

# **Programming Development Funds to Support a Counterinsurgency**

## **Nangarhar, Afghanistan 2006**

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**September 2008**

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# Introduction

This paper describes one method of programming development funds at a sub-national level to positively affect a counterinsurgency, in this case, in Eastern Afghanistan. It is presented as a practical model for both students in the classroom and operators in the field to understand the complexity of a type of mission that the United States has not attempted since Vietnam. The paper explores how one interagency group, the Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), developed and implemented a strategy for increasing stability in its area of operations by maximizing the resources each agency brought to the table and creating “unity of effort.”<sup>1</sup>

In 2006, when the activities described in this study took place, no process or doctrine of any kind existed to aid PRTs in programming funds to influence an active insurgency—and to the author’s knowledge, none exists as of the writing of this paper. The aim of this study is to provide readers with an eight-step process of strategic program development, culminating in the execution of a series of projects, highlighting lessons learned throughout the experience. The eight steps were developed by the command group (CG) of the PRT, which consisted of one representative each from USAID, U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and U.S. Army Civil Affairs.

The CG decided to create this process because of the limited funding of the PRT. There was no way to fund every project brought to the PRT by the local government, the people, or other actors in the area. Because the PRT was the largest source of accessible funds in the province, it was often pulled in multiple directions. The CG feared losing focus on the primary and critical task of establishing stability by getting caught up in basic development projects that were outside its mandate. The tipping point of holding the meeting that established this process occurred when USAID allocated \$1 million to its Jalalabad Field Office at the PRT for stability projects.<sup>2</sup>

The eight steps of strategic program development are:

- Understanding the Strategic Framework
- Operationalizing the Strategy
- Determining Geographic Focus through Tribal Analysis
- Defining Project Parameters
- Conducting the Project Identification Process
- Gaining Government Approval
- Holding the PRT Project Nomination Board
- Implementation

The target audience for this study is the CG of a PRT operating in Afghanistan, but the lessons can be extrapolated to other interagency models around the world

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Marinacci, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams—Towards Unity of Effort,” May 2004. USAID Discussion Paper.

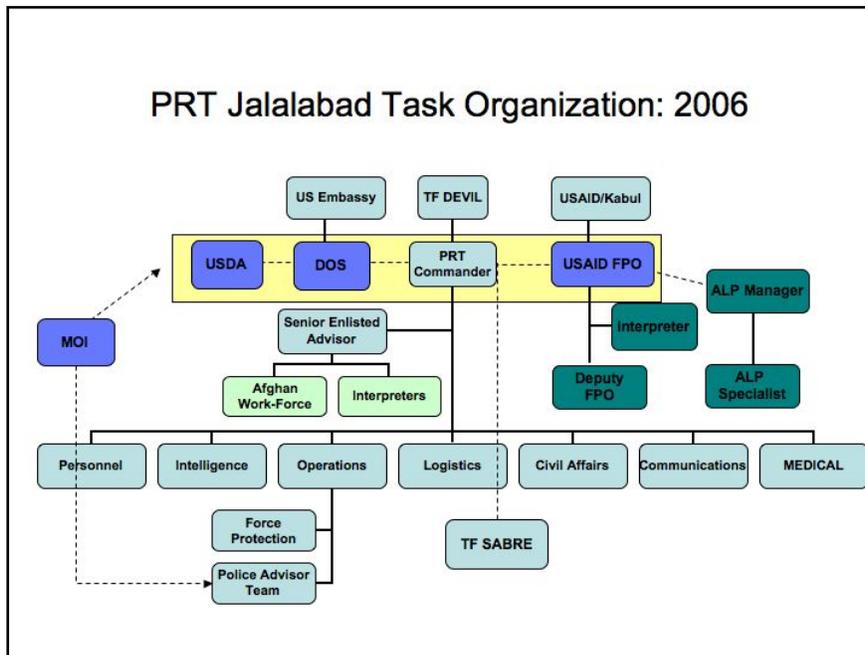
<sup>2</sup> Having a clear understanding of budgets is helpful, but not necessary until further into the process, when the team goes into the community to talk to potential stakeholders. It is useful to have everything in place so when money does become available it easily fits into the strategic framework the PRT sets up for its province.

# Background

## Provincial Reconstruction Teams

PRTs were created in late 2002 by the U.S. military to expand its civil-military operations in the provinces of Afghanistan with the goal of creating stability. A PRT is a team of interagency partners with representatives from each of the “3Ds:” defense, development, and diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> When the U.S. military designed the concept, it was also important for the PRTs to be international. Since 2002, 14 countries established or took over PRTs, with many more countries augmenting the mission.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 outlines the task organization chart of the Jalalabad PRT in 2006:

**Figure 1. PRT Jalalabad Task Organization 2006**



The PRT is led as a team by the CG (highlighted in yellow), with each agency having its own responsibilities outside the team. No single agency or department has authority over any other in the Afghanistan model.<sup>5</sup> The military commander manages all military functions including the provision of basic life support (food, shelter, health, communications, transportation) as well as specific skills that are utilized by the team (planning, intelligence collection and analysis, reporting, patrolling, cordon and search, combat operations, and others). The development officer manages, monitors, and develops projects and programs for her/his country and works with the

<sup>3</sup> The “3D” concept came out of the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy, which stated that the United States needed to maximize each component of its foreign services to achieve national security.

<sup>4</sup> Australia/Netherlands (joint PRT), Canada, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.

<sup>5</sup> PRTs in Afghanistan are not led by the U.S. Military, as is often reported. The military provides basic life support and transportation, but has no authority over the activities or programs of the other interagency partners.

military to develop sound projects to affect stability in the area. The diplomat analyzes the political situation in the area and reports back to both her/his home country's embassy and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul in addition to shaping the strategy of the PRT.<sup>6</sup>

Every PRT is different based on a number of factors, including the needs of the province, the PRT host-country requirements, national and international development programs in the area, and security.

According to the ISAF PRT Handbook:<sup>7</sup>

The PRT should not act as an alternative to the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), but rather seek to improve the capacity of the GoA to govern itself. PRTs perform a vital role in occupying the vacuum caused by a weak government presence and are hence deterring agents of instability. PRTs seek to establish an environment that is stable enough for international agencies, the local authorities and civil society to engage in reconstruction, political transition and social and economic development.

