



FINAL REPORT

**AFGHANISTAN: AGRICULTURE RURAL REHABILITATION
EVALUATION**

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Prepared By:

Frederic C. Thomas (Team Leader)
Helen A. Cruz
Radun S. Laban

Prepared For:

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PREFACE

The following report is an evaluation of cross-border programs funded by the Agency for International Development's Representative for Afghan Affairs and managed by CARE, IRC, MCI, and VITA. While special attention was given to VITA, the other programs were also studied for comparison purposes.

The evaluation was undertaken by a team of three consultants contracted by Chemonics International Consulting Division. The members of the team were Frederic C. Thomas, institutional development specialist and team leader; Helen A. Cruz, rural sociologist; and Radun S. Laban, construction engineer.

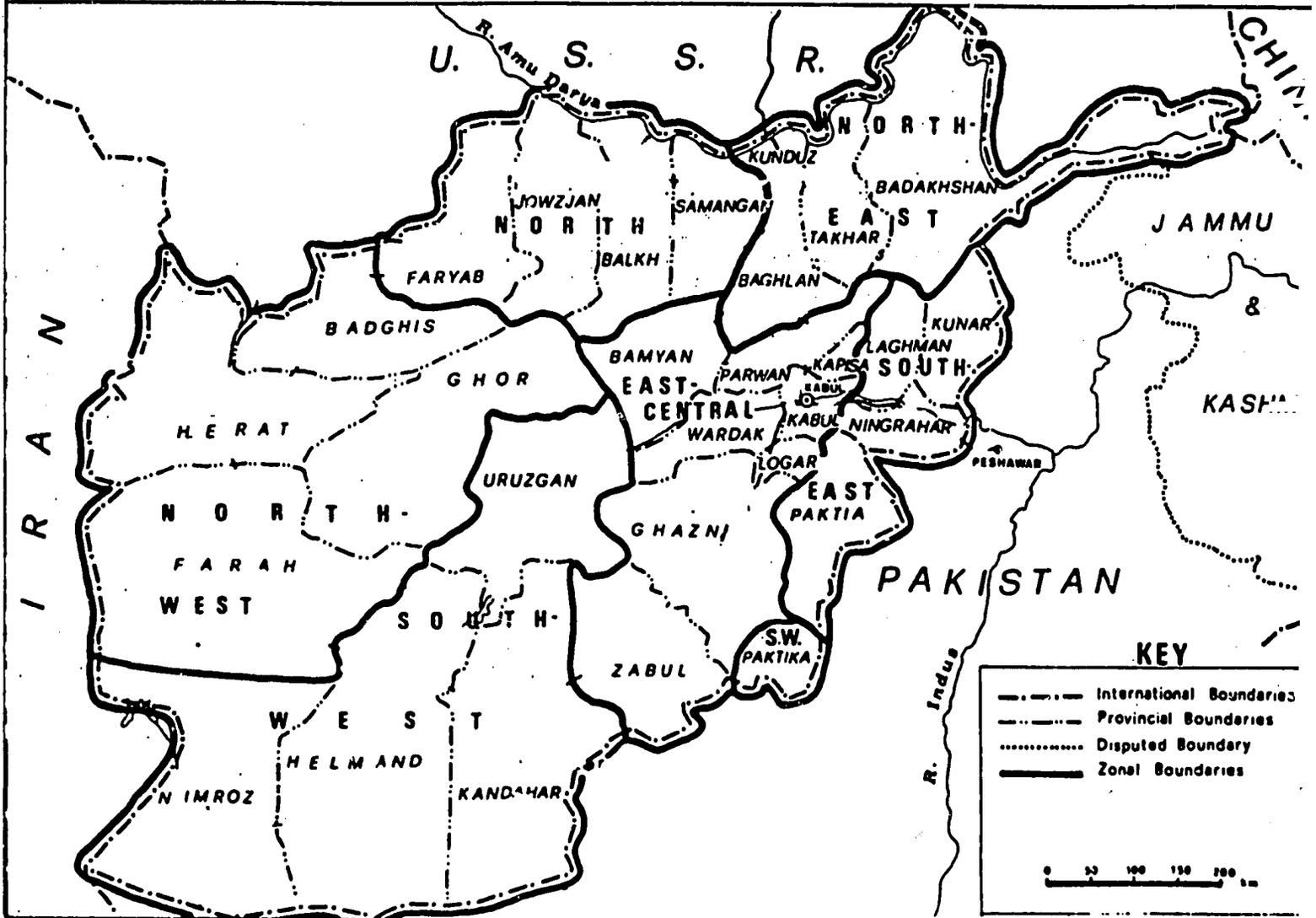
After a preliminary document review and briefings with AID staff in Washington, D.C. and with PVO officials in the Washington area and in New York, the team spent one month in Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta (October 13 to November 11, 1991). There they reviewed project files and consulted with USAID project managers and the staff of the four PVOs involved in cross-border rural rehabilitation activities. In addition, the team interviewed officials in four Afghan PVOs engaged in similar work, as well as representatives of the UN World Food Program, the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, senior Afghans working for other USAID contractors, and others with experience in cross-border operations.

The evaluation is organized into several sections: an introductory section describing the context within which cross-border reconstruction operates; a description and analysis of each of the four PVO programs under review; a comparison of the four cases with reference to key program features; and finally, conclusions and recommendations. The analysis of each program will deal respectively with the background of the program, its staffing, how projects are implemented, their outputs in physical terms, monitoring and training activities, impact and sustainability, coordination issues, and future prospects.

The team would like to express its thanks to the many staff members of the office of the AID/Rep in Islamabad and its Regional Affairs Office in Peshawar for their assistance during this evaluation. In addition, the team would like to thank the staff of VITA, CARE, RAP, and MCI for their support and the time they devoted to facilitating the team's work in Peshawar and Quetta. If individuals may be singled out for their kindness and hospitality, as well as the logistical support provided to the team, VITA Chief of Party Mir Mohammad Sediq Ashanand his Deputy, Robert B. MacMakin, deserve special appreciation.

AGRICULTURAL SURVEY OF AFGHANISTAN

Showing Zones & Provinces



Afghan ARRE Geographic Coverages by Province

VITA Agricultural Sector Support Project: Kandahar; Farah; Herat; Ghazni; Paktika; Paktia; Wardak; Bamyan; Logar; Kabul; Parwan; Baghlan; Takhar; Kunar; Samangan; and Kunduz.

CARE Food-for-Work Program: The Marawara and Bachi Valleys in Kunar. Operations have been extended into Paktika.

MCI Agricultural Development for the South: Zabul; Kandahar; and Helmand.

IRC Rural Assistance: Grantees have projects in the following areas: Ghazni and Wardak (CoAR); Paktika (ESAR); Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul, Kunar, Paktika, and Badakhshan (RAFA).

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ACRONYMS

AAP	Afghan Agricultural Project
ADS	Area Development Schemes
AID	Agency for International Development (U.S.)
AID/Rep	Office of the AID Representative for Afghanistan Affairs
ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ADO	Agricultural Development Officer
ADT	Agricultural Development and Training Component of ASSP/Private Sector Activities
AIG	Afghan Interim Government
ARR	Agricultural and Rural Rehabilitation Component of the ASSP
ARS	Agriculture Rehabilitation Schemes
ASSP	Agriculture Sector Support Project
AVAP	Afghan Village Assistance Program
CAIP	Consolidated Annual Implementation Plan
CARE	Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
CoAR	Coordination of Afghan Relief
DAI	Development Alternatives, Inc.
DC&A	Data Collection and Analysis
ESAR	Engineering Services for Afghan Reconstruction
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IUAM	Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen
LBI	Louis Berger International Inc.
MCI	Mercy Corps International
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PSA	Private Sector Agribusiness
PVO	Private Voluntary Organization
RAO	Regional Affairs Office of AID/Rep in Peshawar
RAP	Rural Assistance Project
RAFA	Reconstruction Authority for Afghanistan
RPA	Rehabilitation Program for Afghanistan
SCF	Save the Children Fund
START	Short-term Assistance for Rehabilitation Team
SWABAC	South West Afghanistan and Baluchistan Agency Coordination
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNO	University of Nebraska (Omaha)
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development Representative for Afghan Affairs
VITA	Volunteers in Technical Assistance
WFP	UN World Food Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cross-border rural rehabilitation operates in a complex and unsettled environment. Most programs are concentrated in the more accessible eastern belt, where war damage is greatest and from where most of the refugees come. Fighting continues around key cities under government control and among various *mujahideen* groups. The local commanders of these various groups are linked to politico-religious parties (*tanzeem*) based in Peshawar and in Iran. The seven *tanzeem* in Pakistan that have been united in the *jihad* against the Kabul regime disagree on negotiations to end the war. Meanwhile, their commanders inside Afghanistan have their own local tribal and kinship sources of support. As the legitimacy of continued military action weakens, commanders are vying for control over humanitarian aid channeled by private voluntary organizations (PVOs) to their client communities. PVOs depend upon commanders to guarantee security and upon district and village *shura*, which can best be thought of as informal gatherings with consultative and advisory authority. To work inside Afghanistan requires assurance from local commanders of reasonable security and *shura* support so that priorities are determined with reference to tribal and kinship interests and local participation in projects is ensured.

Since the mid-1980s the U.S. government has supported the cross-border humanitarian and rehabilitation activities of PVOs and United States Agency for International Development (USAID, or AID) contractors as targets of opportunity materialized. Handled by different offices of the AID Representative for Afghan Affairs, funding and oversight is compartmentalized and essentially short-term. There will be a growing need to establish a more coordinated, programmatic approach as political conditions improve.

Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA) was among the first PVOs to establish an effective rural works program on a widespread basis inside Afghanistan. VITA's strengths lie in the political sensitivity and judgment of its Afghan leadership. With a good network of relations with the Peshawar *tanzeems* and commanders inside Afghanistan, VITA has managed to remain neutral in a politically volatile environment. Its staff in Peshawar and 16 field offices are technically competent, even overqualified for the level of engineering required. In the past, *karezes* (underground canals) and now surface irrigation, tertiary roads, and bridge projects are identified by *shura* and implemented by VITA staff with a contribution, mainly in labor, made by beneficiary communities. If VITA can be faulted it is probably with respect to the single-purpose, scattered nature of its interventions, providing little opportunity for continuing involvement with *shura* and communities at large. Also, while their monitoring of technical aspects of implementation is good, VITA staff are insufficiently trained to evaluate impact. They lack baseline data and training in data collection and analysis. VITA's narrow infrastructure focus doesn't lend itself to analysis of impact, which can only be determined with references to changes in agricultural production, marketing, and improvements in social conditions, all of which are outside VITA's mandate.

Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) activities are concentrated in two provinces immediately adjacent to the Pakistan border. Agriculture in these provinces has suffered from a large outflow of refugees. A key objective of CARE's program is refugee repatriation. Working in a few valleys rather than in widely scattered locations, CARE has tried, with limited success, to measure the impact of its program in terms of resettlement. Implementation is more decentralized than that of VITA, partly because its two field offices are better staffed (not technically but in numbers) and have greater mobility. Also, since CARE projects are highly labor-intensive, design of simple structures can be done in the field. With an agricultural component in addition to rural works, CARE elicits active *shura* participation in implementation and provides training in storage and accounting for food-for-work commodities and other operational requirements. Working in depopulated areas, however, makes it difficult to insist, as VITA does, upon a contribution of labor from the community. The overall impression is one of a meticulous operation. Yet when fighting arose between political factions in Kunar, CARE was caught in the middle, and in Paktika, its activities in one district brought it into sharp disagreement with the other PVOs.

Rural works in Mercy Corps International (MCI) operations are limited to cleaning *karezes* and minor improvements in surface irrigation. These activities are of secondary importance to MCI's primary objectives in agricultural and horticultural rehabilitation, including distribution of seed wheat, fertilizer, and other farm inputs. Rural works are done with pick and shovel and little else and are not therefore comparable to much of what VITA, and to a certain extent CARE, does. Self-help commitments by village *shura*, water user groups, and individuals are spelled out in written contracts—including how payments will be made. Monitoring is done at different levels as in the case of other PVOs, but again, there has been no post-project impact analysis. With support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and other sources in addition to USAID, as well as food aid from the (UN) World Food Program (WFP), MCI can operate with greater flexibility than VITA in responding to the unique priorities of particular communities. Also, political conditions in its area of operations are more favorable for longer-term programming. MCI plans to establish a suboffice inside Afghanistan to maintain closer touch with its field offices.

The International Rescue Committee/Rural Assistance project (IRC/RAP) is of particular interest for the guidance and training it provides to its subgrantees, particularly Afghan PVOs. If institutionally strengthened, Afghan PVOs can play an important grassroots role in rural rehabilitation. The RAP Manual establishes guidelines to improve quality of programming, technical implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of impact. RAP training for monitors, other cross-border staff, and even *shura* representatives, suggests how collaboration could greatly benefit VITA. RAP's conditions for making grants may be too stringent when it comes to expanding Afghan PVO activities inside Afghanistan, especially in the interior provinces which until now have been neglected. When conditions improve there will also be a need to fund surveys and a need for mapping and project formulation missions by Afghan PVOs so they can develop viable project proposals.

A comparison of these four cases leads to certain conclusions and specific recommendations. In keeping with the evaluation terms of reference, these conclusions are reached with VITA particularly in mind. Briefly, they can be summarized as follows:

- From a technical standpoint, the work done by VITA and CARE is of good quality and technical monitoring is satisfactory. VITA should develop construction schedules and cash-flow projections for managing implementation.
- The implementation of CARE projects simultaneously in several neighboring villages and in closer interaction with *shura* and farmers suggests lessons for VITA, particularly the importance of adding an agricultural dimension to its activities. This will call for some additional staffing, close collaboration with an Afghan PVO having agricultural competence, or relinking agricultural development and training (ADT) field staff—currently under the Agriculture Sector Support project/Private Sector Agribusiness (ASSP/PSA) for which Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI) is contractor—to ARS staff.
- Lack of staff capability to collect and analyze baseline data and conduct post-project evaluations is detrimental to project design, implementation, and impact evaluation. This deficiency is found in all four PVOs and calls for continuous, in-service training of Afghan monitoring staff in applied research methodology. This need will become increasingly important when a more integrated and programmatic approach to rural rehabilitation is needed in PVO interventions.
- A combination of Afghan and expatriate monitors is the best interim arrangement. With appropriate training VITA monitors could function quite effectively. Informal feedback from commanders and communities in Afghanistan may be as important as the formal monitoring system, and for this reason also, more attention should be given to working with villages in a more multidimensional manner. USAID monitoring for verification purposes should be done independently of VITA by the Data Collection and Analysis (DC&A) unit and by non-American engineers provided by Louis Berger International, Inc.
- Except for the strictly engineering component, VITA training has been generally weak with respect to an overall training framework, objectives, methodology, curriculum and materials, monitoring, and follow-up training evaluation. VITA should collaborate with the RAP training unit in designing and implementing training, initially to meet the needs of monitoring staff.
- In addition to some agricultural staff, VITA field capabilities would be strengthened by access to more vehicles, giving engineers and technicians the mobility to supervise a number of projects more efficiently.
- The important role of the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) at the Peshawar level appears not to have been given the donor support it deserves. Also, PVO coordination of operational activities at the field level is virtually

nonexistent. While there is little USAID can do by itself to correct this situation, it should hold regular meetings of USAID-funded PVOs and contractors engaged in the different sectors in transborder programs.

