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STABILITY IN KEY AREAS (SIKA) PROGRAM FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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STABILITY IN KEY AREAS (SIKA) PROGRAM FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION



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Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) Project

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ACRONYMS AND OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Automated Directives System
AECOM	Architecture, Engineering, Consulting, Operations and Maintenance
AGE	Anti-Government element
CDC	Community Development Council
COR	Contracting Officer’s Representative
DAI	Development Alternatives International
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDA+	District Development Assembly with additional stakeholders
DDP	District Development Plan
DGO	District Government Office
DoWA	Department of Women’s Affairs
DPP	District Project Portfolio
DSC	District Stability Committee
DSF	District Stability Framework
FOG	Fixed Obligation Grant
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (referred to as “the government” throughout the report)
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IL	Implementation Letter
IR	Intermediate Result
IP	Implementing Partner
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MISTI	Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Initiatives
MRRD	Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National Area Based Development Program (MRRD program)
NSP	National Solidarity Program (MRRD program funded by the World Bank)
PGO	Provincial Government Office
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PRRD	Provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SAM	Stability Analysis Mechanism or Stability Analysis Method
SIKA	Stability in Key Areas
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SOI	Source of Instability
SSM	Sector Stability Meeting
STAB-U	Stabilization Unit
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WAC	Women’s Advisory Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID/Afghanistan's Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) program conducted a multitude of district government confidence building initiatives, mitigation activities, and grants aimed at addressing community identified sources of instability in specially chosen unstable provinces in Afghanistan. Working closely with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), SIKA's aim was to expand and improve the legitimacy of the Afghan Government in districts and unstable communities. The SIKA program (the Program) strategy was to first assist district entities to better understand their operating environment and identify the challenges to stability they face, and then enable district governments to implement activities aimed at addressing those identified sources of instability (SOIs). At the direction of USAID, the SIKA stabilization program later emphasized governance programming aimed at improving the capacity of subnational government, primarily at the district level.

The Program consisted of four similar projects totaling roughly \$300 million. It was initially overseen by the Stabilization Unit within the USAID Mission, but was later transferred to the Office of Democracy and Governance (ODG). The Program's projects were implemented by AECOM International Development Inc. (AECOM) in the East, South, and West of Afghanistan, and by Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI) in the North. The four projects had a staggered start schedule with SIKA East starting operations in December 2011, SIKA West starting in January 2012, SIKA North starting in March 2012, and SIKA South starting in July 2012. All of the programs closed out in the summer of 2015 with the exception of SIKA North which closed out in April 2015.

The MISTI project had earlier conducted individual mid-term performance evaluations of each of the SIKA projects. This final performance evaluation examined the projects together and marks an opportunity to document the SIKA program successes and challenges in the context of stabilization and governance programming as well as in the context of shifting USAID and Afghan government priorities. This evaluation examined each of the four SIKA projects and covers the breadth of SIKA activities and whether the SIKA approach was successful in promoting stabilization and good governance. The evaluation also identifies key lessons learned from stabilization programming and how those lessons can be used to inform future programming on stabilization, local governance, and development problems.

Key Findings, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The final SIKA program performance evaluation identified the following key findings that may serve as lessons learned for future USAID programming on governance, stabilization, and development in conflict-afflicted areas. Associated evaluation recommendations follow the findings.

The USAID SIKA program in Afghanistan did not, generally speaking, improve stability or good formal governance. Instead, the four projects constituting the Program contributed to increased community cohesion, resiliency, and improved the perceptions of local leaders, albeit at the expense of government officials. The nature of SIKA programming, particularly under the service delivery component, had the unintended effect of causing local residents to generally credit local leaders for project benefits instead of formal government institutions, including DDAs and CDCs. This does not necessarily imply that SIKA programming did not achieve its objectives under stabilization and governance. On the contrary, the SIKA projects performed considerably well in executing their contracts, implementing all four intermediate results, and building up the capacity of MRRD-developed institutions. Nonetheless, the Program's task – to create stability in unstable districts – was too monumental to occur through service delivery and governance programming alone. USAID's stabilization approach was insufficient in

improving stability through the sources of instability (SOI) model, particularly in the context of what many observers characterize as a very fragile state (see 2015 Fragile States Index) and emboldened insurgency, both of which became acute in 2014 with the Presidential election crisis and delays in forming the Ghani government.

The SIKA program was designed during the counterinsurgency and surge phases of military operations in Afghanistan as part of the United States Government's "all of government" approach. The four projects were originally designed to stabilize key districts by serving as a part of the later stages of the counterinsurgency spectrum (*clear, hold, build*), and later recast somewhat to align with a transition phase of USAID programming. Unfortunately, the military campaign was not always successful in completely clearing districts of anti-government elements and getting to the "hold" and "build" parts of the counterinsurgency spectrum. Moreover, by the time the projects began programming, the military was already in drawdown, often leaving the SIKAs to implement in only partially cleared areas with no viable security partner. This forced the Program to conduct programming in a number of insecure areas at a time when their model suggested they could only conduct programming once a district had been cleared of insurgents and had a present and somewhat functioning security apparatus and district government. This was not always the case, especially in 2014. The SIKA projects implemented programming in a number of districts where there was only a token security apparatus and no functional district government and in a number of districts where district governments lost authority and territory -- over the course of programming -- to insurgents. In some cases, districts were under total insurgent control. How local national staff managed to implement project activities in these areas is still an open question as expatriate M&E specialists were unable to personally monitor or verify what was being reported by local staff. The explanation given, that they were able to leverage local knowledge and contacts, is in and of itself not a sufficient explanation. *How* they leveraged local knowledge and contacts is more to the point. This has not been sufficiently answered to allow for practical lessons learned and to help in establishing best practices for program delivery in insurgent controlled areas.

The Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM), the tool used by the SIKA projects to program activities, was an insufficiently tested tool for identifying local sources of instability and then programming service delivery projects. This tool was used by each SIKA project to understand local SOIs and then program mitigation activities to address them. However, given budget constraints, USAID vetting delays, grants implementation limits, project Implementing Partner risk aversion, and a male-dominated focus on infrastructure development, the majority of these mitigation activities/grants were small-scale infrastructure improvements that did not adequately address the systemic and root causes of community-identified SOIs. This led to minor improvements in district quality of life and increased cooperation between communities and the subnational government. Though, their overall effect on district stability was negligible. This is based on MISTI's impact evaluation of the SIKA program (and other USAID stabilization projects) and on qualitative assessments conducted by MISTI in each SIKA district over the course of the SIKA project contract implementation period.

The primary SIKA program final evaluation recommendations include:

Improve the Mechanism for Identifying Sources of Instability – As the finding noted above stated, SAM was an insufficiently tested tool which evolved during the early stages of the Program from the District Stability Framework (DSF) model used by the military and USAID to understand local sources of instability. However, the SAM tool was not adequately tested in the Afghan context before the SIKAs were contracted to use it. It was prone to back engineering (the process by which communities choose the projects they want and then back engineer the SOI to match the project). It was too complicated for uneducated participants (the majority) and the process of vetting identified SOIs to test their local validity and feasibility was limited or non-existent. A large number of SOIs were too general (e.g. youth unemployment, lack of market access, insecurity) for effective programming under the SIKA model which used small grants. Furthermore, some SOIs that the SIKA projects programmed against were not,

in fact, SOIs. For example, female unemployment was mitigated against through vocational trainings such as tailoring and embroidery courses. However, unemployed women do not constitute a destabilizing force in conservative Afghanistan.

Do Not Reward Unstable Districts at the Expense of Stable Districts– Good governance is about programming and governing equitably. The SIKA programming model did not allow for equitable resource allocation as the Program rewarded unstable areas at the expense of stable areas. While the Program aimed to improve local governance and thereby “stabilize” districts, the four projects had no significant impact on overall stability as noted by the aggregate stability index measure score discussed in MISTI’s impact evaluation. USAID/Afghanistan’s shift from a stabilization to a governance emphasis beginning in early-2014 could have been used as an opportunity to change the direction of the SIKA projects by focusing resources on improving governance in districts which had a present and active district government instead of continuing to spend money in unstable districts with low levels of district government presence and activity.

Maintain Flexible Operations Especially When Earlier Selection Criteria is no Longer Valid - District selection was based on criteria developed by USAID and the MRRD that changed over time. As such, USAID should have maintained some flexibility in choosing programming districts, particularly as districts fell to the Taliban or suffered from a lack of district government presence. MISTI’s impact evaluation and endorsement experiment demonstrated the link between USAID programming in Taliban-controlled areas and an increase in support for the Taliban. This counterproductive outcome should serve as a lesson learned for future USAID programs that continue to operate in areas lacking government presence and control.

Build Upon Existing Structures – The SIKA program IPs successfully aligned with the Afghan government’s existing subnational government structures and governance processes, namely the Community Development Councils (CDC) established by MRRD’s National Solidarity Program (NSP) and District Development Assemblies (DDA) formed by the National Area-Based Development Program (NABDP). This approach focused attention on building capacity and processes for current community, district, and provincial entities, and not, for example, creating new committees or competing structures and councils. While the SIKA projects did augment existing structures by adding other stakeholders, these were done in conjunction with the government and proved successful and sustainable over time. It is important that future MRRD-partnered programming build upon existing structures as this is key to sustainability.

Include Women from the Start – The potential for gender programming to increase stability through reducing support for the Taliban was clearly illustrated in the MISTI impact evaluation, but such activities were often overlooked by the SIKA projects. It is imperative to program gender into as many activities as possible and to do so from the start of programming. “Soft” stabilization programming should include literacy and empower women because these types of activities have the greatest impact on reducing support for the Taliban and other anti-government elements. Only SIKA East addressed gender as a fundamental aspect of all project activity programming. This led to highly successful programming in the East that empowered women and gave them a real voice in the districts’ decision-making process.

Grants Solely to Employ Afghans Should Not Be Undertaken – Programming focused on boosting/providing employment in the short term, such as cash for work activities, should not be implemented because of the risk of increasing support for the Taliban. In particular, efforts to improve per capita income via development projects without prior assessments of territorial control by the Taliban or the government may have detrimental effects as shown by MISTI’s impact evaluation. The majority of SIKA grants were small interventions meant to employ as many community members as possible. These

were used as countermeasures against unemployment SOIs that commonly plague rural Afghanistan. Such grants, however, do little to address the systemic causes of unemployment.

Program Multiple and Concentrated Activities Instead of One-Off Interventions – The SIKA projects tried to address as many SOIs as possible by programming a myriad of grants in multiple communities. The vast majority of communities received a one-off intervention such as a small gravel road, a culvert, or a school protection wall. These interventions were meant to address community SOIs. However, it is evidently clear that SOIs cannot be addressed through one intervention only. Multiple activities (hard *and* soft) should be implemented in the same area over time because doing so increases the magnitude of project impacts and improves prospects for sustaining gains in stability and consolidating support for the government over the Taliban and other anti-government elements. Sometimes it is better to get it right in a few places than try to get it right in a hundred places.

Adhere to a Theory of Change – Stabilization programming should adhere to a theory of change that reflects the program’s strategic objective. Unfocused interventions carry a heightened risk of doing more harm than good, particularly in Taliban-controlled districts. The SIKA program was designed to stabilize unstable districts primarily through district-wide service delivery. Unfortunately, USAID and the IPs conducted small grant work in as many communities as possible instead of focusing on grant work that would actually stabilize a district. A fundamental fault of each SIKA project was the inability to focus on the strategic objective, instead choosing to focus on intermediate results that, when combined, did not fulfill the strategic objective.

Require a Realistic and Measurable Theory of Change – Any USAID project should have a properly articulated and realistic theory of change in its implementation contract and PMP. Furthermore, the project should be able to measure the theory of change through internal and external M&E mechanisms such as outcomes measurements, and evaluations/assessments of project-level and especially project activity-level impacts and performance. The SIKA projects did not have properly articulated theories of change in their contracts or PMPs, and none measured outcomes (or included outcomes measurement in their PMPs). The four SIKA Implementing Partner M&E units essentially served as outputs indicator clearinghouses instead of as autonomous evaluation tools within the SIKA project structures. This is one reason why the projects succumbed to conducting low-priority interventions that were not effective countermeasures for SOIs. Such unfocused interventions could have been rectified by good M&E units that would have identified the major issues to senior IP management during programming.

Require Thorough and Outcomes-based Monitoring and Evaluation – The IP M&E unit, if functioning properly, can serve as the evidentiary-based vehicle for internal program learning and adaptation. The SIKA project IPs, for the most part, did not use their M&E units as vehicles for understanding programming and this was a major lost opportunity. Having a viable and measurable theory of change, measuring outcomes, collecting proper project information from the start, and conducting joint monitoring with government officials/stakeholders are not enough. Senior IP management and USAID need to take M&E results seriously when assessing programming effects.

Do Not Depart From the Process of Stability Interventions - Internal factors and methodology changes negatively impacted beneficiaries. Errors and process changes frustrated the local beneficiaries of SIKA programming when it departed significantly in 2014 from the theory of change that guided the process of stability interventions: work with local leaders to first identify SOIs, prioritize these SOIs for remediation through project interventions, and then plan and implement these interventions to achieve quick impacts in short time frames. Negative impacts were created when the SIKA projects did not adhere to this model. In particular, this occurred when the SIKA project-level stability workshops raised expectations but then undermined confidence in local government when chosen high-priority interventions were not implemented due to vetting delays, a general aversion to riskier, more complex projects by the IPs, and a

focus on low-cost interventions. An analysis of the SIKA program's district project portfolios (DPPs) and executed grants shows a disparity between community-prioritized activities and the ones funded by the projects. The activities funded by SIKA IPs were often not the first or even second placed community priorities. Furthermore, the change from stabilization to a governance focus further frustrated local beneficiaries as some grants had to be cancelled in order to shift funding over to non-service delivery activities.

Conduct More Communications and Outreach – The SIKA East project had a particularly effective and adept communications team that conducted highly impactful and well-received communications trainings which taught communities how to develop agendas and communications strategies, and how to communicate their problems and concerns with local government authorities. These trainings significantly improved bottom-up communication by creating systematic mechanisms to facilitate communication from the village to district and provincial levels. SIKA North conducted highly impactful media activities that highlighted government officials' involvement in service delivery. These initiatives cost little to implement but had significant benefits. USAID should ensure that every program has a strategic communications component. In Afghanistan's "word of mouth" culture, communication is often more important than anything else.

Capacity Building Trainings Must be Relevant and Aligned With the Government – Trainings for the government must be aligned with IDLG's Capacity Institutional Development Directorate and, for the PRRDs, with the MRRD's Community-led Development Directorate. Non-aligned capacity building trainings will not be sustainable and may not be relevant. The SIKA project IPs conducted a number of capacity building trainings that were not aligned with either the IDLG or the MRRD. Many were considered irrelevant, redundant, or insufficient by government officials. The CDC and DDA project management cycle capacity building trainings were effective, but these were based on ensuring sufficient community monitoring existed for the service delivery component of programming. The trainings for improving governance were too varied and insufficient. The SIKA projects should have used the same training materials for all district and provincial government offices. Instead, USAID encouraged each SIKA IP to spend funds on and devise training modules independently. This was wasteful, as a more centralized approach in coordination with the Afghan government would have resulted in more effective capacity building.

Vetting Should not Undermine Programming – Vetting procedures should not undermine the ability to effectively program against SOIs. External and internal vetting should be rapid enough not to impede programming as designed. The SIKA projects suffered from extensive USAID Vetting Unit delays which caused delays in grant implementation, community frustration, negative perceptions of governance, and wasted time. Senior managers in each SIKA IP stated that they would not have chosen low-cost, low-impact interventions if it hadn't been for the vetting delays. To help ensure that vetting does not impede programming, it should be internalized by programs as an auditable part of the programming cycle. The risk of misallocating funds to improperly vetted actors should be borne by the implementer.

Service Delivery Isn't a Stabilization Panacea – USAID Should Program Soft and Hard Projects for Better Effect - SIKA program service delivery did not result in perceptions of good formal governance but did contribute to increased community cohesion (social capital and local leader satisfaction). This means that local traditional leaders such as non-DDA members included in the SIKA stabilization workshops were credited with project benefits instead of formal government institutions. The Program design stipulated that improved service delivery would improve local governance. However, it is clear from MISTI's impact evaluation that this was not always true. Furthermore, soft programming often had more impact than hard programming and also reversed negative perceptions after hard interventions. USAID can have more impact by focusing on soft interventions coupled with hard interventions. The traditional focus on hard grants in insecure areas has proven that it could be destabilizing in the Afghan

stabilization context, and is likely to be so in other stabilization contexts where actors are usually highly particularized and opportunistic.

Ensure Project Sustainability Through Community and Government Commitments – Sustainability should be addressed by including operational and maintenance commitments in the local government grant agreement(s) awarded by project IPs as well as through operational and maintenance emphasis during grant orientation trainings as well as continued trainings upon completion of implementation. Many rural communities are incapable of maintaining built infrastructure without proper training. Also, joint monitoring with local government officials increases government involvement, exposure, and chances of project sustainability. Joint monitoring should be a requirement in any local governance programming and funds should be allocated within projects to make it realistic.

Hire the Right People at the Right Salary - USAID and its IPs should decrease the salary gap between government and IP employees, particularly in rural areas outside of Kabul. USAID and IPs should not upset the labor economics balance in programming areas. Also, hiring qualified individuals is difficult in Afghanistan due to a shortage of qualified English-speaking technical experts. Nonetheless, there needs to be more stringent hiring criteria in place to avoid simply filling vacant positions. Projects partnered with the government should, as a rule, include government officials in the hiring decisions. The SIKA projects had high turnover and a number of unqualified individuals would not have been hired if a central database of all previous hires and their performance evaluations were shared with the SIKA IPs. USAID should assist IPs in this regard as USAID collects all of the biodata forms of new hires.

