

90043

# USAID

**MISSION TO PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN**

**PROJECT ASSISTANCE COMPLETION  
REPORT**

**Agriculture Sector Support Project  
(306-0204)**



*Submitted by Office of Afghan Field Operations  
May 1994*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		<u>PAGE</u>
	<b>List of Acronyms</b>	
1.	<b>Basic Project Data</b>	1
2.	<b>Project Goal and Purpose</b>	1
3.	<b>Background</b>	1
4.	<b>Project Components</b>	
	<i>1987 - 1988</i>	
	• <b>Planning</b>	4
	• <b>Agriculture</b>	4
	• <b>Commercial Channels and PVOs</b>	5
	• <b>Rural Works</b>	5
	<i>1989 - 1993</i>	
	• <b>Agriculture Rehabilitation Schemes</b>	6
	• <b>Private Sector Agribusiness</b>	7
	• <b>Monitoring, Analysis and Planning</b>	7
5.	<b>Inputs</b>	7
6.	<b>Project Accomplishments</b>	
	<i>VITA - Rural Rehabilitation</i>	8
	<i>DAI - Agricultural Development and Training</i>	8
	<i>DAI - Planning, Programming and Analysis</i>	9
7.	<b>Lessons Learned</b>	
	<i>Monitoring</i>	10
	<i>Security of Equipment and Commodities</i>	10
	<i>Transition to Development Oriented Program</i>	11
8.	<b>Sustainability</b>	11

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>AAP</b>	<b>Afghan Agricultural Project</b>
<b>ADS</b>	<b>Area Development Scheme</b>
<b>ARS</b>	<b>Agricultural Rehabilitation Scheme</b>
<b>ASSP</b>	<b>Agricultural Sector Support Project</b>
<b>DAI</b>	<b>Development Alternatives, Inc.</b>
<b>GIS</b>	<b>Geographic Information System</b>
<b>HAVA</b>	<b>Helmand and Argandab Valley Authority</b>
<b>MCI</b>	<b>Mercy Corps International</b>
<b>MIS</b>	<b>Management Information System</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-government Organization</b>
<b>PACD</b>	<b>Project Assistance Completion Date</b>
<b>PSA</b>	<b>Private Sector Agribusiness</b>
<b>PVO</b>	<b>Private Voluntary Organization</b>
<b>USG</b>	<b>United States Government</b>
<b>VITA</b>	<b>Volunteers in Technical Assistance</b>

# PROJECT ACTIVITY COMPLETION REPORT

## AGRICULTURE SECTOR SUPPORT PROJECT (306-0204)

May, 1994

### 1. BASIC PROJECT DATA

<b>PROJECT NAME:</b>	Agricultural Sector Support Project (ASSP)		
<b>PROJECT NUMBER:</b>	306-0204		
<b>PROJECT OFFICER:</b>	Jack Huxtable		
<b>ASST. PROJECT OFFICER:</b>	Don Meier		
<b>TA CONTRACTORS:</b>	Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA)		
Action	Date	PACD	Auth. Amt.
Authorization	03/19/87	03/31/90	\$ 6.0 million
Amendment No. 1	06/22/88	03/31/90	n/a
Amendment No. 2	02/24/89	12/31/92	\$ 60.0 million
Amendment No. 3	Misnumbered	n/a	n/a
Amendment No. 4	04/01/92	06/30/94	n/a
Amendment No. 5	08/25/92	06/30/94	\$ 74.0 million
Cumulative obligations: (3/31/1994)		\$ 63,572,189	
Cumulative expenditures: (3/31/1994)		\$ 60,525,714	

### 2. PROJECT GOAL AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the project as originally designed was to provide humanitarian assistance related to agriculture to the free Afghan people remaining inside Afghanistan, in order to help increase agricultural production and food availability by means of agricultural and rural rehabilitation and private sector agribusiness activities development.