The PRT's mandate is to extend the reach of the central government, develop security sector reform, and conduct reconstruction and development activities. Together, these three objectives are designed to bring stability to the province(s) in which the PRT operates.<sup>8</sup>

### ***PRT Mission: Stability***

Stability is defined as government monopoly of the use of force over its people.<sup>9</sup> As illustrated by figure 2, stability can be measured along two axes: legitimacy of government and effectiveness of government.<sup>10</sup> Increasing the effectiveness and legitimacy of government are considered "friendly" lines of operation (LOO) in military terms.<sup>11</sup> The PRT can also focus on weakening the enemy LOO, which includes decreasing government effectiveness and legitimacy. When programming development funds, it is best to focus on the former because the nature of development is to improve the government's ability to monopolize the use of force and deliver benefits enabled by that monopoly of force, such as public works, education, and public health.

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<sup>6</sup> This is true of PRTs in Afghanistan and may not be applicable to PRTs in other engagements.

<sup>7</sup> "ISAF PRT Handbook," Edition 3, February 3, 2007.

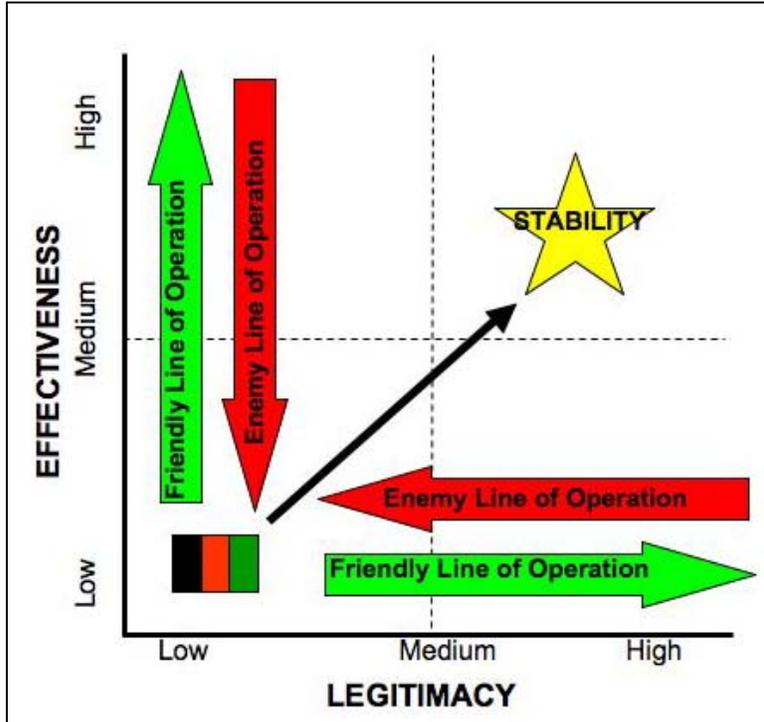
<sup>8</sup> Taken from the Terms of Reference for CFC and ISAF PRTs in Afghanistan, which were adopted by the Executive Steering Committee on 27 Jan 05.

<sup>9</sup> "ISAF PRT Handbook," Edition 2, August 21, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> This concept and the associated graphics were created in 2006 by Nick Marinacci and John Schweiger, the Director and Deputy Director respectively of USAID/Kabul's Civil-Military Program from 2003–2006.

<sup>11</sup> The DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms defines a line of operation as, 1. A logical line that connects actions on nodes and/or decisive points related in time and purpose with an objective(s) or, 2. A physical line that defines the interior or exterior orientation of the force in relation to the enemy or that connects actions on nodes and/or decisive points related in time and space to an objective(s).

**Figure 2. Stability Lines of Operation (USAID/Kabul Civil-Military Program, 2006)**



### **Nangarhar Province**

Nangarhar is an extremely important province in Afghanistan because it provides the primary licit trade route with Pakistan at the Torkem border crossing. It is the economic center of the east for business and development, has one of the most educated populations in the country, and is considered one of the “breadbaskets” of the country because of the land’s fertility.<sup>12</sup> It is also known as one of the leading producers and processors of poppy in the country.<sup>13</sup> The Nangarhar population has a history of supporting insurgents, ranging from the Ghulzais, who attacked the British as they retreated from Kabul after the first Anglo-Afghan war, to the anti-Soviet *mujahideen* forces—and now the Taliban. The first use of Stinger missiles in warfare occurred at the airport on the outskirts of its capital, taking down three Soviet helicopters.<sup>14</sup> Nangarhar’s strongmen welcomed Osama Bin Laden when he was forced to leave Sudan in 1996 and provided sanctuary for Al Qaeda training camps. Some of the most intense fighting early on in Operation *Enduring Freedom* took place in the Tora Bora section of the Spin Ghar Mountains, a range that lines the southern part of the province. As of 2006, Nangarhar was a staging ground for the insurgency raging in the eastern part of the country.

The province is home to two ethnic groups, the Pashtun and the Pashai. There are four Pashtun tribes (Khogiani, Shinwari, Mohmend, and Ahmadzai), and each tribe has additional subtribes. For the purposes of this study, the most important subtribes to distinguish are those of the Khogiani tribe: the Waziri, Sherzad, and Kharbone. Each ethnic group, tribe, subtribe, village, and family has a complex network of relationships that extend back generations. For foreigners

<sup>12</sup> USAID focused on five areas of the country for its Rehabilitating Agricultural Markets Program (RAMP), one of which was Nangarhar due to its production potential (RAMP quarterly reports).

<sup>13</sup> This was not the case in 2005 and 2006 due to counter-narcotics programming by the GoA and the international community (UNODC 2005 and 2006).

<sup>14</sup> Crile, George, *Charlie Wilson’s War* (New York: Grove Press, 2003), 436–439.

