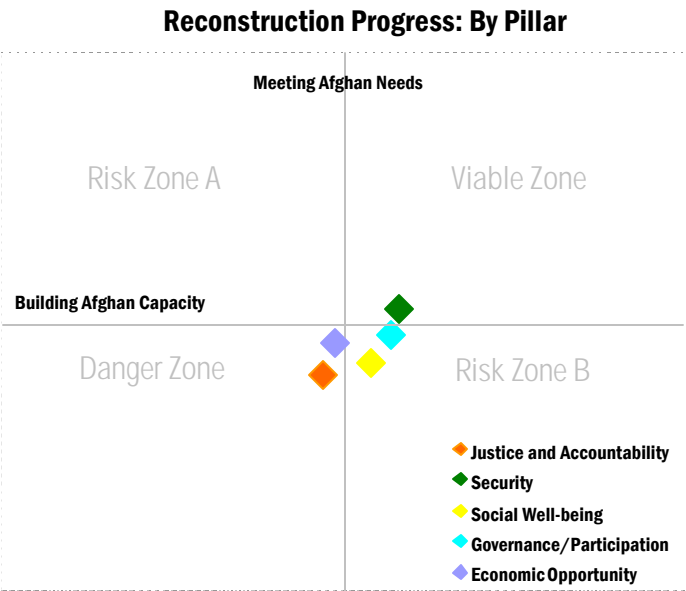
Post-conflict reconstruction must be strategic. It must not, however, be ideological or utopian or build off the grandiose concept of "nation building" with its colonial antecedents. Rather, it must offer a pragmatic view that engages local people and encourages the expansion of their basic rights and freedoms. *In the Balance: Measuring Progress in Afghanistan* is an effort to help international actors improve their understanding of and increase their effectiveness in Afghanistan and other post-conflict cases.

¹ *Progress or Peril? Measuring Iraq's Reconstruction* is available online at http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/0409_progressperil.pdf.

² Mike Dziedzic, Rick Barton, Craig Cohen, *Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction*, CSIS-USIP Special Report, Forthcoming, 2005.

Overall Findings

Despite significant advancements since the fall of the Taliban, this comprehensive study of Afghanistan’s reconstruction progress reveals that Afghanistan has not yet reached the Viable Zone, and its fate remains “in the balance.”



Security performs better than any other pillar. The security situation has improved because of the international military presence, but crime remains a serious concern, and commanders continue to wield significant influence.

The results from **Governance and Participation** and **Social Well-being** reveal that a broad foundation for future success is being built, but too few needs have been met in Afghans’ day-to-day lives. President Karzai is a positive symbol of national unity and hope, but the Afghan government remains weak. Commanders and corruption continue to obstruct service delivery and Afghans’ democratic rights. Services have greatly improved, but they are difficult to access and quality remains mediocre.

Economic Opportunity and **Justice and Accountability** both fall in the Danger Zone, with Justice and Accountability performing the worst of any pillar. The formal justice system in Afghanistan remains unable to confront impunity or criminal networks, adjudicate land disputes, or protect citizens’ rights. Economic growth has been significant, but uneven. Commanders still maintain illicit sources of revenue, and job opportunities are lacking for most Afghans, including ex-combatants.

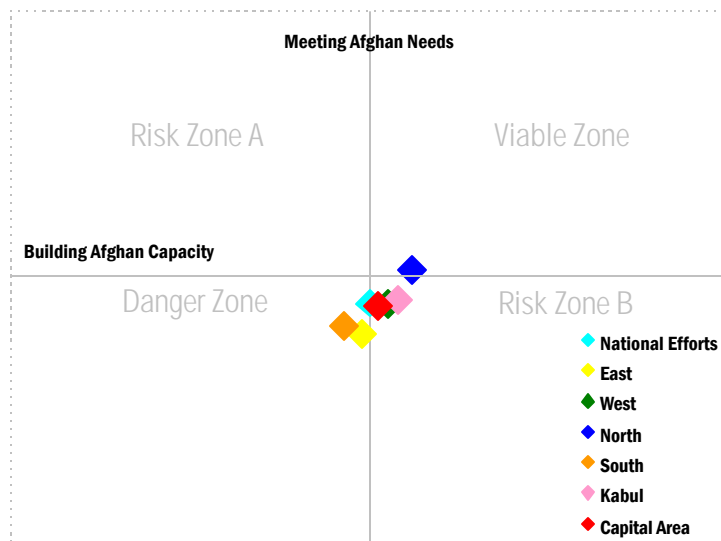
To avoid backsliding, concentrated effort must continue in Afghanistan. International engagement underpins Afghans' sense of public confidence, an essential precursor of progress.

Progress has been made in Afghanistan, but priorities must now change to reflect the current situation. Success will depend on abiding by five principles that should guide the reconstruction effort:

- 1) International forces must guarantee Afghan security for the next decade.
- 2) International financial assistance must move more quickly into the hands of ordinary Afghans, such as through the payment of salaries.
- 3) The Afghan government and international donors must look beyond Kabul for reliable partners in local government and civil society.
- 4) International assistance must focus on freeing Afghans from the burden of time-consuming survival strategies by providing economic efficiencies that will improve productivity.
- 5) Afghan leaders must convince fellow Afghans that working together as citizens of a shared community is the only viable path to safety and prosperity.

The needs of Afghanistan go well beyond what any discrete set of recommendations could offer. Our findings, and the subsequent recommendations, are meant to highlight priority areas that could have a multiplier effect on Afghanistan's reconstruction. We do not suggest that these ideas are untested in Afghanistan, only that they have not yet been the priority areas of concern.

Reconstruction Progress: By Region



Methodology

This methodology is intended to offer an impartial, baseline measure of reconstruction progress in Afghanistan as it stands in the first half of 2005.³ It seeks to capture the best thinking and reporting on Afghanistan and to consider this in the context of local perceptions of progress.

The PCR Project brings three unique elements to its methodology to measure progress: we strive for an unbiased perspective; we incorporate local voices; and we seek to measure what actually matters.

Stage I: Choosing the Target Issues

Pillar	Indicators
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commanders • Insurgency • Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration (DDR) • Afghan National Army • Afghan National Police • International Forces • Crime
Governance & Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Government • Local Governance • Political Freedoms and Participation
Justice & Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice System • Rights Protection • Impunity
Social Well Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure and Communications • Health Care and Nutrition • Repatriation and Shelter • Education
Economic Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Climate • Jobs and Cost of Living • Poppy

³ Results of our report are based on data collected from January 2004 until June 2005, and field visits made from February to April 2005.