- Any restructuring or consolidation of USAID responsibility and funding of its cross-border programs should not be done now. It should be done only after USAID establishes a presence inside Afghanistan.
- Afghan PVOs represent an important indigenous resource of expertise and commitment to the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. This resource should be supported, especially in developing projects in interior regions of Afghanistan which have been relatively neglected so far. USAID should make arrangements to fund project identification and formulation costs with some provisional assurance of follow-up funding if the project is approved.
- Treated virtually as a contractor to USAID, VITA operates under restrictions which do not apply to other PVOs. This ambiguity in VITA's status has contributed to an unstable relationship in the past. VITA should be allowed to operate more freely, especially with regard to the type of projects it implements and the support it can draw from UNDP, WFP, and perhaps other donors.
- While it can usefully become engaged in larger-scale, more complex projects, this should not be allowed to divert VITA from the primary activities in which it has proven competence, namely, participatory, appropriate technologies involving maximum community involvement and cost sharing.
- VITA should establish a collaborative relationship with an Afghan PVO which would benefit from VITA's operational and technical experience. With enhanced competence in rural rehabilitation, the Afghan PVO would have the standing to warrant support from multilateral and bilateral donors.

SECTION I INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

A. Setting

Most Afghans are Sunni Muslims; main exceptions are the Hazara in the central highlands and some groups along the Iranian border who are Shi'a. The Pashtu-speaking tribes who mainly inhabit the eastern mountains and southern deserts, and who comprise 40 percent of the population, have been the economically and sociopolitically dominant group over the years. Divided into independent kinship groups, often quarreling and fighting among themselves, the tribal Pashtun have given the border regions with Pakistan a reputation for turbulence and unrest. The other 60 percent of the population, composed of Hazara in the center of the country, Tajiks, Turkomen, and Uzbeks in the north, and Baloch in the southwest, lead a more settled life of subsistence agriculture and some herding.

In 1978, before the Soviet invasion, the population was estimated at somewhere around 13 million. Eighty-five percent, including 1.5 to two million nomads, lived in the rural areas. Fifteen percent were in trade, business, and the civil service in the towns and cities. The rural population lived mainly in small villages composed of household compounds made of mud or stone. Except in nomadic and Turkoman communities, women observed purdah and stayed apart from adult males not belonging to their family.

Twelve percent of Afghanistan's land is cultivable. Only 5.3 million hectares, or about eight percent of the total land area, has potential for irrigation, and of this, only 2.6 million hectares were irrigated in 1978. Canals and small irrigation ditches (*juis*) provided 85 percent of the irrigation before the war. Underground channels (*karezes*), springs, and wells supplied the remainder. Much of the agriculture in Afghanistan depended upon such irrigation. Wheat was the staple crop, occupying almost two-thirds of the total crop area. Before the war, the country was almost self-sufficient in wheat. Corn, barley, rice, cotton, sugarbeet, sugarcane, oilseeds, and fruits and vegetables were also important. Sheep and goats were the main source of meat, milk and wool. Cows, oxen, donkeys, mules and camels served for transport, hauling, plowing, and threshing.

In 1978, the Soviet-backed party of Nur Mohammad Taraki deposed the government of Mohammad Daoud Khan. But real power remained in the hands of tribal and religious leaders and large landowners. Feudal and kinship lines determined power relationships. Loyalty extended to family and tribe, but only within an ethnic group. Attempts to change the fundamental patterns met with increasingly violent resistance. In December 1979 Soviet troops invaded the country to shore up the communist party regime. At this point, the resistance took on the character of *jihad*, or holy war. Fighting escalated and the flow of refugees into Iran and Pakistan swelled.

At the time of the 1989 Geneva accords and Soviet withdrawal, there were perhaps as many as five million refugees outside Afghanistan, the bulk of whom were women (26 percent) and children (51 percent). Another two million or more were displaced within the country, having fled their farms for the relative security of the cities and towns. The demographics of Afghanistan had been drastically altered. Only a quarter of the population remained in rural areas. Whole villages were abandoned, and by the late 1980s 30 percent of the productive land had been left uncultivated, the number of livestock decreased by more than half, irrigation systems had been destroyed by bombs or clogged with silt, and roads and bridges were destroyed or in disrepair. The farm labor supply had been reduced drastically through deaths (an estimated 1.5 million total on both sides) and injuries associated with the war and the flight of families in search of safety. Disruption of markets and credit flows, disintegration of public agricultural extension and training institutions, and the loss of agricultural skills among farmers and families stagnating in refugee camps have combined to inflict perhaps irreversible damage to the rural economy.

The central government in Kabul, led by Najibullah, has been able to control effectively only the major towns and main transport arteries. Fighting has continued, particularly in the eastern border areas where war damage to infrastructure and agricultural production has been most severe. The countryside is under the control of various *mujahideen* bands affiliated with different political-religious parties (*tanzeems*), which operate from Pakistan and Iran. These parties became the early conduits for military and other assistance from the U.S., Pakistan, and other countries supporting the resistance.

There has recently been heavy skirmishing around Kabul and intense fighting around Gardez near the Pakistan border. The agreement in September 1991 between the U.S. and the Soviet Union to end all arms shipments to the combatants has had little effect in bringing an end to the conflict, although there are some optimistic signs.

All of the seven main parties in Pakistan are Sunni; six are mainly Pashtun, and a seventh is mainly Persian-speaking with support derived from the northern provinces. Some are fundamentalist and hardline towards any agreement with Najibullah, while others are more ready to negotiate.

In 1989 the seven parties formed an Afghan Interim Government (AIG) based in Peshawar. The AIG lacks any real authority inside Afghanistan, and *mujahideen* commanders in the field have become the preeminent figures in their own localities, working with provincial and local councils (*shuras*) which have taken over some responsibility for governance. Still, old antagonisms have persisted and led to changing party alignments and support to different resistance groups. Competition for clients and for arms—and now for aid equipment and commodities—has brought *mujahideen* into conflict among themselves, adding to the insecurity and uncertainties within which cross-border assistance must function.

In Peshawar the readiness of foreign donors and the UN to provide massive relief and rehabilitation aid to war-ravaged communities has encouraged the work of international PVOs

and spawned the emergence of a rapidly-growing number of Afghan PVOs.¹ Two years ago there were no more than ten Afghan PVOs; now are there over 60 registered with the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief. Many of them are tied to particular political-religious parties in Peshawar and their commanders inside Afghanistan, who provide security where they work. According to an ACBAR report, relatively few of them can be considered indigenous Afghan organizations with solid grassroots support.

Nongovernmental organization (NGO) cross-border programs are concentrated in the eastern Pashtun provinces where war damage is greatest and from where 75 percent of the refugees come. This area is also the most accessible from Peshawar, where most PVOs have their headquarters. The amount spent by these organizations is difficult to determine, but according to a U.S. Embassy report, it is most certainly in excess of \$50 million annually.

Within Afghanistan there are councils at the district and village levels and sometimes at the provincial level. These councils, loosely termed *shura* by the aid community, were often formed originally by commanders for the purpose of coordinating military operations and sometimes more recently in cooperation with PVOs wanting to initiate projects in the area. Among the tribalized Pashtun along the eastern border, *shuras* are based on a tradition of consultative bodies composed of influential and respected persons who resolve disputes and enforce obedience to behavioral codes. In general, experience with *shuras* has shown them to be fragile and ad hoc: people gather together to deal with a particular problem, and may adjourn just as easily. When a DAI expatriate was taken hostage, the *shura* which had been DAI's interlocutor in the area ceased to exist.

Although they differ from place to place depending upon ethnic and political alignments, *shuras* fill an advisory and mediative role as opposed to having decision making and executive powers. On the other hand, in some parts of the country, notably the northeastern provinces, a tiered system of regional and provincial *shuras* reaches down to the district and village levels. There *shura* committees handle reconstruction, education, health, law and order, etc., and fulfill many of the functions of government. While there are provincial *shuras* in some other areas, they are not as meaningful in the conduct of cross-border work as those at the district level.

Shuras play an important role in legitimizing and explaining the PVO presence and in helping PVO field staff understand the community. Also, they can take responsibility for difficult decisions regarding who benefits from projects implemented by a PVO and thus protect PVO field staff against charges of favoritism that could conceivably put their lives at risk.

¹ The PVO designation is used throughout this report even when the more comprehensive NGO designation might be more technically correct, especially in the case of Afghan organizations sponsored by political factions rather than by the private sector.

B. AID Strategy for Afghanistan

The establishment of an independent, nonaligned Afghanistan remains the overall U.S. foreign policy objective. Until there is an acceptable political and military settlement, AID involvement will remain a cross-border program relying heavily on PVOs. In addition to emergency food aid and other relief, emphasis will continue to be placed on restoring agricultural production and improving income opportunities and access to primary education and basic health services.

When there is a political settlement between factions of the resistance and the Kabul regime, and a transitional government has been established, AID will be able to have a limited but fulltime presence inside the country. Its program will focus on improving Afghanistan's ability to feed its population, reabsorbing the refugees who will be returning, and providing basic social services. Notable also in AID's strategy paper is the importance of further developing the information base needed for planning prioritized reconstruction and provision of services.

The final phase of the strategy envisages a fulltime USAID mission in Kabul charged with a program which serves as a catalyst for substantial reconstruction assistance funded by other donors. Since the new central government will undoubtedly be weak, particular reliance will need to be placed on the Afghan private sector to deliver agricultural inputs and provide essential services. Throughout the strategy period AID intends to focus on human resources development. A large portion of trained skilled and experienced technicians, professionals, and managers has been lost due to war, migration, attrition, and atrophy of skills.

Agriculture has traditionally been the foundation of the Afghan economy. After years of war and neglect, the agricultural infrastructure of the country has seriously deteriorated and necessary inputs and farm equipment are either unavailable or priced beyond the means of most farmers. Irrigation systems must be rehabilitated if there is to be increased production. Also, farm-to-market roads and bridges must be repaired to facilitate the delivery of inputs to farmers and the movement and sale of agricultural produce. Until agricultural production is restored, rural incomes will remain inadequate and Afghanistan's food security will be tenuous, particularly if there is a large-scale return of refugees. Food grain shortages will continue to occur primarily in urban areas and inaccessible wheat deficit areas.

Throughout the strategy period the Agricultural Sector Support project will have three major objectives: "improving private sector capacity to provide needed agricultural inputs; developing and planning technical and leadership training programs; and restoring technically and financially sustainable food production."

C. Evolution of USAID Cross-border Programs

In 1985, the U.S. government developed a strategy for providing cross-border humanitarian assistance from Pakistan to war-affected populations in Afghanistan. Major

components of this strategy were health, education, and cash-for-food activities implemented by selected European PVOs. Because a number of the European PVOs working with refugees and inside Afghanistan were unwilling to accept direct U.S. funding, the U.S.-based International Rescue Committee and the Americares Foundation agreed to act as intermediaries through which funds could be passed to selected PVOs. In 1986, this program was replaced by a five-year PVO Co-financing project administered by the office of the AID Representative for Afghanistan Affairs (AID/Rep) in Islamabad.² In a subsequent effort to move away from strictly cash relief grants, a Rural Assistance project was created and implemented by IRC. RAP was designed to encourage a gradual replacement of cash-for-food disbursements with activities to promote increased agricultural productivity and rural incomes in Afghanistan, and to facilitate the provision of food and other subsistence-related commodities to stabilized Afghan communities.

In 1986, USAID was funding the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen (IUAM) through the Agricultural Council, a policy-making body consisting of representatives from each of the seven political parties. USAID issued a grant to VITA to design a project to assist the agriculture sector. In June 1987, VITA's contract was amended by a cooperative agreement to support a three-year, \$6 million Agriculture Sector Support project. ASSP originally had two tracks, one pertaining to agricultural development and the other to the use of commercial channels for the sale of agricultural machinery and related inputs. Later, a rural works track was added and became the main feature of an Agricultural and Rural Rehabilitation project (ARR) under which VITA now operates.

In January 1989, AID authorized a grant of \$125,000 to CARE for the preparation of a food needs assessment for Afghanistan. The assessment became the basis for the design of a pilot food-for-work project in Kunar which led the next year to a cooperative agreement of \$1.3 million under the PVO Support project to expand food-for-work in Kunar and extend activities to Paktika province. The project focused on enhancing refugee return by involving villagers in the repair of roads, irrigation canals, and other agricultural infrastructure.

In June 1990, AID contracted with MCI to undertake activities to restore agricultural capacity in southwest Afghanistan. An earlier recipient of USAID funding for health activities in that area, MCI had branched out into a variety of agricultural rehabilitation activities. The cooperative agreement with AID provided \$850,000 in PVO Support project funding.

D. Organization of USAID Activities

The compartmentalized manner with which USAID's cross-border programs are handled is an outgrowth of the policy of exploiting "targets of opportunity" as they arose and as PVOs could take initiative. There has been little bureaucratic effort to consolidate and rationalize USAID funding channels and program oversight responsibilities.

² The acronym USAID or AID/Rep is used in this report, rather than the more correct O/AID/Rep.

ASSP is the responsibility of the Agricultural and Rural Development Office, which deals directly with MCI and VITA (as well as contractors handling the other components of the ASSP). CARE's activities under the PVO Support project fall within the purview of the Program Office because of PL 480 considerations. The project officers responsible for these three PVO contracts are based in Islamabad. However, RAP/IRC, which is also part of the PVO Support project, is under the authority of the Regional Affairs Office in Peshawar.

As conditions inside Afghanistan permit, USAID support should shift from the present fragmented efforts of PVOs responding to targets of opportunity to a more comprehensive, intersectoral approach. This shift will call for more coordination by USAID, not only of the rural reconstruction activities of VITA, CARE, and MCI but also of those of contractors in other sectors, particularly DAI in agriculture, Management Sciences for Health (MSH) in the health sector, and University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) in education. Beginning in November 1991 a project advisory committee including the chiefs of party from VITA, DAI, and MCI will convene every other month, which is a step in this direction.

SECTION II EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was done under less than ideal circumstances. Two members of the team were non-Americans, and could conceivably have visited one or two field sites just across the border, but this was out of the question. Because of the abduction of two Americans and other violations, there was a temporary ban in effect on all new cross-border activities, including the movements of expatriate personnel as well as commodities and cash. VITA had cut back sharply and CARE had pulled out entirely from inside Afghanistan. Afghan NGOs funded through IRC/RAP had also curtailed operations. Even if members of the evaluation team had been able to visit Afghanistan, there would have been little to see. Instead, the evaluation had to be done from a distance, relying largely on reports of PVO officials and monitors without being able to cross-check information in any depth. Moreover, the ban meant that the Peshawar offices of PVOs were not functioning normally. Work loads for many in field support positions had dropped off sharply. Training and other useful substitute activities only partially took up the slack.

Considerable attention is given in this report to the sociopolitical environment to provide an appreciation of realistic goals. The abnormal conditions encountered by the evaluation team in Peshawar underlined the importance of recognizing the constraints which prevent programs evolving in the manner anticipated and preclude any serious evaluation of program impact. Any rigorous analysis of programs in strict accordance with an ideal logical framework methodology, while more elegant, would be unrealistic in the environment within which PVOs currently operate.

This evaluation therefore focuses on the processes that have been developed to contend with abnormal conditions, to improve project implementation and outputs (i.e., irrigation and roads) under the circumstances as well as to improve monitoring (and eventually assessment of impact), and appropriate training of headquarters and field staff. The four subjects of analysis (VITA, CARE, MCI, and IRC) are treated in order, starting with VITA, in accordance with the emphasis given to VITA in the team's terms of reference. A comparative analysis then follows the common program features in order to reach some useful conclusions, particularly regarding VITA's activities, and recommendations for the future.

SECTION III VITA

A. Background

In 1986 USAID provided a grant to VITA to design a project to assist in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan's agriculture sector. The grant also authorized VITA to initiate steps towards project implementation. In April 1987, the Agricultural Sector Support project was approved with a value of project cost over three years of \$6 million.

Initially, the project purpose was twofold: (1) to provide resources to support increased agricultural production in selected areas of Afghanistan; and (2) to support the growth of institutional mechanisms to use resources provided under the project.

The ASSP envisaged: (1) a planning component to deal with the formulation of implementation policies, planning the use of project resources, monitoring, evaluation, and overall management; and (2) field activities divided into two (later three) subcomponents, or "tracks."