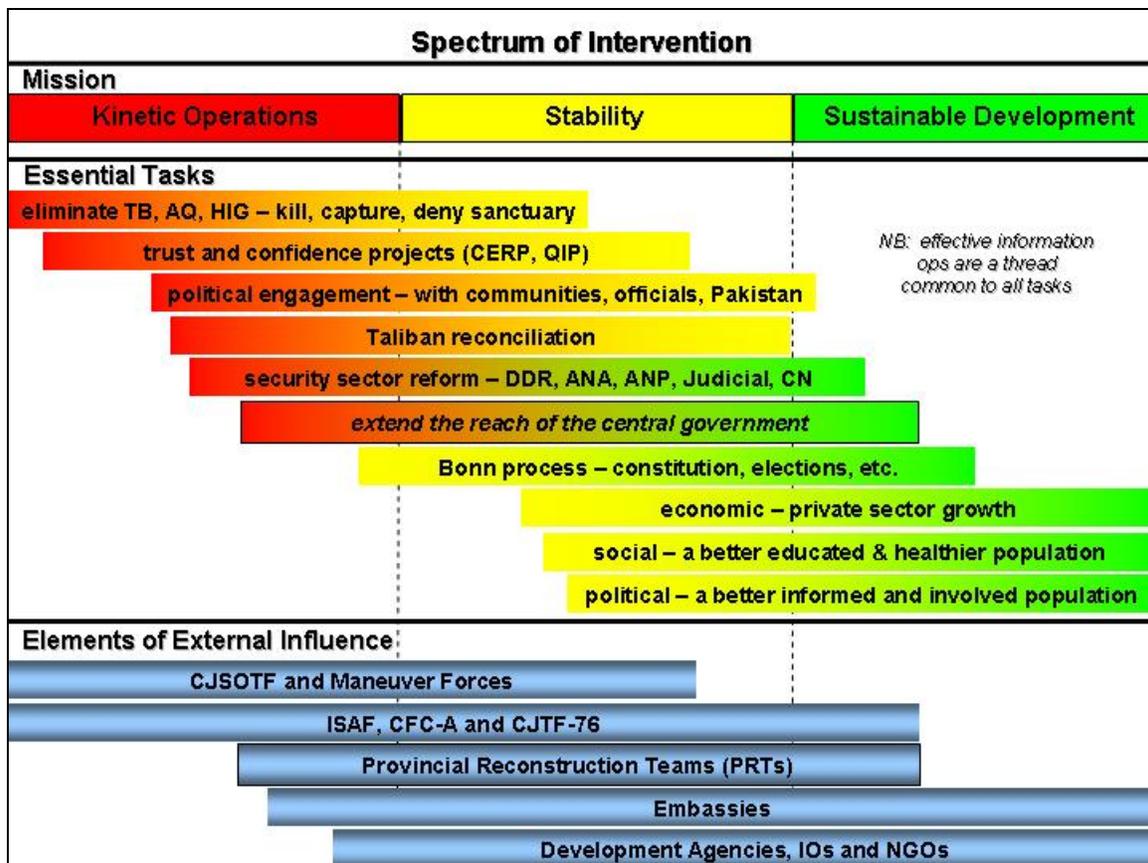
who don't speak the language and live in a secure compound to fully comprehend, these relationships are incomprehensible. Despite the challenges, the members of the PRT's CG had to learn as much as they could about the province, its power brokers, its history, and its current challenges before the team could complete the following process.

The next sections will discuss an eight-step process of strategic program development, highlighting lessons learned throughout the experience. The eight steps were developed by the CG of the Jalalabad PRT in Afghanistan in 2006. Situational awareness is a prerequisite to developing a program; the first step helps the team develop that awareness.

### Step 1: Understanding the Strategic Framework

PRTs are one component of a full-spectrum operation, as the guide illustrated in figure 3, demonstrates. The CG, therefore, met every week with other stakeholders in the area (maneuver units, other foreign governmental actors, and the GoA) to deconflict the PRT strategic planning with ongoing combat operations. At the same time, the development and political officers also met with their development agencies and embassies in Kabul to ensure the strategic plan of the PRT was in line with the current policies. The importance of the non-kinetic and kinetic elements working in unison cannot be emphasized enough.

Figure 3. Spectrum of Intervention (USAID/Kabul Civil-Military Program, 2005)



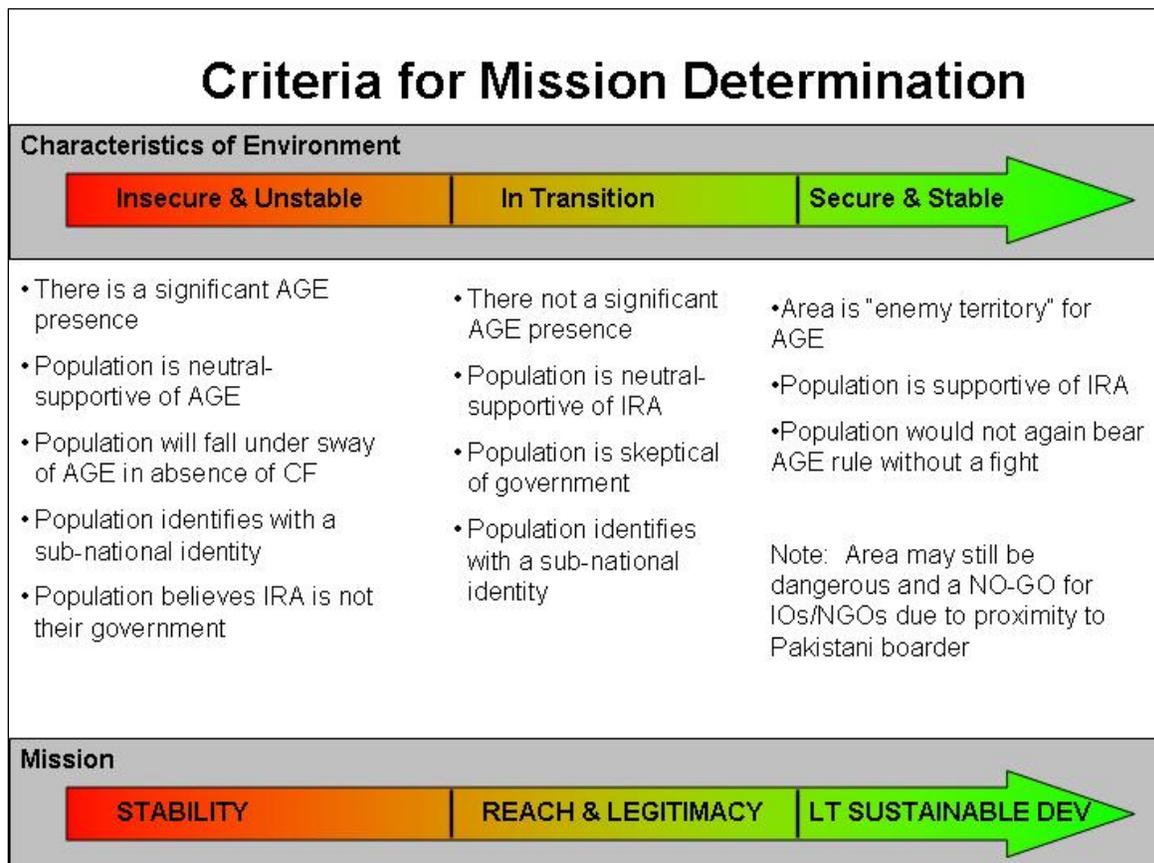
The purpose of a PRT is to enhance stability in the provinces of Afghanistan. By the definition used in the PRT handbook, the population's willingness to be governed is the "legitimacy" axis upon which stability is measured. In the case of Afghanistan, stabilization is the first step in a