Conclusion

The SIKA project IPs fulfilled their contracts with USAID to the best of their abilities in a harsh operating environment and during a period of great transitions in both the USG's strategic focus (stabilization to transition-local governance) and the Afghan government's priorities following the presidential elections in 2014. The success of each SIKA project was measured not only in each IP's ability to execute its contract, but also in each project's ability to contribute towards achievement of the stated USAID program and strategic objectives – to stabilize key districts by improving governance through service delivery and increasing confidence in district level government – which the SIKA program *as a whole* was unable to achieve. The results of MISTI's project-level performance and program-level impact evaluations demonstrate that while the SIKA projects had some individual successes they had no measurable impact, in aggregate, on district stability, did not improve district governance or increase confidence in district level government through service delivery, but instead improved public perceptions of district-level traditional leaders.

Not all of this was the fault of the individual SIKA IPs. These projects had a number of design flaws that prevented them, at birth, from achieving the stated objectives. USAID's SIKA program management, vetting unit, and shifting USG priorities profoundly affected the SIKA projects' ability to program effectively. Nonetheless, the SIKA projects were responsible for a particular failure – they got mired in the individual programming components required to execute a complicated contract and lost sight of the greater objectives of confidence in government and expansion of provincial authority and legitimacy. In particular, the SIKA IPs focused considerable resources on labor-intense grants that were meant to respond to the population's basic service delivery needs. However, the programming undertaken was insufficient in meeting the populations' service delivery needs and rarely resulted in increased public confidence in, or perceptions of legitimacy of Afghan subnational government.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) program (the Program) was to promote stabilization in key areas by supporting the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (the government) to implement community led development and governance initiatives that respond to the population's needs and concerns. The Program helped district entities to identify and respond to challenges to stability with an aim to build confidence in local government and increase the provision of basic services. The Program's work focused on key districts identified based on district selection criteria prioritized by the United States and Afghanistan governments. The SIKA program was implemented in limited districts in coordination with the MRRD and the IDLG through a memorandum of implementation signed with USAID covering the SIKA program's four projects.

The overarching strategic objective for the SIKA program is to increase the confidence Afghans have in the district level government, leading to the expansion of provincial authority and greater legitimacy at the community level. From this strategic objective flow the programmatic objectives for each SIKA project and the intermediate results the programs seek to achieve. The SIKA program complemented other USAID stabilization and governance efforts such as the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) and the Afghanistan Civilian Assistance Program II (ACAP II) among other development programs. SIKA also served as a foundation for recently started USAID sub-national programs, such as SHAHAR (Strong Hubs for Afghan Homes and Resilience Program), ISLA (Initiative to Strengthen Local Administrations) and the national gender program PROMOTE.

To be specific, there were four separate SIKA projects: SIKA East, SIKA South, SIKA West, and SIKA North. USAID awarded East, West, and South to AECOM, and awarded the North to DAI. While each SIKA project had a similar contract with USAID with similar deliverables, their funding, geographic scope, headquarters location, and management were markedly different. SIKA East was based in Kabul and worked in six provinces in eastern Afghanistan. SIKA West was based in Herat and worked in all four western provinces. SIKA North was based in Mazar-e-Sharif and worked in two provinces. SIKA South was originally based in Kandahar, working in five provinces, but, due to security issues, had to relocate all expat and some local staff to Kabul halfway into the contract. While USAID issued the SIKA contracts in late 2011 to early 2012, the Afghan Government did not sign the implementation letter until September 2013. The MRRD wanted the SIKA program to become an on-budget part of the ministry's portfolio. USAID objected and this resulted in almost seven months of negotiations, causing a delayed start.

Background Context

USAID manages a number of stability programs throughout Afghanistan aimed at improving security and extending the reach and legitimacy of the government to unstable communities. These programs are designed to address Sources of Instability (SOIs) and establish an environment for sustained social and economic development. The goal is engagement of government officials in communities in key districts, the implementation of projects aimed at extending the reach of the government to unstable areas, provision of social and economic assistance and income generating opportunities, the building of trust between local citizens and their governments, and encouragement of local populations to play an active role in their own development.

USAID designed the SIKA program to address two particular weaknesses at the district level: (1) lack of development, and (2) lack of good governance. The SIKA program was designed to deliver community developed and implemented projects in close partnership with the government in order to build

confidence in the government and increase stability by addressing these two main weaknesses at the district level. SIKA cooperated closely with MRRD in this effort.

Lack of Development – SIKA Partnership with the MRRD

MRRD’s approach to stabilization is to empower people, build unity within communities, and instill grassroots level participation in decision making while maintaining the ultimate goal of building the population’s confidence towards Afghan institutions. These approaches to stability have been used by MRRD since 2002 through the National Area Based Development Program (NABDP) and, since 2003, through the National Solidarity Program (NSP). NABDP is MRRD’s primary stabilization initiative at the district level. Its goals are the sustainable reduction of poverty and an improvement in the livelihoods in rural Afghanistan. NABDP uses District Development Assemblies (DDAs)¹ to create District Development Plans (DDPs) which link community priorities to the government’s agricultural and rural development strategy. It also strengthens the DDAs as the primary conduit for stabilization initiatives as well as social and economic development planning at the district level.

NSP was created to help local communities identify, plan, manage, and monitor their own development projects largely through the formation of Community Development Councils (CDCs), which serve as the focal points for all village-level rural development in Afghanistan. NSP and NABDP complement each other to provide a stabilizing influence at the district level.

Lack of Good Governance - SIKA Partnership with the IDLG

Under IDLG, the District Delivery Program (DDP) was an Afghan-led, inter-ministerial initiative designed to establish or improve the presence of the Afghan government in recently secured districts by supporting district government efforts to respond to the needs of their constituents by building the government’s capacity to deliver basic services. The program placed competent government officials from critical service delivery ministries in districts to implement integrated packages of basic government services, including health, education, agriculture extension and justice, as well as basic infrastructure, and supports the Afghan government through this process to ensure success and sustainability. The Afghanistan Social Outreach Program (ASOP) created District-level Community Councils that aimed to strengthen security and peace, improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of service delivery and serve as the local governing council.

Building on past governance efforts, IDLG is implementing its sub-national governance objectives and bolstering capacity building efforts in coordination with UNDP, USAID, and other donors. In direct coordination with the Civil Service Commission it is building district and provincial leadership skills and resources in addition to strengthening communications amongst leaders and stakeholders

Working closely with MRRD and IDLG, the SIKA programs’ strategic objective is for Afghans to have increased confidence in their district government, leading to the expansion of authority and legitimacy of Afghan provincial government to the districts and to unstable communities. The SIKA programs’ strategy is to assist GIROA and district entities to better understand their operating environment and the challenges to stability they face. The SIKA programs enable them to develop a localized methodology aimed at addressing sources of instability and to implement activities that address these sources of instability.

¹ DDAs are comprised of representatives of clustered CDCs.

USAID has identified four intermediate results required to achieve the strategic objectives:

1. Provincial and district entities increasingly address sources of instability and take measures to respond to the population’s development and governance concerns;
2. Provincial and district entities understand what organizations and line departments work within their geographic areas, what kind of services they provide, and how the population can access those services;
3. Provincial authorities improve their ability to communicate with district entities to help them better understand their population’s needs and prioritize basic service delivery interventions; and
4. Provincial authorities improve basic service delivery by using the government, Community Development Councils (CDCs), District Development Assemblies (DDAs), Afghanistan Social Outreach Program District Community Councils (DCCs) to plan, design, implement and monitor projects and focus on labor-intensive projects or productive infrastructure.

USAID designed the SIKA programs to function as an Afghan-led and Afghan government owned program that worked within the structures already setup by the government. As such, the SIKA programs worked with MRRD and IDLG to enhance the capacity of the government to plan and implement programming at the provincial and district levels, and to improve governance and service delivery in strategic districts by working within existing government development frameworks.

SIKA stabilization programming was originally designed to serve as quick delivery programs whereby projects identified by the community through the localized Stability Analysis Mechanism (SAM) process are initiated quickly, but achieve long-term results. The SAM process was used to identify local sources of instability and their systemic and root causes in order to produce useful programming information about the district and community-level environments. CDCs, with input from members of the government, analyzed these SOIs to select mitigation activities. These activities were implemented by the community, achieving a level of local ownership required for stabilization.

As US and international military and civilian forces have retrenched from the field, the USAID mission has adapted programming; shifting from field-based counterinsurgency under stabilization to long term development objectives under governance. The Stabilization Unit was merged with The Office of Democracy and Governance in 2013 and has gradually integrated programming and administered guidance to programs in coordination with ministerial counterparts. This essentially means that the SIKAs were the last USAID stabilization programs under the counterinsurgency model used by the military during the peak of the Afghanistan “surge”. Follow on programming will shift focus away from the district level to provincial and urban areas.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The SIKA programs were designed to assist GIRoA officials at the district and provincial levels to respond to the population’s development and governance concerns to better instill citizen confidence and build stability. While each SIKA had similar program goals and objectives, they all executed varying strategies to reach the objectives. Each region had a unique environment, with differences in ethnic makeup, levels of violence, and accessibility to economic infrastructure. As a result, the SIKAs used different activities and at times different indicators to achieve their intermediate results.

The objective of the final performance evaluation is to assess the performance, relevance, success, and impact of the SIKA programs within the context of stabilization and governance programming and

strategic objectives. Specifically, this evaluation is being undertaken to provide information to the Democracy and Governance Office and USAID Mission management on whether activities implemented by SIKAs achieved their desired results by examining the performance of SIKAs according to their approved program and strategic objectives. The secondary objective looks forward and draws on both positive and negative lessons relating to program implementation at the sub-national level for future USAID programs.

This scope of work calls for the completion of three inter-connected tasks:

1. An assessment/evaluation of USAID SIKA programs in Afghanistan
2. Identification of key lessons learned from the assistance in stabilization; and
3. The development of strategic recommendations to address stabilization, governance, and development problems for future planning

The evaluation portion analyzes the core programmatic problem(s) in the country, identifies actors and institutions that have supported or resisted reforms, evaluates USAID program (through SIKA) assistance in relationship to the strategic objective, and SIKA's operational environment, and, if appropriate, how SIKA programs leveraged other resources and USAID programs to meet the strategic objective. The lessons and recommendations component will enable the governance team to address the core stabilization and development problem(s) identified.

Key Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were examined through the evaluation:

- 1 Was the approach to women inclusion appropriate and effective in empowering women and increasing their participation in decision making in SIKA activities? Were any other special initiatives or approaches taken for disadvantaged groups (ex: youth, disabled)?
- 2 How effectively did the SIKAs work through Afghan government structures and within Afghan government processes to empower the local governments in decision-making and community engagements under existing interventions?
- 3 How effective was a bottom-up communications process at linking the overall district and provincial development planning processes?
- 4 How effective were capacity building initiatives aimed at the district and provincial levels (for example: training entities how to plan, design, communicate, implement and monitor development projects and programs?). What is the anticipated or expressed sustainability?
- 5 What lessons learned from SIKA program implementation can inform future USAID programming?
- 6 How effective was SIKA at reaching functional objectives (program elements and sub-elements)? Specifically, what components of SIKA were most and least valued by district, provincial, and national entities (such as IDLG & MRRD and the units within)?
- 7 Outline changes to program methodology over the period of performance as they relate to mission objectives and GIRoA prioritization; what were the successes and failures
- 8 In considering the phase-out/closeout how did the SIKA program facilitate this process and how did the program engage GIRoA for sustainability?
- 9 How effective were the IPs at Monitoring and Evaluation?

Methodology

It is important to note that this is a meta-evaluation of four distinct programs implemented by two different companies (AECOM and DAI), each executing similar USAID contracts in different geographic areas. USAID tasked MISTI to conduct final performance evaluations for each SIKA individually, as had been done for the mid-term evaluations. However, in March 2015, this task changed to include all the SIKAs in one meta-evaluation. This in no way reduces the quality or scope of the evaluation, but it does limit the information the team could write for each finding section.

This performance evaluation used qualitative methods, including observation, interviews, and a desk review of project documents to evaluate SIKA's performance. The evaluation team consisted of one expatriate and one Afghan evaluator from Sayara Research who conducted interviews with SIKA, USAID, MRRD, and IDLG staff to understand processes, challenges, and lessons learned. 122 individuals worked in the field for this evaluation: 1 lead researcher, 1 managing researcher, 29 male researchers, 10 female researchers, 25 research associates, 13 research managers, 13 back checkers, and 28 in operations. The 13 back checkers ensured the quality of the field data through regular monitoring of field data collection, providing the requisite quality control necessary for an evaluation of this size and scope.

To gain a deeper understanding of how the program performed in the field, the evaluation selected 131 completed and ongoing activities/projects for closer study. This is in addition to the several hundred projects already studied under each SIKA mid-term performance evaluation. Each SIKA's project data was examined to understand how projects varied in terms of type, value, beneficiaries, and location. Further project analysis involved examining District Project Portfolios (DPPs) for project relation to identified SOIs, as well as length of time between DPP approval and actual project implementation. Survey data from the MISTI Stability Survey was used to characterize project districts in terms of variables such as overall stability and perceptions of local security. Together this information allowed the team to select study projects that were relatively representative of the universe of each SIKA's programming. The map (Figure 1) shows all SIKA provinces. MISTI had already visited hundreds of project sites for the mid-term performance evaluations of each SIKA. Data from those evaluations was used to support this final evaluation. In particular, MISTI refocused some of the field work on gaining more insight into each SIKA's performance/impact at the district and provincial levels. A complete list of projects visited appears in Annex A.

Security conditions in certain project areas prohibited the Kabul-based Afghan evaluators from visiting each site. Instead, the team recruited and trained male interviewers from each province and female interviewers in ten out of 14 provinces to visit the selected project sites and interview direct and indirect beneficiaries and project stakeholders such as CDC and DDA members who were involved in project implementation and oversight. The interviewers documented perceptions of project selection, implementation, monitoring, effects on stability, and how valued they were by the community in which they were implemented. They also evaluated the degree to which communities recognized Afghan government involvement. The evaluation team did not hire engineers to inspect project quality or accountants to review records. The evaluation was designed to examine community perceptions of processes, outputs, and some limited outcomes. Measuring program impact was not an objective of the performance evaluation since that has already been measured through MISTI's recently completed impact evaluation which ascertains the impact of SIKA projects quantitatively in terms of changes in stability, perceptions of government, and perceptions of service delivery. The MISTI impact evaluation was used to support data in this performance evaluation.

The evaluation team visited 14 out of 17 SIKA operating provinces. In total, the evaluation team conducted 990 interviews: 6 with USAID staff (previous SIKA evaluation interviews afforded the

evaluation team intimate knowledge of the program), 109 with SIKA staff, 92 with Afghan government officials, 240 with district entities, and 555 with beneficiaries. A table with interviews by category appears as Annex B.

TABLE I: DATA-COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Area	Dates Data Collected
Kabul – USAID, MRRD, IDLG, SIKA East and South, external interviews	March – June 2015
Herat – SIKA West	June 2015
Mazar-e-Sharif – SIKA North	March 2015
Baghlan Fieldwork	March 2015
Kunduz Fieldwork	March 2015
Ghor Fieldwork	April 2015
Wardak Fieldwork	April 2015
Logar Fieldwork	May 2015
Helmand Fieldwork	May 2015
Herat Fieldwork	May-June 2015
Ghazni Fieldwork	June 2015
Khost Fieldwork	June 2015
Paktia Fieldwork	June 2015
Farah Fieldwork	June 2015
Kandahar Fieldwork	June 2015
Zabul Fieldwork	June 2015
Badghis Fieldwork	June-July 2015

Limitations

The evaluation design had many strengths including the collection of data from all requested provinces, districts, and multiple project sites. The hiring of female interviewers added depth to the gender portion of the evaluation as access to females by male interviewers is almost impossible in rural areas of

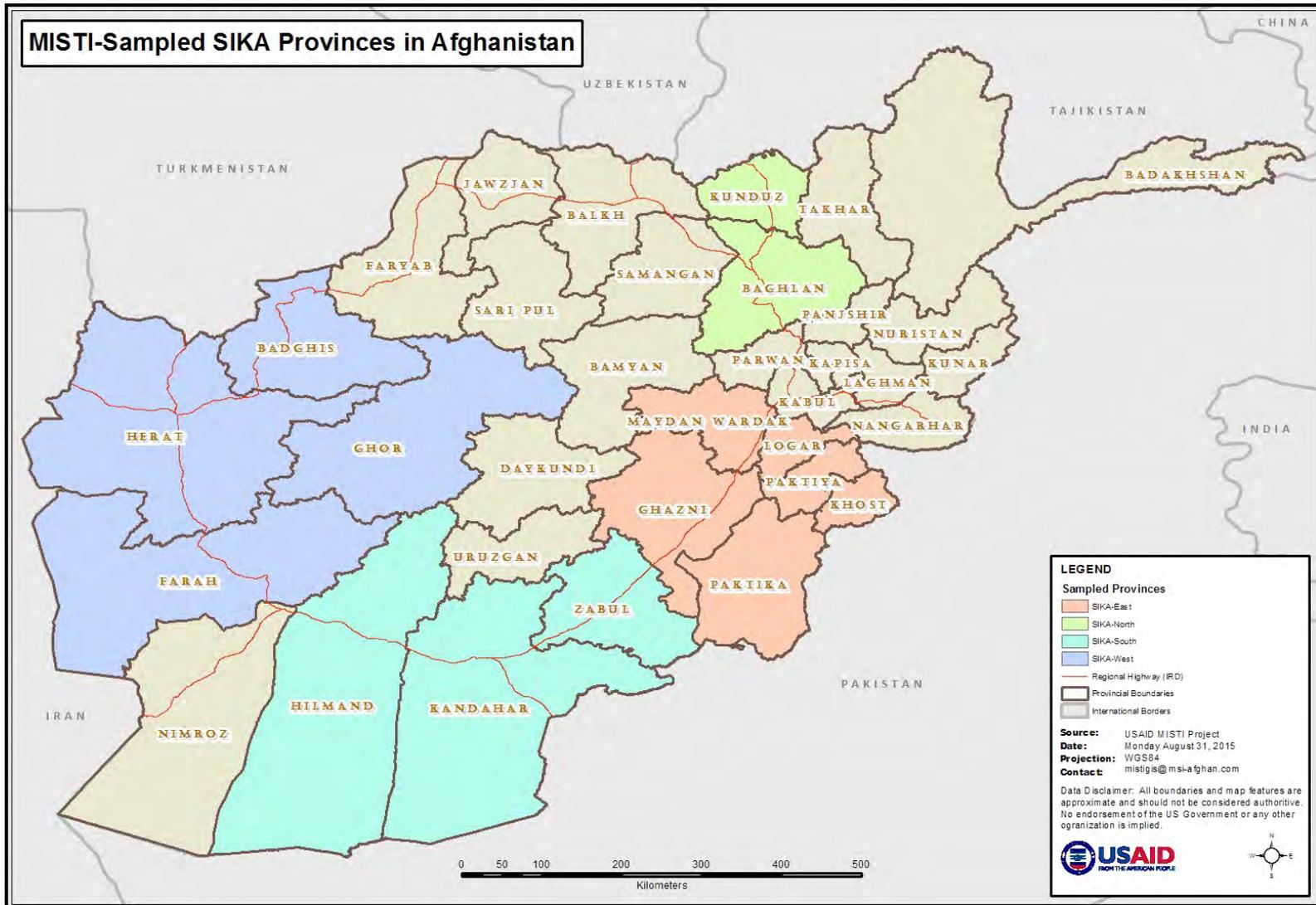
Afghanistan. In addition, the evaluation team has previous experience evaluating USAID stabilization programs in Afghanistan. This evaluation is the culmination of over three years of work by MISTI with the SIKAs programs.