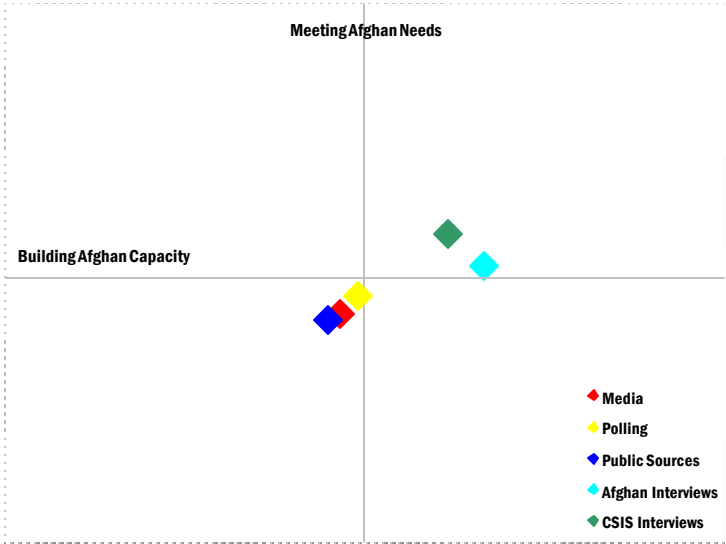
Stage II: Choosing the Target Sources

Five Information Sources:

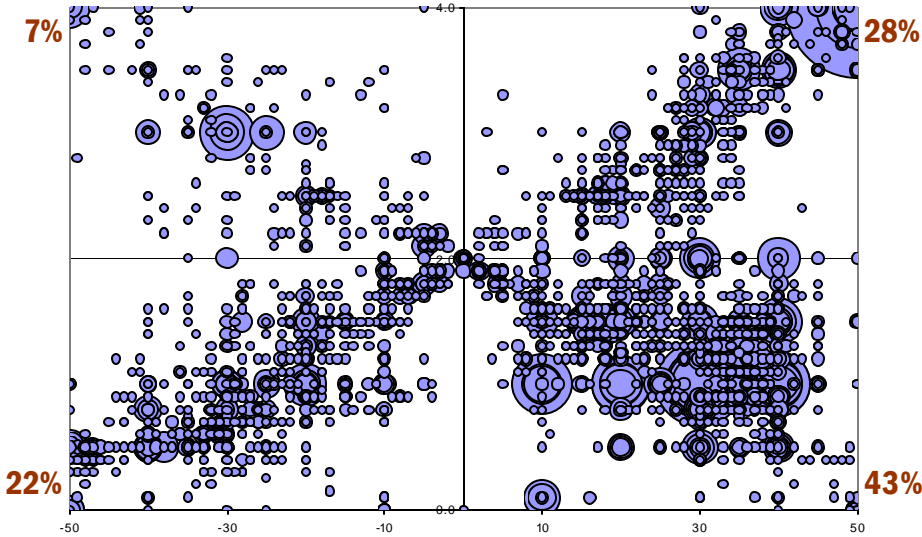
- **Public Sources**
 - **Media Accounts**
 - **Polls/Surveys**
 - **CSIS-Conducted Interviews with Afghans**
 - **Afghan-Conducted Interviews with Afghans**
-
- **Public Sources**
 - **44 Governmental and Non-Governmental Sources** such as the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), The Asia Foundation, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A).
 - **Media Accounts**
 - **48 American, European, Asian, Arab and Afghan news agencies** such as the Financial Times, Al Jazeera, Pajhwok Afghan News, Deutsche Press Agentur, Islaah, Kabul Weekly, and the New York Times.
 - **Polls and Surveys**
 - **13 Polls and surveys** from organizations such as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, the International Republican Institute, the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium, Altai Consulting, and International Crisis Group.
 - **CSIS-Conducted Interviews with Afghans**
 - **112 Interviews with 662 Afghans** in Kabul, Kapisa, Parwan, Ghazni, Mazar-i-Sharif, Konduz, Panjshir, and Kandahar.
 - **Afghan-Conducted Interviews with Afghans**
 - **1,060 Interviews with 1,609 Afghans** in 20 of 34 provinces. Interviewers were identified and managed by Sayara Media and Communication and were trained by CSIS and Sayara staff.

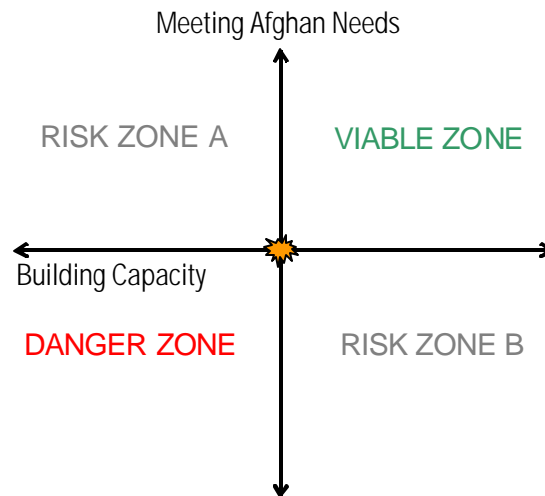
Overall Source Graphs

Reconstruction Progress: By Source Type



Afghan Interviews and CSIS Interviews
All Points, All Sectors



Stage III: Rating and Graphing the Data

The final stage of our data analysis involved rating the data against two scales:

- Whether immediate Afghan needs and interests are being met
- Whether there is a high or low degree of Afghan capacity to provide for these needs and interests over the long term

Data was rated by 15 members of the CSIS Project Team. Interview data was rated by 12 Afghan researchers and CSIS staff. The graphs represent a visual snapshot of reconstruction progress on the basis of over 7,000 data points.