The project adopted a flexible strategy ("rolling design strategy") due to the uncertainties in the political, security, and economic environments inside Afghanistan, and was expected to make adjustments in activities as the situation required.

The project was designed to be implemented in two phases: phase I in the first year, during which target areas and their priority needs were to be identified and then supplied with appropriate equipment, supplies, and technical assistance; and phase II in the second and third years, during which, based on the experiences of the first year, activities were to be expanded to more areas within Afghanistan.

In mid-1987, VITA engaged Mir Mohammed Sediq Ashan, President of the Rural Development Department in Afghanistan before the war, as a consultant to advise on reconstruction of rural infrastructure. This led VITA to propose an amendment of the project to create a third "track." Thus, in addition to planning functions, field activities comprised:

- Track I: The Agricultural Council of the seven-party alliance would provide direction for an entity known as the Afghan Agricultural project (AAP), responsible for implementing activities within Afghanistan. VITA staff would provide technical assistance to the AAP. (For a number of reasons AAP never became functional.)
- Track II: Resources would be channeled through the private sector and PVOs having the ability to work in the agricultural sector of Afghanistan.

- **Track III: Sediq, independent of the Agricultural Council, would direct implementation of a cross-border rural works program involving the cleaning of *karezes* (underground canals) and other minor irrigation improvements, construction and repair of roads, and the creation of "area development schemes" (ADS) through which to provide fertilizer, seeds, oxen, and other inputs.**

An evaluation of the project in December 1988 was positive: remarkable achievements had been made in spite of war conditions and lack of proper security (which prevented monitoring the end-use of project resources and evaluation of impact). It was the only significant cross-border program in rural development having a strong Afghan character. The project had been less successful in developing a specific agricultural assistance program than it had in rehabilitating rural works. This was partly due to the time spent trying to work through the Agricultural Council. It was also due to the close working relations established, especially by Sediq, with the political leaders in Peshawar and, through them, with the commanders in the areas selected for operations. The evaluation also concluded that the project had developed a small but highly successful experimental activity in distributing agricultural equipment through private commercial channels.

The evaluation recommended that VITA should continue its successful rural rehabilitation work. However, since VITA was not really equipped to implement an expanded commercial channels program, it was also recommended that component be given to a new contractor having more experience in agribusiness. It was through that the ADS should be changed to Area Rehabilitation Schemes (ARS) to more accurately portray their actual functions.

In March 1990, USAID signed a cooperative agreement with VITA for implementation of the rural infrastructure activities under the ASSP. The new program was designated the Agriculture and Rural Rehabilitation component of the ASSP with a completion date of May 31, 1992. Development Alternatives Inc. was contracted to handle the agriculture and agribusiness components inherited from VITA. Total funding for the ARR was budgeted at \$11.8 million (\$8.9 million for program costs, \$2.3 for technical assistance, and \$600,000 for logistical support).

B. Objectives

VITA's current program under the ARR project comprises the following objectives:

- Rehabilitation of small irrigation systems according to an implementation plan for each ARS, and the assessment of the potential contribution of rehabilitated systems to food production, employment, and income.
- Building of new roads and rehabilitation of existing roads, including the necessary culverts, bridges and retaining walls in each ARS, in accordance with priorities based on local agricultural production and the economic importance of each road or bridge.

- Supported by a qualified American engineering firm, VITA would be in a position to undertake more complex rural rehabilitation activities. For this purpose Louis Berger International was selected and signed a contract with VITA in April 1991.
- Development of criteria for establishing ARS, namely, they will involve more productive areas (to which refugees will be returning) where there is community organization and local participation, reasonable security, accessibility, where other agencies are not already providing rehabilitation assistance, and where poppies are not grown.
- Implementation of a training plan based on a training needs assessment of managerial, administrative, and technical staff requirements, recognizing also the need for training in equipment operation and maintenance, and for informal, on-the-job training.
- Developing and implementing a system involving monitoring by ARS staff, anonymous monitors unknown to ARS staff, and technical monitoring teams.
- Proposing and subcontracting with an institution to assess the feasibility of establishing an independent "Afghan entity" capable of implementing rural infrastructure rehabilitation as well as attracting financial and other resources from other donors.

C. Organization and Staffing

1. Peshawar Headquarters

As chief of party, Sediq provides effective leadership. He has considerable experience in rural development and a keen sense of the realities of working under extraordinary conditions. His political sensitivity and good judgment are attested by the close working relations he has with different party factions and with commanders in the areas where VITA is working. He knows the party leaders in the AIG and serves as an adviser to at least one of them. He knows his staff, many of whom have worked with him before in Afghanistan. He has a comfortable, collegial management style, and knows how to motivate Afghans. He relies on periodic executive committee meetings to review issues of common concern and readily defers to staff members in areas in which they have responsibility.

Deputy Chief of Party Bob MacMakin and Financial Officer/Accountant Rus Wallace are Americans. MacMakin, who has many years of experience in Afghanistan and knows some Farsi, has established excellent working relations with Sediq. Aside from these key administrative positions (and a Pakistani accountant), all other positions are filled by Afghans. Sediq and Chief of the Rural Works Division Azim Bahrami are, in fact, Afghan-Americans. Nevertheless, the overall impression is that the project is run by Afghans who identify with its objectives and are proud of their work. Although remuneration with VITA is less than with the UN and other organizations, at least one or two of the engineers have turned down attractive job offers. One of them said that, if political conditions allowed, the

entire office could readily pack up and move to Kabul without any disruption in operations. In fact, individual decisions to return, at least for Sediq and probably others, would depend upon which party leaders end up in the new government.

The quality of the senior staff impressed the evaluation team. In the short time available, and limited to English, the team could not judge the overall capabilities and efficiency of the various offices and junior staff. Staff holding senior management positions are predominantly trained as professional engineers or agriculturalists. In some respects they are technically overqualified for the kind of engineering work VITA is doing. A few junior level staff hold bachelor degrees, although most have a level twelve education (which is no small achievement in the Afghan school system). The extent to which support staff have benefitted from on-the-job training is problematic, as described in the training section below.

When questioned on absorptive capacity, Sediq maintained that VITA staff was fully competent to handle a program half again as large as that which is presently managed. Headquarters and field staff have the requisite qualifications. The main deficiency he noted was the need to upgrade the capabilities of ARS monitors, particularly with respect to evaluating subproject impact. In making an assessment on this point, the relatively high turnover at both senior and junior levels is pertinent. Recruitment of replacements poses no real problem. VITA has a long list of applicants, including persons who can be hired from inside Afghanistan.

There are 365 staff, 178 working in Peshawar and 187 working inside Afghanistan. Some persons outside VITA commented that the Peshawar office is overstaffed. There were also charges of favoritism in hiring staff. In the Afghan context, however, it may be only prudent to take relationships and political ties into account in selecting staff. It could even be argued that using family and other criteria as a consideration in hiring staff is not an entirely negative phenomenon: exploiting traditional networks of rights and obligations can serve to promote efficient administration.

The temporary USAID suspension all new cross-border deliveries and movements, in effect since July 1991, curtailed the normal office activities of some departments. The ban was somewhat porous in that Afghans living across the border could go home, but engineers and technical monitors were not coming out. A sharp drop in the level of program implementation left desk officers and others in Peshawar sitting around with little to do. There was some training ongoing or planned to take advantage of the lull, but generally speaking, the time was not propitious for conveying an impression of dynamic activity. On the other hand, VITA staff had more time to give to the evaluation team because of the reduced level of activity.

The USAID suspension was enacted because of the abduction of two Americans inside Afghanistan, as well as the hijacking of vehicles and humanitarian supplies and other violations. According to USAID, it will not be lifted until both Americans are released. When it was imposed, the suspension was accepted by PVO chiefs of party and USAID team leaders. While justified as a security measure, the ban is having a negative impact on cross-border operations, as described later in this report. Some PVO officials felt that it should

have been applied more selectively to the districts or localities where the violations had occurred, and not in a general manner which disrupted all program activities.

In terms of total expenditures, VITA does not seem to be particularly top-heavy.¹ During the period of April 1990 through March 1991 program costs (labor, rented transport and equipment, office expenses) incurred in Afghanistan totalled \$1.6 million; program support costs (locally-hired Peshawar and field office salaries, training, monitoring, etc.) another \$1 million; while technical assistance (expatriate salaries, benefits, travel, home office, etc.) amounted to \$674,000.

2. Agricultural Rehabilitation Schemes

There are presently ARS in 16 of the 28 provinces of Afghanistan. The average number of staff in an ARS is 13, although the actual number can range from eight to 15. Each ARS is headed by a director (area development officer, or ADO) who ideally should have under him a deputy, two senior technicians, two junior technicians, a monitor, administrative clerk, mechanic, driver, and other support staff. Some ARS may be understaffed. The ADO from Kandahar said that inadequate staff (13), and vehicles (his only pickup was recently destroyed by a mine), were his main problems, given the vastness of the area he covers. With more vehicles on hand, technicians could be utilized more efficiently. One technician could cover two or three subprojects, presently impossible because of insufficient transport.

Many ADOs and their deputies have been with VITA since the beginning. Ten of them have engineering degrees; the others have a secondary level education or are graduates from surveying and technical schools. As important as formal education is, they also need a good understanding of local political relationships, a wide network of contacts, and good judgment. Without direct contact and command of the language, it is impossible to comment fairly on their overall quality. Negative criticism was heard, usually regarding favoritism in selection as already noted. Sediq admits that some field staff lack the confidence and flexibility needed to make adjustments to plans when situations change. One ADO was dismissed (reportedly because he was unable to prepare an implementation plan for his ARS); another was transferred to Peshawar because he became too involved in local politics and thus lost his effectiveness as a technician (according to Sediq).

Finding experienced and responsible technical personnel, particularly those who can also manage activities and direct other staff, was a limiting factor in the past. The policy was to staff an ARS with a mix of individuals from the immediate area and the province as a whole in order to represent different ethnic, tribal, and *tanzeem* interests. At the present time, some ADOs are not from the province to which they are assigned. If they have the confidence of the local commander and *shura*, they can perform effectively. Subordinate staff are identified in the district by the ADO and their employment approved by Peshawar

¹ For the sake of clarity, this report will refer simply to VITA activities, as distinct from those of CARE, MCI or other PVOs, even though to be exact they are ARR activities executed under contract by VITA.

headquarters. Because of the need to clear candidates with different local factions, it took the ADO in Herat six months to staff his new ARS.

Even without having been able to visit any ARS, the evaluation team accepts Sediq's contention that field staff are adequate to implement the program at the current or an expanded level. This impression is based partly on the observation that more subprojects have been designed (5,909) than have been sanctioned for implementation (4,069); in short, the field staff is geared up for a higher level of activity than is feasible under present funding limitations. Also, evidence from photographs and videos of the quality of work that has been done lends credence to the claim that a pool of talent has been trained for the type of rural rehabilitation that VITA does very well.

If ARS staff are to assume some responsibility for planning and coordinating rural rehabilitation with other sectoral interventions at the provincial level, they will need other capabilities: agricultural engineering, water management, and agricultural economics. The project implementation forms which they prepare show weakness in collecting data on sociodemographic conditions and farming systems. Monitoring changes in these conditions should be an important element of the program. Presently, neither Peshawar nor ARS staff have the necessary capability. One field monitor has an engineering degree, a few have teacher training or polytechnic educations, the rest secondary school diplomas with at least two years of Afghan government experience.

Peshawar headquarters keeps in fairly regular touch with senior ARS staff, logistic and security problems in cross-border travel notwithstanding. ADOs from the eastern border provinces come into Peshawar every month or two; from remote Takhar a visit to headquarters once a year is acceptable. (Those in the western provinces must exit through Iran and then enter Pakistan through Quetta.) Also, ADOs are called in periodically for a workshop and to finalize their implementation plans. Visits to the field by senior headquarters staff are very rare because of the time it takes to make security arrangements and the inconveniences and risks involved in travelling in Afghanistan. The chief of engineering services (Faruq) has only visited Kunar. The chief of field coordination (Imam) has never returned to Afghanistan since the war. However, Peshawar-based engineering and monitoring staff visit the ARS from time to time, carrying messages back and forth.

In view of the logistics involved, ADOs are given considerable operating flexibility in developing and implementing approved subprojects. Each ARS has an imprest account based on the size of the program and ease of replenishment. These accounts, which are used to cover all rehabilitation activities (including the wages of locally-hired ARS support staff) range from Rs 500,000 to Rs 2.5 million.² The higher figure applies, for example, to Takhar because of the difficulty the ADO faces in getting into Peshawar to replenish his account. Thus, Peshawar exercises control over field activities not only through the approval of subproject proposals, but also through the system of imprest accounts for which ADOs must produce receipts for program expenditures.

² Rs 25 = US\$ 1.00

These imprest funds have enabled ADOs to keep some activities going despite the USAID suspension of new cross-border expenditures and movements of USAID-provided equipment and materials. The level of activity, however, has significantly declined from a normal average of about 750 workers on subprojects to the current level of nearer 200 workers. When implementation expenses exceed the imprest advance, a local commander will usually cover the balance until the ADO can return to Peshawar to replenish his account. It is in everyone's interest to maintain some momentum of activity.³

When Soviet forces were still in Afghanistan, individual *mujahideen* commanders and political leaders in Peshawar asked for VITA assistance in a particular area and gave their assurances that the particular area was secure: that is, activities were based on "targets of opportunity." Under these conditions, ARS were established in particular subdistricts, which on average had a population of about 30,000.

This is no longer the case. Eighty percent of the country is liberated, more people know about VITA (and other PVOs working in the area), and the demand for subprojects has grown. A decision was made at the time of the first cooperative agreement (1990) to establish ARS on a provincial basis, one in each province as security conditions and ARR resources permitted. Sediq also believes that province-level deployment will facilitate eventual absorption into the government structure when it is established. In at least one instance, two district ARS were combined with resulting economies. The decision on where to expand was determined mainly by the number of petitions which VITA/Peshawar and ARS had received from other provinces. It was also based on established criteria agreed upon with USAID, namely, productive areas to which refugees will be returning, areas where *shuras* exist or can be established, where the people have demonstrated readiness to cooperate, where poppies are not grown, and where security can be reasonably assured. On this basis, expansion of ARR activities into six additional provinces was approved by USAID.

D. VITA Home-office Support

Senior staff in Peshawar report no particular problems with regard to backstopping from the VITA home office. There were difficulties in the past with the timely transfer of funds to the field office, creating temporary cash flow problems. Any delays now in receiving advances do not affect operations. But the financial officer points out that they could result in problems when activity builds up, hopefully next spring if the current ban is lifted and ARS come in all at once with a large number of receipts for replenishment.

More fundamental difficulties have arisen in the past due to conflicting perceptions of VITA on the part of USAID and VITA management. VITA's role as essentially a USAID contractor rather than a grantee imposed constraints that did not square easily with the PVO perception of having considerable autonomy. This issue will be discussed below in connection with VITA's future activities.

³ The purpose of the USAID ban is lost on the villages where project commitments have been made. An unintended effect in Kunar of stopping labor-intensive work may have been to free-up more men for fighting.

E. Communications and Logistics

Communications are largely handled through informal channels. VITA is working within a small community of educated Afghans who share a common purpose. They know each other from school days and from working together in the Afghan government before the war. They pass messages for each other and share information on what is happening inside Afghanistan, including project developments. Because of good connections with the *tanzeems*, VITA has access to the *mujahideen* radio. It also can make use of the radio assigned to UNDP's mine clearing operations.

VITA takes pride in the fact that none of its vehicles have been hijacked. Moreover, unlike other agencies, VITA does not pay tolls to *mujahideen* commanders when traveling through their areas. Armed with letters from the AIG security, the *tanzeem* or commander's representative in Peshawar and a VITA identification card, truck drivers have been able to pass through *mujahideen*-controlled areas without difficulty.