democratic process that includes the population’s willing participation, so securing the population’s support is a key component of Afghanistan’s stabilization process. PRTs can help the government monopolize force while securing the population’s support in many ways, ranging from training and mentoring the government to constructing government facilities—district centers, courthouses, schools—that provide a clear platform from which government can operate. The construction of basic public works such as bridges, roads, and micro power that serve the population the government needs to affect is another option for PRT support.<sup>15</sup> Gains made towards securing the population’s support can easily be undone with kinetic operations either targeting or resulting in civilian casualties. If the population’s support recedes for the group the United States is helping vie for the monopoly of power, the challenge of securing force becomes increasingly more difficult.

### Step 2: Operationalizing the Strategy

Figure 4 was developed by the USAID/Kabul Civil-Military Program to better assist the Field Officers, who are responsible for programming millions of dollars, how to understand the environment in which they are operating and tie programming to specific stages or phases of the counterinsurgency (COIN) operation. The mission of the PRT will differ based on the reality on the ground; this chart helps the team identify the stages that the province’s various population groups are in during the assessment period.

**Figure 4. Criteria for Mission Determination (USAID/Kabul Civil-Military Program, 2005)**



In Nangarhar, the CG used this graph to discuss where they thought the five main tribes in the province fell on the spectrum of intervention. In a COIN campaign, the population is the center of gravity, so analysis must be conducted at the community level. The CG chose to use subtribes as a point of analysis rather than an arbitrary district or provincial boundary, and was thus better able to target communities that were having a negative impact on stability in the province.<sup>16</sup> The CG looked at indicators including: NGO activity, violent acts against the military coalition, violent acts against the GoA, poppy growth, the numbers of schools and clinics (government service in action), and population centers. The CG did not develop a complex methodology for measuring each of these criteria; they simply discussed the tribes and indicators using personal knowledge and intuition. The CG determined that most of the province was either “in transition” or “secure and stable.” The subtribes that the CG identified as creating an insecure and unstable environment had a primary geographic commonality—they border Pakistan.

As a team, the CG had to decide where to focus along the spectrum. The tribes considered “green” were off-limits, because those areas were stable and outside the PRT mandate. The question the CG explored was “how far into the red should the PRT go?” The CG quickly realized that was not a question that could be answered intuitively, it needed more complex analysis.

#### ***Lessons Learned***

1. The PRT command group needed to analyze their environment—in military terms “define the battlespace”—immediately upon arriving in theater. Keeping in mind the three mandates of the PRT, and nesting the discussion in the strategic framework outlined above, the interagency representatives should work together to determine how to best achieve their mission in the next 6–9 months. It is important to keep the timeframe short in highly insecure environments because the PRT strategy will often have to be revisited based on the shifting realities on the ground.

2. It is important to note that the PRT developed the mission determination, tribal analysis, and project parameters without GoA involvement. They did this because they wanted to get their national agenda lined up clearly before going to the GoA. They debated bringing in key provincial leaders early in the process, but decided against it due to this priority. In retrospect, it could be argued that this was a mistake. The sooner a PRT can bring the GoA into the process at the provincial level, the better. Government involvement has many benefits, including building the capacity of the GoA to think strategically, to bring an Afghan “reality check” to PRT assumptions, and to create the sense of ownership of these projects that is needed to achieve the stated goals.

Regardless of what a team decides, the issue of local government involvement should be a discussion point within the PRT in the early stages so they can decide at what point government involvement is appropriate. If the governor and line directors are corrupt and may impede the process, a team will want to avoid them as long as possible. The team may discover that the GoA stakeholders needed are rarely in the province; if the projects need to be nominated quickly, time restricts GoA involvement. It must be decided if the benefits outweigh the negatives so the CG can move forward with a clear understanding of when GoA involvement is needed and why.

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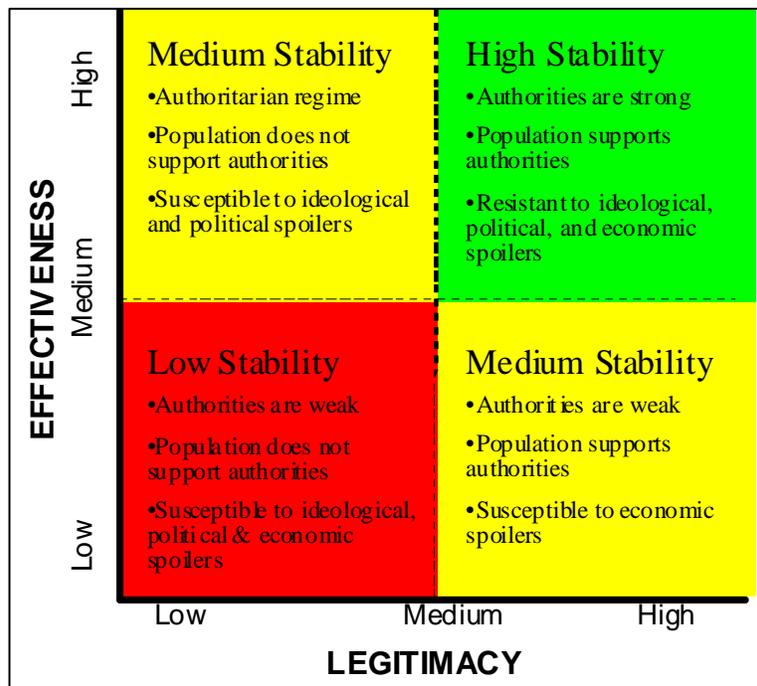
<sup>16</sup>In Nangarhar, a subtribe is a mostly homogeneous group in regards to making and execution decisions. The subtribe as a whole would decide whether to give sanctuary to the enemy. Because many subtribes spanned multiple districts, district lines were irrelevant to analysis and to working with subtribes.