Nevertheless, some limitations should be noted. Since only one to two local interviewers were hired in each province, the depth of information differed, so results should not be compared exclusively by province. Security limitations made data collection in the field difficult. While all data was collected, security issues caused some delays. Access to government officials wasn't always easy, even with SIKAs and ministerial introductions. Some district government officials were simply evasive or non-respondent. While MISTI was able to eventually interview them (some after almost a dozen attempts), it begs the obvious question of how SIKAs was able to implement with them.

Earlier issues with the data quality of SIKAs project trackers which did not reflect all completed activities or correct start and end dates were no longer an issue for this final performance evaluation. The SIKAs, particularly because of MISTI's verification work and a renewed focus on internal M&E, improved their project trackers considerably in their final year of operations.

Lastly, this is meta-evaluation of four similar yet distinct programs. A considerable amount of data was collected for each program, but only the most important and relevant aspects of that data made it into this final report. Where necessary, the sections differentiate between each SIKAs's performance. Given space constraints, this evaluation covers the most essential performance metrics. Further information can be obtained by requesting individual provincial reports.

Figure I: Map of SIKA Province Locations



FINDINGS

Was the approach to women inclusion appropriate and effective in empowering women and increasing their participation in decision making in SIKA activities? Were any other special initiatives or approaches taken for disadvantaged groups (ex: youth, disabled)?

Cultural and religious norms in Afghanistan are two of the biggest obstacles to women's participation in district and provincial level planning. Traditionally, women play a limited role in decision-making on community development. Nonetheless, USAID's gender policy requires implementing partners to ensure gender equality, female empowerment, and gender integration in all aspects of programming as part of USAID's strategy on human rights and effective and sustainable development outcomes. Moreover, USAID's contracts with each SIKA stipulated that each contractor should integrate assistance to women into all stages of development, planning, programming, and implementation. There is a number of gender lessons learned that USAID programs like PROMOTE can implement and some are outlined below. In particular, MISTI's impact evaluation has noted that empowering women and increasing their participation in civil society has positive effects on stabilization and perceptions of good governance. Furthermore, support for the Taliban decreases more among sampled females than the population as a whole. A focus on gender programming from the very beginning of a project is required as auxiliary programming has shown limited success.

Gender programming performance varied considerably. SIKA East had the most successful and nuanced programming of any SIKA, successfully including gender mainstreaming in each phase of the program, even in non-permissive environments with significant male pushback. SIKA West had mixed results. The program did a good job empowering women and including them in activities, but was not as successful at ensuring they were active in decision making. SIKA South had the most difficulty in ensuring female participation. This was partially due to the South's conservative Pashtun culture, but also due to SIKA South's failure to adequately program on gender from the very beginning. SIKA South compartmentalized gender programming instead of integrating it into other programs, as the successful SIKA East model did. This resulted in numerous meetings and discussions but little actual gender programming. SIKA North failed to implement any gender programming until the last year of the project. Although SIKA North made a concerted effort in its last year, most of their programming was hastily designed and executed after most communities had already decided upon grants. Some women did benefit from this last-minute push, but it appeared to be more of a checking the box exercise.

SIKA North

SIKA North included women in SAM trainings and created separate Stability Working Groups (SWGs) for them, but it has been widely agreed by stakeholders and even SIKA North staff on provincial and district levels that the role of women in decision making still remained very limited. In addition, most of the time their participation in SAM and SWGs were either symbolic or ineffective due to the male dominated meetings and discussions. SIKA North purposefully did not conduct gender programming in its first two years because it did not view female empowerment as necessary for stabilization or governance programming – a strategic mistake. In its last year, SIKA North conducted some trainings on gender and women's rights in Islam. These were considered adequately effective by the stakeholders as they believed that these trainings will increase women's knowledge about their rights (which is currently believed to be very low) and will allow women to advocate for their rights. Unfortunately, SIKA North's lack of gender programming early on prevented the program from adequately empowering women in its activities, even after a last minute push to do so.

Strengths

- Training women on their rights within Islam. This has empowered women who were not aware of the multitude of rights they have under Islam – particularly the laws on inheritance, marriage, and property. These trainings have helped participants remove some of their misconceptions and increased their knowledge on the role of women in society both within Afghanistan and internationally. Ignorance of basic gender issues is common in Afghanistan and can be easily rectified through targeted trainings so long as these trainings are supported by dominant males and religious leaders.
- Approaching religious scholars to ensure they participate in workshops with women activists and DoWA officials. These meetings involved discussions on how they can work together on women's rights and creating steps towards women's empowerment in Kunduz and Baghlan. Involving religious leaders in discussions of women in Sharia law was necessary.

Weaknesses

- Lack of a female gender officer/staff member in both provincial offices. Lack of a gender officer at headquarters until the last year of programming. This inhibited SIKA North's engagement with female community members as, in many cases, it was difficult for male staff to meet and discuss programming with women outside of the home.
- Female participation in the identification and selection of SOIs as well as mitigation activities was limited. These meetings were dominated by men and SIKA North did not do much to promote female identified issues. This is evident in SIKA North's DPPs which have a heavy infrastructure development focus, a common issue for men but not women.
- Female members of the CDCs and DDAs were mostly symbolic and inactive. In most cases they were asked to sign documents even though most are illiterate. Little was done to empower these women who were already present in the provincial development planning structure.
- Last minute engagements with DoWA did not ensure sufficient government participation.

SIKA East

SIKA East included female staff at provincial and district levels, provided support to male staff on female engagement, tailored SAM trainings for women (who often need more time and simplified concepts due to lower education levels than men), identified key stakeholders who could assist SIKA East with gender programming and address SOIs, encouraged community support for women's participation in decision-making, ensured active participation when community support was given, and often effectively used the support of male and female allies to promote female involvement in the planning, design, and implementation phases of activities. The gender unit also conducted thorough impact assessments of its programming, identified key issues and resolved to quickly rectify them, showing particular adaptability for a program of SIKA East's size.

Strengths

- Included women in every phase of the program from the beginning of programming.
- Ensured female DDA members were empowered enough to identify female-specific SOIs and female-specific mitigation activities. DPPs reflected a wholesome distribution of gender programming throughout every SIKA East province.

- Gender teams were in place and active in almost every district. Gender officers in Kabul were well trained and adaptive. SIKA East constantly monitored the effects of its gender programming, adapting to any changes in program methodology, USAID directives, and security issues.
- Had strong coordination between SIKA gender teams and DoWAs. This was important as DoWA's involvement in gender programming is fundamental to success and sustainability.
- Active participation by women in sub-coordination and communications committees was not only encouraged, but mandatory. SIKA East conducted far more trainings than contractually required to help women build their capacity. Interviews with female participants showed this to be highly successful and sustainable. Many women are now using those taught skills to advocate for issues even after SIKA East has ended.

Weaknesses

- Short duration vocational trainings such as literacy and tailoring courses made learning the required skills difficult. The duration of these courses is also shorter than the minimum required by the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Martyrs.
- Program often selected women who lived in the urban centers rather than women who lived in the villages, particularly in Ghazni, Wardak, and Paktia. Stakeholders found these women to be less effective because they did not regularly travel back to their villages and because they were not always fully aware of the issues in their villages.

SIKA South

SIKA South tried to include women in almost every phase of programming but had several major challenges. Women were included in SAM and capacity building trainings, Sectorial Stability Meetings (SSMs), and some project implementations, but a number of challenges stemming from cultural reasons, security limitations, lack of women in CDCs and DDAs, and a generally late focus on gender programming precluded women from what could have been a more active role in programming, particularly in DPP development. A considerable number of female chosen grants were not implemented/approved in parts of Kandahar, reducing the impact women had in that province. While SIKA South did make efforts to include women in areas where they were previously denied involvement in development, these efforts, even after three years of programming, were still in the initial stages. More time was needed to support gender-based activities and to make women active participants in decision making.

Strengths

- Created Women Advisory Committees (WACs) to address the lack of women in the DDAs.
- Empowered women to participate in SAM trainings and DPP development.
- Participation of women in Sectorial Stability Meetings (SSMs). These were not through physical presence. Instead, SIKA South conducted a separate meeting with the women to discuss what they wanted shared in the SSMs with male DDA members who then chose to include or not include those issues in their agendas.

Limitations

- Lack of female members in CDCs and DDAs limited SIKA South's ability to include women in the development planning process.
- Low literacy rate of WAC members impeded efforts to use women in governance and development initiatives. Active participation was also limited by security constraints.

- SIKA South spent too much time organizing meetings and getting stakeholder accords instead of focusing on outcomes.
- A programmatic push to roll out projects quickly impeded efforts to include female chosen grants early on.
- Gender programming was not used as an instrument of programming, but rather as a side issue.
- Programming limitations prevented female-specific grants from gaining approval in Arghandab and Daman districts of Kandahar. This was a setback for women there. While SIKA South promised to allocate funds for female programming after this setback, those funds were also cancelled as SIKA South was closing out.

SIKA West

SIKA West did a good job of including women in SAM and capacity building trainings, as well as DSCs and the subsequent conflict resolution committees. Though some of the stakeholders termed the participation of women in identifying SOIs and proposing solutions “symbolic”, women’s participation in DSCs and especially in the conflict resolution committees was largely perceived as active.

Strengths

- Women were active in SAM trainings, capacity building workshops, and played active roles in proposing mitigation activities for female-identified SOIs on the DPPs.
- Encouraged active DSC and conflict resolution committee participation.
- Gender team identified active women and used them to empower less active women.

Limitations

- Insufficient support for an active female role in identifying and prioritizing solutions as males dominated the majority of sessions. Other SIKAs overcame this obstacle with greater efficacy.
- While the SIKA-West gender unit is reported by the USAID COR to have had regular contacts and meetings with Herat DoWA, MISTI found that weak cooperation with DoWA, particularly in Herat and Ghor resulted in a lack of sufficient government buy-in during programming.

Programming for Disadvantaged Groups

Each SIKA programmed grants and activities for youth groups, some with more success than others. Both SIKA East and SIKA South conducted PLAY! programming which empowered young men and women (under 30 years old) and strengthened their representation, participation, and leadership in subnational development and governance. PLAY! combined sports and fitness activities with opportunities for youth to gain leadership and teamwork skills and play a role in district and provincial decision making. These projects achieved considerable successes and provided youth an opportunity to gain access to DDAs which have traditionally been dominated by older men. SIKA North was highly successful in its Kankor exam programs, which helped train youth to take the university entrance exam. Those who received SIKA North assistance did better than a comparable group of those who did not. SIKA North also included youth in much of its soft programming. SIKA West did the least work with youth.

Programming for other disadvantaged groups like reintegrees, refugees, handicapped, and ethnic minorities were not explicitly part of any SIKA’s endeavors.

How effectively did the SIKAs work through Afghan government structures and within Afghan government processes to empower the local governments in decision-making and community engagements under existing interventions?

The evaluation team found that each SIKA was adept at empowering the district governments to engage communities under their existing district level interventions. The evaluation team also found that SIKA East stood out as the most effective SIKA when it came to empowering DDA+ members to effectively communicate concerns and issues to the relevant parties.

The SIKAs have worked through Afghan government structures and within Afghan government processes most of the time. This has benefited the district governments in building local population support and improving service delivery through existing MRRD and IDLG mechanisms, albeit with funding from each SIKA. The programs have generally aligned with NSP, NABDP, and other Afghan government programs and guidelines. Senior SIKA managers had a close working relationship with MRRD and IDLG. However, SIKA East was the only program that met with the ministries at least once a week. This was partially due to SIKA East's strategic position in Kabul.

For purposes of this evaluation the district government consists of the following evaluated departments:

- District Governor: District engagements, conflict resolution, responsiveness to community needs, service delivery when funding is available, monitoring activities, coordinating with line departments working in the district.
- Line departments: DRRD is responsible for ensuring an active and responsive DDA as well as coordinating, implementing, and monitoring MRRD-funded projects. The DoWA is responsible for women's affairs. Various other line departments, where they exist and have an adequate tashkiel, work on their specific ministry's agenda.
- DDA: Elected district representatives who are in charge of selecting development activities, ensuring their implementation. They are also a bridge between the communities and the district government.
- DDA+/DSC/Community Forums: DDA members and other influential stakeholders such as religious leaders, community elders with influence, members of the security apparatus, and other key leaders.

Overall SIKA Successes

- The regular community meetings provided district entities with considerable exposure to their constituents. These meetings empowered the district governments to discuss people's concerns and to use existing or newly funded district interventions to provide services.
- By having DDA members and community elders present in the district centers more frequently, the district government was more empowered to showcase an understanding of community issues and concerns. This improved government awareness of community dynamics and reduced incorrect perceptions. This is further documented by MISTI's impact evaluation, which saw continuous improvements in positive perceptions of the DDA and local leaders.
- District entities responsible for conducting monitoring were empowered to take greater ownership in the mitigation activity. As the community saw a keen government interest in the success of the project and the wellbeing of the community, they became more responsive to future efforts.
- Officials often participated in opening and closing ceremonies for grants. This engagement showed communities that the government was aware of and responsive to their needs.
- Service Provider Catalogues and Fairs linked communities with the government and local businesses and NGOs. These activities were instrumental in bridging the gap between the government and the people. Some fairs are scheduled to continue even after the SIKAs end.

Particular SIKA Successes

- **SIKA East** - the sub-coordination and communication committees, after having received training from SIKA East, had a new and improved role within the communities, which increased their engagement. There was a feeling of confidence that these committees were advocating for community needs with service providers. They have now realized that service providers are responsible for providing resources and there is considerably more follow-up on requests, even after SIKA East's closure.
- **SIKA East** - improved local government performance can be attributed in part to SIKA East's communications trainings and in large part to the DDA+ structure, significant number of activities and projects aimed at addressing SOIs, and constant exposure through outreach as well as opening and closing ceremonies. Such increased exposure has made district governments more accountable and responsive to their constituents, indirectly increasing the efficacy of government services and presence. The side effect of increased exposure is decreased perceptions of government responsiveness (noted in MISTI's impact evaluation) as community members now realize what services are available and how their delivery is delayed.
- **SIKA North** - conflict resolution through the Stability Working Groups and reconciliation jirgas have seen considerable success. SIKA North was effective at working through traditional Afghan structures and incorporating those cultural norms into Afghan government sanctioned conflict resolution undertaken by the district and provincial governments. Much focus was spent on reconciling tribal issues in Kunduz. This was especially important given the fractured nature of Kunduz's tribal dynamics.
- **SIKA North** - Activities and projects received considerable media exposure, providing an effective communications platform for showcasing government responsiveness and service delivery. SIKA North focused considerable efforts on marketing good governance and service delivery improvements through the local media. This empowered and encouraged government officials to play an active role in project activities.
- **SIKA West** – like SIKA North, focused efforts on resolving local conflicts through the District Stability Committees. This saw particular success in Ghor and parts of Herat. Empowering local religious leaders to also participate in publicizing grant activities was an essential move given Afghanistan's level of religiosity.
- **SIKA South** – spent considerable efforts explaining the transition from military to civilian efforts in Southern Afghanistan and how the role of the Afghan government would gain more importance. SIKA South provided a foundation to understand the evolving situation by effectively including local government in their programming. The regular Sector Stability Meetings, where officials and the communities meet to discuss and try to solve community problems, were particularly effective at empowering decision-makers at the local level who were otherwise sidelined during the heavy military presence. In addition, SIKA South encouraged participation in radio dramas and call in shows. These popular engagements supported local government and increased awareness of service delivery in local communities.

How effective was a bottom-up communications process at linking the overall district and provincial development planning processes?

The NABDP created DDAs shortly after NSP had established several thousand CDCs as a way to bridge the gap between village-level and provincial-level governance institutions, paving the way for a bottom-up framework for development. The intent was to accomplish this through district development plans (DDPs – not to be confused with SIKA DPPs – District Project Portfolios). These DDPs are meant to outline the projects DDA members hope to implement in their district. In order to develop this DDP, a DDA is tasked with collecting all of their CDCs' prioritization lists through a Community Development

Plan (CDP). Given that DDA members are also CDC members, this is a wholly bottom-up approach. These DDPs are then presented to the provincial government and the PRRD for approval. This is, at least, how the DDAs work in theory.