Security

Security is based
on stable rule of
law, but what law?
The law imposed
by guns?
-Bamiyan

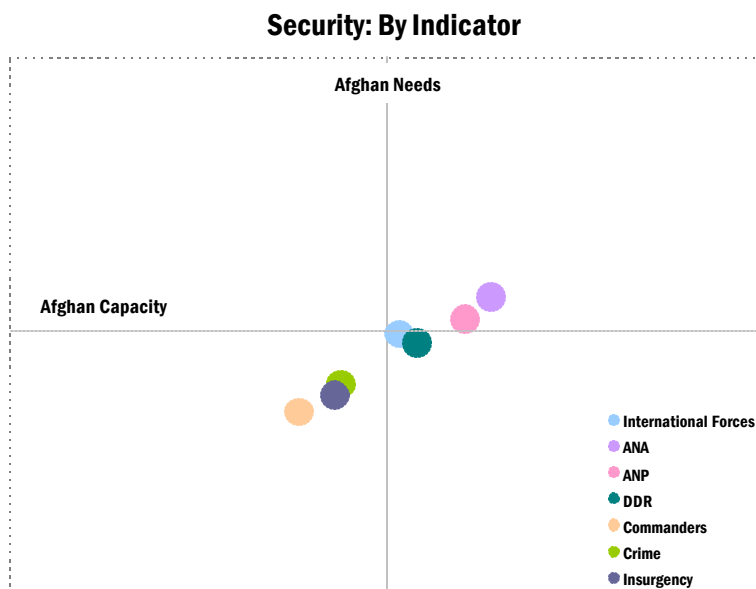
Because of ISAF,
security is good.
The U.S. Military is
the best.
-Kabul

I would walk the
streets at night,
but I still don't feel
safe with these
militias.
-Kandahar

We don't let our
kids go out,
because we are
scared that they
will be kidnapped
and their organs
will be stolen.
-Kandahar

The security situation has improved because of the international military presence, but crime remains a serious concern, and commanders continue to wield significant influence.

- **Most Afghans welcome the presence of international forces.**
- **The Afghan National Army (ANA) is a symbol of national unity and pride.**
- **Commanders still rule local areas, often through the Afghan National Police (ANP), and this generates frustration and weakens the ANP's reputation.**
- **Crime is the chief security concern of Afghans - not Taliban or al Qaeda.**

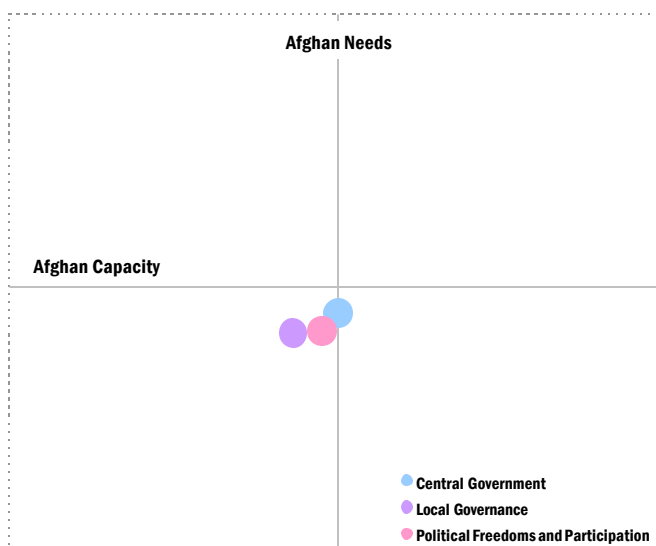


Governance and Participation

President Karzai is a positive symbol of national unity and hope, but the Afghan government remains weak. Commanders and corruption continue to obstruct Afghans' democratic rights.

- Afghans support the central government, despite its inability to deliver services.
- Regional officials are overwhelmingly corrupt and unresponsive to Afghan needs.
- Afghans have rallied around the electoral process, but technical, financial, cultural and security-related obstacles continue to hinder a free public voice.

Governance: By Indicator



People trust the government but haven't received any assistance.
- Parwan

I thought voting was good. I'm choosing my future.
- Kabul

I voted for Karzai, and I want to vote in the parliamentary election. The local government does not have any responsibility and exists only in name.
- Nuristan

Everyone is taking bribes, and no one is working honestly. Now, uneducated people are in the government and have dirty money.
- Helmand

Justice and Accountability

There are greater freedoms. Women are working in offices and children are going to school.

-Kapisa

Conversations we used to have 100 feet underground we can now have right here.

-Parwan

The problem of land-grabbing in the north hasn't been solved yet, and I won't return until it is.

-IDP, Kandahar

There is no law.

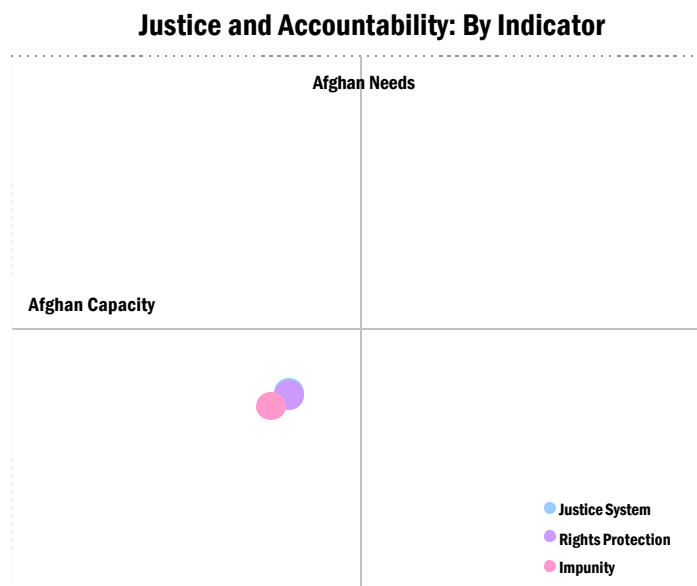
-Kabul

If the government forgives Taliban ministers, we cannot forgive them. They are dirty people.

-Kabul

The formal justice system in Afghanistan remains unable to confront impunity or criminal networks, adjudicate land disputes, or protect citizens' rights. Afghans continue to rely on traditional methods that tend to be applied unevenly.