The purposes of the project, as amended in 1989, were: (1) to help restore agricultural productivity through small-scale agricultural infrastructure rehabilitation; and, (2) to help assure the provision of essential production inputs and other crucial commodities.

### 3. BACKGROUND

Prior to the 1979 Soviet invasion Afghanistan was one of the ten poorest nations in the world. Agriculture was, and continues to be, the dominant sector in the Afghan economy and agricultural growth was achieved prior to the war despite a hostile physical environment, a series of constraints (e.g., water scarcity), and a relatively small amount of arable land. In areas where agriculture was possible, overuse of small plots by poor farmers who could not afford natural or chemical fertilizers, exacerbated natural soil deficiencies. This was particularly true

in the south and southeast, where staple grain production continually fell short of demand, and imports were made from the surplus production areas (traditionally located around Helmand, Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif) which benefitted from plentiful rain and/or available and functioning irrigation systems. Increased production in these surplus areas led to the short-lived period of national grain self-sufficiency in the 1970s.

At the time the Agriculture Sector Support Project (ASSP) was being designed in 1986, the agriculture sector in Afghanistan had been characterized over previous years by serious disruptions and disturbances which extended beyond the direct consequences of the war then raging. There had been widespread reports of drought-like conditions over much of the country since 1982. These symptoms appeared to have been more pronounced in areas north of the Hindu Kush, but the effects were felt all over the country. They were most severe in the winter of 1985/86. This drought-like condition appeared to have been partly a man-made phenomenon, which resulted from the breakdown of irrigation systems, plus the burden of massive numbers of internal refugees. Transportation networks between different parts of the country had deteriorated, exacerbating pricing differences.

The agricultural sector was further characterized by moderate to severe labor shortages and dislocations. This was directly attributable to the effects of the war. There had been massive out-migration from Afghanistan, estimated at approximately 5 million people, or one third of the pre-war population of the country, and there had been casualties and fatalities. In addition, there had been extensive internal migration. The population of Kabul city increased from 500,000 to 2 million people. In short, more than half the population of the country had been forced to relocate, either inside the country or outside of it, with profound consequences for the labor available for work in the agricultural sector. The economic consequence of this was especially pronounced for the fruit-growing areas of the country, where demand for labor was highest.

The third major disruption to the agricultural sector came from the lack of inputs and supplies. Tens of thousands of livestock had been killed. Oxen, the principal traditional draft animals, had been particularly hard hit, and it appeared as though it was de facto Soviet policy to encourage the shooting of draft animals.

Fertilizer was in relatively short supply, particularly in the southern parts of the country. Tractors and other farm machinery had been destroyed, or had broken down due to lack of spare parts, supplies, and the absence of trained operators. Irrigation canals and karezes were often reportedly broken or destroyed. The massive irrigation systems of the Helmand and Argandab Valley Authority (HAVA) in southern Afghanistan, centered around Lashkar Gah (which was largely funded by USAID before the war), was only intermittently operating and at only 15 percent of its designed capacity.

In spite of all these disruptions and dislocations, for the most part there were no reports of starvation. Those people who were still in the rural areas and had not been forced to evacuate because of the war were still able to exist, albeit very much at the margin. With the possible exception of parts of the Provinces of Badghis, Fariyab, and Ghor, people seemed to have enough wheat or other staples to survive, although increasingly they seemed to be living ever closer to subsistence levels.

The Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan, conducted by the Swedish Committee, but paid for by USAID, found that agricultural production in mujahideen-held areas had been reduced to one-third of pre-war levels and confirmed other independent findings. According to the survey, the reasons underlying this decline were:

- the reduction in the supply of labor normally employed in agriculture and/or irrigation infrastructure repair and maintenance, due to flight, disability or death;
- a forty percent reduction in the numbers of draught animals due to disease, mines or deliberate slaughter by government forces;
- a decline in the genetic potential of wheat seed; and
- a decline in the use of fertilizer among most farmers.