In reality, there are few known cases of DDPs approved by provincial governments. A significant number of DDAs were inactive when the SIKAs began operations, having been sidelined during the height of CDC-focused NSP projects. The DDAs were in a sense created by the NABDP and then abandoned to uninterested provincial governments. The NABDP's own reporting says "Not only were CDPs not consulted during the DDA development process, but provincial council members interviewed also attested to disregarding DDPs."²

When each SIKA began operations, it had a mandate to revive the DDAs and accomplish what the NABDP originally set out to do with the consultative DDP process, albeit in an environment that was weary of MRRD affiliated programs making new empty promises. Even though it entered into a difficult development establishment, each SIKA has successfully worked within the Afghan government structures to promote bottom-up communication processes linking DDAs to the district and provincial development planning processes by:

- Reactivating DDAs through regular meetings, empowering them to make decisions and develop new district development plans (or DPPs under SIKA nomenclature).
- Including additional non-DDA members in the decision-making process and regular meetings. These included influential elders, security officials, local businessmen, religious leaders, and, in some cases, leading women who were not already part of the subnational government structure.
- Enabling the DDAs to prioritize their projects based on SAM. In NSP they prioritized projects based on need. SAM allowed for a consultative process that focused on community issues, rather than individual CDC grievances. While SAM was not always successful at identifying legitimate SOIs, it was successful at creating the mechanisms necessary for effective bottom-up communication through the DDAs.
- Hiring PRRD-affiliated social workers/mobilizers who coordinated with DDAs (inviting them to meetings, going with SIKA staff to conduct feasibility studies and occasional monitoring, and serving as a link between each SIKA, the DDAs, and the PRRD).
- Increasing the capacity of DDAs through project cycle management training. Each SIKA focused on doing this with the CDCs, but the DDAs also benefitted from project management trainings.
- Empowering the DDAs to take a greater role in district service delivery with a greater focus on ensuring there is a strong bottom-up link between project-recipient CDCs and project-selecting DDAs.
- Accepting female participation in meetings by listening and respecting women's decisions. The extent to which this worked varied from province to province, but each SIKA worked hard to ensure some measure of female participation and involvement in the communications process.

² NABDP Beneficiary Assessment – Fieldwork Synthesis, October 2012 p26

FIGURE 2: BOTTOM-UP COMMUNICATION PROCESSES TYPICAL TO EACH SIKA

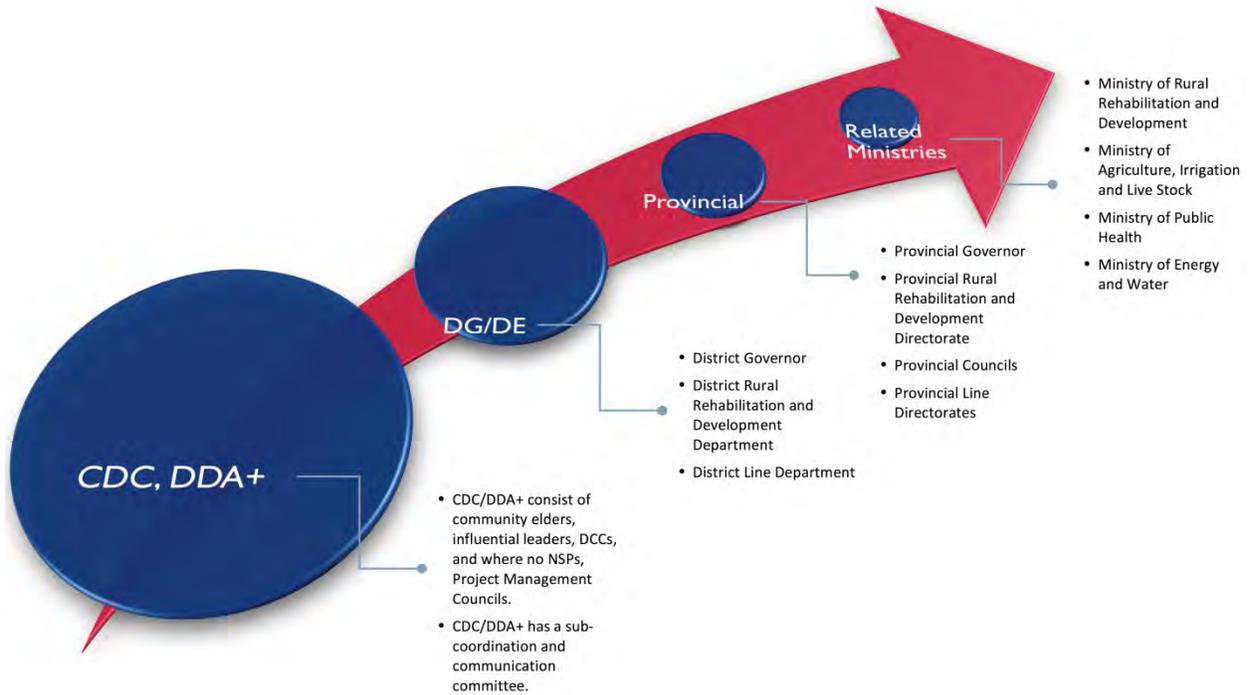


Figure 2: The communications flowchart above demonstrates how community level issues are communicated to DDAs, who then communicate those issues further up the subnational government chain. While this flowchart is more common to SIKA East as it includes the DDA+, the other three SIKAs had a very similar bottom-up communications process once issues reached the district government level. This communications model was effective at conveying development issues from the subnational MRRD structure to the provincial government and ministerial levels. The model’s appropriateness within the local Afghan context and SIKA-nurtured sustainability lends itself easily for future USAID programming involving the MRRD at the subnational level.

The bottom-up communication process was similar for each SIKA. All four of the SIKAs conducted meetings with CDCs/DDAs, identified the district SOIs, prioritized the actions needed to address those SOIs, and then shared those SOIs with district and provincial government entities who approved the DPP. This was done in conjunction with the PRRD, which often served as the focal point for DPP development and approvals.

While each SIKA’s process created an effective system of bottom-up communication, it is important to note that this process did vary from province to province due to differences in district entity participation and overall power dynamics between DDAs and government officials. In some areas, the district governors played an active role in the meetings. MISTI found that in areas with district governor participation in development planning, the overall ability of DDAs to successfully implement development goals was higher than in areas where the district governor was inactive. So while the SIKA model does not necessitate the inclusion of district governors in development planning as development planning is PRRD-led, when the IDLG (via the district governors) was involved in the process, issues were resolved with greater expediency and efficacy.

SIKA East – Noteworthy Communications Accomplishments

SIKA East made the greatest improvements in district level communications because it considered the limitations of each DDA by adding almost every influential and tribal elder left out of the DDA and creating a separate entity, the DDA+. This gave SIKA East a more active and inclusive entity to work with at the district level. They were able to create communication committees in every DDA+ while the other SIKAs worked with the existing DDAs and had to create another entity for discussing stability and governance issues. As all of the members of these entities were not members of DDAs and their participation was voluntarily, they didn't follow an organized communication plan. This made them less effective when compared to SIKA East's communications committees.

Furthermore, SIKA East had a standard five-module outreach training package for all districts where they conduct the following trainings:

Advocacy – how to have access to resources and services as well as rule of law and his/her rights.

Fundraising – how to find local sources for funding infrastructure or services not provided by the government.

Lobbying – how to lobby with influential stakeholders for resources.

Coalition Building – how to communicate effectively for conflict resolution and shared decision-making.

Negotiation Strategy – how to share community concerns and initiate discussions aimed at reaching an agreement.

These trainings significantly improved bottom-up communication by creating systematic mechanisms to facilitate communication from the village to district to provincial levels. Communication committees (male and female) were created and made their communication plans consisting of communication problems, concerns, and a list of activities proposed on DPPs that could not be implemented by SIKA East. They conducted regular meetings amongst themselves and also conducted meetings with the district governors, line departments, and other service providers who could help implement the communications plan. SIKA East's communications work was so effective that community members began to implement trainings and taught skills after SIKA East had already closed.

How effective were capacity building initiatives aimed at the district and provincial levels (for example: training entities how to plan, design, communicate, implement and monitor development projects and programs?). What is the anticipated or expressed sustainability?

Capacity building initiatives aimed at the district and provincial levels were varied and had different rates of effectiveness. Those on project management cycles were effective at training CDCs and some DDA members on how to plan, design, implement, and monitor local infrastructure projects. Given the infrastructure-heavy implementation, much work had to be done with CDCs at the start to ensure they would be able to properly execute infrastructure FOGs. These had generally high success and sustainability. Other trainings for district entities such as leadership and office management were partially effective and depended considerably on the expertise of the training staff as well as the capacity level of each district government. Conflict resolution trainings tended to be effective and trainings on provincial strategies and long term planning were highly valued and appear to be sustainable.

Each SIKA's capacity building department was structured differently. This resulted in varying degrees of efficiency. For example, SIKA North outsourced all of its capacity building to a subcontractor who was able to make the trainings locally appropriate but did not often fill the trainings with the relevant stakeholders. SIKA East trainings were conducted by the respective departments with the SIKA East structure and not solely by the capacity building team. That is, monitoring training was conducted by the M&E team, planning and milestone payment finance were conducted by the grants team, and implementation was done in coordination with engineering. This segregated project management cycle training format allowed the relevant SIKA East staff to conduct the relevant trainings with the relevant knowledge. SIKA West had a generally ineffective capacity building program early on, but improved considerably in its final year, taking into account many of the MISTI mid-term performance evaluation recommendations. SIKA South worked in the most difficult districts with the lowest capacity indicators. Most of their trainings were basic-level modules designed for largely illiterate officials. These were mostly effective but at a much lower level than the other SIKAs.

The greatest overall strength of these capacity building initiatives is that district development bodies and CDCs are now adequately setup for future interventions whether by another donor or through the government.

SIKA North

The Capacity Building Strategy and Plan for Baghlan was one of the most effective SIKA North endeavors as it helped district entities in Baghlan prioritize their daily activities, monitor the various types of development projects, and plan daily operations. These skills were readily adopted and utilized by various district entity officials. SIKA North's project management cycle trainings, where CDCs were taught how to plan, design, communicate, implement, and monitor development projects were practical and successful in ensuring that those CDCs which received SIKA North funding were able to efficiently complete project work both before and after implementation. Moreover, trainees from these CDCs expressed considerable confidence that they can take acquired skills and use them on future development work, thereby making the training particularly sustainable.

Provincial entities in Baghlan were highly appreciative of the Provincial Profile and Strategic Plan training, stating that they are now better able to develop long term provincial strategies using modern techniques and tools. Many officials were using older systems dating back to the 1970s in their strategic planning. SIKA North helped modernize the processes and taught officials how to think using modern norms and strategies. SIKA North was also successful in its Kankor (university exam) preparations and teacher trainings. As noted in the MISTI mid-term performance evaluation, these two trainings were

successful in preparing students for university exams thereby increasing their chances of gaining admission to top Afghan universities. The teacher trainings, although short, did improve the quality of education by augmenting teacher capacity. Lastly, communications trainings help provincial entities improve their communications with line departments and district governments which improved daily work effectiveness and improved collaboration between district and provincial government departments. Unfortunately, given SIKA North's reluctance to conduct gender activities in its first two years of programming, female SAM trainings were considered least effective due to women's limited and symbolic role within the SAM and DPP development processes.

SIKA South

Project management cycle trainings, grants implementation training, communications trainings, and administrative and office management trainings were most effective at increasing government and CDC capacity. CDCs benefited from a clearer understanding of how to design, plan, implement, and monitor development projects through the project management cycle trainings and grants implementation trainings. District and provincial government offices learned important communications skills that were simple, yet effective in teaching government officials how to develop communications strategies with constituents. District and provincial entities also learned how to file, keep records, keep time, and manage meetings during their daily office operations. As most of the government officials are inexperienced (or occasionally illiterate), these trainings were instrumental in improving government office worker's capacity and have been most practical and sustainable.

SIKA South's disaster and environmental management as well as basic procurement and finance trainings were least effective. The environmental training was too theoretical with many of the taught models deemed impractical and too basic to be implemented. The district entities requested more specialized trainings, but SIKA South was unable to conduct them. Basic procurement and finance trainings given to provincial entities were not necessary as most of the provincial staff already had more advanced training on this subject. This was considered a waste of time.

SIKA East

SIKA East had a particularly effective and adept communications team that conducted highly impactful and well-received communications trainings which taught communities how to develop agendas and communication strategies and learn how to communicate their problems and concerns with local government authorities. In addition, communications trainings had visibly empowered women to advocate for their services and rights. Gender mainstreaming was openly accepted by most district governments in SIKA East districts. Taboo gender topics were discussed openly and a considerable number of women were empowered to play greater roles in district decision-making. SIKA East was also effective at conducting project management cycle trainings particularly for district governments who were not as active before in monitoring development projects. The trained staff has been conducting regular monitoring of SIKA and other development work and have expressed a ready interest in continuing to interact with implementers in the future, making this particularly sustainable (so long as there isn't considerable turnover in the district government offices).

Unfortunately, SIKA East did not do well in good governance, leadership and management, or conflict resolution management trainings. District governments in particular saw the governance trainings as much too theoretical and impractical. These government officials were keen to learn governance from senior government officials in a practical environment rather than through theoretical workshops by inexperienced SIKA staff. The leadership trainings were too wide and varied and given to a number of individuals who were not in leadership roles. Although this is not necessarily bad practice, leadership training in an Afghan context should be reserved for those in managerial positions only. Lastly, elders

who received conflict resolution training did not learn anything new as many of these elders have been involved in practical conflict resolution for several decades. Contrary to SIKAs West's and North's successes in conflict resolution trainings, SIKAs East's focus was too narrow and impractical to be successful.

SIKAs West

SIKAs West had impactful project management, conflict resolution, leadership management, and communications trainings. Project management trainings assisted CDCs and district governments to better plan, design, implement, and monitor development projects – a skillset many did not have prior to SIKAs West involvement in the districts. Many of these CDC and district government officials mentioned that these skills will be applied to future development projects. SIKAs West was also particularly successful in conflict resolution trainings which had tangible results in Herat, Badghis, and Farah provinces. Elders who used these new methods of conflict resolution were able to resolve disputes in areas with high rates of conflict between communities. Leadership trainings were effective at improving district government leadership performance. Officials have begun to apply taught skills to daily tasks and responsibilities. Moreover, MISTI's impact evaluation has noted an improvement in government and community leader perceptions in SIKAs West districts, further demonstrating the efficacy of such capacity building trainings. Lastly, communications trainings were combined with service provider fairs to improve the government's ability to reach out to constituents and develop two-way communications channels. This training taught government officials the basic elements of communications necessary for improvements in local governance and perceptions of local governance.

SIKAs West was least successful in good governance and concept note development trainings. According to district officials who received good governance trainings, this training was too theoretical and impractical for daily use. Like district officials in SIKAs East, district officials in SIKAs West preferred to be trained by senior government officials. Concept note development trainings were ineffective as the modules were too technical for illiterate CDC and DDA members. Since the concept notes for SIKAs West were developed by SIKAs West staff with only minimal input from CDCs, this training was unnecessary.

Sustainability

Each SIKAs focused on some measure of project management cycle training in order to build CDC and DDA capacity to conduct development work. This built upon the strengths of the NSP and NABDP and allowed for individual CDC members to gain important insight into how development work occurs and what are the tools necessary for project sustainability. These trainings have provided CDCs and DDAs a necessary platform for future development projects initiated through the MRRD. Certain management and leadership modules have a degree of sustainability built into them as improved leadership often results in improved governance. Most of the office management trainings were effective at improving district office performance and were practical and easy to understand. Government officials are using many of the taught skills in their daily operations with significant improvements in the efficacy of government work. In the West and North, conflict resolution committees continue to meet even after the SIKAs withdrew support. The East's communications trainings have been so effective, that participants are now training others using SIKAs East's training modules. While Afghanistan is a particularly conservative country, any gender training that improves the conditions for women, no matter how small, is a powerful step in improving stability and governance. MISTI's impact evaluation has demonstrated that even small women-centered activities had measurably positive impacts on district stability. Although each SIKAs varied in its ability to effectively program on gender, the inherent sustainability in such programming is undeniable.

What Lessons Learned from the SIKA Program Implementation Can Inform Future USAID Programming?