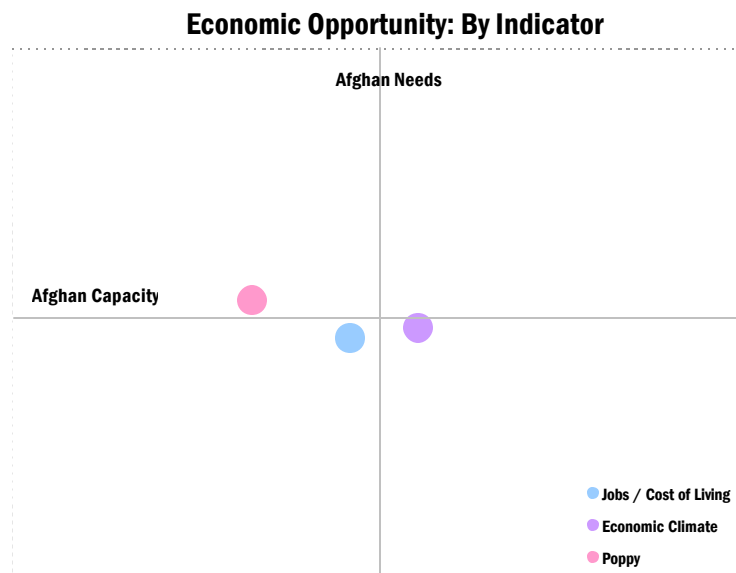
- **Afghans do not yet trust formal justice institutions.**
- **Afghans enjoy more political, economic, and social rights now than at any time in the recent past, but the status of women remains low and land issues remain unresolved.**
- **Afghans remain cynical toward the formal justice system because commanders and war criminals operate with impunity.**



Economic Opportunity

Economic growth has been significant but uneven, commanders still maintain illicit sources of revenue, and job opportunities are lacking for most Afghans—including ex-combatants.

- **Afghans are surviving, but they remain vulnerable to shocks and income is unpredictable.**
- **Poppy cultivation is a vital short-term economic strategy in rural areas, but it is neither sustainable nor legal.**
- **The economy continues to grow, but foreign investment remains low.**



I am a shopkeeper. I am working today, but tomorrow there is no work. We would like a factory to provide jobs.
-Parwan

I am a government employee and earn only 2,000 Afghanis (\$40) a month. This does not cover my expenses. If the government pays attention to salaries, mine might increase.
-Nangarhar

Women work, but they don't tell their extended relatives that they work. They tell them that they go to school.
-Kandahar

I am borrowing money from friends to survive.
-Ghazni

Social Well-Being

There is still no power, no roads, a water problem. Where is the money going?
-Kabul

Teachers are so bad that I have to work here to pay for additional courses.
-Ghazni

The people don't trust the health system, so they go to Pakistan. My brother was ill and died en route.
-Kandahar

Karzai has promised a lot and has delivered a lot. But we had electricity under the Taliban, and now we don't.
-Kabul

There is a lot of water, but no irrigation canals. As a result, there are no crops, and there is hunger.
-Kapisa

Services have improved significantly, but they are difficult to access and quality remains mediocre.

- **Communications are greatly improved in all urban areas and in some rural areas.**
- **Most electricity is provided by generators, and the vast majority of Afghans do not have power.**
- **Rehabilitation of irrigation systems has not met immediate needs and has not received the attention it needs for the longer term.**
- **There have been isolated successes in the transportation sector, but lack of roads is preventing Afghans' access to markets, health care, and education.**
- **Children are returning to school, but teachers are unqualified and schools are difficult to access.**
- **The health care system suffers from poor infrastructure, access, and a lack of trained doctors.**
- **Afghans are returning to their country by the millions, causing increased strain on services that are already thinly stretched.**

Social Well-Being: By Indicator



Recommendations and Conclusions

Afghans have lived through numerous attempts to “modernize,” “reconstruct,” or “build” Afghanistan. Most of these have been imposed on local populations from the outside and above, by foreigners or Afghan elites seeking to transform Afghanistan according to their own visions of progress. Today, however, a broad cross-section of Afghans has the opportunity to play a significant role in forging a new Afghanistan. The Afghan government and the international community have stood behind a common vision of a country that can transcend the radicalism, divisiveness, and wrenching poverty that is all most Afghans have ever known.

The reconstruction of Afghanistan is an enormous and unpredictable task, made more difficult by the country’s segmented geography, years of war-damage and non-investment, a bulging youth population, and continuing insecurity. Suffering is the rule in Afghanistan, rather than the exception. One local woman told us, “Around here, we drink our pain.”

Yet Afghans are hopeful this time around. The heavy fighting has stopped. The harshness of the Taliban period has been replaced by an increasingly inclusive government. Afghans speak fondly of electing their President, and of watching their children go to school for three uninterrupted years. As one Afghan told us, “I was in hell, but I just put one foot in heaven.” There is hope as well in largely untapped local capacity.

Hope, though, has been tempered by unmet expectations and a realistic assessment of day-to-day life. Afghans continue to worry about commanders, crime, and the lack of dependable police. They see corruption and a culture of impunity undermining the promising new government, and they worry about Kabul’s ability to deliver to the provinces, where most people live. The Afghans we heard from do not think only of their present needs, but are concerned with their future and their country’s future. They prioritize education and rule of law. They recognize the fragility of the current moment, without losing sight of their long-term goals.

Reconstruction goals in Afghanistan must be both achievable and sensitive to local conditions if they are to be attained. Reaching for too much too soon could lead Afghans to resist rapid changes to their culture and way of life and to have unattainable expectations. Placing the benefits of reconstruction too far off in the future could lead to a backlash on the part of Afghans wanting more. The emergency phase in Afghanistan has passed, but the country is not yet ready to move on to a more traditional “development” relationship with donor states. The needs remain too great, and the state remains too weak.

The goal in Afghanistan should be to provide ten years of relative peace so that Afghans have a chance to build their skills, make a living, connect to each other

and the world, and establish an open government under the rule of law. After ten years of peace, Afghanistan would still be a desperately poor country with a young population, but unified and working to build a safe and prosperous future. The first steps have been taken, but the longer journey still awaits.

This journey is likely to be fraught with problems. Bilateral and multilateral partners will inevitably reduce their contributions. Right now, international spending accounts for 90% of Afghanistan's total budget, with the United States leading the way at approximately \$15 billion per year. If this money tapers off prematurely, it is likely to have a devastating effect on Afghanistan's future. Political pressures are on the rise in the United States and elsewhere calling for a reduction in force levels in Afghanistan. International engagement must not diminish as a result of fatigue—it should be a result of increasing Afghan capacity.