In addition to the reduction in the draft animal population, there had been a general decline in livestock herds traditionally used by rural Afghans as another source of income to counter the impact of poor agricultural production. Numbers of common sheep, karakul sheep and goats had declined anywhere from thirty to seventy percent; trade in skins, a major foreign exchange earner before the war, had declined; and exports of traditional homemade carpets, largely made by women and dependent on karakul wool, had dropped off sharply from 1978.

With major segments of the labor force involved in the war or residing in Pakistan or the Gulf, and with most savings going into the war effort, resources were scarce. Operation and maintenance had seriously lagged. Small dams were not rebuilt after spring runoff and canals were allowed to silt in. In Qandahar, an area that previously produced seventy-five percent of Afghanistan's dried fruit, resistance sources indicated that many of the orchards were dying for lack of water.

In addition, transportation services, especially those that linked surplus food areas in the north with deficit areas in the south, fared worse than irrigation services, and transport costs soared. Primary and secondary roads were extensively damaged, or were not maintained, and travel on them was slow.

One study mentioned that the cost of moving goods from the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif over the Hindu Kush mountains to merchants, who continued to ship goods from Peshawar to Kabul, reported transport costs ranging from U.S. \$110 to \$550 per eight ton truck, depending on the extent of war-related disruptions and risks at any given time.

In the spring of 1986, the Mission and Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA) began exploratory discussions on the agricultural situation in resistance-controlled areas of Afghanistan. It was initially assumed that VITA could work under a grant agreement to provide limited agricultural sector support to an incipient Afghan Private and Voluntary Organization (PVO). By late summer of 1986, the Afghan PVO was not able to secure official recognition of the Government of Pakistan, a pre-condition for US support. At the same time, the Seven Party Alliance recognized the importance of the agricultural sector by forming an Agriculture Council.

The Council, which paralleled those in other sectors, thus became a possible avenue for channeling US resources in agriculture. In September, 1986, USAID provided a one-year grant in the amount of \$537,900 to VITA to design a project for assisting the agricultural sector of Afghanistan. The grant also authorized VITA to take steps leading toward eventual project implementation. Subsequently, USAID authorized the Agricultural Sector Support Project (ASSP) on April 1, 1987 with a life of project cost of \$6 million. VITA was contracted to implement the project. The initial Project Assistance Completion Date (PACD) was March 31, 1990.

#### 4. PROJECT COMPONENTS

##### *1987 - 1988*

As originally designed, the project had essentially two components. One was to have been an institution-building element; an Afghan organization (the Afghan Agricultural Project or AAP) was to be created as the primary vehicle for implementing the project. Policy guidance was to be provided by the Agricultural Council, a body already in existence, consisting of representatives from each of the seven political parties in the Alliance. The other component, running parallel to the AAP but working outside the direct guidance of the Council, was to channel resources (funds and farm equipment) through private sector groups and PVOs which had the ability to work in the agricultural sector in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, neither the AAP nor the Council was able to function adequately and they ceased to exist after about a year. To implement agricultural activities, including rehabilitation of irrigation systems and rural roads, the ASSP was restructured in August, 1987 to introduce a rural works component. The definition of rural works included, on a trial basis, Area Development Schemes (ADS), through which fertilizer, seed and oxen would be provided in targeted areas.

The trial ADSs proved to be a viable way to deliver goods and services for agricultural production and rehabilitation. Beginning in mid-1988, the ADS program was expanded. By the end of the year there were twelve ADS teams working in eight provinces.

The ASSP evolved into four components, one in planning and the three discussed above related to field activities: agriculture, commercial channels and PVOs, and rural works.

1. **Planning.** The planning component formulated implementation policy (within the general policy guidelines provided by USAID) and planned the use of project resources; monitoring and evaluating project activities and the overall management planning was very informal. Lack of hard information on the situation inside Afghanistan was an obstacle to efficient planning, monitoring and definition of problems. An evaluation and monitoring system was in place, however, and project monitoring was built into individual project activities.