Funds are also transferred into Afghanistan via *mujahideen* channels. Pakistan rupees are deposited with a commander's representative in Peshawar and on that account the field office inside Afghanistan can obtain afghanis or rupees, depending on the location.

F. Implementation of ARR/VITA Subprojects

From discussions with VITA headquarters staff as well as with three ADOs interviewed in Peshawar and Quetta, it appears that ADOs take an active role in developing and implementing subprojects. The *shura*, particularly at the district level, serves an important consultative and liaison role. The ADO has contact with commanders and *shura* in the area and actively solicits subproject proposals. If a *shura* doesn't exist, he may go to the mosque and ask people to set one up. Members will usually include commanders in the area, respected elders, a *mullah*, an educated person—always males. The influential *tanzeems* in the area as well as the different tribes must be represented to avoid later difficulties. If there is a dispute between commanders, *tanzeems*, or *shura* over the choice of a road, for example, VITA will not consider the proposal. The *shura*, however informally constituted, should prioritize proposals received from different villages. In this capacity, it is sometimes referred to as a development *shura* as distinct from a military *shura* composed entirely of *mujahideen* commanders to coordinate operations. Ideally, a *shura* shouldn't be too large: five to seven members is best.

ARS staff work mainly through district-level *shura*, and not ordinarily with village *shura*. Both *shura* and individual commanders propose subprojects for VITA implementation. The *shura* confirms that there is village support in the form of labor (invariably paid by the subproject), locally-available materials, tools, and accommodations for VITA technicians when work is in progress. The ADO points out that VITA is not there forever: the people must maintain the road or irrigation structure after work is completed.

Proposals are written up on a particular form. In the case of an irrigation subproject, the form shows the village, number of *jeribs* irrigated, type of damage incurred, availability

of labor and skills, and so forth. An ARS technician then goes to the site and prepares a survey report with more technical details, including a profile of the terrain and the structure, the labor, materials, equipment and transport required, and the number of the beneficiaries. This information is reviewed by the Field Coordination Office in Peshawar and then, in cooperation with the ADOs, consolidated in the ARS implementation plan. The number of subproject proposals which reach this stage significantly exceed the number that are implemented.

The community most directly affected will provide some inputs at the feasibility stage, such as basic information about the number of families and agricultural systems or assisting pacing off as part of a technical survey. A member of the *shura* is present when workers are paid. Otherwise, technical planning, subproject implementation, and keeping of records is handled by ARS staff, and *shura* participation in implementation is limited. *Shuras* receive no special training from ARS staff.

A shift away from *karez*s has occurred in the last year or two. *Karez*-cleaning made sense in the beginning since the need was widespread, labor-intensive, and called for limited technical support and only cash from VITA to pay laborers and obtain some simple equipment. *Karez*-cleaning required no critical technical interventions; monitoring was difficult, and as technicians rarely went into the underground tunnels, they had no technical control.

Karez-cleaning offered a means to respond rapidly to perceived needs in scattered localities under different commanders without spending time on feasibility studies. The evaluation team occasionally heard that poorly surveyed subprojects sometimes resulted in committing insufficient funds. Other criticisms were that VITA expects the beneficiaries to contribute to the cost (voluntary labor) even though most of them are too poor to do so, and the project may then be aborted before it is properly finished. VITA policy requires that the beneficiaries cover roughly 25-30 percent of the cost because it is in their self-interest to have the system functioning. VITA's share, which in the case of *karez* cleaning is never more than Rs 17,500, is paid out in three installments: in advance; after work is one-third completed; and after completion. There were cases in the past of work stopping when it was found that a *karez* would never produce water. Now, however, only "wet" *karez*s, where water flows cleaning can be assured, are cleaned.

In the case of roads, VITA pays labor Rs 35 a day, which is about three-quarters of the going wage rate. Thus, a quarter of labor costs can be considered a local contribution.

As VITA built up staff capability and was equipped to undertake more technical work, there was a shift of emphasis, with USAID's urging, to surface irrigation, requiring siphons, retaining walls, and other structures, and to rehabilitation of roads, bridges, and culverts. While there is a backlog of *karez* subprojects to implement this year, no new *karez*-cleaning activities have been approved. On the other hand, rural road and culvert rehabilitation have increased significantly.

A sustainable base of local participation is needed for the maintenance of completed subprojects. In some places, PVOs have worked with *karez*-owner associations, which function as a *shura* of sorts. The members of the association have a very direct interest in the project. Because of traditional practices of allocating water and contributing labor, maintaining *karezes* and irrigation channels which VITA has helped to rehabilitate is perhaps not a problem. But there was no evidence available to the evaluation team of the formation of water users' associations upon completion of irrigation improvements. This type of local participation needs to be systematically observed and noted. The maintenance of an improved road is a more serious problem since each village feels responsible only for a particular section and may not voluntarily undertake to do timely maintenance.

G. Physical Outputs

Status of Infrastructure Activities (cumulative to 9/18/91)

Type	Requests	Designed	Approved	Ongoing	Completed
<i>Karezes</i>	18686	4292	3035	350	2565
Canals etc	20098	1440	942	141	514
Potable water	926	1	1	0	1
New roads	660	37	12	6	6
Rehab roads	2365	65	39	14	7
Motor bridges	7261	46	24	2	6
Foot bridges	50	28	16	8	4

For the 1990/91 period, a total of 2,505 irrigation projects (including *karezes*, *juis*, flumes, dams, intakes, retaining walls, sluice gates, Irish bridges, and irrigation wells) and 51 roads, bridges, and culverts were included in the implementation plan. A total of 1,617, or 64 percent, of the irrigation subprojects were completed and there were 987 under construction. Fourteen of the roads and bridges, or 27 percent of the total, were completed, the remainder either under construction or carried over to the 1991/1992 plan.

The evacuation of U.S. nationals, including some VITA senior staff, during the Gulf war interrupted certain activities. Nevertheless, the above figures are perhaps more indicative of implementation than subsequent figures for the 1991/92 period because of the suspension of cross-border movements of equipment and supplies which went into effect during the second half of 1991.

VITA reports also include the number of requests received grouped by type of subproject. The number of subproject requests actually surveyed in the field in anticipation of implementation is, however, but a small percentage of the total. More meaningful, therefore, is the number completed as a percentage of those subprojects which were surveyed and approved, namely: 84 percent of approved *karez* subprojects; 55 percent of other

irrigation works; 25 percent of new and improved roads; and 25 percent of motorable and foot bridges.

Quantitative achievements are included in VITA's quarterly progress reports. These summaries are backed up by design sketches, surveying layouts, and quantity take-offs as normally required in the construction industry. The level of detail is adequate for the nature of the structures. The flow of information between Peshawar and ARS related to topography, technical issues, material procurement and the like indicates reasonably close technical and managerial control. Particularly valuable, given restrictions on travel to job sites, were the many photographs and videotapes the evaluation team saw.

1. Technical Implementation

The ARS engineer or technician conducts the preliminary survey of the requested subproject, providing a rough plan and profile of the structure. The proposed subprojects are then discussed in a meeting in Peshawar where the implementation plan is developed. Once a subproject is approved, it goes through the process of civil design, quantity take-offs, and cost estimates. After this stage is completed by VITA's engineering services, the subproject is turned over to field coordination for implementation.

In most cases, technical implementation rests with the ARS staff which handles, in cooperation with the village *shura*, the recruitment of labor and procurement of locally-available materials. In the case of more complex subprojects requiring cement, reinforcement steel, gabion wire, etc., materials are purchased in Peshawar or Quetta and trucked into Afghanistan. Explosives and blasting materials for road improvements are supplied by *mujahideen* groups in the area.

Wages differ depending upon the province and availability of labor. Daily rates range from 1,000 to 2,500 Afg (equivalent to approximately Rs 25 to Rs 60, or \$1 to \$2.50). In the eastern border areas closest to Pakistan, where there has been considerable depopulation, labor costs are higher than in the interior of the country. Masons, *karez* cleaners, and other skilled labor are generally paid twice as much as unskilled workers.

2. Quality of Work

Subprojects range from cleaning *karezes* and irrigation channels entirely with handtools, to small culverts and take-off structures requiring reinforcement, and, at a more sophisticated level, gravel roads and suspension bridges (up to 35 meters in length).

It would appear from the documentation that VITA is conscientious regarding the quality of its work. One senses a close connection between the senior engineering and implementation staffs in Peshawar and ARS operations inside Afghanistan. Through technical meetings and site visits, senior VITA staff have maintained hands-on control despite the logistical difficulties.

3. Problem of Measuring Cost-effectiveness

An effort was made to calculate the cost-effectiveness of different types of subprojects implemented by VITA. But this was not possible because of the range of local conditions and external variables encountered. Consequently, there are no traffic counts or measurements of water flows in canals before and after a subproject is completed. VITA status reports only estimate the number of beneficiaries for completed subprojects on the basis of the average number of beneficiaries per *karez* or *juis* or kilometer of road. It may be for this reason that VITA's reporting on activities is in terms of the number of subprojects surveyed, approved, and completed. Accounting of actual expenditures (as distinct from planned expenditures contained in annual implementation plans) is grouped by ARS. Procurement is done mainly in the field but also in Peshawar, and field salary costs are in the project support budget. To analyze these figures vis-à-vis types of projects implemented, say, in a couple of provinces over a particular period, would have required more time than the evaluation team had at its disposal.

It is helpful to note, however, that for planning purposes VITA calculates \$10,000 per kilometer for repair and widening a road in mountainous terrain, \$8,000 per kilometer for the same work in hilly or rolling terrain, and \$6,000 per kilometer in flat lands. The average cost of cleaning a *karez* is estimated to be \$750 (Rs 18,000) although *karezes* can vary widely in length, from 200 meters to two kilometers. To clean up a canal requires from Rs 6,000 to Rs 25,000 per kilometer depending upon length, topography, materials needed, and other factors.

VITA should prepare a detailed construction program based on Consolidated Annual Implementation Plan (CAIP) targets, at least with respect to roads, bridges, and larger irrigation structures. The program should be periodically adjusted as conditions change and implementation problems arise. Thus, progress in program implementation can be followed more easily, while also plotting expenditures to show if the program is staying within budget.

H. Monitoring Project Activities

VITA's monitoring system, designed to provide feedback to ARS and Peshawar managers, operates at three levels:

(1) Level one monitoring makes use of ARS field monitors who, according to the job description on file, are expected to visit assigned subproject sites and compile and assess information based on prepared monitoring forms. Provided with cameras, they record subproject status and accomplishments. No particular attention is given to data collection nor to information which is needed to determine whether subproject objectives are being achieved.

(2) Level two monitoring checks on the quality at level one, using 13 additional monitors unknown to ARS staff. They are supposed to cover all nearby and 75 percent of the more remote subprojects. They determine the extent of field staff acceptance at subproject sites and the responses of beneficiary communities. Through such casual, indirect

contact, information on progress, quality of work, and impact on recipients is obtained. These monitors report directly to Sediq. Their assignments are alternated among provinces to ensure anonymity.

(3) Level three monitoring is done by a team of three technical staff from Peshawar headquarters. Their visits to project sites are randomly scheduled to cover at least 25 percent of all subprojects implemented. Their reports are used in workshops to discuss projects, modify designs, and improve construction specifications.

In addition to these three levels of regular monitoring, VITA management obtains informal feedback on the implementation of subprojects from local commanders and community leaders, either directly if they pass through Peshawar, or indirectly through others. Also UN staff or staff from other PVOs are sometimes requested to check on particular subprojects if they are going to be in the area.

With respect to technical monitoring (type three above), problems seem to be addressed in a timely fashion and dealt with in sufficient detail. Monitoring reports were found to be technically satisfactory and informative. In addition to basic information on the subproject, reports provide details on implementation, status of completion, number of workers and wages paid, materials and equipment at the site, impact, community participation, and problems encountered and resolved. The monitor also rates the quality of ARS performance with respect to design and implementation. At present, seven civil engineers based in Peshawar are assigned to this monitoring task.

Level one monitoring is important for entering data into the prepared monitoring form. With this information the chief of the monitoring and evaluation division compiles the data for inclusion in the report prepared for USAID. Information from the other monitoring levels is not included, and because of this and other weaknesses in collecting and analyzing the data, an overall description of project implementation during the particular period is difficult to obtain.

I. Training Activities

VITA's training activities, which began in 1988, are mostly in-service or on-the-job, ranging from two-day seminars and workshops to a four-month program in agricultural extension. The objective of training is to provide refresher technical and administrative knowledge "to upgrade capability" or skills in specific tasks, such as completing forms or work planning, to meet specific job requirements.

At first, training was handled entirely by VITA's senior staff. By 1990, VITA began to use the resources of Peshawar University and IRC and, for the training of tractor operators and mechanics, a private company in Lahore. Once freed of some of their training duties, senior staff were able to benefit from short-term training provided by USDA in the United States. In July 1991, the University of Wyoming sent a team of four to conduct a six-week engineering refresher course for 15 VITA technical staff in Peshawar and six engineers from other organizations.

Classes run by VITA staff in agricultural extension, English language, and in operations and maintenance were unmanageably large and consequently ineffective. (Out of the 80 trainees initially enrolled in an English language course, only seven graduated.) Technical courses specifically restricted to engineers or ARS officers were more useful. In some cases, staff of other PVOs were allowed to participate. Training was imparted mainly through lectures and field visits (e.g., to an agricultural research station or soils laboratory), but with little practical work. Quizzes and a final examination (which are not in keeping with the principles of nonformal education) were applied.

To assess the effectiveness of VITA's training activities, it is appropriate to deal with each of the following elements:

1. Training Needs Assessment

VITA carried out a training needs assessment in accordance with the cooperative agreement. The assessment served to identify subject matter training needs, but it didn't establish a coherent training philosophy or framework within which to base a training plan involving a participatory, team approach. On the basis of this assessment, VITA prepared a training schedule listing courses, their duration, and the number of trainees.

2. Training Objectives

Purpose-level objectives have not been formulated in such a way as to define specific skills required for specific tasks. The outputs of the training program fail to differentiate between the objective of nonformal acquisition of skills and that of formal education to acquire new knowledge. This deficiency is reflected in the program's methodology, particularly lengthy lecture sessions "to update knowledge in technical areas."

3. Trainee Numbers and Composition

The number of trainees in each course is usually small enough to enable trainers to provide individualized attention. The courses are homogeneous in composition, that is, all engineers, all technicians, all ARS staff. Skills acquired are not always transferred to job situations because in general the trainee's immediate supervisor and management are not sufficiently familiar with the nature of training, and hence are unable to respond with the support needed to sustain new enthusiasm and initiative. The trainee becomes frustrated and reverts to his old ways, thus negating the value of training. It would be better for trainees and their immediate supervisors to train together as teams, and for managers to be better informed of the nature of the particular training program. Most pervasive of all, however, is the unsettled environment within which VITA field staff work, making it difficult to apply the skills acquired from a training program which is structured as though conditions were normal.

4. Trainer Qualifications

From 1988 until 1990, the trainers were mainly senior staff who, while technically competent, were not knowledgeable in areas such as the principles of adult learning, training program design, training plan preparation, methods and approaches, curriculum development, and monitoring and evaluation of training. More recently, VITA's training program has made use of expatriates. But a university lecturer with a doctorate is not necessarily an effective trainer. Moreover, VITA senior staff are not able to monitor and evaluate their own performance as trainers. Nevertheless, it appears from interviews with VITA staff that the training of engineers was straightforward and practical.

5. Training Methodology

As already noted, the delivery of training sessions is primarily based on lectures combined with field trips. Trainees are not given adequate orientation on what to observe systematically during those trips.

6. Curriculum and Materials

The few curricula and materials available on file in VITA's training office are prepared in a notional, descriptive form rather than in a procedure-based, step-by-step modular form. Materials are not supported by concise, practical, Afghan-specific handouts and case studies, which trainees can review during the course or refer to later upon return to their regular jobs. An innovative training method was noted, however, in the presentation of special topics, such as bubble irrigation and apricot drying techniques.