LESSONS LEARNED	FUTURE USAID PROGRAMMING
COORDINATION AND ALIGNMENT	
<p>Coordination with the government in districts and provinces has generally been good. However, there had been numerous cases where district and provincial government officials had higher or unrealistic expectations because they did not correctly understand the scope of the SIKA program. This was also the case with the MRRD and IDLG as well as the coordinators for them hired by each SIKA. Moreover, DoWA was not always aware of gender programming and was not always consulted when gender programming was designed and implemented.</p>	<p>Implementation Letters signed between USAID and relevant Afghan ministries should clearly outline what ministry (and specifically what department within the ministry) is responsible for what element of programming. There should also be clearly outlined responsibilities for oversight, deliverables, communication channels, and necessary coordination activities.</p> <p>IPs should clearly explain program objectives, deliverables, and limitations to every government official they work with. This should be outlined in a programming document an IP can prepare. There is often confusion as to what are the government’s roles and responsibilities that are often not clearly explained through the implementation letter nor through the ministries. It is the IP’s responsibility to clarify any misunderstandings early on to avoid programming hiccups.</p>
<p>Reviewing and signing SIKA projects and activity documents were viewed as extra workload by most of the government staff (district government offices and PRRDs). The SIKAs, after all, were a small part of their official workload. Many government stakeholders said they did not have adequate resources to process SIKA paperwork as to do so properly would require assessing all of the plans, engineering specifications, community issues, and other necessary components. Signing blindly would endanger the government’s position and the sustainability of the project. Nonetheless, the SIKAs exerted considerable pressure on the local governments to sign project paperwork quickly, often threatening the government with potential “cancellation” or “loss of provincial funding”. In a number of cases, the government openly accepted projects it disagreed with for fear of losing SIKA funding.</p>	<p>While it was the government’s responsibility to take on the additional workload the SIKAs presented them, there appears to have been a disconnect between USAID/SIKA management and the government in terms of how that workload should be processed. The SIKAs expected the government to participate in project implementation and monitoring, signing all necessary documents as quickly as possible. The government in many provinces had different expectations. They wanted to play a more active role in project design, implementation, and follow-ups with the communities. Because of time constraints and the IP’s need to burn through grant funds, the government was not always allowed to conduct its internal processes. This caused friction and resulted in a number of cases where SIKA staff threatened project cancellation if the government didn’t comply. Future USAID programs would do better to avoid strong-arming the government.</p>
<p>USAID and internal SIKA limitations such as no vertical structure construction, vetting unit delays on projects over \$25,000, and a focus on low-cost,</p>	<p>Future programs need to focus on the goal of the program and how best to achieve it with the funds available. The SIKAs used stabilization</p>

LESSONS LEARNED	FUTURE USAID PROGRAMMING
<p>small scale infrastructure grants have been counterproductive for stabilization. A large number of communities selected mitigation activities that did not fit the SIKA’s budget criteria. This resulted in the community being forced to choose smaller scale projects that did not always adequately address the SOI. These smaller projects were quicker and easier to implement, but they decreased the stabilization effect as they often failed to solve the root causes of instability. For example, if a root cause of instability is high unemployment, short term vocational courses on mobile phone repair or motorcycle maintenance do not sufficiently address unemployment. The same applies for small flood protection walls that protect a small portion of agricultural land. These were built to address the unemployment SOI as flooding causes damage to crops and reduces family incomes. However, these protection walls were never big enough to prevent against village flooding (the average protection wall size was less than 100 meters).</p>	<p>programming as tool to improve local governance through service delivery. However, this service delivery was problematic from the start as too many USAID and internal IP restrictions on construction forced communities to choose mitigation activities that did not adequately address SOIs or their root causes. SIKA North was so risk averse to CDCs stealing grant money that the IP almost exclusively programmed in kind grants instead of FOGs (as the SIKA contract mandated). SIKA East had so many districts that its budget per district didn’t allow for any meaningful construction that has proven stabilizing effects (e.g. bridges). SIKA West programmed considerably against the unemployment SOI, but failed to demonstrate how any of its vocational trainings and infrastructure work reduced unemployment or increased access to markets. SIKA South conducted a large number of small-scale infrastructure development projects in highly insecure areas without sufficient oversight and monitoring. This was further verified by MISTI where a significant number of grants have been verified by MISTI as “not executed” or “executed with conditions”.</p>
<p>USAID did not coordinate with its various programs operating in the same area. For example, CCI was conducting training with the Guzara DGO when SIKA West was tasked with also working there. Neither of the programs knew what the other was doing and neither knew that they were both going to work with the Guzara DGO until they had met in the actual DGO. There has been insufficient coordination mandated by USAID and this has resulted in inefficient programming. Another example is that each SIKA knew that much gender programming had already been conducted in most districts on organizing women’s shuras, working with DoWA, implementing previous grants to women, etc. Having known what was already done would have benefitted provincial gender programming. Each SIKA had to start from a blank slate in areas that had considerable previous programming. This was not coordinated with USAID or the Afghan government.</p>	<p>USAID should mandate the sharing of information from one IP to another. USAID should also ensure that IPs do not program from a blank slate in areas where programming has occurred before. Now that the SIKAs have gone through the effort of establishing mechanisms, processes, and built individual capacity in a number of key provinces, these efforts should not go to waste. Other programs would be wise to build upon the SIKA successes. Unfortunately, this lack of coordination and disinterest by USAID is still common. For example, the SIKA West COP reached out to the CORs and to the PROMOTE program to offer gender documentation and advice on working with women’s groups in the Western provinces, but no one responded to his emails or showed interest in getting the documentation. This is an unfortunate waste of knowledge and local expertise that USAID would be wise to disseminate rather than file away.</p>

LESSONS LEARNED	FUTURE USAID PROGRAMMING
HUMAN RESOURCES	
<p>SIKA staff is paid considerably higher monthly salaries than district/provincial government officials. This has caused jealousy and, at times, resentment of SIKA staff by government officials. Furthermore, not all SIKA staff were adequately qualified to perform their duties. Some government officials who have over 15 years experience received capacity building training on leadership and management from young SIKA staff who have not held any leadership or management positions.</p> <p>While USAID SIKA managers felt the system improved over time, some government stakeholders (PRRDs, district governors, DoWA) criticized the SIKA recruitment processes, calling them unfair, not transparent, and based on personal relations rather than qualifications or suitability for the position. PRRDs, in particular, asked the SIKAs for a decisive role in recruitment as they have had for the NSP, NABDP, and NRAP programs.</p>	<p>USAID and IPs should decrease the salary gap between government and IP employees, particularly in rural areas outside of Kabul. USAID and IPs should not upset the labor economics balance in programming areas. Also, hiring qualified individuals is difficult in Afghanistan due to a shortage of qualified English-speaking technical experts. Nonetheless, there need to be more stringent hiring criteria in place to avoid simply filling in vacant positions.</p> <p>If a program is partnered with the MRRD, as in the case of the SIKAs, then the MRRD should have a say in recruitment, especially if this has been the case for other programs funded by donor governments. IPs have not always hired the most suitable candidates thereby causing friction between the government and USAID programming. Getting this right at the start of programming makes considerable differences throughout the life of the project.</p>
<p>There has been considerable turnover of qualified and non-qualified individuals. It is important to keep a centralized list of hires at USAID (through biodata forms) so that future programs know who to be cautious about and who to headhunt.</p>	<p>USAID should assist IPs in the hiring process by cautioning against previously fired applicants and by sharing biodata previously collected from other projects.</p>
PROGRAM DESIGN	
<p>The SIKA design was not well conceived nor realistic. The District Stability Framework (which later became SAM) took the atmospheric of an entire area and put it on paper. This is an incorrect method for Afghanistan. Telling local authorities to use DSF/SAM is not a good idea given the low capacity and non-cultural applicability of it. Good governance is about programming and governing equitably. DSF/SAM do not allow you to program equitably as you actually reward unstable areas at the expense of stable areas. While this model was adopted by USAID to fit in with the military’s counterinsurgency strategy (in insecure areas), that strategy is no longer active.</p>	<p>SIKA was designed during the counterinsurgency and surge phases of military operations in Afghanistan. It was designed to stabilize key districts by serving as a part of the middle stage of the counterinsurgency spectrum (clear, hold, build, transition). DSF was used by many American Provincial Reconstruction Teams to assess the needs and SOIs in their districts and then generously program quick delivery projects. DSF essentially became a process for generating a “wish list” of projects rather than as a true and tested stabilization process. SAM falls under the same criticism. While the SIKAs made efforts to modernize SAM and make it more regionally appropriate, it still wasn’t the correct tool to use for understanding SOIs. This is why unrealistic SOIs</p>

LESSONS LEARNED	FUTURE USAID PROGRAMMING
	<p>such as “lack of a mosque” or “female unemployment” are often found on SIKA DPPs³. SAM can also lead to “back engineering” of projects. This is the process by which communities choose the projects they want and then back engineer the SOI to match the project. The Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI), a SIKA predecessor, was rife with back engineering DSF. A large number of ASI staffers worked for the SIKAs, particularly SIKA East.</p> <p>Future programming should integrate more closely with the MRRD’s existing approaches and not rely on foreign counterinsurgency models.</p>
<p>There is an accountability issue when doing work in insecure districts with lots of anti-government entities. There is no way of checking what CDCs do with a FOG after the final milestone payment. There is M&E, engineering, and compliance monitoring, but this is not enough. There is no mechanism to follow the money and ensure that it’s spent according to specifications. While the SIKA compliance departments did work on this issue, once FOG money had been transferred to a CDC account, it was essentially out of each SIKA’s hands.</p> <p>Furthermore, MISTI’s impact evaluation showed that programming grants in Taliban controlled areas actually increased support for the Taliban. This was counterproductive and a waste of US Government funds.</p>	<p>In kind grants are a much better way to ensure success in community programming in insecure areas even if community contributions are not focused on and involvement by the communities is minimized. Stabilization after all is not about short term cash for work programming under the auspices of service delivery.</p> <p>It is important to note that this lesson learned is for particularly insecure areas where the management and monitoring of development is high risk. The grant model employed by SIKA was effective at building community capacity and ensuring project ownership. The in kind model should only be used as a last resort.</p>
<p>Vetting delays prevented the SIKAs from implementing much larger infrastructure grants which would have been more effective at mitigating SOIs for multiple communities. This was caused by slow USAID vetting and the likelihood that too many grants would not work due to vetting challenges.</p>	<p>The Vetting Unit at USAID, while a necessary component, was the single biggest cause of grant delays for each SIKA. The focus on small infrastructure grants (less effective) rather than larger infrastructure grants (more effective) was due to SIKA senior management and COR fears that larger grants would not be vetted quickly or at all. There is a distinct possibility that the Vetting Unit made the SIKAs less effective and less impactful.</p>

³ MISTI is not disputing the relevance of female participation on decision-making bodies (CDCs, DDAs, and the DDA+). In MISTI’s opinion, female unemployment is not an SOI in Afghanistan and should not be a focus of stabilization programming.

LESSONS LEARNED	FUTURE USAID PROGRAMMING
MONITORING AND EVALUATION	
<p>Third-party monitors cannot verify projects without useable GPS coordinates. Accurate GPS coordinates and quality monitoring are inextricably linked. Without accurate GPS coordinates, verifiers cannot arrive precisely to project locations to take photographs of what they find. GPS coordinates should be collected using GPS-enabled smart phones whose data can be uploaded directly to a central database. Furthermore, M&E teams have had the most difficulty monitoring high-cost, complex projects.</p>	<p>M&E teams should prioritize monitoring of high-cost, complex projects over low-cost, less complex projects. The most expensive verified activities have lower successful completion rates compared to less expensive projects. In SIKA-South provinces, 49% (32 of 65) of projects above the average project cost are “not executed” or “executed with conditions.” The largest projects are less likely to be successfully completed compared to smaller or mid-range projects because of their extensive budgets and activity scopes. Large “not executed” or “executed with conditions” projects are disproportionately represented when considering the total cost of these incomplete or non-existent projects. Grant scopes and associated budgets should be reduced in order to align with the monitoring capacity of field teams.</p>
<p>The SIKAs focused most of their M&E efforts on ensuring monitoring complemented grants work. That is, the M&E department was used to provide proof of project execution to the grants team so that they could issue milestone payments to project beneficiaries. The M&E departments within each SIKA served as outputs clearinghouses, collecting metrics on indicators that showed number of meetings, number of projects, number of women trained, and the like. While these indicators were important, none of the SIKAs conducted effective evaluative work to understand what all of those meetings amounted to. Some of this was because none of the SIKAs had working theories of change, and some of this was because none of the SIKAs had PMPs incorporating impact assessments/evaluations into their M&E departments. There was an overreliance on MISTI’s impact evaluation to determine outcomes. There was also a misunderstanding that MISTI’s measurement of SIKA outcomes would show overarching issues related to stability and governance, not specific programming. This overreliance and misunderstanding prevented the SIKAs from conducting independent assessments of their own individual performance in order to improve programming. Some SIKAs understood the importance of doing this internally and changed their approach after the mid-term performance</p>	<p>An IP’s M&E unit should be an independent body that is capable of conducting the following key tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Independently monitor grants to ensure compliance 2. Independently collect on PMP indicators 3. Conduct assessments of programming to qualify PMP indicators and assist senior management in identifying problem areas as well as identify successes that can be replicated or scaled up 4. Assess the continued relevance and suitability of the program’s theory of change/development hypothesis in order to ensure the IP is on track <p>The SIKAs performed well on the first two, but not as well on the last two.</p> <p>Future USAID programs should place sufficient focus on the independence of the M&E unit to conduct program monitoring. These future programs should also focus on conducting internal assessments to aid senior management decision-making. Relying exclusively on third party M&E or subcontracted M&E is insufficient.</p>

LESSONS LEARNED	FUTURE USAID PROGRAMMING
<p>evaluations. However, none of them succeeded in conducting any significant assessments that actually changed or assisted ongoing programming/methodologies – the intent of any meaningful assessment.</p>	
MISCELLANEOUS	
<p>Focus on ensuring that Afghan government counterparts are held accountable for work and reduce immediate expectations (e.g. getting paid to show up). If a government official or individual beneficiary is disinterested in an activity because of a lack of a financial reward, then the IP needs to reconsider the activity as it will not be sustainable once the program ends. Financial incentives, if used, need to be curtailed earlier than close to closeout (as was common for all SIKAs).</p>	<p>Future USAID programming needs to take into account the delicate balance between incentivizing program participation and sustainable programming. Financial incentives for participants can be wholly detrimental to program performance and long term sustainability. IPs should curtail them early and temper participant expectations before they get accustomed to handouts.</p>
<p>Grants Undertaken Solely to Employ Afghans Do Not Work. Programming focused on boosting incomes in the short term, such as cash for work activities, should not be implemented because of the risk of increasing support for the Taliban. In particular, efforts to improve per capita income via development projects without prior assessments of territorial control by the Taliban or the government may have detrimental effects as shown by MISTI’s impact evaluation. The majority of SIKA grants were small interventions meant to employ as many community members as possible. These were used as countermeasures against unemployment SOIs that commonly plague rural Afghanistan. Such grants did little to address the systemic causes of unemployment.</p>	<p>Future USAID programming should not undertake grants meant to employ Afghans. These types of “cash for work” grants have traditionally not worked, and, in the context of the SIKAs, did not adequately mitigate against SOIs. These grants also have a tendency to upset local labor dynamics through quick and heavy infusions of cash into local economies that are not always prepared to handle such increases in local assets.</p>
<p>The SIKAs tried to address as many SOIs as possible by programming a myriad of grants in multiple communities. The vast majority of communities received a one-off intervention such as a small gravel road, a culvert, or a school protection wall. These interventions were meant to address community SOIs. However, it is evidently clear that SOIs cannot be addressed through one intervention only.</p>	<p>Multiple activities should be implemented in the same area over time because doing so increases the magnitude of project impacts and improves prospects for sustaining gains in stability and consolidating support for the government over the Taliban and other anti-government elements. Sometimes it is better to get it right in a few places than try to get it right in a hundred places.</p>

How effective was SIKA at reaching functional objectives (program elements and sub-elements)? Specifically, what components of SIKA were most and least valued by district, provincial, and national entities?

The below most and least valued charts tabulate the results of a cross section of SIKA programming that were rated by district, provincial, and national entities during MISTI interviews. It is important to note that the charts reflect the opinions of Afghans interviewed by MISTI. The below program elements do not necessarily imply good performance. For example, the SAM process was highly valued by participants, MISTI, as noted in this and the mid-term evaluations, found numerous systemic flaws with SAM and the SOIs the process identified. Furthermore, not every SIKA programmed each element in the same way. Where there are significant differences, they are noted in the last two columns.

Program Element	Most Valued	Where Valued and by Whom	Reasoning
IR 4 – Grants and Service Delivery	Infrastructure Grants – roads, culverts, protection walls, school boundary walls, irrigation improvements	All SIKA regions, MRRD, IDLG, CDCs, DDAs, beneficiaries, district and provincial entities	Infrastructure improvement projects are the most noticeable and tangible aspect of programming. These projects were also listed as priorities on DPPs by every district. Infrastructure development allowed for a highly visible demonstration of good governance through service delivery. In particular, most irrigation projects directly benefit communities by increasing access to water, increasing land under cultivation, and improving crop yields. Economic situations generally improve in the near term while also providing communities with short term labor on the project. Kareze extensions have mitigated certain water conflicts between communities which were causing local instability (but not necessarily district-wide instability). Road rehabilitations and culverts improved the poor state of provincial roads which were responsible for high transportation costs, limited mobility (and access to district/provincial centers), inefficient farm to market supply chain dynamics, and poor access to medical centers. Furthermore, many beneficiaries and SIKA staff claimed that school boundary walls increased school enrollment by providing a modicum of protection to students.
IR 1 – all sub-elements	SAM Process	All SIKA regions, MRRD, CDCs, DDAs, beneficiaries, district and provincial entities	SAM trainings connected the various communities to the district center. The forums for identification of sources of instability and the subsequent mitigation activities were generally done through a transparent democratic process. Government officials, stakeholders, and numerous other participants commented how these trainings connected the center and peripheries of the provinces through a consultative decision-making process. However, women were not always adequately involved in the decision-making process in certain districts. Also, it is important to note that while the process of SAM was highly valued, its results were not necessarily so.