### Step 3: Determining the Geographic Focus through Tribal Analysis

After determining generally which communities created or allowed an insecure and unstable environment to develop, the CG had to narrow the targeted areas even more because USAID’s budget was only 1 million dollars, and not every community in need could be reached. At this point, the USAID Field Program Officer (FPO) asked the commander of the military component of the PRT, LTC Lynda Granfield, to provide the USAID office with a soldier to research the tribes and conduct a conflict analysis. A senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) who had shown great interest in this subject was assigned to the project.<sup>17</sup>

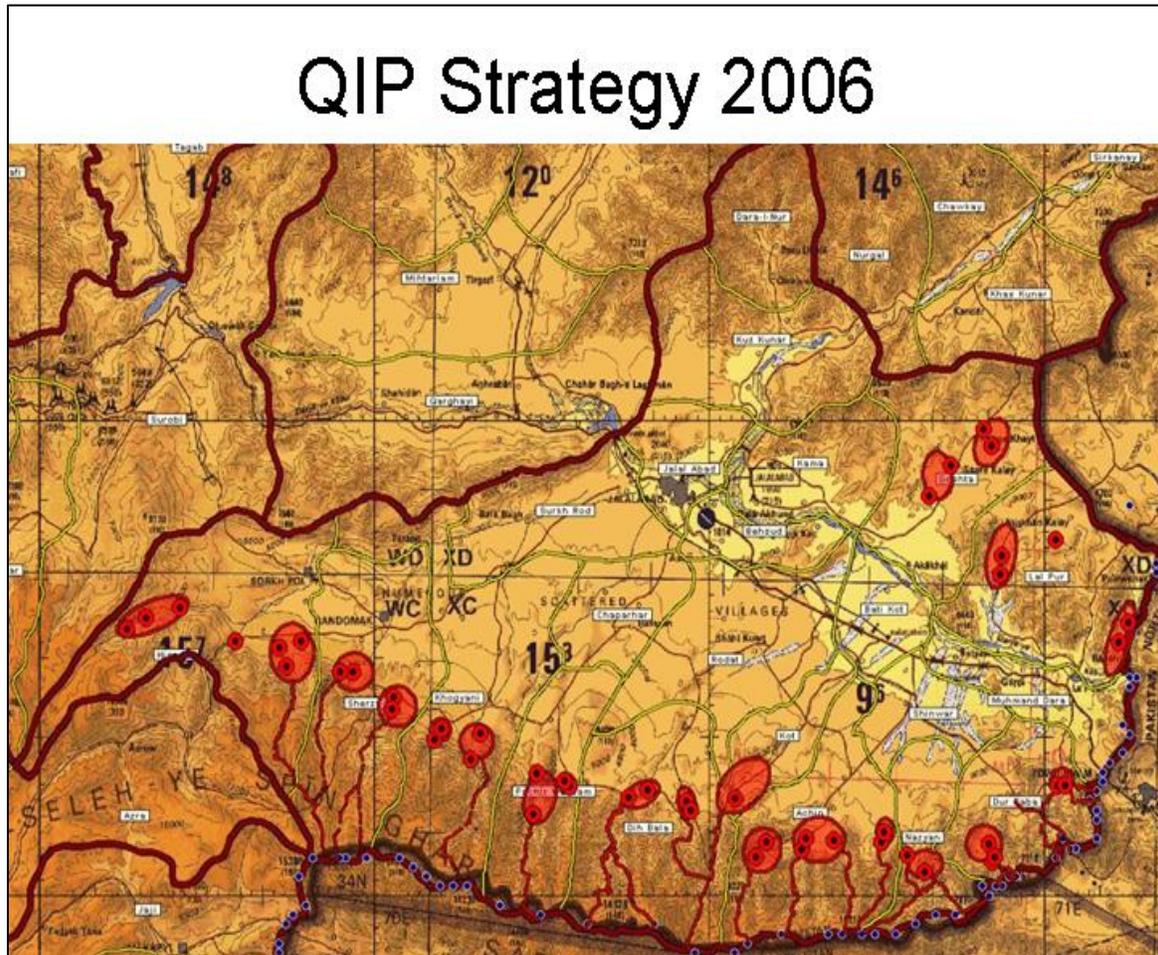
The NCO, Sgt Steve Kling, was tasked with mapping each subtribe and sub-subtribe and placing them in the stability matrix illustrated in figure 5, based on the geographic area the CG had agreed upon in the operationalizing meeting. Sgt Kling developed a picture of tribal instability in the province, but argued that, although certain sub-subtribes were quite stable, the CG had to target those villages with projects or risk creating conflict between the sub-subtribes.

**Figure 5. The Stability Matrix (USAID/Kabul Civil-Military Program, 2006)**



<sup>17</sup> This is a prime example of the “unity of effort” that can happen at a PRT. The author was far too busy managing a \$19 million Alternative Livelihood Program to spend the time needed to analyze the tribal situation well. The NCO who helped with this project was being underutilized by his team, and was able to support USAID in designing the intervention for the PRT. In the end, everyone benefited from this unconventional approach to program development.

**Figure 6. Map of target villages for USAID Quick Impact Projects (QIP) program in Nangarhar, Afghanistan (USAID/Jalalabad PRT, 2006)<sup>18</sup>**



Once the communities were analyzed down to the smallest tribal division possible, the NCO began to target specific villages. The CG criteria included:

1. Communities must be politically fence-sitting and generally located near “problem village clusters.”<sup>19</sup> The populations were not in support of the GoA, but they did not support anti-government elements, either.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The red lines are key smuggling routes. The black dots are specific villages. The red circles show a village cluster area for targeting purposes.

<sup>19</sup> The term *village clusters* was coined by a USAID implementing partner who discovered the sub-subtribes in Nangarhar existed on a hub-and-spoke model, where the hub is a village headed by a male elder, and nearby villages (the spokes) are headed by the children of that male elder. The village clusters were the entire hub-and-spoke model for a family, or sub-subtribe.

2. The communities had to lie along key smuggling routes, a primary cause of insecurity in these districts.
3. There was little or no international or GoA involvement via projects in the community.

Over the next month, Sgt Kling researched possible village candidates using military intelligence databases, GoA, local DOD maneuver units, Special Forces, Other Coalition Forces, USAID implementing partners, and PRT interpreters. After collecting and analyzing the data, he developed a map (figure 6) of the village cluster areas that were to be the focus.