7. Budget

If an annual training plan is well-conceived and justified, then it should deserve more financial support than training now receives.

8. Training Support

Apart from a few technical books provided by the University of Wyoming and some curriculum materials, the training office is equipped with a photocopying machine and an overhead slide projector. Two classrooms are available for training; otherwise, resources are inadequate. It would be desirable if there were an artist who could prepare charts and graphs.

Monitoring and evaluation: In-house trainers have not been trained in monitoring and evaluation. Except in the case of USDA, trainers were not instructed in the preparation of individual or group action plans which could then serve as a basis for assessing training effectiveness. In the case of the University of Wyoming, trainees did prepare individual action plans, and a post-training evaluation was carried out. But neither USDA nor Wyoming have yet followed up on these action plans. Lack of training in monitoring and

evaluation also explains why there has been no internal evaluation of VITA's training activities.

9. Technical Training

Technical training caters to the different needs of engineers, senior and junior technicians, and equipment operators. Courses have been arranged in civil engineering for Peshawar and ARS staff to upgrade qualifications in technical monitoring and solving practical implementation problems. Courses in construction include such practical subjects as working with gabions, road alignments and surveying; also, courses in the operation and maintenance of tractors, backhoes, front-end loaders and other equipment. Masons, carpenters, explosive handlers, and other skilled workers receive on-the-job training, since there are subprojects, for example, where workers do not know how to mix mortar, prepare concrete, or cut and bend reinforcing steel. VITA should be commended for the effort it has devoted to these various technical training programs.

10. Some General Observations

Technical courses have been delivered effectively and did have some positive value for the trainees, particularly ARS officers and monitors. Trainees especially profited from courses delivered in Urdu or Dari, even by an expatriate sufficiently proficient in one of these languages. Since availability of trainees has not been a problem, courses are given during the slack winter months when work in Afghanistan comes to a halt.

The impression from interviews is that overseas training has not been very effective. Alumni could identify specific topics they found relevant to their work, but they felt that the training program would have been more useful if there had been more Afghan-specific case studies and training materials.

J. Impact and Sustainability

A plan to measure subproject impact must be built into project design. Basic data must be collected at the time of the initial feasibility study and subsequent project design. Linking this data with information collected during implementation and after completion enables determination of project impact.

That VITA has made provisions to identify subproject impacts is evident in their implementation and monitoring forms. Yet staff are not able to design these forms in accordance with data collection methods and techniques, nor to analyze the data that are produced. There is no provision in the subproject design to follow up on completion, measuring the impact on the local population, agricultural output, farming system, commercial activity, etc.

If AID's logical framework analysis were the basis of subproject design, then end-of-project status would be established at the purpose-level. VITA's responsibility is in the delivery of outputs—*karezes*, kilometers of roads and bridges, small-scale irrigation

systems—which provide quantitative indications that the purpose-level objective has been achieved. The impact of a subproject can only be measured six months or a year after completion.

Certain constraints prevented the evaluation team from attempting to determine impact: (1) the fact that the team was unable to see projects on the ground; (2) lack of quantitative indicators in subproject design enabling VITA staff to follow up on impacts; (3) weaknesses in the formulation of engineering surveys and monitoring forms; and (4) weakness in staff capabilities with regard to survey design, data collection methodology, and analysis.

Nevertheless, interviews indicate that there is some general evidence—which must be taken on faith—that subprojects are having an impact:

- There is evidence in some areas of increased yields, especially of wheat which is being marketed in limited quantities. Rehabilitation of *karez*s and canals has brought about increased flow of water to a larger command area.
- Improved roads have reduced transport costs with a concomitant reduction in the prices of commodities. Surplus farm produce is being marketed to neighboring provinces from Kunar for example which has been seriously depopulated. Also, temporary wage labor is coming in from refugee camps, the first stage in eventual refugee repatriation.
- *Karez*s that are cleaned and repaired alleviate water shortages. This eases the burden on village women who are the water collectors and carriers. Perhaps hygienic conditions have also improved.
- Employment on rehabilitation projects, averaging about 750 workers at any one time in the case of VITA subprojects, provides critical sustenance for families. The average estimated family size is seven, which means that some 5,000 people directly benefit in those areas where subprojects are being implemented.

K. Coordination with Other Contractors and PVOs

Coordination is of a generally ad hoc nature: informal sharing of information with DAI; arrangements with MCI to provide gabions and some engineering assistance in the rehabilitation of the lower Helmand valley; a joint irrigation project in Kunar with CARE providing wheat rations and VITA handling technical supervision; a decision not to work in Badakhshan because Afghanaid is working there; arrangements to extend VITA's engineer and technician training to the Danish organization Dacaar.

Formerly there were monthly meetings of the chiefs of party working under USAID agreements. In its implementation plan VITA requested such regular meetings, but the last meeting chaired by USAID was in August 1991, mainly to discuss security. Starting in November 1991, USAID every two months will convene an advisory committee comprised

of chiefs of party of ARR (VITA), DAI, MCI, ACLU, and the Swedish Committee for the purpose of facilitating planning and avoiding duplication of effort.

Sediq or other VITA senior staff attend some meetings of PVOs organized by ACBAR, but to attend all of them, including those of ACBAR regional and agricultural subcommittees, would impose too great a demand on staff time.

L. The Immediate Future

Under its cooperative agreement, VITA was supposed to seek outside assistance to assess the feasibility of establishing an independent Afghan entity. USAID feels that VITA has dragged its feet in taking this action so as not to work itself out of a job. From VITA's point of view, it has been put on a short leash regarding its future. Its current agreement runs out in May 1992, but VITA has been asked by USAID to program activities through December 1992 "assuming present level of funding," after which no assumptions can be made that ARR/VITA will remain in business. Leaving aside the difficulties of budgeting under such conditions, uncertainties regarding the future of the program will inevitably have a demoralizing effect. It would be most unfortunate, with planning on hold and staff on notice, for VITA to begin losing momentum during a critical transition period in Afghanistan's future. If the efficacy of what VITA is doing were questioned, closing down activities could be accepted. But to the contrary, VITA runs a very effective cross-border program which should be kept going. The conclusion of this report will include the evaluation team's suggestion for how this might be done.

The contract with Louis Berger International signed in April 1991 is designed to provide VITA with "specialized and complex engineering services which exceed in-house capacities." In the meantime, LBI will be sending two (non-American) engineers for technical monitoring purposes after the current travel ban is lifted. Their observations should be most helpful to VITA and USAID. However, the evaluation team has reservations, to be discussed in the conclusion of this report, regarding the extent of VITA's involvement in more complex operations. As already noted, VITA's engineering staff capabilities may, in fact, be underutilized. More importantly, a clearer picture of VITA's role and functions during the transition period in Afghanistan's rehabilitation is needed before calling on LBI-level specialized services.

The task of the MIT group assigned the Afghan entity study was to design a strategy for evolving the VITA program into an entity "capable of broadening its funding base and expanding its impact on rural infrastructure." Until a new government is established in Afghanistan, the proposed entity must be able to function independent of any central authority either as a nonprofit PVO which could compete for contracts from donors, or as a commercial venture, or as an endowed foundation with independent core resources.

MIT has recommended decoupling ARR/VITA from VITA and registering it in the United States as a nonprofit, Afghan-run organization with its own board of directors and Afghan CEO. The new organization can then sign a new agreement with USAID to continue what VITA has been doing. Or, preferably, it can compete for grants and contracts from

other donors and undertake joint projects with other NGOs, providing construction, engineering, training and perhaps other services, thus reducing its dependence on USAID. The nature of its field operations will of course have to change as donors introduce new criteria and priorities into the selection of projects. They may, for example, require that projects be part of a larger integrated scheme for rural reconstruction.

The need for legal standing in the United States as an independent entity, not as an Afghan affiliate of VITA or with interlocking boards of directors, requires some elaboration. This is so especially since the study recommends that the board of the new entity should contain both Afghans and non-Afghans, that many of the existing features of VITA's cooperative agreement should be retained along with core funding from USAID, in order to maintain the existing (VITA) administrative structure and enable the entity to compete for contracts with other donors. The evaluation team questions whether the recommended changes do, in fact, create an entity which is substantially different from what now exists since ARR/VITA is already a predominantly Afghan institution.

SECTION IV CARE

A. Background

CARE sent a team to Pakistan in the summer of 1988 to assess the situation Afghan refugees would face upon their eventual repatriation and to determine how CARE could best provide assistance. The team's report cited food-for-work as a critical need. CARE received grant funding from AID/Washington to conduct a food needs assessment and to design a program response. The assessment, by region, calculated probable food and cash needs and identified those provinces which, by virtue of their productive capability, size of their refugee population, and probability for a high level of early repatriation, would be most in need of assistance. Kunar and Paktika were at the time the most liberated of the provinces adjacent to Pakistan and the most susceptible to rapid repatriation. Over two-thirds of their populations lived in refugee camps right across the border.

On this basis, CARE designed an eight-month pilot project for 30,000 persons in Kunar under a subgrant through IRC's Rural Assistance project. The project was called the Afghan Village Assistance Program (AVAP). AVAP had two components: a food security program involving a one-time distribution of hand tools and periodic provision of food to assist refugee resettlement; and a cash/food for work program for the reconstruction of "community assets" in preparation for returning refugees while at the same time providing labor and a source of income for those who had already returned.

A recent evaluation of this pilot project focused on impact in terms of refugee resettlement. It was estimated that 40 percent of the food security beneficiaries had reestablished their residences, and that some 30 percent were engaged in subsistence-level agricultural production. (Many of the workers on reconstruction projects, however, were brought in from refugee camps in Pakistan and did not remain once work was finished.) These quantitative measures were not always conclusive. However, there were qualitative indications, such as the repair of mosques and water mills in the area, which confirmed that communities were being reestablished and resettlement was taking place. Other anecdotal evidence: One village in Kunar has grown from only seven families two years ago when CARE began activities in the area to 190; another village has grown from 38 to 150 families in the same time period. CARE claims that 30 percent of the refugees from Kunar have returned (although current fighting between *mujahideen* may be reversing the trend), and UNHCR estimates of refugee returns are considerably less.

In mid-1990 USAID provided CARE with \$1.3 million for one year under the PVO Support project to expand its activities within Kunar and initiate operations in Paktika. As with the pilot activity, the follow-on project was designed to provide food security as well as support reconstruction activities which respond to the needs of returning refugees, such as repair of village roads and irrigation systems, clearing of fields and terracing, removal of

land mines, and reconstruction of homes. In June 1991 USAID obligated an additional \$1.4 million to extend CARE's activities for another year.

B. Objectives

The overall goals of AVAP are: (1) participating villages will reconstruct 50 percent of the community infrastructure; and (2) fifty percent of program participants will have reconstructed their homes and farm infrastructure within the program period. These goals are based on the assumption that villages will recover sufficiently to maintain a sufficient labor force to undertake reconstruction work and organize themselves in *shuras* to deal with this task.

In designing the program CARE gave particular attention to establishing quantifiable indicators that these goals and intermediate objectives were being achieved. The recent evaluation of the pilot phase, as discussed below, was an effort to measure impact in terms of these indicators. CARE is now in the process of preparing another impact analysis.

C. Organization and Staffing

Twenty-eight staff are based in Peshawar, 37 are assigned to Kunar, and 43 to Paktika (compared with VITA's staff of 178 in Peshawar and 187 in the field). The Peshawar office is staffed with an American program manager (Bill Huth); an Afghan assistant program manager (Asif Rahimi) who oversees the two field offices and also does monitoring; an assistant program manager for finance and monitoring (John Stiles, of British nationality); and a chief procurement officer (Rahimullah). In addition to Huth and Stiles, there are eight Pakistanis (mainly drivers and watchmen) in the Peshawar office. The rest are Afghans.

Two more key Peshawar-based positions are planned: an engineering coordinator and a training officer. Presently, CARE is informally advised by an expatriate professional engineer having extensive irrigation engineering experience in Asia. Until the training officer position is filled, in-house training on CARE's office and administrative procedures as well as technical training is being handled mainly by CARE staff members. Training assistance has also been provided by IRC and VITA.

Presently about ten Peshawar staff are professionals. It would appear from the personnel roster that some 13-15 of the staff in each provincial office are in technical and supervisory positions. The two provincial offices are each headed by a program administrator (often referred to as "project engineer" or "project manager"). Under him is a field coordinator, also a graduate engineer, who is assisted by ten site supervisors having technical school educations. Two supervisors are assigned to an area, one for each five villages. The extent to which this hierarchical structure and assignment of staff does, in fact, operate on the ground could not be determined.

Provincial offices have a great deal of autonomy. Field staff have considerable latitude in planning, implementing, and approving subprojects. No fixed money ceiling is

placed on their approval authority. Design of structures, costing and material estimates are done largely in the field, except in the case of more complex undertakings, and only checked, rather than approved, by the Peshawar "monitoring engineers." In this respect, CARE runs a decentralized operation.

On the other hand, CARE's operations are restricted to two provinces that are right up against the Pakistan border. Field offices serving Kunar and Paktika have been set up in Asadabad and Urgan, respectively. The program is characterized by Huth as one of "establishing a beachhead" which is readily accessible and where the potential for refugee repatriation is greatest, and gradually spreading out from there. All materials and heavy equipment needed on a particular job are trucked over from Pakistan. Only food commodities, handtools for labor-intensive activities, and a few vehicles are kept at the provincial offices. Inventories and money inside Afghanistan are kept to a minimum. The program administrator in each province has an imprest advance of only Rs 100,000 (compared with Rs 500,000 to as much as Rs 2.5 million in VITA's case) for transport, loading and unloading costs, office expenses, and the like. Money to pay workers on subprojects is not sent into Afghanistan; instead the foreman on the job draws the funds (up to a limit of Rs 20,000) from a bank in Pakistan. Food and other commodities are transported commercially, not by CARE vehicles. In these respects, CARE runs a lean operation.

At the time of the evaluation team's visit, the suspension of all new cross-border deliveries and personnel movements was in effect. When remaining food stocks were used up, CARE shut down. Cross-border staff were pulled back to Peshawar. Some large debts in the food security program had to be left unpaid.

D. Home-office Support

There appears to be little need for home-office backstopping. Unlike the situation with VITA, replenishment of the CARE program budget is handled directly through AID/Islamabad and AID's Bangkok banking facility. CARE/New York is out of the loop. There was one serious delay in replenishing CARE/Peshawar's second call-forward, in which instance Huth said that CARE had to borrow money from a USAID contractor, but he expects that this will not be a continuing problem. It is noted here only to show that, however tight the procedure, such problems are probably unavoidable.

The Peshawar office calls occasionally on services from its technical support office in Bangkok to carry out a training needs assessment, for example, or to prepare a concept paper on adding an agricultural and natural resources component to the program.

E. Implementation Strategy

Project villages are selected on the basis of two key criteria: (1) they are in the process of resettlement; and (2) they are unable to satisfy their food requirements without diverting critical resources from reconstruction. To ascertain if these criteria are met, CARE

staff (initially together with RAFA, Reconstruction Authority for Afghanistan) survey the areas identified by the provincial *shura* before making any selection of villages in which subprojects can be initiated.

The range of subproject activities should reflect village priorities and engage village participation. Returning refugees often listed home construction and clearing and terracing of fields as top priorities. Now most subprojects in both provinces relate to irrigation. Eight road projects have been completed in Kunar and one in Paktika.

The manpower requirements and wage rates are such as to allow each household to earn a significant portion of its annual food requirement but not so high as to divert labor from other agricultural pursuits, discourage local production, or depress market prices. Food rations and daily wage rates have been set according to calculations of family size, annual caloric requirements, market value of wheat, and other factors. In Kunar, payments to workers were at first entirely in food, but as market conditions changed (when *mujahideen*, believing that food was being diverted by merchants to Kabul, closed the main road and food backed up in the market), wages were paid increasingly in cash. They are now 100 percent in cash. Should large numbers of refugees return, it may be appropriate to revert to a wheat ration.