Program Element	Most Valued	Where Valued and by Whom	Reasoning
IR 1 and IR 3	Sector Stability Meetings (SIKA South), District Stability Committees (SIKA West), DDA+ (SIKA East)	SIKA South, West, and East, MRRD, IDLG, CDCs, DDAs, local government officials and influential leaders who took part in meetings	While the SAM process provided communities with the ability to identify SOIs and mitigation activities, these various regular meetings allowed influential community members and the district development bodies (DDAs) to meet with district government officials and discuss district-wide concerns. SIKA essentially created these structures and laid the foundation for their continued work. While discussions of SIKA grant activity was the primary motivation in the early set of meetings, they later morphed into regular discussions on a wider variety of issues, some not even SIKA related. Some of these meetings have continued even after SIKA closeout. Their importance is further exemplified by the inclusion of non-DDA members who would otherwise have been left out of the district development process. This widened the number and types of people who helped improve governance and stability within the districts.
IR 2, IR 3, and IR 4	Outreach Activities SIKA North – kankor exam and media outreach SIKA South – SPFs SIKA East – gender, communications committees and PLAY!	SIKA North, East, and South, MRRD, IDLG, beneficiaries, DoWAs, relevant line ministries, district government officials, some provincial governments	The size and breadth of SIKA outreach activities differed by region. In the North, Kankor exam preparations and media activities that showcased government service delivery and government to community outreach work were highly valued. In the South, service provider fairs were a new and valued method for linking government and business services to the people. In the East, the vastness of gender programming and communications trainings resulted in considerable social gains. The East’s PLAY activities were highly valued by youth, local government, and both the MRRD and IDLG. Many of these outreach activities empowered the sub-national governments to more effectively engage and respond to the needs of the communities. Before, the government did not always understand the needs of the people and how to respond to those needs. Now it is much more engaged and has become increasingly responsive.
IR 3 and in kind IR 4 activity	Provision of School Equipment by SIKA North and West	MRRD, IDLG, district and provincial entities, Ministry of Education, local beneficiaries	Lack of education and educational facilities was a common SOI found on DPPs. SIKA North and West assisted the department of education by providing equipment that the department couldn’t itself provide to schools. These provisions helped the department of education motivate parents to send more children to schools. This also improved people’s perceptions of service delivery by line departments not regularly associated with SIKA activities (e.g. MRRD and DoWA)

Program Element	Most Valued	Where Valued and by Whom	Reasoning
IR 3 and IR 4	Capacity Building on Project Management given to CDCs and DDAs	SIKA East, North, and South, MRRD, participant CDCs and DDAs, district entities	CDC and other relevant community stakeholders learned how to design, plan, implement, and monitor various infrastructure development projects. This helped communities better manage their particular mitigation activities. It also set the foundation for continued MRRD work with those CDCs as they are now better prepared to implement and monitor grants.
Internal	SIKA Staff abilities, high salaries, and attitudes	All SIKA regions, MRRD, IDLG, CDCs, DDAs, beneficiaries, district and provincial entities	SIKA Staff were paid considerably more than district/provincial government officials. This has caused resentment. Government officials also questioned some staff members' abilities and skill sets, feeling that SIKA hired individuals without the requisite qualification necessary for work in governance. There were also issues raised relating to staff attitudes. The IDLG and MRRD coordinators, in particular, saw a high rate of turnover. This was partially a result of poor job performance.
IR 3	Capacity Building for district entities	All SIKA regions, IDLG, beneficiaries, district and provincial entities	The SIKAs conducted capacity building trainings for district government staff. These trainings consisted of various modules such as leadership, office management, accountability, record keeping, computer courses, English courses, and filing. Each SIKA conducted capacity building differently, but they were all universally unvalued by participants who found the modules either too easy or too difficult, too short, unnecessary, poorly taught, or given to the wrong people. More is discussed on this in the capacity building findings question.
IR 1 - 4	Gender programming in SIKA North	SIKA North, MRRD, IDLG, DoWAs, beneficiaries, district and provincial entities	SIKA North had a very limited number of gender grants and female-specific activities. While SIKA North assisted DoWA in celebrating Women's Day and helped in conducting several gender related trainings, the gender portion as a whole was ranked least valued as it didn't have enough activities to empower women. A push to conduct gender programming occurred in the final year, but this was deemed insufficient and too late to affect IR 4 grant activity programming.

Outline changes to program methodology over the period of performance as they relate to mission objectives and Afghan government prioritization; what were the successes and failures?

Program methodology changes over the period of performance revolved primarily over the shift from a stabilization to a governance focus as mandated by USAID. While the shift also reflected IDLG's demand to refocus programming to build lasting capacity in the district governments and was negotiated over time with MRRD, the shift was primarily a USAID-led adjustment given the withdrawal of the military and the end of the counterinsurgency campaign. In any event, the move to a governance focus had profound implications for the scope and successes of the SIKAs. Born as strictly stabilization programs that fostered good governance through service delivery administered through the MRRD structures, the SIKAs were transformed into a subnational government platform for improved district government outreach and performance, albeit with a continued service delivery component. This shift allowed the SIKAs to emphasize district entity engagements and address governance SOIs much more effectively than through grants activities alone. Other program methodology changes were concentrated on internal programming process such as gender, outreach, M&E, and community stability analysis approaches. Each SIKA had a number of changes occur to its internal organizational structure, some leading to more streamlined processes. Overall, the SIKAs had a rough start in 2012/2013 due to implementation letter signing delays and delayed implementation of grant work due to the long lead time required to facilitate DPPs and because of vetting unit delays at USAID. Much effort went into making the SIKAs more efficient and responsive towards the end of 2013 and onwards. Below are the main methodological changes as they related to mission objectives and Afghan government prioritization.

Stabilization to Governance Shift: USAID dissolved the Stabilization Unit, which was responsible for the SIKAs, and incorporated its staff and functions into the Office of Democracy and Governance. This had a profound effect on the focus of the SIKAs as they were no longer deemed stabilization programs per se, but governance programs. This shift reprioritized SIKA activities to focus more on improving governance at the district level through the IDLG. Early programming was conducted almost exclusively with the MRRD even though the IDLG was the second ministerial partner according to the implementation letter between USAID and the Afghan government. The change from stabilization to governance was in line with USAID's exit from the development during a counterinsurgency model it followed under the military's leadership. This methodological change had profound outcomes for improved governance as earlier efforts to engage district governments were limited without active IDLG involvement. Nonetheless, the MRRD expressed disappointment as this shift was prioritized by internal USAID objectives and not by the Afghan government. Under the earlier model, the focus was on community-led development through a bottom-up approach advocated by the MRRD. The USAID shift refocused the development process to include a top to bottom approach at the governance level. The governance model, according to the MRRD, did not take into account the community's needs as much as the earlier model, favoring district government needs over community development needs. One could argue that the two are intertwined, but the reality is that various government entities often fight over donor support. The shift to governance diluted the MRRD's almost exclusive access to the SIKAs. Nonetheless, the shift was somewhat successful in improving subnational governance and community perceptions of district leaders, particularly because the shift occurred after most districts already created DPPs to address their SOIs.

Women in Governance and Gender Inclusion: Gender programming was included from the start in only SIKA East. The other SIKAs initially focused on establishing female participation in the development process so that the DPPs could be inclusive. Women were not central to SIKA work until the last year of programming when senior management realized that involving women was fundamental to good governance and stabilization. SIKA North began to implement gender programs the latest and made only modest efforts at best in its final year. SIKA South expanded its gender programming by

integrating women's priorities and inputs through WAC participation in SSMs and by engaging the gender team with capacity building. SIKAs West did not make any substantive changes to gender programming, continuing to include them in district development planning, but the program did curtail a number of vocational trainings for women in its final year. SIKAs East understood the importance of integrating gender into every aspect of programming and was successful in this regard. The MRRD and IDLG wanted to see more female involvement in SIKAs activities, but understood this was limited by cultural and regional constraints. The main methodological shift was the realization by all stakeholders that excluding half of the population from the main development decisions would not be sustainable or prudent.

Engaging Youth: There was a shift in the last half of programming to include youth in governance activities. SIKAs North had considerable outreach programming geared specifically for youth, such as Kankor exam preparations. SIKAs East and SIKAs South attempted to address the poorly functioning government SOI and insufficient youth civic engagement by adopting the PLAY! Initiative. PLAY! brought youth into the governance process by holding youth-centered physical education, sports, and community involvement activities that attempted to bring youth closer to their district government. Some youth were given opportunities to participate in the governance process as well.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Early SIKAs PMPs did not have properly articulated theories of change or sufficient outcomes measurements. All of the SIKAs redrafted their PMPs after the MISTI mid-terms and began to implement evaluations and assessments internally. Not every SIKAs was successful in this regard, but major efforts were undertaken by each program to incorporate M&E results into programming decisions. Each SIKAs also improved its GPS collections for verification purposes and conducted gradually more effective remote monitoring. Given MISTI's early issues with SIKAs GPS coordinates, there was a significant shift to improve data collection and this was reflected in improvements to SIKAs project trackers.

Joint Monitoring: Early grant work was monitored by the SIKAs and the communities. The PRRD was not always available or willing to conduct monitoring (even though it is their responsibility to do so). The SIKAs were successful in pressuring the PRRDs and the MRRD into conducting joint monitoring of grant activities thereby increasing the PRRD's exposure and knowledge of each province's development work. These joint monitoring exercises were particularly successful in the West and the East, where PRRD involvement was highest. Joint monitoring was conducted with government counterparts as well. PRRD, DGOs, and certain line departments took part. For example, representatives from the Department of Education came to monitor school boundary walls constructed by SIKAs East. District social workers hired by the SIKAs were instrumental in bridging the gap between the PRRDs and the SIKAs.

Capacity Building: The SIKAs struggled early on to craft capacity building modules for district governments that would align with the IDLG's capacity building framework. This was partially caused by a lack of documentation from the IDLG as well as a lack of direction given to the SIKAs. Some SIKAs conducted capacity building trainings that were later criticized by the IDLG for being irrelevant or redundant. After several steering committee meetings, the IDLG took a more active role in guiding district government capacity building. Later trainings became more aligned with government approaches and needs.

Internal Structures: Each SIKAs contract was the same, but the internal organization of each program was different. SIKAs North had a small core team in its Mazar-e-Sharif office and subcontracted most of its programming (capacity building, trainings, media activities, resource development) to outside firms. This model continued throughout the duration of the program. SIKAs West was troubled early on with significant senior staff turnover which affected morale and internal organization. An early COP focused on capacity building and gender while the next COP did not. The arrival of the final COP in SIKAs West's second year improved the internal organizational structure and refocused activities on governance, in line

with USAID's reprioritization. SIKA East changed their international organizational structure from IR focused to more of an integrated structure whereby different units worked across IRs to facilitate programming. Teams worked in unison among common objectives rather than the "Balkanization" model so common to the design of the contract. However, in its last year, SIKA East reverted back to the original model having realized that the change did not work well. SIKA South added an additional intermediate result even though this was neither mandated by its contract nor necessary as the additional IR added was capacity building which was already part of IR3 in the contract. SIKA South's productivity and oversight suffered when its staff left Kandahar for security reasons and relocated to Kabul. Significant turnover in SIKA South's M&E, programming, and gender units affected productivity. Overall, it is important to understand that internal IP structures have significant effects on program performance. The SIKAs underwent considerable changes, but those SIKAs that had the least amount of internal organizational change performed better overall.

SAM: The District Stability Framework was a wholly military/USAID creation that was restructured into the SAM used by each SIKA. SAM was not aligned with the Afghan government in the beginning but became aligned with NABDP-type methodology for assessing needs through a "problem tree" after MISTI's SAM evaluation. In essence, the best parts of the NABDP methodology were combined with SAM and restructured by SIKA to use DDPs in each province in consultation with PGOs, DGOs, and PRRDs in order to integrate the entire provincial planning process into existing SAM trainings that became DPPs used by the SIKAs for FOGs. SIKA East was the only SIKA successful at incorporating this methodological shift, but it did so only in the last eight districts it programmed in after February 2014. This change in methodology, although late to fruition, made SIKA East's community engagement process much more integrated with the Afghan government, thereby increasing potential for sustainability.

Streamlined Grants Processes: Due to factors outside the control of SIKA, such as vetting, security, slow provincial work, and other implementation challenges, the programs were forced to become more streamlined and efficient at how they planned and implemented. This meant improved coordination with the government to avoid delays or unmet expectations and a streamlining of all grant activities to ensure that they would not fail compliance or vetting. This made each SIKA better positioned to respond to concerns faster. It also made the programs a bit more flexible in terms of getting things done within their allotted budgets and timeframes.

In considering the phase-out/closeout how did the SIKA program facilitate this process and how did the program engage GIROA for sustainability?

Each SIKA engaged the government during closeout in order to transfer programming materials and, in some cases, personnel. Each SIKA also identified key programming activities that it saw necessary to continue after program closeout in order to ensure sustainability. This required the support of the MRRD and IDLG at the national, provincial, and district levels. The SIKAs did well in ensuring a smooth closeout (although it was sometimes rushed) and in engaging the government to ensure sustainability. However, the overall sustainability of programs and grants is questionable given the uncertain future over DDAs and the uncertainty over future funding for district-level activities. Some programming is likely to continue in the near term, but may end quickly once participants realize they will not receive funding. This depends on the MRRD's ability to continue to receive donor funding and apply it at the district level.

The SIKAs facilitated the phase-out/closeout process by handing over key documents and information such as:

- Products – such as service provider catalogues, DPPs and narratives, district profiles, stakeholder registers, communications and outreach plans, project photos, catalogues, and posters, curriculums used for taught capacity building modules, and gender mainstreaming guides and plans. The DPPs are particularly important for the MRRD for future grant work in the same districts and with the same CDCs.
- Training Documents – such as gender and female-specific trainings, communications trainings that included advocacy, fundraising, lobbying, negotiation strategy, unity building, and district communications trainings, district government capacity building development trainings, grant writing and management, conflict management trainings, and water management trainings. Most of these will benefit the PRRDs and local government offices which can recycle training modules for new staff or conduct refresher courses themselves.
- Reports – such as all M&E assessments and evaluations as well as monitoring results and indicators, lessons learned, all the SIKA monthly, quarterly, and final reports, as well as success stories with photos and video, internal reports on gender, communications, service provider fairs, coordination meetings, and provincial conferences. These will serve as an archive of activities and can be referenced by the government for future work.

While the handover of products, training documents, and reports was important, the government required additional resources in order to make SIKA successes sustainable. For example, the district stabilization programming meetings (DDA+, DSC, SSMs) were successful. Some of these meetings have continued despite SIKA's closeout and retraction of funding. Nonetheless, their continued operation is dependent on the will of the participants and the likelihood of future funding from the MRRD or district governments. The SIKAs have engaged the MRRD to ensure that district meetings continue. The SIKAs requested letters of commitment from the MRRD and had a series of closeout meetings where the sustainability of these community meetings was discussed. However, it is still unclear what MRRD's plan is, especially considering that funding for district entities has been reduced and the ministry is more focused on its own development bodies represented by the DDAs and not on the larger bodies the SIKAs organized.

The sustainability of the service provider fairs and catalogues is uncertain. While the IDLG and district and provincial governments have been keen on continuing these fairs, there is variable commitment from Kabul in terms of funding. At this point, it appears that the only way these fairs will continue is if a sufficient number of local businesses take part, thereby providing the necessary funding.

Infrastructure development was a central feature of the SIKAs good governance through service delivery model. However, it is uncertain how the MRRD or the communities will fund repairs in the future. The onus on repairs falls on the community, but given the considerable PRRD involvement in each project, it is likely communities will expect some measure of government financing. These details have been discussed with the MRRD, but there remains the question of funding.

In terms of broader sustainability, the SIKAs took the best of both worlds and combined them into a stabilizing force in the communities. That is, the SIKAs took the MRRD's development bodies and structures and combined them with the district governance structures (and other stakeholders) to improve good governance. This worked well while SIKAs was funding community development. However, traditionally there are considerable disagreements between the IDLG and MRRD regarding processes, roles, responsibilities, and top-down development over bottom-up development. These disagreements may preclude the DSCs, DDA+s, SSMs, and other district-level meetings from continuing to have the same measurable impact as they did under the SIKAs.

How effective were the IPs at Monitoring and Evaluation?

SIKA monitoring was effective in many areas and deficient in others. All programs submitted detailed reports outlining grant construction milestones and activity objectives. They improved, to varying degrees, their GPS coordinate collection systems. SIKAs East and West showed the most improvement in data collection, while SIKAs South showed little improvement, had comparatively higher percentages of incomplete or nonexistent projects and struggled to provide consistently accurate GPS coordinates for their complicated grants with multiple activities.⁴ SIKAs North showed strong monitoring improvement over time but still suffered from high rates of incomplete and non-existent projects.

SIKA evaluative work was ineffective. The programs did not have working theories of change even after multiple PMP revisions. These PMPs concentrated on outlining outputs that needed to be reported to USAID. Few SIKAs had outcome indicators in their PMPs, and none did an effective job of collecting on outcomes. The MISTI mid-term performance evaluations criticized each SIKAs for not measuring outcomes or conducting meaningful impact assessments internally in order to gauge programming efficacy. All of the SIKAs attempted to rectify this issue in the final year, but none succeeded in producing evaluative work that strengthened programming or informed senior management. The SIKAs M&E units were, essentially, output indicator clearinghouses.

Monitoring

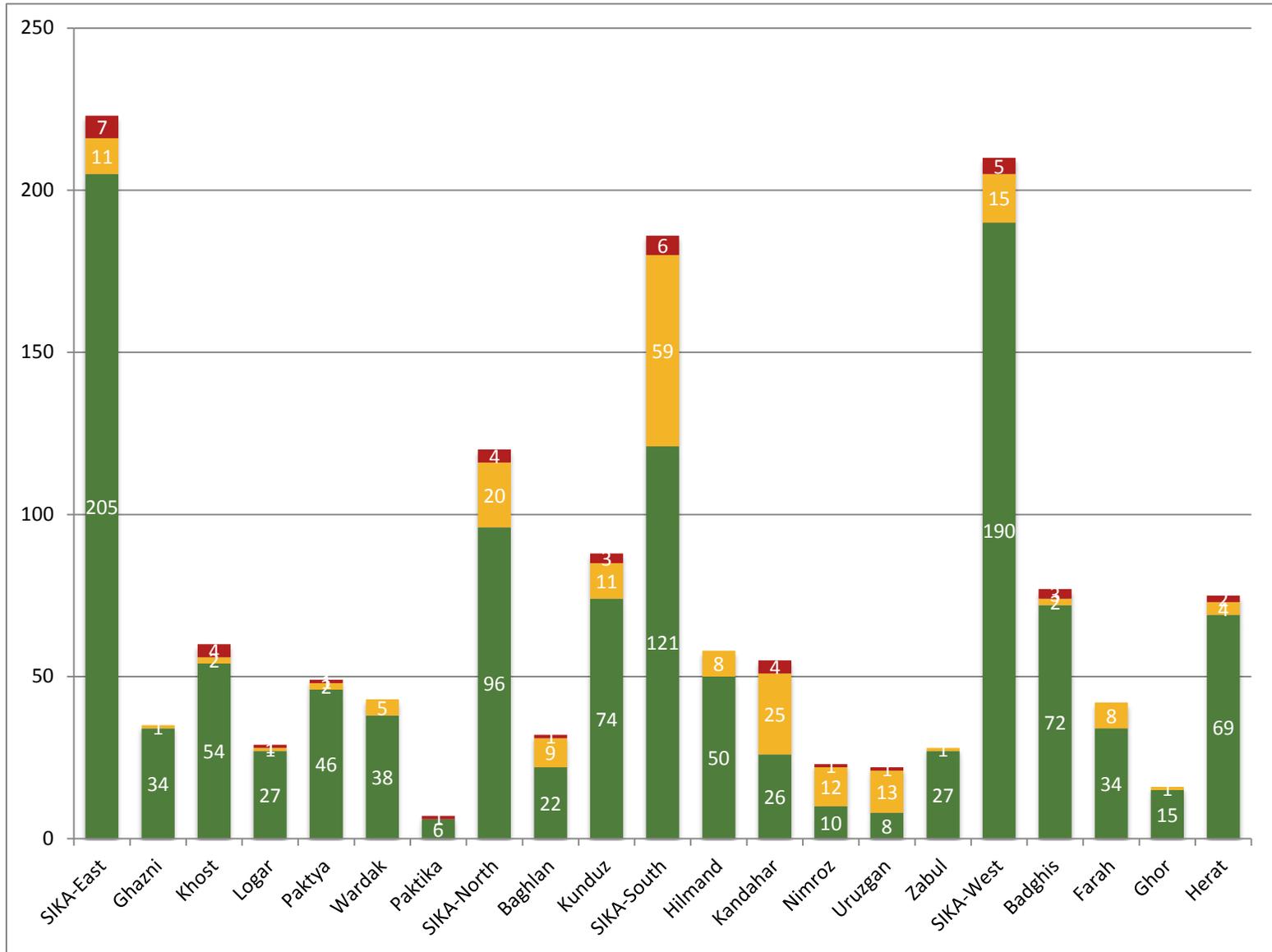
Early monitoring weaknesses were the same across all SIKAs. All programs poorly recorded GPS coordinates from their project sites, usually opting instead for centralized CDC coordinates and/or writing GPS coordinates by hand and transcribing them into spreadsheets. None consistently used cell phone-based applications like ODK to collect data that automatically synchronized with a central database. Finally, few programs regularly reviewed the quality of the GPS data they collected.