Success will depend on abiding by five principles that should guide the reconstruction effort:

- 1) International forces must guarantee Afghan security for the next decade.
- 2) International financial assistance must move more quickly into the hands of ordinary Afghans, such as through the direct payment of salaries.
- 3) The Afghan government and international donors must look beyond Kabul for reliable partners in local government and civil society.
- 4) International assistance must free Afghans from the burden of time-consuming survival strategies by providing economic efficiencies that will improve productivity.
- 5) Afghan leaders must convince fellow Afghans that working together as citizens of a shared community is the only viable path to safety and prosperity.

Despite significant progress since the fall of the Taliban, this comprehensive study of Afghanistan's reconstruction progress reveals that Afghanistan has not yet reached the Viable Zone, and its fate remains "in the balance."

Security performs better than any other pillar, primarily because of the long-term capacity that has been built up in the Afghan National Army. Two-thirds of U.S. assistance to Afghanistan supports the U.S. troop presence there, and out of the remaining \$5 billion per year, \$3 billion goes to supporting the ANA. Despite this investment, Afghans are only just beginning to feel safe on a day-to-day basis. Our study indicates that the immediate security needs of Afghans are only minimally being met.

The results from **Governance and Participation** and **Social Well-Being** reveal that a broad foundation for future success has been built. Afghans recognize the strides made toward creating an inclusive and responsive government, as well as the heavy investment that has poured into their country to help provide for their basic needs. This study shows, however, that Afghans' immediate social well-being and

governance needs remain unmet. Commanders play a key role in undermining performance in both areas.

Economic Opportunity and **Justice and Accountability** both fall in the Danger Zone, with Justice and Accountability performing the worst of any pillar. Rule of the gun rather than rule of law persists throughout much of Afghanistan, and too few legitimate means of wealth generation are available to most Afghans. Growing poppy provides immediate economic benefit, but is not sustainable in the long-run and undermines rule of law.

These results have important implications for bilateral and multilateral partners in the coming months. **Concentrated effort must be continued in Afghanistan because it underpins the sense of public confidence, which is indispensable.** Progress has been made, but still needs to be solidified, and priorities must now change to reflect the current situation.

The major investment the United States has made in improving Afghanistan's security situation must reap greater benefits for Afghans on a day-to-day basis. Finding ways to increase public safety will prove as important as confronting insurgents. Out of the roughly \$2 billion per year the United States spends on non-security related programming, the majority is spent on counter narcotics and election assistance. The United States and international partners must not lose sight of the importance of expanding local ownership and playing a catalytic role in Afghan society. As the leader of the international effort, the United States must deliver in flexible, innovative, adaptive, pragmatic and non-ideological ways.

What follows is a brief summary of our findings in each of the five pillars, along with a set of cross-cutting recommendations.

Security

Establishing security and public safety in a post-conflict society means enabling people to resume regular routines through the reinforcement of three basic freedoms: movement, speech and assembly. This job remains incomplete in Afghanistan.

Security is now provided by a mixture of the U.S. military, NATO forces, ANA, local militias, police, and private guards. Day-to-day safety for most Afghans remains uncertain. Movement around the country is constricted, curfews and unsafe areas are standard, kidnappings and bombings occur with some frequency, and fighting persists in the South and East.

Our findings confirm that most Afghans trust international forces and see them as a long-term necessity. The dominant presence of 18,000 American soldiers has started to transition responsibility to a growing pool of 8,000 NATO troops as NATO steadily increases its role beyond Kabul, moving across the North to the West. Quick, tough, and surprising U.S.-led military initiatives have dulled the threat of

insurgency or anti-government forces, but the increasing frequency of attacks in the past few months highlight the on-going dangers.

The Afghan National Army has started in a positive direction. Well trained and paid, the ANA has embedded foreign military advisors in most of its units. Sheltered from any significant tests so far, its 23,000 trained soldiers will need to play a more active role if public safety is to increase in Afghanistan. As the ANA grows in effectiveness and size to a planned level of 70,000, it must also remain accountable to civilian oversight.

Police are critical to daily public safety, but are not yet meeting Afghan expectations. They are poorly paid and poorly trained, and commanders are still the de facto power holders in many local areas. DDR has succeeded in collecting heavy weapons and demobilizing 60,000 militia, but the process remains incomplete and flawed. Even though 57 leaders of private armies have turned in weapons in order to qualify as candidates for the National Assembly Elections, many former warlords have re-armed “demobilized” forces under the guise of local police through funds provided by drug trafficking.

A rules-based system has yet to take hold in Afghanistan, and incentives remain stacked in favor of the commanders. The lack of alternative livelihoods for demobilized soldiers means they have little option but to pick up the gun again. Provincial leaders still find themselves in an uncertain political environment of shifting alliances and extralegal challenges to their authority, making private militias necessary to maintaining power. Afghanistan remains caught in a Hobbesian world, something even U.S. forces have recognized and sought to exploit in their efforts to enlist private militias in the hunt for al Qaeda operatives.

International actors worry about Afghanistan becoming a “kleptocracy” or a “narco-state,” while Afghans’ chief concern remains the violence and crime that pervades their society.

Governance and Participation

Providing people with an open and trusted government that is capable of delivering the most basic services remains an enormous challenge in Afghanistan. While there has been important progress, the larger job lies ahead.

Afghans have favorable feelings about President Hamid Karzai, but they recognize that his reach does not extend far beyond Kabul. Provincial and local government and local civil society remains weak. Efforts to build long-term capacity have focused on investments in national infrastructure rather than on a decentralized approach that invests in people.

The weakness of the Afghan government is apparent—both in terms of its ability to deliver services and its capacity to generate revenue without foreign assistance. The Afghan government relies on 90% of its revenue from external sources,

measuring roughly \$4 billion to \$7.8 billion per year. Too much of this money finds its way into the pockets of corrupt officials.

Afghans resent the presence of warlords in the government, but understand the tradeoffs necessary to preserve peace. Public confidence in governors and regional authorities is low, with the majority maintaining their own militias and assuming office in illegal ways. At the same time, Afghans realize that government responsiveness begins at the local and regional level.

This September's legislative and regional council elections will be a rallying point to bring local voices into the political process. Former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, for instance, sees the elections as a way to expose warlords and potential spoilers "as soon as possible to the popular will." Elections could play this role, but technical, financial, cultural, and security-related obstacles continue to hinder a truly free public voice in Afghanistan.

Justice and Accountability

The challenge of establishing justice and accountability is to create the conditions in which people are free to exercise their basic rights, live without intimidation, and have recourse to a fair system for resolving differences. Afghanistan has a long way to go in each of these areas.