CARE has been criticized in the past for providing an overly generous daily ration (16 kg) on food-for-work projects. WFP believes that one *seer* (7 kg) of wheat is adequate, at least in the interior regions. Of course, labor is scarcer and wages higher in the border areas where CARE operates. The emphasis on resettlement of refugees may also justify the more generous ration as an incentive to return.

Villages should participate in selecting subprojects, in providing labor and locally-available materials, in storing, distributing, and accounting for subproject materials. CARE provides handtools, cement, gabion wire and other construction inputs, as well as technical supervision. The villagers are supposed to keep records of who worked, for how long and how much each was paid. In this connection, CARE feels that it has a training responsibility in simple recordkeeping and bookkeeping.

F. Interaction with *Shura*

In the beginning CARE worked through the Reconstruction Authority For Afghanistan, which was part of the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahideen. Soon afterwards, with AID encouragement and overhead funding, RAFA became a PVO and lost its official status. CARE has since worked directly through the provincial *shura* in Kunar and the Urgan *shura* which covers the eastern half of Paktika. Formal agreements between these *shura* and CARE establish the conditions under which the program will operate: the number of villages (contingent upon CARE's survey), criteria for selection, range of program activities, calculation of wage rates in commodities (or equivalent value in cash), and provision of handtools and other equipment.

The Kunar provincial *shura* is a formally-constituted body of some 20 members representing the different tribal and political factions. The Urgan *shura* in Paktika is somewhat less organized. As spelled out in the Kunar agreement, the role of the provincial *shura* is to help identify the villages, assure the safety of CARE personnel, help arrange housing, warehousing, and commodity transport. The role of "valley *shuras*" (representing a number of villages) and, in turn, village *shuras* (some of which may have yet to be formed) is to identify priority subprojects, liaise with local commanders and *tanzeem* leaders, handle storage, distribution, and accounting for commodities, select worker representatives and group leaders, maintain attendance records, arbitrate labor and land disputes, and provide space near the site to accommodate technicians, masons, and other skilled personnel working on the subproject.

The Urgan *shura* chose areas for CARE where other PVOs were not working. In 1990, 12 of the 21 PVOs, USAID contractors, and other agencies operating in Paktika worked through the Urgan *shura*, with seemingly little awareness of each other's activities and *modus operandi*. One agency even paid Rs 8,000 a month to the *shura* on the understanding that this was to cover expenses relating to meetings, food, security, etc.

Covered by this agreement with the provincial *shura*, CARE staff decides, on the basis of a reconnaissance survey of the designated area and contact with local commanders and such village *shuras* as may exist, which subprojects will be implemented. As noted earlier, the program strategy adopted by CARE limits activities to certain villages having resettlement potential. By limiting its scope in this way, CARE keeps commitments within annual budget allocations. The field office develops an annual packet of activities to be implemented, and technical surveys are not done until implementation can be assured. The technical survey is carried out by a CARE field engineer (site supervisor). Subproject design, labor and materials, and cost estimates can then be determined. Thus, unlike VITA, the number of subproject requests is kept in check and the possibility of raising expectations unduly and provoking a backlash is avoided.

Recent difficulties in Kunar demonstrate how easy it is for an organization like CARE, which has a reputation among PVOs as working by the book, to get trapped in the midst of *mujahideen* rivalries. In 1990, CARE's good local connections facilitated the release of a 15-truck convoy of food seized by the Salafi (Wahabbi) party in Kunar. At that time the Salafi controlled the Asadabad area. To obtain warehouses for food stocks and tools, CARE agreed to employ Salafi guards. In mid-1991, Hisbe Islami (Hekmatyar) forces overthrew the Salafi. The food warehouse was damaged by an explosion, the guards killed, and tools were stolen from the other warehouse.

In the "liberated" border provinces such as Kunar and probably also in Paktika, internecine conflict between *mujahideen* groups is a greater impediment to refugee repatriation than fighting between *mujahideen* and government forces. As the supply of arms dries up, the competition between rival commanders for humanitarian supplies becomes more intense. Commanders lose their authority and influence if they are unable to channel aid to the communities on which they depend, and there is resentment if a PVO passes through their area to give assistance elsewhere.

G. Physical Outputs

Status of Subprojects (cumulative up until 8/91)				
Type	Planned	Completed	Ongoing	Pending
Irrigation	139	41	21	72
Mule tracts	1	0	1	0
Terraces	3	2	1	0
<i>Karez</i> s	6	6	0	0
Springs	13	13	0	0
Roads	9	8	1	0
Reservoirs	4	4	0	0
Warehouses	3	3	0	0

Technical reports seen in the Peshawar office confirmed this summarized information with more details on locations, design of the structure, dimensions, materials, labor employed, etc. A report of activities (July 1989-February 1991) in three valleys of Kunar included the following summary:

- 1,000 people employed on average each month, supporting their families in 58 villages.
- 43 subprojects totalling 107 km of irrigation channels were completed and 2117 ha irrigated.
- 8 road subprojects totalling 91 km completed.
- 6 subprojects totalling 5 km of *karez* tunnels cleaned, and 60 ha irrigated.
- 3 storehouses completed providing 117 metric tons of wheat storage.

Total program cost of this work, including all administrative overhead, amounted to \$1.7 million, of which wheat constituted \$608,000.

1. Technical Implementation

The proposed subproject is initially surveyed by the site supervisor. If it is then decided to include the subproject in the budget, a technical survey is conducted by the field engineer, site supervisor, and other CARE staff. This includes topographic layout, preliminary design, and cost estimations. According to AVAP regulations, this information is then sent to Peshawar for approval, which is probably the case for simple structures. According to engineers in Peshawar, detailed design work and cost analysis for more complex structures are done in Peshawar. The detailed take-off of all materials ("bill of

quantities") defines the quantity of work required for each part of the structure (foundation excavation, road cutting and ditching, gravel filling, stone masonry, compaction and wetting, metal work, etc.). On this basis, materials, labor, and transport costs are calculated.

For certain subprojects, cement, reinforcing steel, lumber and other materials must be trucked to the site from Peshawar. Initiating several subprojects simultaneously in a valley or cluster of nearby sites facilitates logistics and CARE supervision.

The local *shura* designates a representative who organizes the labor into work groups. Each group includes 30 workers (selected with due regard for kinship alignments). To the extent possible, skilled labor is also recruited from the immediate area. In Kunar, skilled labor is paid from Rs 100-120 and unskilled labor Rs 40 per day, or the equivalent value in wheat (40-50 kg and 20 kg, respectively). In Paktika, wage rates are somewhat higher.

2. Quality of Work

Quality of work is controlled in the first instance by the job foreman, who reports to the CARE site supervisor and, in turn, to the field coordinator. In the event of a technical difficulty, they will inspect the problem and seek a solution. These actions are included in a monthly report to Peshawar. As noted below, a parallel process of quality control is ensured through regular monitoring visits by technical staff from Peshawar.

The impression is that these procedures are scrupulously observed and that from a technical standpoint CARE's operations are very sound. Unfortunately, CARE does not produce videotapes or photographic documentation (as extensive as VITA's) of work in progress and structures completed, which makes evaluation at a distance more difficult.

3. Measuring Cost-effectiveness

As noted above, subproject costs are analyzed on the basis of input estimates. The quality of work in the Peshawar engineering office would indicate that estimates are accurately made. However, the evaluation team was not shown any cost breakdown on a project-by-project basis or, for that matter, for the different categories of projects (roads, *karezes*, etc.). Rather, expenditure is broken down by category (material, equipment, transport, local salaries, office equipment, etc.). In future, however, inputs and outputs will be given a project code number so that, when entered into accounting, cost-effectiveness can be determined.

H. Monitoring and Reporting System

At the Peshawar level, the two assistant program managers for projects and finance, respectively, have overall monitoring responsibility. In early 1991, two project engineering monitors were hired, one for each of the two target provinces, to make technical assessments and develop a training program to enhance field staff performance. In the field, site supervisors monitor work progress, quality, use of materials and equipment, village food inventories, amount of food distributed, etc. Monitoring reports drafted on this basis are

sent to the assistant program managers in Peshawar for analysis and action before submission to USAID.

An example of the monitoring report that is compiled by the assistant program manager (Stiles) included work progress (number of roads, irrigation channels, mule tracks completed etc.), evidence of repatriation, and deliveries of food, tools, and construction materials. Implementation constraints were noted, and the report concluded with planned future activities. This narrative account of implementation along with quantitative achievements provides a vivid picture of implementation, comparing progress with planned targets. The fact that it is well written by a native English speaker is important, a feature which couldn't be expected of middle-level Afghan staff.

The technical monitors from Peshawar headquarters (Eng. Noorallah and Eng. Bismullah for Kunar and Paktika, respectively) normally visit each month all of their projects under construction. CARE views monitoring as a means of reviewing and evaluating what is being done, determining the accuracy of reporting, and taking corrective action when needed. The primary purpose of monitoring is to verify whether a structure has been built on time, to correct specifications, and within budget. Monitoring reports include detailed recommendations ("Do not use gabions in the wash crossings; stone masonry would be a better solution.") Lessons learned from these reports are sometimes incorporated into design standards for future use. Reports also reflect local opinion ("People are very happy with the CARE program and are asking for the continuation of the same in the future.")

I. Training Activities

Training activities have been confined until now to staff development, such as orientation programs and in-service training in computer literacy, since CARE's program and its staff are relatively new. Most middle and junior-level staff are Afghans who are recruited mainly from the refugee camps and have a relatively low level of skills. Because of the ban, an active program of training is now underway. Short three-week courses given in the second half of this year include road construction, irrigation systems, DOS and LOTUS programs, construction materials, technical drawing, field administration, and English. Usual attendance in each class is about 20. CARE staff and contractors from private firms are the instructors, and courses in management and computer programs are handled by IRC. The general reaction of trainees appears to be positive. (Of course, they couldn't very well state otherwise in any written evaluation when their bosses are the instructors.) Some of the technical material presented in these courses seemed to be more sophisticated than actually required in view of the labor-intensive nature of CARE's activities.

It is planned that training will be as decentralized as possible and will be conducted either by CARE's own technical staff or through other international PVOs. Training of expatriates will include language training in Farsi (Dari), while administrative staff will receive orientation in CARE's policies and procedures, and field staff in technical subjects, report preparation, inventory control, accounting, and English language. The trainers will be senior field staff who will train subproject foremen on the technical aspects of activities and assist in solving problems that arise. This level of training will be conducted in two sessions

each year in each project village. Also, field supervisors (each of whom is responsible for five villages) will train *shura* representatives in inventory control and in the use of special equipment. This can be explained partly by the need to establish a system for storing and accounting for food commodities and hand tools at a village near to other subproject sites. But it is also clear that CARE is ready to devote considerable effort to grassroots training: for example, mule traction training given to eight Kunar farmers included mules, harnesses, and tillage equipment so the farmers could give demonstrations to others.

CARE is in touch with GTZ and IRC with a view to coordinating staff training on special technologies, such as dome construction, pressed earth brickmaking, and domestic energy saving.

CARE has a newly-rented training center pending recruitment of a training officer, who will initially provide an organization-wide training needs assessment. Only after the program is well underway can its effectiveness be evaluated.

J. Impact and Sustainability

1. Marawara Repatriation Evaluation

CARE recently contracted with outside evaluators to conduct an evaluation of its activities in the Marawara valley of Kunar. The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the extent of repatriation of refugees one year after CARE's pilot interventions in the villages of the area. The assumption was that the rehabilitation of physical infrastructure serves as an incentive to refugees to return and resume farming. However, the evaluation did not sufficiently account for intervening variables that would affect repatriation, particularly fighting against the Kabul regime and between *mujahideen* groups.

The evaluation methodology and statistical treatment were handled systematically, being designed by an academician and implemented by experienced field researchers. However, given the nature of the data collected and conditions in the research area, such sophisticated research became more of an exercise having little practical value. The study did note qualitative evidence that some permanent repatriation was taking place. Also, there is isolated quantitative evidence from certain villages of a significant return. Sustainability—that is, an assurance that the returnees will stay put—can be seriously questioned under present unstable conditions.

2. Evaluation of Eight Irrigation Channels

CARE has also attempted to measure the impact of 36 irrigation channels they have completed in Kunar. The study was contracted to an Afghan PVO, Short-term Assistance for Rehabilitation Team (START), which fielded a team of two engineers. A sample of eight channels was surveyed by means of a prepared questionnaire, but the selection of farmer-respondents was not systematically randomized (i.e., three farmers on each channel). Questions were answerable by "yes" and "no" only. While the study is not yet completed, data collection is finished and suggests the need for a more thorough

grounding in basic applied research methodology on the part of study designers and researchers.

3. Proposed Impact Measurement

Baseline surveys are being established. It is proposed to cover 25 percent of the villages where rehabilitation works were completed a year ago. A control village, which is outside of the CARE area, will also be surveyed. Quantitative indicators have been established, but no qualitative indicators. A team of field researchers is to be hired and trained on the methodology and techniques of the study. Data collection techniques are yet to be determined. If a questionnaire similar to that used by START is employed, there is a strong likelihood that project impact will not be determined.

K. Coordination with Other Organizations

Instances of collaboration have already been noted: with VITA and IRC on training matters and with VITA on an irrigation project in Kunar where CARE provided food rations for the workers. There are undoubtedly others. Although there are many PVOs in Peshawar, it is still a small community, and frequent contact is inevitable.

The USAID Regional Affairs Officer (Hank Cushing) calls informal meetings of USAID contractors from time to time. This brings CARE together with chiefs of party of VITA, MSH, CCSC, Ronco, UNO, and IRC to share information or discuss a particular issue.

CARE's relations with respect to other PVOs, particular within the context of ACBAR meetings, have not been universally appreciated. There is criticism of CARE which may stem from CARE's identification with an unpopular USG position. There was insufficient time in this evaluation to discuss with CARE its opposition to the ACBAR-proposed boycott of activities in the Bermal district in Paktika. Reportedly CARE maintained that it would continue to work in the district even though the local commander (Yar Khan) was highjacking UN and ACLU trucks and equipment, detaining drivers, and generally making himself very unpopular among PVOs having to transit his territory. The PVOs felt that Yar Khan was using blackmail to get aid for his area "through the barrel of a gun," and CARE was undermining security. The U.S. position was that ACBAR is here as a forum to share information, avoid overlap and duplication, and to establish common procedures and norms. But the United States (and CARE) would not surrender decision authority to ACBAR. ACBAR couldn't tell CARE to stop work; only USAID could do that. VITA, not surprisingly, sided with CARE. The fine distinction between the role of ACBAR in establishing common norms and procedures and in proposing a boycott when norms are threatened was lost on the evaluation team.

L. Future Activities

CARE believes that it may soon be time to withdraw some staff from Kunar and work elsewhere, at least with regard to rural infrastructure rehabilitation. A reduced presence

would be adequate for the purpose of follow-up agriculture activities. The purpose of a recent survey done by Madera and CARE of the lower Pech valley where CARE had been working was to determine how CARE could best help farmers to improve their agricultural production. Particular attention was given in the Madera-CARE survey to the resettlement of refugee families and what they needed to become reestablished as farmers. Interestingly, one preliminary conclusion was that water remains the main limiting factor, and the best way to increase production is to go on investing in irrigation.

Still, CARE would like to get more involved in "second generation" agriculture activities which, after all, should be closely linked to irrigation improvements. A more holistic approach is also necessary to measure impact.

USAID would like CARE to expand activities into the central provinces which are now underserved. But CARE wants to maintain its "beachhead approach." The evaluation team can appreciate CARE's concern for logistics and the importance of providing close support to its field operations. On the other hand, the particularly unsettled conditions now prevailing in the provinces immediately adjacent to the Pakistan border raise doubts about the beachhead approach, from both the standpoint of security and refugee return. There may be better areas further inland in which to work. Also, the labor-intensive nature of CARE's operations which allows for decentralization and the value attached to food rations as opposed to cash payments in the interior provinces (according to WFP and MCI) also argue for CARE's working in the central provinces.