#### **Lessons Learned**

The author could not have programmed the funds with such complexity without the help of the military. The access the military has to intelligence on anti-government elements is incomparably better than the information a USAID employee can access. By tapping into core capabilities of the military (intelligence and planning), the money the author was responsible for programming had a greater impact.

The author vetted the information collected by SGT Kling with the Provincial Governor, Provincial Council, appropriate GoA line ministry representatives, NGOs working in the area, PRT interpreters, and USAID Implementing Partners to better triangulate the information. The military is an excellent source for information, but cannot be the only source.

### **Step 4: Defining Project Parameters**

In the beginning stages of program design, as in all normal development programs, it is fundamental to establish clear project parameters, or the program can quickly lose focus. In the case of Nangarhar, the first parameter set was *infrastructure projects only* for two important reasons. First, the CG wanted to create physical reminders of the GoA in these areas. Second, USAID's implementing partner (IP)<sup>21</sup> was a construction organization with no capacity to manage "soft development" projects—that is, projects that build skills and improve human capacity. This limitation was frustrating, but USAID had to work with the available IP so construction factored heavily into the project parameters.<sup>22</sup>

The next step was to establish exclusion criteria so that everyone involved understood what could or could not be funded. Policy and legal restrictions make it difficult for USAID to fund either religious or security-related infrastructure, so structures such as mosques and police stations were excluded. The CG also excluded clinics, because the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) hires NGOs to operate clinics around the country. Clinics sit empty if NGOs do not have donors to provide the clinic's operating expenses. The CG could have met with local healthcare providers to try to coordinate a joint project, but that would have been time-consuming, and no member of the CG had the extra time to dedicate to that coordination. Constraints such as a program manager's limited time will also factor into parameters.

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<sup>20</sup> The CG's rationale for targeting fence-sitting villages was that it was still possible to win their support for the GoA through increasing the legitimacy or effectiveness of the government. The CG reasoned that the villages supporting the insurgency were already decided and would be harder to win over.

<sup>21</sup> USAID does not directly implement projects it designs. It outsources project implementation to a partner organization. The degree to which USAID is involved with managing the partner is determined by the type of aid provided—grant, cooperative agreement, or contract.

<sup>22</sup> As of 2006, USAID changed the program managed from the PRT Office from QIP to Local Governance and Community Development (LGCD), which expanded the scope of work to include capacity building and conflict mitigation, in addition to construction.

It is important to note that health projects in Nangarhar were funded by the European Community (EC), yet there was no local EC representative in Jalalabad with whom the PRT could coordinate. If this had been a USAID health area, the CG might not have excluded it. The last point is not meant as a criticism of the EC, but rather as an example of the importance of understanding the area or “battlespace” so the program’s design can maximize the money’s effectiveness. If a donor does not have provincial representation, coordinating operations at the local level is difficult.

A project time limit of 3–6 months, from groundbreaking to ribbon cutting, was the next parameter set by the CG. This limit was set because the purpose of building these structures is to shift popular sentiment toward the GoA, and the CG feared that if a project took years, the goal would not be achieved—in part because growth of enemy strength might outpace the project. Also, the projects should be small in scope, such as a school or a micro-power system. QIPs should not be multi-million dollar development projects in warfighting areas due to the challenge of an ever-changing battlespace. The purpose of a QIP is to positively affect stability, not to conduct long-term development.

Another aspect of gaining popular support for the GoA was to give jobs to the sub-subtribe community we were trying to affect, who would also be the project’s beneficiaries. The next parameter, therefore, was to insist on local employment opportunities. Jalalabad is home to a vocational construction trades training school funded by USAID and DOD, so the CG included a provision for the communities involved with the project to nominate 6–12 people to attend the month-long course and learn vocational trade skills. If the village was interested in this option, the CG then required the contractor to allow the villagers to serve as interns on the project in their area, so they could work with the contractor’s staff and practically apply the skills they learned in the school.

The final parameter was that the projects must serve multiple villages and have a subtribal area impact. The rationale was to reinforce the idea of *community*, which was destroyed during 25 years of war. We also wanted to foster the idea of development rather than a laundry list of projects. Too often communities in high-risk areas are caught in survival mode; one goal of these projects is to lay the groundwork for the population to think above a sub-subtribal level and identify with those from nearby areas to build a larger community mindset.

The limitation of Afghan contractors was another factor considered at this time. Due to 25 years of nearly continuous fighting, Afghanistan had an extremely limited capacity to absorb the quantities of aid that began flowing in 2001. The CG discussed the number of locally owned construction companies that were available in the area, what other projects those companies were working, and what level of construction they could handle, e.g., could they construct an eight-room school house, or a three-story district center with power and water? The CG knew the challenges could be worked around, but it was important to discuss these realities as preparation for managing the expectations of the villagers in the target areas.<sup>23</sup>

The CG decided to develop a short list of the types of acceptable projects for this program based on the limitations described above. The list was not exhaustive by any means, but the CG used it as a baseline to ensure that members of the team could speak consistently and coherently to those outside the PRT. Three primary sectors were agreed upon:

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<sup>23</sup> If there is only one viable construction company for foot bridges in the area, and that company is working on two other projects, then the villagers may need to accept a company from another part of the country to get their bridge constructed soon, or else agree to wait 6–8 months while the local company completes the other projects. It is important to be aware of this in the program design phase, so that when projects are identified, the people who meet with the communities can be aware of the limitations and manage expectations.

- Water/Sanitation/Sewage (piped water systems, gutters),
- Agriculture (irrigation, canals),
- Basic Infrastructure (bridges, schools, micro-hydro, flood protection).

### **Step 5: Conducting the Project Identification Process<sup>24</sup>**

After the team developed a clear idea of the tribal area and the parameters of the projects, the CG then discussed the project identification process. Ideally, the FPO planned to first meet with the Provincial Council, the only democratically elected body in the province, and the directors of key line ministries (Rural Reconstruction and Development, Agriculture and Public Works), explaining the concept of QIP, its parameters, and its geographic focus. The goal was first to vet their programmatic concept with the provincial government and deal with any issues at that time.

The next step was to push the project identification process to the government to decide how best to proceed. The FPO explained the preferred geographic focus, acceptable project types, and implementing limitations with the hope that the GoA would sort out the actual projects. The CG anticipated that the GoA would develop small teams to go to the areas of interest and hold *shuras*<sup>25</sup> with the community leaders to discuss project options; a representative from USAID’s primary IP in the area and the USAID Afghan program manager would participate, representing the interests of USAID.