2. Agriculture. There were twelve schemes in eight provinces. Each team in an ADS had four to six members who were trained as tractor and thresher operators/mechanics. Informal surveys within the Area Development Schemes identified the types of inputs considered by farmers to be essential to rehabilitate agricultural production. Equipment and draft animals provided by the project demonstrated and introduced improved farming techniques. The experience helped Project managers and implementors to better define possible future activities. For example, certain types of threshers which were introduced on a small-scale turned out to be inappropriate, while others worked quite well and demand for them was filled through the commercial channels sub-component. They helped to introduce, within ADS areas, tractors with plows and tillers, bullocks, threshers, reapers, other equipment, and wheat seed.

3. Commercial Channels and PVOs. Working with private-sector Afghan businessmen, the project provided for sale and use throughout Afghanistan of agricultural equipment such as threshers pumps, rice husking machines, and spare parts worth approximately \$1.5 million. This commercial, private sector-oriented activity addressed war-created shortages.

Lack of information on the condition of fixed productive resources, and of the supply and appropriateness of alternative production inputs and services, was a constraint on sound design and implementation of this and other agricultural activities. To alleviate this constraint, project personnel devised a two-staged approach. The first stage involved introduction and testing of alternative types of production goods and services to determine their suitability and acceptability under conditions prevailing in different areas. While losses of some types of production resources had been heavy -- e.g., livestock -- considerable, though not precisely known, amounts of other production goods and services were available in many farming communities, supplied by private initiative and by the Kabul Government and Soviet efforts.

During the summer of 1987, VITA began working with two PVOs which were carrying out activities in Afghanistan: the Swedish Committee and British-sponsored Afghanaid. With the Swedish Committee, VITA jointly executed a field construction project. A collaborative development program was carried out with Afghanaid. Subsequently, VITA worked with two other PVOs -- the Austrian Relief Committee and the Dutch Committee -- and, to a lesser degree, the Norwegian Committee.

4. Rural Works. The Rural Works Division became operational in the summer of 1987 with a small staff. As of mid-November 1988, the staff had grown to nearly 200, with about three-fourths of them in Afghanistan. Rural works activities were centered in areas freed from Soviet and Central Government control -- generally within the eastern provinces, which were the origin of the majority of the refugees in Pakistan. These areas were being dealt with first for two reasons: security and ease of access from Pakistan.

Rural works activities were limited essentially to rehabilitating village roads and bridges, and small-scale irrigation systems, notably karezes. Project implementors felt that village access roads and provisions of irrigation water were imperative to the rehabilitation of agricultural production.

An assessment was undertaken as part of the larger exercise of project redesign. The assessment found that during the one and a half year implementation period many achievements had been accomplished. Mechanisms and systems had been developed to rehabilitate small-scale irrigation systems and farm-to-market roads. A small experimental activity had been developed to distribute agricultural equipment through the private sector. Reports coming out of Afghanistan indicated that the term "VITA" had become synonymous with agricultural rehabilitation. Travelers cited evidence of VITA's work throughout the eastern provinces and their services were in great demand.

The ASSP was less successful in developing an agricultural rehabilitation organizational structure than it was in implementing rural works types of rehabilitation activities. To a large extent this was because about one year was lost, through no fault of the project managers, in attempting without success to work through the Agricultural Council of the Seven Party Alliance. Only after deciding to do agricultural work through the field-structure of the Rural Works Division's Area Development Schemes was much accomplished in agriculture, except for the provision of equipment through the private sector.

### **1989 - 1993**

In 1988 USAID Washington approved the Mission's Transition Strategy for the upcoming Afghan resettlement and rehabilitation period. The primary focus during this period would be the provision of assistance that would help ensure that conditions inside Afghanistan were such that the existing and returning populations were able to sustain themselves. Food security and agricultural rehabilitation were considered paramount to this effort since they were directly related to immediate resettlement needs.