When MISTI began third-party verifications of SIKAs projects, USAID advocated for accurate GPS coordinates that tied location data to pictures of field projects. Each month thereafter, SIKAs programs reviewed monitoring data for errors and taught improved monitoring techniques to field staff. These changes resulted in much better data collection and accuracy, which in turn improved MISTI's verification of SIKAs field projects. Over time, reporting was even more streamlined, with SIKAs programs providing start and end point coordinates for linear features and multiple coordinates for grants with multiple activities.

The results of MISTI's verification of SIKAs projects speak to the overall effectiveness of SIKAs monitoring efforts. High percentages of "executed with conditions" or "not executed" projects found by MISTI teams are correlated with poor SIKAs monitoring performance. The table below shows the results of all SIKAs verifications since MISTI's fieldwork began in May 2014. MISTI conducted 739 verifications and re-verifications of SIKAs projects and 17% (127 of 739) of them are "executed with conditions" or "not executed."

⁴ SIKAs South and North grants are generally more complicated than SIKAs West and SIKAs East grants. For example, SIKAs West and SIKAs East grants frequently encompassed one activity with either one GPS coordinate or a two GPS coordinates for a linear feature. SIKAs South and North grants, on the other hand, were more likely to be long roads with multiple turns and culverts, dozens of small activities like water gates or culverts, and protection walls with multiple segments in different locations. Collecting accurate GPS coordinates (one facet of high-quality monitoring) for SIKAs North and South posed more logistical and technical challenges to internal monitoring teams than GPS coordinate collection for SIKAs East and West grants.

**TABLE 2: LIFETIME PROGRAM VERIFICATIONS – PROGRAM, PROVINCE, STATUS
MAY 2014 – SEPTEMBER 2015**



Based on the above data MISTI concludes the following:

1. 35% of verified SIKAs-South projects (65 of 186) are either “not executed” or “executed with conditions.” SIKAs-South “not executed” and “executed with conditions” projects represent 51% of all “not executed” and “executed with conditions” activities across all SIKAs projects.
2. 19% of verified SIKAs-North projects (23 of 120) are either “not executed” or “executed with conditions.”
3. 10% of verified SIKAs-West projects (20 of 210) are either “not executed” or “executed with conditions.”
4. 8% of verified SIKAs-East projects (18 of 223) are either “not executed” or “executed with conditions.”
5. 83% (612 of 739) of all SIKAs projects are “executed as reported.”

SIKA East

SIKA East monitoring data collection efforts were very poor in the early stages of the program. GPS coordinates were error-ridden, unstandardized, and did not include start and end coordinates for linear features. However, monitoring improvements were substantial throughout MISTI's monitoring period, driven primarily by robust coordination and follow-up from the SIKA East M&E Team. SIKA East made several visits to MISTI HQ to learn how verification teams collected GPS data using smartphone technology linked to an online database. They also sent monitoring teams to re-verify GPS coordinates for all completed infrastructure projects instead of using inaccurate CDC coordinates. SIKA East's monitoring efforts are impressive and are reflected in MISTI's verification results: 8% of verified SIKA-East projects (18 of 223) are either "not executed" or "executed with conditions."

SIKA East did not have a properly articulated theory of change in its first PMP (April 2102) but had subsequently included a practical and well-articulated theory of change in its PMP revisions. However, while the theory of change exists, it is not being measured through outcomes and there is no systematic M&E system in place to conduct effective outcomes measurements. Impact assessments of individual programming is generally done by the individual programming unit and only then reported to the M&E department. Senior management has prevented M&E from conducting its work on anything but outputs collection for the indicators (monthly reporting). Impact assessments often reached the M&E department as finalized reports many months after they were conducted. The M&E unit conducted a significant number of focus groups, baseline surveys, and assessments in its final year. However, some of the baselines occurred after programming had begun – making it a false baseline. Communications and gender programming assessments were conducted by those individual departments and not by the M&E unit. When SIKA East did finish its evaluative work, the program was already in closeout mode and none of the assessments could be used to effect senior management decision-making. USAID essentially received a collection of assessments (some quite good) that evaluated programming after it was completed. While this was important information, the M&E unit should have conducted assessments more routinely and more independently long before program closeout. This would have ensured program methodology changes based on empirical data rather than on senior SIKA East management dogma (the last COP attempted to annul successful programming like communications and gender).

SIKA South

SIKA South monitoring teams significantly improved the quality of GPS coordinates for their projects over time, but challenges remained. The program rightly provided multiple GPS coordinates for many complex grants with dozens of activities, but even with this attention to detail, 35% of verified SIKA-South projects (65 of 186) are either "not executed" or "executed with conditions." For project SSHMGA297 in Helmand province, SIKA-South staff noted that "community representative[s] do not allow field engineer[s] to use a reliable GPS instrument" because of security problems.⁵ If MISTI field verifiers were able to take GPS coordinates using smart phones, SIKA South project staff funding the field activity should have been able to use them as well. Monitoring problems arose from the size and complexity of the grants that made up a large portion of the SIKA South portfolio, as well as the generally high levels of instability found across southern Afghan provinces.

SIKA South had the least success in conducting evaluative work and reformatting its PMP to include a viable theory of change and outcomes measurements. The program focused almost exclusively on monitoring and gathering outputs indicators. Even during the final months of programming, SIKA South had no viable evaluative work.

⁵ Email from SIKA-South Grants Compliance Specialist Richard Pendry to MISTI, dated July 18, 2015.

SIKA West

SIKA West monitoring was effective at confirming the location and completion of field projects. SIKA West had relatively low rates of “not executed” and “executed with conditions” projects, accounting for only 10% of verified projects (20 of 210). SIKA West’s GPS coordinates were usually accurate, and they often simplified monitoring processes by dividing grants into small manageable chunks (one culvert, one canal, etc.). However, early tracker submissions had larger numbers of projects for which they could not collect high-quality GPS coordinates. SIKA West’s final project tracker only highlighted four of these projects, showing considerable improvement over time. MISTI re-verified nearly all SIKA West “not executed” and “executed with conditions” projects, with the majority of re-verifications returning “executed as reported.”⁶

SIKA West re-crafted its PMP after the MISTI mid-term performance evaluation to include a theory of change and outcome indicators. Nonetheless, the PMP was still output indicator focused. There was an inclusion of a newly defined theory of change, but the re-crafted indicators were used mainly to tie into the new theory of change rather than outcomes measurement. The M&E unit conducted several short range assessments, such as the Badghis road project assessment, to understand immediate benefits of each project to the community. These perception surveys randomized respondents and collected information on how beneficiaries perceived SIKA aid. However, the results of these surveys were published as the program was closing out and did not affect any management decisions.

SIKA North

SIKA North also improved monitoring over time but experienced significant monitoring obstacles. SIKA North and MISTI communicated regularly to develop better GPS coordinate collection techniques, and project trackers demonstrated quality improvements, including more specific GPS coordinates, better descriptions for all grant activities and detailed start/middle/end points for road projects. However, MISTI found that many road projects were shorter than stipulated in the grant documents and some districts, like Khanabad and Baghlani Jadid, had high levels of incomplete projects (50% and 31% respectively).

Fighting between insurgents and government forces across Kunduz province compounded monitoring difficulties in SIKA North’s geographic area, as SIKA North staff were unable to return to many sites to confirm GPS coordinates. MISTI staff was also unable to access many SIKA North projects because of Taliban checkpoints across much of Kunduz province. Overall, MISTI found that 19% of verified SIKA North projects (23 of 120) were either “not executed” or “executed with conditions.”

SIKA North did not have a fully functioning M&E unit until the last year of programming due to personnel turnover. The program did not have a theory of change or outcomes measurements until the last M&E director arrived and began to conduct impact assessments, internal evaluations, and outcomes measurements with a fully revised theory of change included in a new PMP (after the MISTI mid-term performance evaluation). These evaluations were well targeted and the M&E unit managed to assess SIKA North’s programmatic benefits quite well. However, since the results were released fairly late in the programming cycle, it remained unclear whether SIKA North’s senior management was able to use the results to affect programming.

⁶ SIKA West and the other SIKA programs provide updated GPS coordinates for grants undergoing re-verification. In these cases, MISTI treats both the original and the re-verification with equal weight when calculating the percentage of projects “executed as reported” and when creating charts of verification data. MISTI only replaces original verifications with the re-verifications when there are errors with original reports. Re-verifications that were unable to be completed include BB-3-005 and BB-9-003.

LESSONS LEARNED FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMING

This final performance evaluation identifies the following key findings that should serve as lessons learned for future USAID programming on governance, stabilization, and development:

Improving Stabilization Programming

Improve the Mechanism for Identifying Sources of Instability – SAM was an insufficiently tested tool. It evolved during the early stages of SIKA from the District Stability Framework (DSF) model used by the military and USAID to understand local sources of instability. However, the tool was not adequately tested in the Afghan context before the SIKAs were contracted to use it. It was prone to back engineering (the process by which communities choose the projects they want and then back engineer the SOI to match the project). It was too complicated for uneducated participants (the majority) and the process of vetting identified SOIs to test their local validity and feasibility was limited or non-existent. A large number of SOIs were too general (e.g. youth unemployment, lack of market access, insecurity) for effective programming under the SIKA model which used small grants. Furthermore, some SOIs that the SIKAs programmed against were not, in fact, SOIs. For example, female unemployment was mitigated against through vocational trainings such as tailoring and embroidery courses. However, unemployed women do not constitute a destabilizing force in conservative Afghanistan.

Do Not Reward Unstable Districts at the Expense of Stable Districts– Good governance is about programming and governing equitably. The SIKA model did not allow for equitable resource allocation as SIKA rewarded unstable areas at the expense of stable areas. While the SIKAs aimed to improve local governance and thereby “stabilize” districts, the programs had no significant impact on stability as noted in MISTI’s impact evaluation. USAID’s shift from a stabilization to a governance focus in 2014 could have been used as an opportunity to change the direction of the SIKAs by focusing resources on improving governance in districts which had a present and active district government instead of continuing to spend money in unstable districts with disparate levels of district government presence and activity.

Vetting Should not Undermine Programming – Vetting procedures should not undermine the ability to effectively program against SOIs. External and internal vetting should be rapid enough not to impede programming as designed. The SIKAs suffered from extensive USAID Vetting Unit delays which caused delays in grant implementation, community frustration, negative perceptions of governance, and wasted time. Senior managers in each SIKA stated that they would not have chosen low-cost, low-impact interventions if it hadn’t been for the vetting delays. To help ensure that vetting does not impede programming, it should be internalized by programs as an auditable part of the programming cycle. The risk of misallocating funds to improperly vetted actors should be borne by the implementer.

Service Delivery Isn’t a Stabilization Panacea – USAID Should Program Soft and Hard Projects for Better Effect - SIKA service delivery did not result in perceptions of good formal governance but did contribute to increased community cohesion (social capital and local leader satisfaction). This means that local traditional leaders such as non-DDA members included in the SIKA stabilization workshops were credited with project benefits instead of formal government institutions. The SIKA design stipulated that improved service delivery would improve local governance. However, it is clear from MISTI’s impact evaluation that this was not always true. Furthermore, soft programming often had more impact than hard programming and also reversed negative perceptions after hard interventions. USAID can have more impact by focusing on soft interventions coupled with hard interventions. The traditional focus on hard grants in insecure areas has proven to be destabilizing in the Afghan stabilization context, and is likely to be so in other stabilization contexts where actors are usually highly particularized and opportunistic.

Maintain Flexible Operations Especially When Earlier Selection Criteria is no Longer Valid -

District selection was based on criteria developed by USAID and the MRRD that changed over time. As such, USAID should have maintained some flexibility in choosing programming districts, particularly as districts fell to the Taliban or suffered from a lack of district government presence. MISTI's impact evaluation and endorsement experiment demonstrated the link between USAID programming in Taliban-controlled areas and an increase in support for the Taliban. This counterproductive programming should serve as a lesson learned for future USAID programs that continue to operate in areas lacking government control.

Always Work in Coordination with the Government

Build Upon Existing Structures – The SIKA IPs successfully aligned with the Afghan government's existing subnational government structures and governance processes, namely the Community Development Councils (CDC) established by MRRD's National Solidarity Program (NSP) and District Development Assemblies (DDA) formed by the National Area-Based Development Program (NABDP). This approach focused attention on building capacity and processes for current community, district, and provincial entities, and not, for example, creating new committees or competing structures and councils. While the SIKAs did augment existing structures by adding other stakeholders, these were done in conjunction with the government and proved successful and sustainable over time. It is important that future MRRD-partnered programming build upon existing structures as this is key to sustainability.

Ensure Project Sustainability Through Community and Government Commitments – Sustainability should be addressed by including operational and maintenance commitments in the grant agreements as well as through operational and maintenance emphasis during grant orientation trainings as well as continued trainings upon completion of implementation. Many rural communities are incapable of maintaining built infrastructure without proper training. Also, joint monitoring with government officials increases government involvement, exposure, and chances of project sustainability. Joint monitoring should be a requirement in any program and funds should be allocated to make it realistic.

Hire the Right People at the Right Salary - USAID and IPs should decrease the salary gap between government and IP employees, particularly in rural areas outside of Kabul. USAID and IPs should not upset the labor economics balance in programming areas. Also, hiring qualified individuals is difficult in Afghanistan due to a shortage of qualified English-speaking technical experts. Nonetheless, there needs to be more stringent hiring criteria in place to avoid simply filling vacant positions. Programs partnered with the government should, as a rule, include government officials in the hiring decisions. The SIKAs had high turnover and a number of unqualified individuals would not have been hired if a central database of all previous hires and their performance evaluations were shared with SIKA. USAID should assist IPs in this regard as USAID collects all of the biodata forms of new hires.

Program Effectively

Include Women from the Start – Gender programming has shown significant gains in terms of stability but has often been overlooked in importance. It is imperative to program gender into as many programming components as possible and to do so from the start of programming. Soft stabilization programming should include literacy and empower women because these types of activities have the greatest impact on reducing support for the Taliban and other anti-government elements. Only SIKA East addressed gender as a fundamental aspect of all programming. This led to highly successful programming in the East that empowered women and gave them a real voice in the district's decision-making process.

Program Multiple and Concentrated Activities Instead of One-Off Interventions – The SIKAs tried to address as many SOIs as possible by programming a myriad of grants in multiple communities. The

vast majority of communities received a one-off intervention such as a small gravel road, a culvert, or a school protection wall. These interventions were meant to address community SOIs. However, it is evidently clear that SOIs cannot be addressed through one intervention only. Multiple activities (hard *and* soft) should be implemented in the same area over time because doing so increases the magnitude of project impacts and improves prospects for sustaining gains in stability and consolidating support for the government over the Taliban and other anti-government elements. Sometimes it is better to get it right in a few places than try to get it right in a hundred places.

Do Not Depart From the Process of Stability Interventions - Internal factors and methodology changes negatively impacted beneficiaries. Errors and process changes frustrated the local beneficiaries of SIKA programming when it departed significantly in 2014 from the theory of change that guided the process of stability interventions: work with local leaders to first identify SOIs, prioritize these SOIs for remediation through project interventions, and then plan and implement these interventions to achieve quick impacts in short time frames. Negative impacts were created when the SIKAs did not adhere to this model. In particular, this occurred when the SIKA stability workshops raised expectations but then undermined confidence in local government when chosen high-priority interventions were not implemented due to vetting delays, risk aversion by the IPs, and a focus on low-cost interventions. An analysis of the SIKA district project portfolios (DPPs) and executed grants shows a disparity between community-prioritized activities and the ones funded by the SIKAs. The activities funded by SIKA were often not the first or even second placed community priorities. Furthermore, the change from stabilization to a governance focus further frustrated local beneficiaries as some grants had to be cancelled in order to shift funding over to non-service delivery activities.

Conduct More Communications and Outreach – SIKA East had a particularly effective and adept communications team that conducted highly impactful and well-received communications trainings which taught communities how to develop agendas and communications strategies, and how to communicate their problems and concerns with local government authorities. These trainings significantly improved bottom-up communication by creating systematic mechanisms to facilitate communication from the village to district and provincial levels. SIKA North conducted highly impactful media activities that highlighted government officials’ involvement in service delivery. These initiatives cost little to implement but had significant benefits. USAID should ensure that every program has a strategic communications component. In Afghanistan’s “word of mouth” culture, communication is often more important than anything else.