Afghanistan is a land rife with disputes. Years of fighting have left the bitterness that comes from loss of life and property. Tensions persist between ethnic, religious, regional, and social groups in Afghanistan, as well as between returning refugees and those who never left.

While there are multiple methods for arbitrating differences in Afghanistan, the formal justice system remains unable to confront criminal networks or impunity, adjudicate land disputes, or protect citizens' rights. Afghans remain cynical toward the formal justice system because commanders and war criminals who carried out past abuses remain in prominent positions. President Karzai's reluctance to arrest a few high profile abusers and demonstrate the end of impunity could threaten the long-term viability of rule of law.

Afghans enjoy more political, economic, and social rights now than at any time in the past three decades, but the status of women remains low. Women's centers and teachers could play a larger role in both civic education and alternative dispute resolution.

Economic Opportunity

Providing economic opportunity in post-conflict settings depends on more than sustaining livelihoods with minimal external assistance. Countries like Afghanistan pose the added challenge of providing work for a generation of young

ex-combatants who represent the country's troubled past as well as its hope for the future. Getting economic opportunity right is vital to consolidating peace.

Afghanistan's economy has grown steadily for three and a half years, but it remains heavily aid dependent. According to recent UN reports, Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest and least developed lands, and its people some of the most vulnerable to extreme poverty and destitution.

Power, roads, water, and dependable communications are inadequate, especially in rural areas in Afghanistan. This severely hampers agricultural productivity and leaves farmers highly vulnerable to bad weather and other shocks, leading many to turn to growing poppy. Investment in small-scale infrastructure projects could help to connect people and provide the necessary inputs for growth.

Urban reconstruction has generated short-term employment opportunities in the larger cities. The post-conflict boom-town effect, however, is not without dangers in Afghanistan: inflated asset prices have raised the cost of living for the poor while encouraging the rich and powerful to seize property, sometimes forcing the poor off their land. State regulators therefore play an important role to ensure a just allocation of the peace dividend.

For the most part, the influx of internationals and the return of millions of refugees have provided new markets for products such as cellular phones, services such as those provided by hotels and restaurants, and traded consumer goods. These positive developments have also focused Afghan attention on the need to increase their productivity in order to compete in regional export markets and participate in the reconstruction of their country.

Social Well-Being

Afghanistan's human development is the lowest in the region and among the worst in the world. Life expectancy is 45 years on average. Half of Afghan five-year-olds are underweight, and one expectant Afghan mother dies every 30 minutes from lack of care. Even if growth continues as planned, the Afghan government is predicting a per capita GDP in 2015 of only \$500.

Afghanistan is lacking in most basic services. Electricity—when it exists—is typically provided by generators, but the vast majority of Afghans do not have power. Irrigation needs are immediate, and rehabilitation has moved slowly. The health care system suffers from poor infrastructure and a lack of access and trained doctors. Afghans are returning to their country by the millions, causing an increased strain on services that are already thinly stretched.

The winter of 2004-'05 was a cruel reminder of the harshness of the environment and its effect on local people. Hundreds of villages in the central Hindu-Kush mountain range were cut off by heavy snowfalls, which then melted suddenly and

destroyed roads, fields, and houses. Despite a massive humanitarian response, no one knows how many died.

Natural catastrophes are likely to have severe consequences for Afghanistan again on account of limited infrastructure and response capability. Afghanistan will not be prepared for the next drought or earthquake. Its people are scattered across the country at a rate of 40 people per square kilometer, and few of its roads are paved. A lack of roads prevents Afghans' access to markets, health care, and education. An infrastructure backbone linking Afghans to services and to one another would be a positive step, but insufficient to sustain progress.

Education could help to change the current reality for Afghans. In March 2002 more than 3,000 schools opened for the new school year, offering a new beginning for millions of Afghan children. Today there are more Afghans in school than ever before in the country's history. Between 2002 and 2004, 4.2 million Afghan children returned to school, of which 30 percent were girls. Since 2002, 1,753 schools have been rehabilitated.

Despite this achievement, literacy remains a privilege in Afghanistan. Only 14 percent of Afghan women are literate—only 8 percent in rural areas. Fewer than 60 percent of Afghan men are literate. Only 100,000 teachers are salaried nationwide. The vast majority lack necessary qualifications, and very few are women.

These challenges are compounded by Afghanistan's growing population: 45 percent of the country is under 14, and the population is growing at 4.8 percent a year. The government's own population estimate of 23.7 million is based on 2.1 percent annual growth since 1979, though the reality could be somewhere in the range of 30 million. The pressure now is on primary schools, which absorbed 9 out of every 10 children who returned to school in 2003. As this generation grows up, secondary and tertiary education will require massive investments in teacher training and materials.

Cross-Cutting Recommendations

Governments and international actors tend to make poor choices in post-conflict settings. Often this is a failure of strategy, prioritization, and sequencing. The following recommendations are intended for both the Afghan government and the international community.

The needs of Afghanistan go well beyond what any discrete set of recommendations could offer. The following are meant to highlight priority areas that could have a multiplier effect on Afghanistan's reconstruction. We do not suggest that these ideas are untested in Afghanistan, only that they have not yet been the priority areas of concern.

Our findings suggest that prioritizing the following set of cross-cutting recommendations will help to move Afghanistan toward the Viable Zone.

Recommendation #1: Target attention, resources, and military forces on key border crossings and adjacent regions in an effort to confront criminal networks, make regional and local governors more effective and accountable, and reduce the illicit trafficking of poppy.

- Deploy ANA with embedded international trainers and monitors to borderlands in order to secure unstable areas against threats from neighboring states and internal anti-government groups.
- Secure and monitor the collection of customs revenue and ensure its transfer from regional authorities to the national government, thus strengthening central government resources and weakening the financial autonomy of commanders.
- Interdict and convict narcotics traders.
- Reward honest local governors whose border guards and police are transparent and accountable with regional development incentives.

Commanders pose a major problem to Afghanistan's reconstruction, but most cannot be confronted militarily without risking a renewed outbreak of major fighting. The place to start weakening the grip of criminal networks and strengthening the national and local government is at the major border crossings. Historically, Afghanistan's strongest warlords have established personal fiefdoms from the duties they have collected on legal and illegal trade at the four major border-crossing regions: Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Jalalabad and Herat.