SECTION V

MCI

A. Background and Objectives

In June 1986, with a grant from USAID, MCI began a program of providing medical supplies and health care facilities in southwestern Afghanistan. Since July 1988, with funding from the Canadian High Commission, United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), RAP, and UNDP, and with food and agricultural inputs from WFP, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and USAID, MCI has been implementing a variety of agricultural projects in the provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, and Zabul. Work has focused on the production and distribution of seed wheat, rehabilitation of orchards and vineyard, pilot activities to determine the potential for introducing certain high value cash crops, and to carry out assessments, notably in the lower Helmand river basin, for purposes of rehabilitating the irrigation systems.

The rehabilitation of *karez*s and small hand-dug irrigation canals are strictly ancillary to MCI's primary agricultural activities and constitute but a small part of its overall program. *Karez*-cleaning is done only in districts where MCI is already involved in the distribution of seed wheat and fertilizer and in wheat cultivation, the redigging of damaged vineyards and supply of new rootstock, or in constructing grape and apricot drying sheds. Irrigation assessments done by MCI field staff, notably in the districts of Maiwand and Shara Safi, arose from requests by the local population after MCI had established a presence in the area.

MCI was initially supported by USAID through IRC's RAP program, under which MCI received a subgrant of \$100,000. Being more conveniently located to AID/Rep in Islamabad than to IRC in Peshawar, and having longer-term, more developmental objectives than those which were then supported by RAP, MCI established a funding relationship directly with USAID. Consequently, MCI now operates under a cooperative agreement dated June 1990 under the PVO Support project, initially obligating \$850,000, extended a year later with another \$875,000 to support MCI's agricultural activities. The agreement stipulates inter alia, like agreements with other PVOs, that MCI will not operate where it is known that poppies are grown, a stipulation which currently precludes activities such as wheat production and animal health programs in these areas.

USAID funding constitutes about three-quarters of MCI's dollar budget in the agricultural sector. Other donor support includes some residual Canadian High Commission resources, UNDP money, and, most important in terms of total resources available, WFP wheat. The wheat is for the most part transported by UNILOG directly to MCI district centers inside Afghanistan where it is used as food-for-work payments. The people, in fact, prefer wheat to cash, and there are no indications yet of payments in wheat affecting the market price of local production. Thus, *karez* cleaning and labor-intensive irrigation rehabilitation are being implemented with UNDP and WFP funding.

Because of these other sources of funds, MCI has been less affected than VITA and CARE by the temporary suspension of all commodity and personnel movements. An active program of extension services to wheat and cumin farmers and machinery demonstrations for wheat growers and vineyard rehabilitation continues, as well as assessment surveys of the southern Helmand valley. Equipment and funds were already inside Afghanistan when the suspension went into effect, and WFP food shipments have never stopped. MCI staff movements in and out of Afghanistan have been affected, however, with obvious detriment to field staff support, exchange of information, modification of projects, monitoring, and reporting.

MCI's mixed bag of funding support has not created any major difficulties of a policy nature. USAID emphasis is perhaps more developmental than that of the UN, which is oriented more towards relief. From this difference of perspective friction can sometimes result; for instance, USAID insistence on contributions by the aided communities whereas the UN is ready to meet the full cost of food-for-work projects. On the other hand, UNDP does not fund overhead administrative costs whereas project staff, office costs, and other overhead items are included in USAID's cooperative agreement. There seems to be no commingling of funding from the different sources, and local currency generations from the sale of AID commodities is credited to USAID's Quetta bank account. The main point in making these observations is that multiple funding sources provide important flexibility in operations, without creating major policy or administrative difficulties.

B. Organization and Staffing

MCI's agriculture program (as distinct from its health sector activities) is under the overall management of an expatriate project coordinator (Myron Jespersen). Being a Canadian, he can travel inside Afghanistan and, in fact, would like to set up a suboffice at Panjwai near Kandahar in order to spend more time in closer contact with field operations. Jespersen's program management functions include liaison with USAID, UNDP, WFP, and other donors, and coordination with PVOs who have activities in the area. His Afghan division head (Ramatullah) has direct responsibility for all field operations inside Afghanistan as well as the maintenance of political contacts with commanders and local leaders, a function of critical importance in any cross-border program.

Among other senior staff at Quetta headquarters, there is an assistant division head, two logistic officers, an information officer who maintains the program database, a field monitor, and a camera/video man. All are Afghans except for the information officer, who is an American volunteer employed at a modest salary. An American horticulturist consultant is presently on board, and a volunteer engineer will soon arrive to deal mainly with the lower Helmand activities.

Field operations inside Afghanistan are supervised by ten area coordinators who are posted in the districts where MCI now works. Under each, there is an assistant area coordinator and one or several supervisors charged with particular subprojects. Area coordinators have agricultural degrees, which, according to Jespersen, is a bit of a waste since so much of their work is of a political/public relations nature as well as project

reporting and accounting. Supervisors serve as extension staff, following up fieldwork and certifying payment (in cash or wheat) in the course of subproject implementation. This organization is not found in all of the ten districts where MCI now operates. The field office may be headed by an assistant coordinator, or there may be no supervisor.

Originally from the province to which they are assigned, area coordinators are knowledgeable of local conditions and the authority structure. However, as a matter of policy they are not from the actual district to which they are assigned and therefore not subject to pressures arising from local kinship and tribal loyalties. Turnover is low, although a few have been dismissed, usually for becoming politically involved or showing poor judgment.

C. Implementation of Subprojects

Area coordinators meet about once a month in Quetta to discuss activities and priority needs in their respective districts, and to propose new subprojects. Upon returning to their districts, they discuss possible subprojects with the district *shura*. The provincial *shura* from Kandahar (and perhaps in other provinces) has splintered and is no longer meaningful; so MCI operations are handled with commanders (for security and logistic arrangements, including transporting money to MCI operational centers) and district *shura*.

If the district *shura* agrees with the priority and the project, it will nominate someone to intercede with village *shuras* and, in the case of agriculture projects involving individual farmers, represent the district *shura* in arranging contracts. Again, the village *shura* is an informal gathering made up of whoever comes that day to discuss the subject. MCI places much importance on these contracts which spell out in writing work to be done, the contributions by the beneficiary (individual farmer or members of a village *shura*) and by MCI, how payments are calculated, and when payments will be made. MCI, like VITA, expects the beneficiary to contribute 25 percent of the cost, in cash or in labor. MCI covers the rest, usually one-third in cash and two-thirds in wheat. Also like VITA, payments are made at specific stages in the process of implementation (one quarter of the MCI contribution in money when work has begun, a subsequent payment in wheat, and so forth). They are calculated on the basis of work done (Afg 400 for each linear meter of *karez* cleaned, Afg 200 per cubic meter of canal cleaned, etc.). The contract, copies of which are kept by MCI and the district *shura*, serves as a record of payment in case of any later dispute. Very few contracts have to be canceled.

MCI supports *karez* cleaning and the rehabilitation of small irrigation canals and drains directly linked to the rehabilitation of vineyards and other agricultural activities. In fact, irrigation activities are not begun until after other agriculture subprojects have been initiated. This integrated approach is an attractive feature of the MCI program.

In the case of *karez* subprojects, the contract is concluded with the village *shura* or with the *karez*-owners or water-using families as a group. A water-master (*mirab* or *mirao*) handles the distribution of water and arranges contributions of labor. Which *karezes* to work on is determined by a survey, which is simply a listing by the village *shura* of the *karezes* in

the area and the number of families served by each, followed up by a visit from MCI staff to determine length and overall state of disrepair. Only wet *karez*s which will be productive when cleaned and also serve a relatively large number of families are worked on. Because of seasonal variations, no effort is made to measure flows of water or establish other quantitative criteria and carry out complicated calculations. Jespersen's view is simply to restart the traditional process: the people know better than any outsider does whether or not the effort is worthwhile.

After a number of *karez*s or irrigation canals in a particular district have been identified in this way, subproject funding is requested from UNDP within the limit of its local obligation authority (\$75,000). Jespersen finds the UNDP arrangement more flexible and realistic in the local operating environment than the more specific information that was required when working under RAP approval procedures.

With the exception of the surveys recently carried out in the lower Helmand valley, MCI is careful about conducting surveys which could be misconstrued as promises and, if there is no concrete action, could have serious repercussions. It is important that the purpose of the survey is fully explained well in advance and clearly understood by everyone who could be adversely affected if there is no follow-up. The clients, it must be remembered, are all armed.

With recourse to UNDP funding and WFP wheat, work can begin. Work is done entirely with hand tools. There is no use of concrete or other materials or special equipment. MCI eschews any involvement in engineering, even the use of gabions. The three roads MCI has worked on apparently don't require culverts. Locally-hired tractor-trailers are used for hauling labor and aggregates to the work site.

D. Outputs

With respect to irrigation rehabilitation there is no overall implementation plan that establishes targets against which output can be measured. This would appear to be due in part to UNDP funding on the basis of individual subproject proposals and in part to the prevailing attitude in MCI that quantification may have little relevance in the Afghan context. A lot of work, it seems, is not recorded. The paperwork, according to one person at MCI, is abominable.

Nor has MCI targeted refugee repatriation as an objective, unlike CARE. For some of the political parties, repatriation may not be a priority. For those who have remained inside Afghanistan, providing special treatment to returnees can be resented. Also, refugee status is ambiguous, crossing back and forth across the border from refugee camps in Pakistan to their home villages inside Afghanistan, some members getting rations, other members farming.

E. Monitoring and Reporting System

Monitoring is done at five levels:

(1) Area coordinators are the key field monitors. MCI's information center gives them a form showing the data that should be collected with respect to approved projects.

(2) An Afghan generalist with an agricultural background is sent out from Quetta, sometimes with a photographer. He carries a note on projects and problems to check into and reports orally to headquarters.

(3) Jespersen, a Canadian, and his Afghan counterpart (Ramatullah), an agriculturalist, made fairly regular trips to project areas prior to the interruptions this year due to the Gulf war evacuation and the subsequent ban.

(4) Monitoring by USAID has not been initiated yet, but UNDP and WFP do occasionally send out their own expatriate and Afghan monitors, or both.

(5) Informal feedback, comments, complaints, or testimonials are received from commanders and other influential persons when they come into contact with MCI staff or visit MCI headquarters for one purpose or another.

MCI feels that this system operating at different levels provides an effective cross-check to learn what is happening in the field. The quality of monitoring will be even further improved when a suboffice is set up inside Afghanistan nearer to the centers of project activity.

MCI has set up an information center as the locus of its management information system (MIS). Using the PICK operating system under the responsibility of an expatriate staff member, the MIS is almost completed and should be fully sustainable by Afghan staff by the end of next year. The MIS is designed to meet donor reporting and MCI's administrative requirements. Files track the details of the main components of the agricultural program, which can be assessed in any given format and reports prepared accordingly. Results of surveys using questionnaires are in the process of being analyzed to facilitate decision-making on future activities. Obviously, only the quality of the monitoring system will determine the reliability of the output of this information system.

F. Training Program

On-the-job staff training is mainly an MIS function. Other training has been done by FAO, UNHCR, and perhaps other agencies. At the field level, MCI staff and commercial farm equipment suppliers deliver extension training to farmers through demonstration plots, pilot projects, or through *mullahs* reading notes on agriculture in Pashtu during Friday prayers.

MCI plans to organize a more systematic training program for para-veterinarians. Support in preparing materials and organizing the program will be furnished by Tufts University. Plans, which include training for the nomad women who look after the animals, face fundamental issues: will the women participate, and will their husbands consent? The

proposed strategy will concentrate first on the men who in turn will train the female members of their families; women will continue the process of training other women herders.

MCI is also looking into more effective outreach strategies for its field staff and extensionists. There is low staff turnover, and MCI is exploring the possibility of providing some higher educational opportunities for its Afghan staff.

G. Impact and Sustainability

MCI has not done any post-project impact analysis, nor have any funds been provided to do impact and sustainability studies. Afghan staff are probably not able to undertake such studies.

H. Coordination and Links with Other Agencies

There are different levels of coordination: inside Afghanistan; at the Quetta level; and among USAID contractors. Any coordination inside Afghanistan takes place at the district as opposed to the provincial level, and there is good coordination among PVOs. MCI, Afghan Relief and Rehabilitation, and Solidarité, for example, coordinate when they are working in the same district. At the Quetta level, there is coordination with Save the Children Fund (SCF), the Swedish Committee, and Interchurch Aid on specific matters, such as the adjustment of salary scales to avoid major discrepancies between agencies. Also, Jespersen chairs the agriculture subcommittee of South West Afghanistan and Baluchistan Agency Coordination (SWABAC) in which a number of international and Afghan PVOs participate. Among USAID contractors there is ad hoc coordination on specific issues, for instance with VITA on some engineering assistance on the lower Helmand rehabilitation. Jespersen would welcome regular meetings with other agencies supported by USAID to clarify, for example, pesticide review and approval conditions.

Achieving consensus in SWABAC on the part of all PVOs is no simple matter. They cannot agree, for example, on a single price for the marketing of seed wheat or other agricultural inputs inside Afghanistan. When 15 vehicles were taken in Zabul, however, SWABAC members agreed on a message to be sent to the commanders, stating their intention to stop all work in the area if the vehicles were not returned. This joint action apparently had the desired effect.

I. Planned Future Activities

The recently-completed survey relating to the rehabilitation of the lower Helmand irrigation system recommended repair of the Darwaeshan and Boghra diversion dams and the Hazarjoft bridge. This work will require a coordinated effort among several organizations. Because of its experience and good relations in the area, MCI should, according to the consultant, coordinate these arrangements and provide logistic management. Although MCI doesn't have the engineering staff and has consistently shied away from engineering projects, UNDP wants MCI to manage these Helmand projects, and MCI is hiring an expatriate (volunteer) engineer to assist. The consultant also recommended that MCI establish three

new operational centers in the lower Helmand valley, where there has been extensive silting of canals and drains, to provide labor-intensive, low technology assistance in agriculture and infrastructure rehabilitation.

Besides the lower Helmand, there is, according to Jespersen, "pressure from donors" for MCI to expand into other underserved provinces of Afghanistan, particularly Farah and Nimroz and maybe even Ghor. Because of the difficult logistics and problems of security, however, he is reluctant to do this. The importance he attaches to providing close support to field staff and maintaining regular contact is the reason he now wants to set up a suboffice at Panjwai near Kandahar, where he and his agriculture division head (Ramatullah) can spend more extended periods of time.

SECTION VI IRC

A. Background and Objectives

IRC's Rural Assistance Program evolved from early efforts to provide humanitarian assistance inside Afghanistan. PVOs, many of which had been working in Afghanistan since soon after the war began, were identified as the best mechanism through which to channel this assistance. IRC was one such PVO, and from 1985 to 1988, \$6.9 million as given by USAID to PVOs through IRC for cross-border projects. During these years the majority of assistance focused on health care training, support for medical facilities and the distribution of cash-for-food grants.

By 1988, increasing stability in many areas made it possible to provide other types of assistance. In an effort to move away from strictly cash relief grants, USAID initiated the RAP, to be funded independently of the health activities. The goal of the RAP was to provide assistance to Afghans who wish to remain in, or return to, their homes in Afghanistan. RAP would provide emergency and survival assistance but would increasingly concentrate on aid aimed at raising levels of food production and incomes in rural Afghanistan.

In June 1988, a cooperative agreement was signed with IRC appropriating \$9.4 million to fund cross-border projects implemented by PVOs. Four types of grants were authorized: (i) survival grants providing cash relief in areas where it was difficult to transport food and other basic necessities; (ii) village assistance to support reconstruction and provide agricultural inputs in areas that were reasonably secure and had an adequate population to resume farming; (iii) emergency assistance in the form of cash and food relief to populations affected by military actions or natural disasters; and (iv) resettlement grants to sustain returning refugees until they were able to resume farming and other income-earning activities.