Agriculture and its related activities would continue to be the primary livelihood for the majority of Afghans for the foreseeable future. However, extensive damage to the rural agricultural infrastructure, the unavailability of sufficient amounts and types of agricultural inputs at appropriate intervals, and damage to and lack of maintenance of roads and irrigation schemes had left this sector in poor condition to sustain the needs of several million potentially returning refugees. The problem facing the project at that time was how to facilitate the sustainability of war-affected Afghans through increased agricultural production.

In order to address the situation outlined above, and in keeping with the Mission's approved Transition Strategy, an extension of the project was needed in order to greatly expand the breadth and depth of project components. Following a 1988 evaluation, the project was amended. The amendment increased the life-of-project funding level from the initial \$6 million to \$60 million and extended the PACD from March 31, 1990 to December 31, 1992. The PACD was later extended to June 30, 1994, although all project field activity ended by December 31, 1993. The expanded project was composed of three components:

1. **Agricultural Rehabilitation Schemes (ARS)** and infrastructure rehabilitation would serve individual farmers and small groups of informally organized farmers with rehabilitation services, production inputs and marketing outlets for marketable surplus. This component

was also dedicated to providing assistance in rehabilitation of small-scale community or group-owned, managed and jointly used agriculturally-related facilities, such as irrigation schemes -- especially lower level elements (minor canals, outlets, ditches, karezes), rural roads, bridges, and community marketing facilities.

2. A Private Sector Agribusiness (PSA) component would primarily serve individual farms and small groups of informally organized farmers with production inputs, services and marketing outlets for marketable surplus. This component was to be operated primarily through the existing private sector agribusiness sector in Afghanistan and Pakistan, drawing heavily on goods and supplies available on the market in Pakistan.

3. The Monitoring, Analysis and Planning (MAP) component would serve as a market surveillance and analysis system essential in the monitoring of project progress. A Management Information System (MIS) would systematically assemble and analyze information from all sources focusing on the monitoring of prices of agricultural inputs and food crops.

Initially, the ARS component was to be continued under the direction of Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA), the then sole contractor. VITA had successfully developed and managed the ARS component and would continue to implement it until their contract expired in early 1990. Thereafter VITA's activities continued under a Cooperative Agreement (CA) mechanism. The management and technical support for the PSA and MAP components was to be provided by a new U.S. private sector contractor. The contractor ultimately selected through a competitive process was Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI).

## 5. INPUTS

Because of the nature of the Afghanistan Cross-border Humanitarian Assistance Program, and the lack of a counterpart government, all funds under ASSP were obligated into contracts and cooperative agreements. This was a unilateral project; no contribution was made by the Government of Afghanistan or any other donors. Obligations into contracts and cooperative agreements was as follows (as of 3/31/1994):

Activity	Obligated	Expended	Pipeline
VITA contract	\$ 10,037,986	\$ 10,037,980	-0-
VITA Cooperative Agr.	\$ 19,784,310	\$ 19,539,378	\$ 224,972
DAI contract	\$ 29,340,000	\$ 26,583,997	\$ 2,756,003
RONCO contract (logistics)	\$ 4,400,000	\$ 4,354,600	\$ 45,500
ASSP bases (warehouses)	\$ 9,893	\$ 9,983	-0-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 63,572,189</b>	<b>\$ 60,525,714</b>	<b>\$ 3,046,475</b>

## 6. PROJECT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The best measure of the impact of the ASSP over its seven year life would be a comparison of agricultural production in 1987 and 1994 in the areas where the project worked. This would require baseline data which does not exist because there was a major war going on in 1987; it lasted until early 1992. A secondary measure of impact is simply to detail the contractors' activities, from which some development benefits can be inferred. A problem which compounds the unreliability of this method in this case is that virtually all of our data on the contractors' achievements come from the contractors themselves. The Mission has been largely unable to verify this data because of the prohibition on expatriate travel to Afghanistan for monitoring purposes (a problem which is discussed under the "Lessons Learned" section, below). With this caveat, the contractors' accomplishments over the LOP are as follows:

### *VITA - Rural Rehabilitation*

- 762 juis (irrigation ditches and canals) cleaned and repaired;
- 2,896 karezes (underground wells) improved or restored;
- 226 projects completed involving retaining walls, flumes, springs, or other structures needing repair or reconstruction;
- 28 road rehabilitation projects completed and 14 new roads built;
- 32 bridges repaired or built;
- over 450 trainees participated in 31 training courses and 10 workshops/seminars conducted (equivalent to 16,065 person days of training).

### *DAI - Agricultural Development and Training Component*

- Procured and distributed 23,600 MT of DAP fertilizer; 5,500 MT of urea fertilizer; and 2,943 MT of improved wheat seed for seed multiplication program (due to the early termination of the DAI contract, responsibility for distribution of 600 MT of this fertilizer and 900 MT of the wheat seed was shifted to MCI under the PVO Support project).
- Established 7 nurseries for fruit tree propagation, which were transferred to private ownership;
- Established 1,677 orchards inside Afghanistan, which were supplied with 287,701 trees;
- Conducted 28 training programs, equivalent to 23,000 person-days of training;

- 
- Conducted 276 demonstrations for 4,140 apricot growers to teach them proper apricot drying techniques;
  - Tested and demonstrated various types of high-value crops, improved vegetables, and rootfuels;
  - Shipped 4,300 eight week old chickens to Nangarhar province under a pilot poultry project;
  - Prepared instruction manuals for use in training programs and by extensionists in Afghanistan on topics such as safe use of farm machinery, growing corn in Afghanistan;
  - Acquired various types of farm machinery for testing and demonstration inside Afghanistan, including 57 threshers, 57 tine tillers, 44 tractors, 50 plows, etc.

#### ***DAI - Planning, Programming and Analysis Component***

- **GIS** - Developed (with Earth Satellite Corporation) a computer based Geographic Information System (GIS) providing land cover/land use maps and other physical surface information for Afghanistan, using data from satellite imagery, existing maps of Afghanistan, historical records and technical reports concerned with agricultural production, and field surveys.
- **Helmand-Argandab** - Prepared a assessment analyzing the changes in land under cultivation in the area of the Helmand-Argandab irrigation system and on infrastructure-related factors.
- **Commodity Price Bulletins** - Issued quarterly (monthly, as of 1992) reports on commodity prices and currency exchange rates in Afghanistan (based on interviews of Afghans in Pakistani money bazaars and, later, on bazaar surveys inside Afghanistan);
- **Survey Reports** - published reports on land area under cultivation and wheat yields based on samples taken in selected provinces.
- **Land Cover and Land Use Assessment** - In April, 1993, a report was prepared consisting of maps of each province displaying summary land use statistics.
- **Project Newsletter** - A monthly newsletter was published from February through December, 1992, reporting on project activities and disseminating information related to Afghan agriculture.

## 7. LESSONS LEARNED

### *Monitoring*

The USG-imposed prohibition against expatriate travel to Afghanistan for purposes of monitoring project activities left the program vulnerable to fraud, theft, and abuse. Project officers were unable to accurately verify the delivery and disposition of project commodities, determine the impact of project inputs, perform needs assessments for further project interventions, test the reliability of the contractor's monitoring results, or evaluate the contractor's/grantee's performance. It should be pointed out that, throughout most of the war and afterwards, UN agencies and most NGOs routinely monitored and supervised their projects in Afghanistan. The prohibition against travel by expatriate Americans, barely defensible during Soviet occupation, should have been lifted, or at least substantially eased, following the collapse of the Najibullah regime. The Mission had formed its own Data Collection and Monitoring (DC&A) Unit, which became operational in 1989; however, with a staff of only 4-6 Afghan monitors to cover the activities of all of the Afghan projects, its operations were necessarily limited in scope. The findings of the DC&A Unit reinforced the need for an independent monitoring capability.