In a country with limited public funding sources, customs duties are one of the most reliable sources of government revenues.⁴ Reports suggest that the police squads now guarding the borders have in some cases not been paid in months, and are more concerned with protecting themselves than with stopping armed traffickers. By securing the four major border areas with the ANA and international trainers and monitors, the national government will secure a reliable stream of income.

There is some evidence that an earlier effort to change the balance of power in Herat is working. Since Governor Ismail Khan was shifted to the Ministry of Power and Water in Kabul, customs remitted from the region have increased by 38 percent. A similar effort in the other main border regions is likely to produce results. Taking over this key governmental function will help to consolidate the national government's monopoly on the use of force.

At the same time that the national government confronts criminal networks, it must also support those governors and local police officials in border areas who are willing to operate in an open and transparent way. President Karzai retains the

⁴ In the fiscal year ending March 2005, half of Afghanistan's revenues were from customs.

ability to appoint all 34 provincial governors. He should eliminate those in border regions who facilitate and benefit from criminal networks, and develop governance agreements with their replacements that address the transparent handling of public resources and open political participation and debate.

Because so many of the existing governors have checkered pasts, it is incumbent upon President Karzai to find a package of incentives that will give those who have some promise the ability to become constructive public servants. It would make sense, therefore, to give governors in border regions some ability to deliver on high priority initiatives. A modest start would be a \$1 million operating budget for each province and a regional project fund of up to \$5 million. These funds could be dispensed on a monthly basis with simplified project monitoring that would require governors to explain their spending choices.

Such a mechanism builds off the successes of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and National Solidarity Program (NSP). These programs channel donor funds directly into Afghan hands, which allows for spending flexibility while ensuring wide public engagement with decision-making, thereby increasing a sense of national ownership.

Governors should also be required to speed the delivery of services to the Afghan people, and to target resources to training and incentives packages for local police. A colonel in the Afghanistan police with 26 years of service told us that he was paid \$70 per month compared to a colonel in the ANA, who was receiving \$420 per month. If police are to share the burden of providing public safety and stopping drug trafficking, they must be paid accordingly.

Recommendation #2: Forge connections between Afghans by investing in communications, roads, and irrigation; eliminate barriers between Afghans by securing roads and investing in alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

- Spread the benefits of economic expansion out from the cities, thus slowing the movement of people to overburdened urban areas.
- Link governance and service delivery to local infrastructure development by investing in hydro projects to revitalize and connect rural areas.
- Build roads that connect people and regions, and that provide jobs through road construction. Ensure the safety of roads through ANA deployments.
- Take advantage of Afghanistan's location by better connecting the country to its neighbors.
- Continue to support advances in radio broadcasting and cellular telephone services.
- Scale up the indigenous capacity to adjudicate land and water rights disputes.

Afghanistan has always been a divided country. The opportunity exists today to reduce these divisions by targeting reconstruction assistance and building on

indigenous dispute resolution mechanisms. Many isolated programs exist, but what is lacking is an overall strategy to connect Afghans to one another and to their neighbors, and to lessen the tensions that divide. Minimizing the isolation of peoples within Afghanistan will play a critical role in fostering the sense of nationhood.

Afghanistan needs capital investment in infrastructure. At present, most Afghans spend large portions of their day surviving in relative isolation: seeking water, food or fuel, walking to the markets, or just staying warm. Where power lines once existed, they have now fallen into disuse or have been destroyed by war. Much the same is true of roads, power plants, industry, and irrigation.

The reliable distribution of electricity linking the major cities would significantly improve the daily lives of millions of Afghans and create a greater sense of national connectedness. Meanwhile, harnessing the hydro power of Afghanistan's watersheds through the purchase of simple turbines could provide electricity where other models of power generation are not available. The international community also needs to redouble its support to the Afghan government's efforts to increase the amount of irrigated land available to its farmers.

Afghanistan should invest heavily in road construction. Better roads will not only connect people, goods, and services to the four major economic centers of Afghanistan, but their construction will also provide much-needed jobs. Attention should be given to the secondary roads that link Afghanistan to its neighbors, thereby re-establishing the trade routes that are once again becoming the arteries of the region's economic development.

However, infrastructure will only foster these connections if there is a trusted dispute resolution system. Rule of law will only exist in Afghanistan with the creation of an effective formal justice system; but such a system is years, if not decades, away. In the meantime, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms should be strengthened. These could focus on land and water usage rights, the primary flashpoints in post-conflict countries—particularly while Afghanistan's refugees and internally displaced resettle.

Recommendation #3: *Improve the safety, health, literacy, and education of Afghans—particularly women and youth. Success will depend on strengthening the prospective Afghan middle class by identifying, training, and paying key agents of change.*

- Raise the importance of teachers, health care providers, civil servants, judges, police, and community organizers to the same level as the ANA by providing the same basic benefits.
- Cut across ethnic, tribal and regional divides by promoting a national level effort.
- Support indigenous training institutes to improve teachers' performance.

- Invest in literacy to help Afghanistan's growing youth population compete regionally.
- Invest in the health of women and children by training and educating female doctors.
- Encourage institutional relationships between community centers and universities in Afghanistan and similarly aimed organizations in the United States.

Afghanistan's ability to sustain reconstruction progress will depend on the commitment of a broad mix of public servants. These include teachers, judges, police, health care providers, civil servants, and community organizers. The current lack of training and low pay has left a gaping hole in Afghanistan's ability to protect and aid those in need, particularly women and children.

Health care and education are both key inputs to securing a strong future. Afghans cannot currently expect to live beyond 45 years on average, half of its five year olds are underweight, and one expectant mother dies every half hour from a lack of care. Literacy is a privilege in Afghanistan – 14% of women are literate, and only 8% in rural areas.

Many women in Afghanistan are afraid to leave the house to go to work because their husbands do not permit it. Women are also particularly vulnerable to domestic violence and operate within a much more restricted environment than men do. Many do not go to school, vote, or have access to necessary health care if the doctor is male. Constraints on women's education and health have negative consequences for children as well.

But Afghanistan now has a huge opportunity. Getting education and health right today can embed positive values in a new vibrant generation. Nearly half of Afghanistan is under 14 years old, and the country is estimated to be growing at a rate of 4.8 percent per year. The challenge of opening their doors to education requires a massive and sustained investment because there are only about 100,000 teachers, of which only 15 percent are qualified. Very few are women. The same is true in the health care field, where the number of trained providers, particularly women, does not meet the demand.