In reality, USAID had only a few weeks to meet with villagers, design the project, gain GoA approval, nominate the project through the USAID chain of command, have it sent to the IP for a bill of quantity (BOQ)—USAID’s internal process to have a QIP project funded—and have the BOQ approved.<sup>26</sup> Based on the author’s prior experience of working with the provincial GoA, they would not have been able to do this in a timeframe that met USAID’s needs. Time constraints were explained to the government, but timelines are not always adhered to in Afghanistan, and all too often, the deadlines passed. Some projects never happened or were delayed by months while the government decided whether to support them.

Because of the time restrictions, the CG chose to use existing USAID partners working in the area, and asked them to hold community *shuras* and develop project nominations. The author met with USAID IPs and explained the concept of QIP and its parameters. They agreed to conduct the process and transmit the information to USAID electronically. USAID also used information that the U.S. Army civil affairs team collected that fit within the scope of the program. In each instance, the communities were asked to nominate their top four project priorities.

A key factor in project success is local ownership. Initially, the CG thought of requiring a 30 percent community contribution to any project, but realized there were other ways to gain community buy-in, such as requiring security for the project and ensuring local workers have jobs on the project site. Additionally, the contractors could hire local women to cook food for the work

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<sup>24</sup> At this point in the process, the USAID FPO moved from the consultative process of the CG meetings to the individual responsibility of programming funds as a development expert. The FPO continued to seek advice from her colleagues, but the ultimate legal responsibility for representing USAID-funded projects and programs to the population and the GoA rested with the FPO.

<sup>25</sup> *Shura* is an Arabic word for “consultation” or “council.” In Afghanistan, it is a method for decisionmaking whereby the leaders of a community discuss a topic and make a decision for the whole of the community.

<sup>26</sup> Having to nominate projects in a minimal timeframe is common in combat zones because of ever-shifting money cycles at higher levels. That is all the more reason to develop a sound strategic plan at the provincial level, so that the minute money becomes available the team can program it into an existing framework rather than starting from scratch every time the HQ wants the PRT to spend money.

crews. They also could hire the head of the local *shura* to coordinate the labor force rather than having the outside contractor find people.

### **3. Lessons Learned**

1. If you want to utilize the GoA in project identification, then it will require a significant amount of time and mentoring by the PRT. The PRT will most likely have to fund the transportation and per diem costs of the GoA to visit the communities, which have limited operating funds of their own. The parameters of the projects must be clear, and the PRT must have Afghan representatives present at meetings to manage community expectations. It is possible that the GoA may promise projects that are beyond the PRT's capacity, which would undermine the entire project. It is much more difficult and time consuming to have the GoA engaged, but it is a key factor in counterinsurgency, and the PRT must have a serious discussion about the cost-benefit analysis if it is considering bypassing the GoA to meet a deadline.

The Jalalabad PRT chose to follow the time deadline instead of building the capacity of the GoA, and it was probably a mistake. Nangarhar had a competent and active provincial government, which is ideal for this kind of program. Further, to achieve the greatest impact on an insurgency, programming of funds must have GoA ownership; bringing in the government at a later stage might remove the government even further from ownership of the program.

2. If there are any doubts about the ability to fund at least one project in the area, then the GoA and the PRT or its proxy *must not go to the area*. Only after a budget is secured should anyone meet with the communities. The PRT, its proxy, or the GoA, will explain the number of projects that can be completed based on the budget. The project nomination process should be explained in simple terms, so the community can know when to expect a project to begin. They should be given contact information for the GoA and the primary IP so they know that they can follow up directly. They must understand that they will be responsible for security in the area for the contractor, and will be held accountable. They must understand that the community will have the chance to work on the project, and they must know if a trade school option or other training options exist. These discussions may need to be held in multiple meetings to ensure that everyone understands the project.

3. It is important to manage expectations of the beneficiaries during the project identification stage. In most cases, the PRT will not know their exact budgets or how many projects they can complete. Once a meeting like this is held, the community will expect some kind of results. Considering the strategic objectives of affecting the insurgency, if the community's expectations are raised and nothing occurs, the result could be damaging. The people's frustration with their government for not delivering what they thought was promised will be used by the enemy to further undermine the legitimacy of the GoA. Therefore, it is *imperative* that this part of the exercise be handled delicately.

4. There *must be* community contribution of some kind for a project to have the desired effects. If the community is not willing to contribute to the project, then the importance of the village should be reassessed. The PRT could meet with the district sub-governor or the provincial governor to address this issue and get greater government involvement to understand why the community refuses to contribute. In a particularly hostile area with nearby villages that are good secondary targets, moving focus areas should be considered.

## **Step 6: Gaining Government Approval**

In each province of Afghanistan, there are formal and informal governance institutions. Because the goal of the PRT was to increase the government's effectiveness and legitimacy, the FPO decided to gain project concurrence through the formal mechanisms, namely, the Provincial Council and the appropriate technical line directors representing their ministries: Rural Reconstruction and Development, Agriculture and Public Works. It is important to note that USAID did not seek approval for the projects, only concurrence. The QIP programming cycle

includes a final approval at the ministerial level in Kabul, so the provincial directors do not have the authority to approve projects.<sup>27</sup>

Once projects were identified, USAID staff wrote project nomination forms and translated the forms into Pashto for GoA distribution. USAID first met with the Provincial Council, which had been together for about a month. This was the first formal meeting between USAID and the council, so the FPO spent the morning explaining USAID and the strategy behind QIP. The Council was asked to review the projects nominated by the communities to see if there were any issues or concerns that were not addressed. They agreed to have their comments back within the week, and were very appreciative at being included in the process. They also requested to be involved in future programming, especially in the project identification portion. USAID agreed that it would be a good idea.

USAID next met with the appropriate line directors to ensure the projects were nested in the larger national programs of their technical ministries. The government was asked to verify and concur with the projects within one week; most of the line directors signed their concurrence on the internal PRT project nomination form (Annex 1) during the initial meeting. USAID worked with each of the line directors in other project programming, so they were familiar with the process, and this was merely routine business.

Once the Council and the technical directors signed their concurrence with the projects, USAID sent a final copy of the project form to the Governor's office for notification.