### *Security of Equipment and Commodities*

The ASSP suffered the highest level of losses of all of the projects in the Afghanistan portfolio. Thefts and hijackings of valuable agricultural commodities and vehicles - which are in great demand and easily convertible to cash - became a very common occurrence. This was especially so where commodities had to be transported over great distances, as when DAI attempted to increase its activities in the northern areas of Afghanistan (resulting in hijackings of huge shipments of wheat seed). Overall, there was a lack of appreciation on the part of both USAID and the contractors for the complexity of the security situation inside Afghanistan, which led to overambitious planning of activities and lack of attention to the intricacies of negotiating safe passage of project commodities.

Another reason behind the security problems we experience was linked to the way the program operated. The usual modus operandi of both VITA and DAI was to leave high-value equipment in the hands of locals for long periods of time, with minimal supervision from project management in Peshawar, while various rural rehabilitation works were carried out in the area. Over time, this created a sense of ownership on the part of the local populace. The result was that local commanders prevented the removal of much of the equipment from these areas when the project was closed out. Because of the difficulty in removing equipment from these areas, the Mission was ultimately forced to grant most of the equipment to VITA with authority to subgrant it to international organizations and to NGOs working on similar projects in areas where the equipment was located. It is questionable whether these NGOs will be able to exert their ownership interests in this equipment in any meaningful way.

---

---

### *Transition to Development Oriented Program*

In the final years of the program, the ASSP, particularly the VITA component, had trouble making the transition from the relief-oriented, works-style of operation which was instituted in the early years, to a more accountable, development-oriented program. In the initial years, ASSP assistance was, in general, channeled through commanders. Many, very small projects were undertaken and supervision by the technical assistance contractor was, for practical reasons, minimal. (For example, as of October 1992, VITA had 420 separate projects under construction, 1,303 approved for construction, 2,250 designed, and 3,234 surveyed.) Due to the war environment, the least visible projects were selected in the early years of the project (such as cleaning of karezes) to reduce the possibility of Soviet attack. These factors compounded the difficulty of appropriately monitoring the projects.

In addition, needs assessments were basically delegated to the local level, resulting in occasional embarrassments to the program. In one instance, a road was built which aided hauling of timber from forested public lands for commercial sale. In another case, a road was built which had no apparent purpose other than to improve access to the house of a prominent commander in the region.

As the orientation of the USAID program shifted toward traditional development goals and Mission management began demanding greater accountability, the contractors were unable to impose the accountability measures that would have been required to produce the results demanded.

## 8. SUSTAINABILITY

In the early years of the program, sustainability was not given high priority. The ASSP, and indeed the entire program, was oriented toward relief efforts and support of the Afghan resistance through works-style projects, rather than development-oriented assistance. When the size of the program was diminished in 1992, and the new program strategy was developed to reorient our assistance more toward sustainable development, agriculture was not selected as one of the sectors for concentration. Efforts were thus geared toward winding down the agriculture sector contractors' efforts, rather than building in sustainability measures.

The Mission commissioned a team from MIT to perform a study of the feasibility of converting VITA's Peshawar-based operation into an Afghan NGO. This study found that the prospects for converting VITA into an independent NGO were good and detailed the steps necessary to accomplish this. One of the recommendations was that VITA aggressively seek funding from sources other than USAID. No action was taken by USAID in furtherance of the team's recommendation. This was probably because USAID did not want to lose directional control of the activities of the organization, as it inevitably would if VITA received support from other donors. Also, accountability concerns led to a hesitation to hand over project equipment and commodities to VITA where there could be no effective monitoring and control over the use of this equipment inside Afghanistan.