In addition to paying teachers, health care providers, and other public servants higher and more secure salaries, the international community should invest in strengthening Afghanistan's training institutes, including universities and local-level centers. Relationships between American and Afghan institutions could be a more creative way to raise Afghan capacity – they would link Afghans to a broader range of ideas and experiences, and they can develop over longer periods without fostering dependence or resentment.

The same type of training and payment programs should be instituted to target judges and police. Rule of law will not be established in Afghanistan without

trained and honest public servants. Any other benefits that could possibly accrue in health and education will be wasted in the absence of rule of law.

Afghans must eventually do it themselves. Too often, Afghans see foreigners playing the key roles in reconstruction, and not passing on their skills to Afghans. This must change if Afghanistan's transition is to succeed.

Conclusion

The future of Afghanistan remains in the balance. Afghans are trying to make the transition from decades of fear and survival to a new dawn. The international community must help them by removing as many of the obstacles that stand in their way as possible, including instability, a lack of teachers, poor health, and a poorly-funded civil service.

The international community must further ensure that each dollar of assistance is spent as much as possible on the Afghans themselves. After three and a half years, many Afghans feel frustrated by the pace and priorities of reconstruction efforts thus far. They feel absent from the major decisions shaping their country's future. They remain unable to contribute technical skills or even to work on the construction sites where foreign laborers toil. Many are confused by the rapid transition of their government, economy and society. Most wonder where all the money promised by the international community has disappeared to. Afghans feel themselves sinking again into a familiar pattern of dependency.

The progress that Afghans have made since 2001 is uncertain, as are the international community's grand promises. Transitions may be rapid in post-conflict countries, but they do not always end well. In Afghanistan, it is too soon to congratulate ourselves. We have not yet seen how the Afghan parliament will provide legislative oversight, nor how the security apparatus will operate when tested under battle. Nor have we seen how Afghan industries will mature and begin to forge trade relationships in the region, or how the government will tax and regulate them.

If we have learned anything from the past three and a half years, it is that our partnership with Afghanistan must be committed and resolute. It must secure short-term wins for the country while not weakening national capacity. And it must serve as a partnership, building true foundations for Afghanistan's future rather than mere façades.

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The content and judgments made in this report are solely those of the authors and project directors.

Project Background

In the fall of 2001, General Gordon Sullivan (USA, Ret.), President of the Association of the U.S. Army (AUSA), and Dr. John J. Hamre, President of CSIS, recognized a gap in the U.S. government's ability to effectively respond to the challenges of post-war transitions, establishing the Post-Conflict Reconstruction (PCR) Project at CSIS. Together, they assembled a high-level, bipartisan *Commission on Post-Conflict Reconstruction*, which included 27 former U.S. government officials, sitting members of Congress, experts, and representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

After exploring the needs of countries emerging from conflict, the Commission published the *Post-Conflict Reconstruction Task Framework*,⁵ which identified four pillars of reconstruction work: security, governance and participation, justice and reconciliation, and social and economic well-being. The *Task Framework* compiled post-conflict practices, tasks, and activities into a matrix that is now used globally as a functional tool and training instrument for post-conflict efforts. The State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Development, for instance, used the *Task Framework* as the basis of its Essential Task Matrix. The PCR Project's early work emphasized the development of practical tools to fill a critical gap in the post-conflict field—the lack of anticipatory, pragmatic, non-bureaucratic, and action-forcing models for developing strategies and measuring progress.

Using these as a reference, the PCR Project then examined particular post-conflict cases, developing “action strategies” which identify priorities and possible setbacks, and recommend actions to take before the end of conflict to adequately prepare for the post-peace period. Our first study, which focused on Iraq, was released in January 2003, before the launch of major combat operations. Titled *A Wiser Peace: An Action Strategy for a Post-Conflict Iraq*,⁶ it detailed ten fundamental elements that would improve the likelihood of a lasting peace. In the spring of 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld invited the PCR Project to conduct the first post-conflict reconstruction assessment in Iraq, from which we produced *Iraq's Post-Conflict Reconstruction: A Field Review and Recommendations*.⁷ The assessment results outlined priority areas to focus the immediate efforts of the U.S. government and its coalition partners.

As a follow-on to this work, the PCR Project began to develop a broad-based, data-rich, multidisciplinary model of measuring progress in post-conflict situations. It was designed to cut across various weaknesses and biases inherent in different

⁵ See *The Post-Conflict Reconstruction Task Framework*, CSIS-AUSA, May 2002, <http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/framework.pdf>.

⁶ See *A Wiser Peace*, CSIS, January 2003, <http://www.csis.org/isp/wiserpeace.pdf>.

⁷ See *Iraq's Post-Conflict Reconstruction: A Field Review and Recommendations*, July 2003, <http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/IraqTrip.pdf>.

information sources, and could be modified for virtually any post-conflict situation. Our initial case study was Iraq, and *Progress or Peril? Measuring Reconstruction in Iraq*⁸ was published in September 2004. A supplemental report was released in October 2004.

In 2005 the PCR Project will publish with the U.S. Institute of Peace a Special Report on Measuring Progress in Stabilization and Reconstruction. This report emerged from a working group comprised of policy makers, practitioners, and scholars from the U.S. Government, United Nations, World Bank, NGOs, think tanks, and academic institutions. This working group report has informed PCR's methodology in a number of meaningful ways that have been incorporated into this report.

Aside from its work on measuring progress, the PCR Project has also produced action strategies anticipating reconstruction challenges and priority opportunities in Sudan and Sri Lanka, and a report assessing donor challenges in Afghanistan. *Winning the Peace: An American Strategy for Post-Conflict Reconstruction* (CSIS Press, 2004) provides an intellectual overview of post-conflict practice and policy areas, and includes a number of case histories.

⁸ See *Progress or Peril? Measuring Iraq's Reconstruction*, CSIS, September 2004, http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/0409_progressperil.pdf; *Progress or Peril? Iraq Update*, October 2004, http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/0410_progressperil.pdf.

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Rick Barton is a Senior Adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and Co-Director of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project. He has led work to improve the way the United States and the international community approach war-prone situations, including action strategies for Iraq, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, and is a regular contributor to public discussions on peace building.

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