Capacity Building Trainings Must be Serious and Relevant and Aligned With the Government – Trainings for the government must be aligned with IDLG’s Capacity Institutional Development Directorate and, for the PRRDs, with the MRRD’s Community-led Development Directorate. Non-aligned capacity building trainings will not be sustainable and may not be relevant. The SIKAs conducted a number of capacity building trainings that were not aligned with either the IDLG or the MRRD. Many were considered irrelevant, redundant, or insufficient by government officials. The CDC and DDA project management cycle capacity building trainings were effective, but these were based on ensuring sufficient community monitoring existed for the service delivery component of programming. The trainings for improving governance were too varied and insufficient. The SIKAs should have used the same training materials for all district and provincial government offices. Instead, USAID encouraged each SIKA to spend funds on and devise training modules independently. This was a waste, as a more centralized approach in coordination with the Afghan government would have resulted in more effective capacity building.

Grants Solely to Employ Afghans Should Not Be Undertaken – Programming focused on boosting/providing employment in the short term, such as cash for work activities, should not be implemented because of the risk of increasing support for the Taliban. In particular, efforts to improve per

capita income via development projects without prior assessments of territorial control by the Taliban or the government may have detrimental effects as shown by MISTI's impact evaluation. The majority of SIKA grants were small interventions meant to employ as many community members as possible. These were used as countermeasures against unemployment SOIs that commonly plague rural Afghanistan. Such grants did little to address the systemic causes of unemployment.

Maintain Focus on the Strategic and Program Objectives

Adhere to a Theory of Change – Stabilization programming should adhere to a theory of change that reflects the program's strategic objective. Unfocused interventions carry a heightened risk of doing more harm than good, particularly in Taliban-controlled districts. The SIKAs were designed to stabilize unstable districts primarily through district-wide service delivery. Unfortunately, USAID and the IPs conducted small grant work in as many communities as possible instead of focusing on grant work that would actually stabilize a district. The fundamental fault of each SIKA was the inability to focus on the strategic objective, instead choosing to focus on intermediate results that, when combined, did not fulfill the strategic objective.

Require a Realistic and Measurable Theory of Change – Any USAID program should have a properly articulated and realistic theory of change in its contract and PMP. Furthermore, the program should be able to measure the theory of change through internal and external M&E mechanisms such as outcomes measurements, and evaluations/assessments of project-level and especially project activity-level impacts and performance. The SIKAs did not have properly articulated theories of change in their contracts or PMPs, and none measured outcomes (or included outcomes measurement in their PMPs). The SIKA M&E units essentially served as outputs indicator clearinghouses instead of as autonomous evaluation tools within the SIKA structures. This is one reason why the SIKAs succumbed to conducting low-priority interventions that were not effective countermeasures for SOIs. Such unfocused interventions could have been rectified by good M&E units that would have identified the major issues to senior management during programming.

Require Thorough and Outcomes-based Monitoring and Evaluation – The IP M&E unit, if functioning properly, can serve as the evidentiary-based vehicle for internal program learning and adaptation. The SIKA IPs, for the most part, did not use their M&E units as vehicles for understanding programming and this was a major lost opportunity. Having a viable and measurable theory of change, measuring outcomes, collecting proper project information from the start, and conducting joint monitoring with government officials/stakeholders are not enough. Senior management and USAID need to take M&E results seriously when assessing programming effects.

CONCLUSION

The SIKAs were successful at executing their contracts with USAID and at fulfilling their obligations under USAID regulations. The SIKAs performed well in programming their intermediate results and fulfilled their program deliverables. However, the SIKAs were improperly designed, which affected their ability to stabilize districts and improve district governments.

The design failure was best put by one SIKA chief of party during his final interview with MISTI – “The SIKAs tried to develop artificial demand for central governance, but there really was no demand for a district government. There is no real and functional economy that demands a central government. There isn’t the density of population, institutions, or commerce to support a district government in most places. You don’t even have the infrastructure like roads and offices to support a district government.”

The SIKAs were tasked to improve stability through the platform of district government. Their failure to achieve this objective is not wholly their fault. Sometimes, it is impossible to improve district government when one is lacking, inaccessible, or not required by the local population.

ANNEX A: COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECT SITES VISITED

No	Province	District	CDC NameLang	Project Name	Project Status
1	Baghlan	Baghlan-e-Jadid	Kohistani CDC	BAG-G-043	Awarded
2	Baghlan	Baghlan-e-Jadid	Maleem Akbar CDC	BAG-G-004	Awarded
3	Baghlan	Baghlan-e-Jadid	Laqai ha CDC	BAG-G-042	Awarded
4	Baghlan	Baghlan-e-Jadid	Baghlan	BAG-G-030	Awarded
5	Baghlan	Baghlan-e-Jadid	Baghlan-e-Jadid	BAG-G-003	Awarded
6	Baghlan	Baghlan-e-Jadid	Khodaidad Khil	BAG-A-039	Awarded
7	Baghlan	Pul-e-Khumri	Puli Khumri	PUL-A-025	Awarded
8	Baghlan	Pul-e-Khumri	Puli Khumri	PUL-A-031	Awarded
9	Baghlan	Pul-e-Khumri	Puli Khumri CDC	PUL-A-010	Awarded
10	Kunduz	Kunduz	Gul Tapa	KUN-A-078	Awarded
11	Kunduz	Kunduz	Kunduz	KUN-A-095	Awarded
12	Kunduz	Kunduz	Kunduz	KUN-A-094	Awarded
13	Kunduz	Khanabad	Sar Dawra	KHA-G-036	Awarded
14	Kunduz	Khanabad	Khanabad	KHA-A-045	Awarded
15	Kunduz	Khanabad	Khanabad	KHA-G-002	Awarded
16	Kunduz	Khanabad	Khanabad	KHA-A-055	Awarded
17	Kunduz	Dasht-e-Archi	Dashte Archi	DAS-A-019	Awarded
18	Kunduz	Dasht-e-Archi	Sayed Akbar Bajawari CDC	DAS-G-052	Awarded

19	Kunduz	Dasht-e-Archi	Dashte Archi	DAS-G-003	Awarded
20	Kunduz	Dasht-e-Archi	Dashte Archi	DAS-A-025	Awarded
21	Kunduz	Kunduz	Gor Tapa CDC	KUN-A-078	Awarded
22	Kunduz	Kunduz	Kunduz	KUN-A-095	Awarded
23	Kunduz	Kunduz	Kunduz	KUN-A-094	Awarded
24	Wardak	Sayedabad	Sayedabad DDA	0685 WRD SAD FOG	Awarded
25	Wardak	Sayedabad	Hakeem Khil CDC	0017 WRK SAD FOG	Awarded
26	Wardak	Jalrez	Jalrez	0689 WRD JRZ FOG JALREZ DDA (DG-Coordination meeting)	Awarded
27	Wardak	Jalrez	Mohammad Noor Khil	0292 WRD JRZ FOG	Awarded
28	Wardak	Jalrez	Kota Naqshi CDC	0375 WRD JRZ FOG	Awarded
29	Wardak	Jalrez	Jalrez	0495 WRD JRZ FOG	Awarded
30	Wardak	Jalrez	Ismael Khil Ulia CDC	0218 WRD JRZ FOG	Awarded
31	Ghazni	Muqur	Markaz	0929 GHZ MQR FOG	Awarded
32	Ghazni	Muqur	Muqur DDA	0683 GZN MQR FOG	Awarded
33	Ghazni	Muqur	Muqur	0543 GHZ MQR	Awarded
34	Ghazni	Muqur	Markaz	0633 GHZ MQR FOG MARKAZ PMC	Awarded
35	Ghazni	Muqur	Zardad Kala CDC	0728 GZN MQR FOG ZARDAD QALA CDC	Awarded
36	Ghazni	Muqur	Chorak CDC	0775 GZN MQR FOG	Awarded
37	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Deh Yak DDA	0690 GZN DYK FOG	Awarded
38	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Ramak CDC	0046 GZN DYK FOG	Awarded
39	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Kohna Deh CDC	0057 GZN DYK FOG	Awarded
40	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Deh Yak DDA	0135 GZN DYK INK	Awarded

41	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Tasang Kalay CDC	0433 GZN DYK FOG	Awarded
42	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Tunfer Kalay CDC	0478 GZN DYK FOG	Awarded
43	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Deh Yak	0632 GHZ DYK FOG	Awarded
44	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Deh Yak DDA	0129 GZN DYK INK	Awarded
45	Ghazni	Deh Yak	Tunfer CDC	0056 GZN DYK FOG	Awarded
46	Khost	Gurbaz (DDA)	Gurbaz DDA	181 KHT GRB FOG	Awarded
47	Khost	Gurbaz	Shahwali Khan CDC	0367 KHT GRB FOG	Awarded
48	Khost	Gurbaz	District wide	0674 KHT GRB FOG	Awarded
49	Khost	Gurbaz	Maidan First village CDC	0794 KHT GRB FOG	Awarded
50	Khost	Gurbaz	Garda Mela Kali CDC	0529 KHT GRB FOG	Awarded
51	Khost	Tani	Tani DDA	181 KHT TNI FOG	Awarded
52	Khost	Tani	Dakhi Nawai Kali CDC	0805 KHT TNI FOG	Awarded
53	Khost	Tani	District wide	0104 KHT TNI INK	Awarded
54	Khost	Tani	Essa khel CDC	0299 KHT TNI FOG	Awarded
55	Khost	Tani	Hesarak CDC	0227 KHT TNI FOG	Awarded
56	Paktia	Ahmadabad	District wide	0345-B-SGA-GHZ PKT RSSAO	Awarded
57	Paktia	Ahmadabad	District wide	0388-C-SGA- PKT KHT	Awarded
58	Paktia	Ahmadabad	District wide	0342 B SGA-PKT	Awarded
59	Paktia	Ahmadabad	District wide	0313-C-SGA-PKT LGR RSSAO	Awarded
60	Paktia	Ahmadabad	Ahmad Shah Khel CDC	0236 PKT LAL FOG	Awarded
61	Paktia	Mirzaka	District wide	0388-C-SGA- PKT KHT	Awarded
62	Paktia	Mirzaka	District wide	0313-C-SGA-PKT LGR RSSAO	Awarded

63	Paktia	Mirzaka	Jandal Khel CDC	0803 PKT SKM FOG ROZAN KHIL CDC	Awarded
64	Paktia	Mirzaka	Elam kahol CDC	0661 PKT ALK FOG	Awarded
65	Paktia	Mirzaka	Kajeer CDC	0879 PKT SKM FOG BARA CHINOW CDC	Awarded
66	Logar	Baraki Barak	Shah Mazar CDC	0094 LGR BBK INK	Awarded
67	Logar	Baraki Barak	Padkhwabi Roghani CDC	0095 LGR BBK INK	Awarded
68	Logar	Baraki Barak	Masjid Chaar Sooq CDC	0541 LGR BBK FOG MASJID CHAR SOOQ	Awarded
69	Logar	Baraki Barak	Masjid Mohammad CDC	0540 LGR BBK FOG	Awarded
70	Logar	Baraki Barak	District wide	0693 LGR BBK FOG	Awarded
71	Logar	Mohammad Agha	Matwargi CDC	0458 LGR MAG INK	Awarded
72	Logar	Mohammad Agha	District wide	0459 LGR MAG INK	Awarded
73	Logar	Mohammad Agha	Deh Safi Sang CDC	0249 LGR MAG FOG	Awarded
74	Logar	Mohammad Agha	Rahmabad girls school	0003 LGR MAG FOG	Awarded
75	Kandahar	Daman	Karim Kariz CDC	SSKDDM004	Awarded
76	Kandahar	Daman	Dwaham Khoshab CDC	SSKDDM008	Awarded
77	Kandahar	Daman	Daman DDA	SSKDDM475	Awarded
78	Kandahar	Daman	Daman	SSKDDM598	Awarded
79	Kandahar	Daman	Daman DDA	SSKDDM047	Awarded
80	Kandahar	Arghandab	Shuhin Wasat CDC	SSKDAG026	Awarded
81	Kandahar	Arghandab	Wakil Kala CDC	SSKDAG037	Awarded
82	Kandahar	Arghandab	Khowaja Malk CDC	SSKDAG604	Awarded

83	Kandahar	Arghandab	Wahidyan CDC	SSKDAG605	Awarded
84	Kandahar	Arghandab	Arghandab DDA	SSKDAG086	Awarded
85	Hilmand	Nad Ali	Nad Ali DDA	SSHMNA486	Awarded
86	Hilmand	Nad Ali	Nad Ali DDA	SSHMNA510	Awarded
87	Hilmand	Nad Ali	Nad Ali DDA	SSHMNA513	Awarded
88	Hilmand	Nad Ali	Gunobi Naw Abad CDC	SSHMNA610	Awarded
89	Hilmand	Nad Ali	Wardagan Kalay Loybagh	SSHMNA366	Awarded
90	Hilmand	Bost	Lewanai Karam	SSHMBO192	Awarded
91	Hilmand	Bost	Haji Sayed Mohammad CDC	SSHMBO351	Awarded
92	Hilmand	Bost	Haji Sayed Mohammad CDC	SSHMBO352	Awarded
93	Hilmand	Bost	Haji Talib	SSHMBO156	Awarded
94	Hilmand	Bost	Haji Sayed Mohammad CDC	SSHMBO511	Awarded
95	Hilmand	Bost	Haji Mirza Khan CDC	SSHMBO153	Awarded
96	Zabul	Tarnak Wa Jaldak	Tarnak wa Jaldak	SSZBQA609	Awarded
97	Farah	Bala Boluk	Shiwan CDC	BB-1-001	Awarded
98	Farah	Bala Boluk	Kanesk CDC	BB-9-003	Awarded
99	Farah	Bala Boluk	Khwaja Khedr	BB-3-009	Awarded
100	Farah	Bala Boluk	Amin Abad CDC	BB-4-001	Awarded
101	Farah	Bala Boluk	Geranai Alokozai	BB-3-002	Awarded
102	Farah	Farah Center	Towask CDC	FC-2-001	Awarded
103	Farah	Farah Center	Korgh Zard CDC	FC-3-002	Awarded

104	Badghis	Qadis	Omer Baik CDC	QA-2-006	Awarded
105	Badghis	Qadis	Chashma Safid CDC	QA-2-008	Awarded
106	Badghis	Qadis	Khodamada	QA-2-005	Awarded
107	Badghis	Qadis	Zadsaleh CDC	QA-2-011	Awarded
108	Badghis	Qadis	Rabat CDC	QA-3-001	Awarded
109	Badghis	Qadis	Mirahmad CDC	QA-2-010	Awarded
110	Badghis	Qadis	Khalifa Habibullah CDC	QA-3-007	Awarded
111	Badghis	Muqur	Jan Dosti CDC	MU-2-006	Awarded
112	Badghis	Muqur	Taraki Haji Ab Rahim CDC	MU-2-006	Awarded
113	Badghis	Muqur	Totak-e-Khalife CDC	MU-3-004	Awarded
114	Badghis	Muqur	Senjetak CDC	MU-4-002	Awarded
115	Badghis	Muqur	Kharestan CDC	MU-4-005	Awarded
116	Badghis	Muqur	Totak-e-Siah Gol CDC	MU-3-015	Awarded
117	Badghis	Muqur	Kamori CDC	MU-3-019	Awarded
118	Ghor	Chaghcharan	Barre Khane (Kharestan)	CH-1-003	Awarded
119	Ghor	Chaghcharan	Kata Chashma CDC	CH-1-004	Awarded
120	Ghor	Chaghcharan	Chahar Shareka CDC	CH-1-002	Awarded
121	Ghor	Chaghcharan	Tasriqi Village	CH-3-001	Awarded
122	Ghor	Chaghcharan	Dahan Dara Kassi Village	CH-4-001	Awarded
123	Ghor	Chaghcharan	Lashkara CDC	CH-5-004	Awarded

124	Ghor	Chaghcharan	Barre Khane (Kharestan) CDC	CH-1-001	Awarded
125	Herat	Kushk Rabat-e-Sangi	Khalifa Rahmat Hulya CDC	KR-1-001	Awarded
126	Herat	Kushk Rabat-e-Sangi	Jagatai (Rabat-e-Sangi Sharqi) CDC	KR-1-010	Awarded
127	Herat	Kushk Rabat-e-Sangi	Khodrawan CDC	KR-1-011	Awarded
128	Herat	Kushk Rabat-e-Sangi	Rabat Sangi Gharbi CDC	KR-2-004	Awarded
129	Herat	Pashtun Zarghun	Jirah Gar/Ab Garmi CDC	QA-2-001	Awarded
130	Herat	Pashtun Zarghun	Gaja Village CDC	PZ-8-003	Awarded
131	Herat	Pashtun Zarghun	Foshkan CDC	PZ-4-003	Awarded

ANNEX B: NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS

Area	USAI D	SIKA Staff	The Government	District Entities ⁷	Beneficiaries	Others	TOTAL
National - Kabul	5		6				11
SIKA East – Kabul		13					13
SIKA South – Kabul		7					7
SIKA South – Kandahar		4					4
SIKA West – Herat	1	9					10
SIKA North – Mazar- e-Sharif		4					4
Kandahar		3	4	22	50		79
Zabul		7	8	5	8		28
Helmand		3	13	11	59		86
Khost		4	4	26	21		55
Ghazni		12	11	22	75		120
Wardak		6	4	33	37		80
Logar		4	4	21	30		59
Paktia		10	5	25	24		64
Baghlan		4	5	11	75		95
Kunduz		4	4	32	90		130
Farah		4	6	8	23		41
Ghor		3	4	5			
Badghis		3	7	6	28		44
Herat		5	7	13	35		60
TOTAL	6	109	92	240	555	0	990

⁷ Includes DDAs, but not CDCs as they are listed under beneficiaries.