#### **4. Lessons Learned**

This is the time to conduct capacity assessments of the GoA. Find out what they can contribute to the project. For example, the Jalalabad PRT in 2006 often had Department of Public Works engineers work on their projects to ensure the contractors met GoA specifications. Additionally, the provincial council agreed to meet with the beneficiary communities on a monthly basis to ensure the project was meeting the communities' expectations. It is not only the community that must feel ownership of these projects, it is also the government.

### **Step 7: Holding the PRT Project Nomination Board**

The next step in the process was the Jalalabad PRT's internal project nomination board, a coordinating mechanism in which each agency voluntarily agreed to participate to better coordinate efforts.<sup>28</sup> The PRT established this meeting within 3 months of its creation because it was clear the local community expected each team member to have the ability to discuss any project managed by someone in the team. The locals did not care about agency distinctions, only that someone could explain what was happening in their village. Although frustrating at times, each agency found this meeting instrumental in ensuring that the PRT's various projects fit within

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<sup>27</sup> The GoA has a unitary government structure, so decisionmaking authority was not delegated to the provinces, which made the job of the PRT much more difficult. The CG was tasked with increasing GoA effectiveness and legitimacy, but at the provincial level the leaders often had little of either. Fortunately, in Nangarhar, there was a strong government at the provincial level that would make decisions and gain the proper support inside each ministry.

<sup>28</sup> The PRT concept has no policy directives that require the leadership of each agency to meet, coordinate, or operate together in any way. The Jalalabad PRT developed the nomination board to ensure that each agency knew what the others were doing and could support each other. This was a personality-based solution to a major coordination problem that worked beautifully.

the strategic focus each agency agreed to honor, there was no duplication of efforts, and the team had visibility on what everyone was funding.

Anyone in the Jalalabad PRT could bring a project idea to the board, which consisted of DOD Civil Affairs, USAID, USDA and DOS as voting members, and any other PRT member who was interested could attend for situational awareness. Although every agency was on the board, only USAID and DOD had money available to fund projects, so if a project was suggested by someone on the team without funds and everyone agreed that it supported the mission, DOD and USAID would discuss which funding mechanism was more appropriate. The meetings were held only when necessary—when someone wanted feedback or guidance on projects they were planning, when they needed funds, or when the projects had gone through the cycle described below and were ready to be sent to higher headquarters. The board served as a brainstorming session, a sounding board, a reality check, and a final check before elevating the projects to the next level.

The process is as follows:

1. A representative from the agency proposing the project provides a brief verbal summary of the concept.
2. The representative explains the project nomination and approval process that occurred for the project.
3. The representative asks for feedback/input and possibly funding.
4. Usually, questions ensue and are either addressed to everyone's satisfaction at the time, or the agency representative is requested to provide more information and complete what is unsatisfactory. For example, someone who wants to build a school but has not coordinated with the director of education must get that coordination piece in place before the board will concur on the project.
5. If everyone agrees that the project is a good idea, fits within the strategic focus of the PRT, and has the necessary government and community approvals, then everyone signs the form noting their concurrence. (*Note: Only the agency representative has the authority to request or deny projects; if someone is against a project they can note their concern on the form, but the project may be nominated anyway*).

Once the project was approved, each agency had its own internal project approval processes, which will not be discussed in this document. Generally, the project nominations were sent to higher headquarters for final approval. Once approved, the next step was implementation.

#### **5. Lessons Learned**

The Project Nomination Board is an excellent tool to allow everyone in the PRT to have visibility on each other's projects. Even if a PRT does not want to use a model of endorsing each agency's projects, it is recommended that representatives meet regularly to discuss the status of ongoing projects, thus ensuring the PRT is speaking with one voice externally.

There is some debate regarding who from the military should participate. Ideally, it would be the head of the military component, usually a LTC or COL, the final decisionmaker for DOD project funding. In Jalalabad, the Civil Affairs commanders participated because they had *de facto* authority from the military commander to make decisions in the meetings. In the future, both the military commander and whoever he or she delegates as project management could participate, because the military commander also needs visibility on the other agencies' projects. Additionally, in some PRTs there is a feeling of disparity between the civilian and military components, so the more the leaders of each agency work as a team, the stronger that team will become.

## **Step 8: Implementation**

Planning is essential, but plans are of little value without good implementation. Due to the collaborative nature of this project, and the desired end state of creating a more stable environment, it is fundamental that the contractor hired to construct the project work with complete community and GoA involvement.

The best way to ensure cooperation is to write any such requirements into the scope of work for the contractor. During the bidding conference, it is important to inform the potential contractors that these requirements are non-negotiable, and failure to meet them will be the basis for termination.

### **6. Lessons Learned**

Based on experience, it is not enough to do all of this hard work in the beginning. The PRT also must follow up as the project develops. Extensive pre-planning, as laid out above, will greatly help with the amount of follow-up. If the Provincial Council agrees to meet with the community, and the line ministry has a worker on the project, it should considerably ease the burden of management from the project funder. Further, it is the responsibility of the donor agency to constantly monitor and evaluate these projects and ensure they are being done well. A monitoring schedule and form should be developed for each project.

## **Conclusion**

It is not easy to measure the effects of funding construction projects on stability operations. A project in one area could be the reassurance that a community needed to believe in their government. A project in another area could have little effect outside the immediate community it serves. But the people at the tip of the spear in the field have to start somewhere. Once the CG starts to understand what “wins” or “loses” in a specific area, they need to capture that information and share it with others to ensure that practitioners in the field and analysts and policymakers can grow smarter about how to conduct the civilian side of counterinsurgency.

The CG must keep in mind that the goal is not to buy the community. It is to give the community faith in their government so they will take the initiative to deny sanctuary to and provide information about the people trying to destroy the government. The communities must take their future into their own hands by standing up to the forces who want to undermine the new government, and no amount of kinetic operations will convince the community to take such a risk.

Part of defining the battlespace is setting up a good timeline of project cycles. In areas of greater instability, the cycle of determining mission criteria, tribal analysis, and project parameters will be more frequent than in areas with greater stability due to the changing realities of the insurgency. This is fundamental to the success of the PRT’s mission due to the ever fluctuating staffing patterns of the various agencies and personnel. The military may rotate on 9-month cycles, whereas the development officer may stay for 36 months, and the political officer for 12. Programming must not be personality-dependent. The timelines for the PRT to analyze the battlespace and adjust programming accordingly should be driven by the realities of the insurgency, the Afghan people, and institutions in the area, rather than the PRT personnel.