In July 1990, IRC signed an amendment to its cooperative agreement with USAID which obligated an additional \$4.8 million to RAP and extended the life of the grant through December 1991. In anticipation of refugee repatriation, the program is increasingly viewed as a means to restore the agricultural sector in Afghanistan. Its objectives are achieved primarily through cash for work irrigation and road repair projects which provide employment and restore rural infrastructure. The other main component of RAP grants is the transportation and distribution of seeds, fertilizers, farm machinery and other agricultural inputs.

Since the inception of RAP, a total of 58 grants totaling \$16.5 million have been funded. The grantees have included four U.S., three European, and six Afghan PVOs.

B. Organization and Staffing

Unlike the other PVOs which the team has evaluated, IRC/RAP is a "pass-through" funding channel. It does not itself implement cross-border projects. The organization and staffing of its Peshawar headquarters reflect its grant-making, reporting, and monitoring functions. Under the direction of an American coordinator (Andrew Wilder), there is a proposal evaluation department (an expatriate and an Afghan assistant), which provides technical advice to PVOs preparing proposals and evaluates their submissions; a reporting department (one expatriate) which collects and compiles the PVOs quarterly narrative and financial reports to meet USAID requirements and also advises PVOs on reporting requirements; a monitoring department (an expatriate and six Afghan monitors and assistant monitors) which verifies the status of RAP-funded activities and also advises subgrantees on how projects can be improved; a training unit (an expatriate assistant manager and ten Afghan trainers and other positions); an accounting department (a Pakistani and one Afghan assistant), which audits subgrantee financial records; and an administration department (an Afghan office manager and 14 subordinate staff). Almost all the senior staff positions were filled either last year or this.

The cost of administering the grant program amounts to a mere 7.5 percent of the total RAP budget. It is a lean operation and salaries are low.

Heavy reliance on expatriates is explained by Wilder in terms of the work the staff must do. Qualified Afghan engineers and other professionals can implement cross-border programs. In fact, they are the only persons with the political and grassroots connections, and because of travel restrictions, the mobility to function effectively. RAP, however, is a funding mechanism and not an implementing body, which, for legitimate cultural reasons, could place heavy pressures on Afghans with funding responsibility. Also, given the nature of RAP's subsidiary functions—developing training curricula, establishing guidelines for approval of project proposals and reporting on implementation (and impact), and ensuring that monitoring is reasonably objective—finding and hiring qualified Afghans (especially at IRC's relatively modest pay scales) would be next to impossible. Also, the administration of many subgrants totalling a large amount of money calls for close coordination and correspondence with AID working easily in English. And, as in the case of all the PVOs the team evaluated, the accountants were Pakistanis.

To evaluate the RAP requires, therefore, not only an appreciation of its headquarters-level activities but also the implementation of projects by its subgrantees. To do this in any depth in the time available to the evaluation team was out of the question. The team did have separate discussions, however, with four PVOs subgrantees: Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR); Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA); Engineering Services for Afgan Reconstruction (ESAR); and RAFA in the course of its investigations.

C. RAP Strategy and Guidelines

The cooperative agreement with USAID was amended in July 1990 incorporating recommendations from an outside evaluation (late 1989) and subsequent redesign of the

program. In response to the amended agreement, RAP staff developed a "RAP Manual" which explains the objectives and priorities of the program. The manual is also intended to serve as a practical tool for PVOs seeking RAP funds by providing technical data, and fulfilling narrative and financial reporting requirements.

At first, RAP supported European NGOs (89 percent of all grants) and a few American PVOs. Now, European PVOs account for 30 percent of the grants, American PVOs 40 percent, and Afghan PVOs 30 percent. RAP is making an effort to provide a greater share to Afghan NGOs; the RAP Manual is evidence of this, but there are not that many of them which can meet the selection criteria and respond to RAP's programming and reporting standards. RAP would prefer to work with a limited yet diversified number of small Afghan PVOs and not end up supporting only one or two, such as RAFA, which have the administrative resources to churn out proposals. Wilder feels that small PVOs have inherent advantages in their identification with particular localities where they have a stake in maintaining their reputation.

The USAID decision earlier this year to cut off all funding to European PVOs is therefore unfortunate. It reduces the flexibility of the program and disqualifies agencies which can deliver cross-border assistance effectively and have experience dealing with IRC and USAID priorities and procedures. Nor are there American PVOs which can fill the void. The only one qualifying for any significant funding is the Save the Children Fund.

There are over 60 Afghan NGOs registered with the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief. Some are said to be little more than one individual who wants to work in his home community, has political contacts, and good relations with the local commander. Some are strictly concerned with relief. Others are too closely identified with one political party. Relatively few have the capacity to manage cross-border reconstruction. Since the evaluation and redesign of RAP in early 1990, much attention has therefore been devoted to institutionalizing support to Afghan NGOs. The RAP Manual, the development of guidelines to improve the quality of reporting, and the creation of a training unit, which can serve the needs of cross-border staff, are manifestations of this emphasis.

RAP is giving increased attention to rural rehabilitation. In 1990, just over 50 percent of RAP funding was for irrigation (particularly *karezes*) and six percent for road repair. According to RAP policy, funding is for simple, short-term production and income-oriented purposes. The maximum amount of a grant is \$500,000, with a maximum duration of one year. Although the PVO can apply for a follow-up grant, the emphasis is very much on small, rapidly-implemented interventions. PVO grantees, however, indicated a desire to develop longer-term commitments in the areas where they now operate if funding could be assured.

According to its manual, RAP will consider requests from PVOs to cover the costs, such as survey work or data collection, of developing a proposal, but in practice it generally doesn't do so. If it did, RAP would be inundated with proposals which it couldn't evaluate. Also, when the program was getting started, surveys and data collection by European NGOs working inside Afghanistan could have been seen as intelligence-gathering. Whatever the

policy reason, small Afghan PVOs pointed out that they don't have the overhead to conduct the kind of surveys that are needed to develop a viable project proposal, unless they can get funds from some other donor, such as UNDP. So they must rely on sketchy and sometimes erroneous information provided by commanders and *shuras* to estimate labor and materials requirements, work schedules and costs. Because of low salaries and overheads, what may be a cost-effective means of carrying out cross-border activities can lead to projects which are poorly designed and implemented.

MCI confirms that, when MCI was a subgrantee, RAP requirements regarding subproject proposals—even down to the level of individual *karezes*—were unrealistic in view of the uncertainties and unstable conditions under which cross-border programs must operate.

RAP approves all good proposals. On a few occasions, they have told a potential PVO grantee to re-do the proposal after having coordinated with other PVOs in the area regarding activities, implementation procedures, wages paid, etc. In this limited fashion, RAP serves a positive coordinating function.

D. Implementation of RAP Grants

Briefly stated, the process is as follows: RAP staff review the grant proposal, questioning technical issues, wage rates, work plans, negative effect of free distributions, how impact will be measured, etc. On the basis of this review, which gives the grantee an opportunity to make changes, a project document is prepared, describing project location, *shuras* in the area, beneficiaries, community contribution, measurable objectives, activities, implementation procedures, provisions for monitoring, and detailed budget. The project document, if accepted by RAP, is then reviewed by the project manager in the USAID Regional Affairs Office (RAO) before approval by the RAO in Peshawar and the USAID grants officer in Islamabad, after which a grant agreement is signed. The PVO grantee can then begin implementation, furnishing RAP with quarterly reports on success in achieving targets, activities completed, ongoing and planned, and problems encountered, and when the project is completed, a final report with lessons learned and (hopefully) an indication of impact.

Short visits to three RAP grantees (CoAR, ESAR, and RAFA) provided some useful, though tentative insights, both on their modus operandi and comparisons with VITA and CARE:

- With money originally from the Norwegian Committee, CoAR was the first PVO to work in Ghazni province, or least in the area of Mokur. With the agreement of the local *shura*, CoAR established a reconstruction committee composed of a field manager, agriculturalist, engineers (civil and road), accountant, and mechanic. To avoid local pressures, the first staff assigned to Mokur were not from the area, although the *shura* was asked to help recruit subordinate staff. A similar committee was later set up at Saydabed in Wardak province to cover two or three districts. Eighty-five percent of CoAR staff are now based in Afghanistan. The

purpose of CoAR reconstruction committees is not to be tied to any one commander, tribe, or *tanzeem*, so as to be in a position to get two or three district *shuras* to cooperate. In looking ahead, CoAR sees its committees as incipient rural development bodies under the future government. Ghazni and Wardak were chosen because these provinces, unlike the eastern border areas, can be easily controlled from Kabul, Mokuir and Saydabed being on the main highway.

- ESAR was able to develop a proposal for RAP funding because of prior support, in this case from UNDP, which enabled it to survey and map a fairly large area in Paktika province, and thus prepare a viable (*karez*-cleaning) project proposal. A military *shura* of local commanders guaranteed security. Project implementation was arranged entirely with *karez*-owners associations. The project was 75 percent finished when it had to be stopped because of the cross-border ban. Like CoAR, ESAR complained of the amount of time spent collecting data and project planning, for which they have no funding, in order to prepare a convincing and economically viable proposal. The map ESAR prepared of the area included a number of villages, drainage patterns, the location of *karezes* and irrigation channels. It was quite impressive. The 17 percent overhead provision in the RAP grant isn't expected to cover these project preparation costs.
- Having received \$180,000 from USAID for administrative support, RAFA is presumably in a better position than the others to identify and develop project proposals. It has suboffices in Quetta (covering Helmand, Kandahar, and Zabul) and in Kunar, Paktika, and Badakhshan. It has good staff, but is criticized as being tied to one political party (Jamiat). Why RAFA has not received more grants from RAP was not determined. It has received support from UNDP and WFP.

E. Technical Comments

During the twelve-month period prior to the ban, RAP approved 19 project proposals, nine of which were completed. Subsequent to the ban, three proposals were approved, but work will not begin until the ban is lifted.

The RAP Manual provides detailed instructions to PVOs on how to survey and design subprojects and prepare cost estimates. RAP does not encourage PVOs to repair roads. Guidelines for working on irrigation structures underline this as a RAP priority.

Technical and logistical aspects of implementation of course differ according to the type of subproject the PVO is proposing to implement. Each proposal outlines the implementation plan step-by-step, the tools and equipment required, logistical arrangements, responsible authorities, key subproject staff, and procedures for hiring and paying laborers.

RAP's monitoring team is comprised of one expatriate and six Afghans. The Afghans participated in RAP's PVO Training Unit course. The course included principles of monitoring, pre-mission planning, report writing, and field training in such areas as flow

measurement, crop-cut methods, and soil analysis. The course involved both classroom and field training.

The technical quality of subproject proposals is assured by requiring designs to meet certain standards. Quality of designs has improved significantly since the RAP Manual was issued. Whether there has been improvement in field implementation is more difficult to know. RAP hopes to determine this through its monitoring of some of the work of every PVO that it funds. Also, the findings of any independent monitoring of PVO subprojects are to be submitted to RAP. Photographs and videos are helpful, but in themselves are insufficient.

Maintenance of the completed subprojects should be the responsibility of the respective communities. Lack of maintenance is often an indication that the subproject location was poorly selected and people did not really need the work to be done in the first place. Deteriorating security may also cause people to leave an area where a subproject has been implemented. Some of the *karez*s repaired with the help of RAP funds in southern and western Afghanistan were subsequently damaged by severe flooding this spring.

Through field monitoring and audits of accounts, RAP has an indication of subproject costs. Available data, however, are insufficient to conduct a precise cost-effectiveness analysis. RAP calculates Rs 40 per meter as an average *karez* cleaning cost.

F. RAP Monitoring System

There is an expatriate manager of the monitoring department and three Afghan monitors, one of whom is an agronomist and another a trained video cameraman. RAP is currently looking for a monitor with an engineering background. The monitoring department verifies the existence and status of RAP-funded projects, evaluates quality, and advises PVOs how their projects could be improved. Monitoring reports, generally confidential, help RAP set priorities in areas of greatest need and determine which activities are most successful and beneficial. The monitoring department is seen by RAP as an important management tool for PVO staff, particularly those who cannot travel into Afghanistan.

To strengthen its monitoring program, RAP undertakes comprehensive in-house training of its monitoring staff. They are now being trained in RAP objectives, planning monitoring missions, data collection, report writing, and land mine awareness (six hour course), and English.

RAP's internal auditor also serves in indirect monitoring function with respect to the financial records of PVO subgrantees.

G. RAP Training Activities

1. Shura Management Training Unit

This unit, which falls under IRC's Rehabilitation Programme for Afghanistan (RPA), is based in Darsamand. The unit provides skills training to *shura* personnel in the management of rehabilitation programs. It develops modular curricula to meet the specific requirements of PVOs. Since 1989, the unit has trained field administrators and *shura* liaison staff in Paktia, Paktika, and Urgan.

2. PVO Training Unit

The PVO training unit was created to exploit the potential of an increasing number of Afghan PVOs to provide rehabilitation assistance. The unit is staffed by an assistant manager, who just recently came on board, and a short-term consultant. The assistant manager completed a training plan based on a needs assessment and will soon be teaching a course for cross-border field staff of Afghan PVOs. Four Afghan training advisors, four trainers, a translator, and an artist complete the present staffing. A training manager is expected to be on board later this year.

Initial activities include coordination with other PVO training programs, as well as with those of IRC itself since there will be sharing of facilities and course materials. RAP and RPA will cooperate in giving an agricultural extension course, and RAP will be training *shura* liaison officers for RPA. The unit conducted a training needs assessment of some Afghan NGOs and planned courses accordingly. Its staff also assessed the capabilities of trainers in IRC's other programs in order to upgrade their skills in curriculum design, materials development, etc. In cooperation with SCF, they developed a training methods video on participatory training techniques. Workshops on RAP accounting procedures and proposal writing have been organized for the benefit of Afghan PVOs. The training of RAP monitors, noted earlier, was also conducted by the unit. Staff from the unit will visit PVOs funded by RAP on a regular basis. Follow-up assessments of training programs to determine the impact are also planned.

It is premature to make any assessment of the effectiveness of the unit. But judging from its activities so far, it appears to be systematically pursuing the various elements involved in a sound training system. From a few monitoring reports it appears that PVO grantees are implementing RAP-funded projects effectively. This may be due, at least in part, to the procedures in the RAP Manual which they are obliged to adhere to, in which case the workshop on project proposal writing had a useful effect. However, more emphasis should be given to data collection and analysis in order to improve the quality of reports. Otherwise, RAP and some of the PVOs they work with will have to continue to rely on expatriates to produce acceptable monitoring reports.

3. Impact and Sustainability

While RAP's focus is still on simple, short-term rehabilitation, increased attention is given to the longer-term impact on the beneficiaries. Proposals from PVOs are required to provide detailed descriptions of the current situation in the subproject area so that upon completion, changes that have occurred as a result of the subproject will become apparent. Preliminary reports will estimate the potential increase in crop production after an irrigation system has been repaired, the expected yield after the distribution of seed and fertilizer, or the benefits to a community of a rehabilitated road. Experience shows that there is a time factor required to identify impacts. Changes immediately after project completion may not be sustainable after outside funding has ended. Consequently, project proposals for RAP funding will also need to identify sustainability issues and propose actions to address them.

Proposals submitted by expatriate PVOs which provide subgrants to Afghan PVOs will be favored by RAP if one of its objectives is to strengthen the subgrantee's administrative and technical capabilities. Also, PVOs which address issues pertaining to minority and vulnerable populations, such as women and ethnic groups in underserved areas, will be given priority in RAP funding. Until now, SCF is the only expatriate PVO addressing women's issues through its income generation/handicraft project. Also, with regard to a women's poultry project, there has been no systematic follow-up effort to evaluate impact. Clearly, there is need to study women belonging to various ethnic groups and design a WID strategy in spite of the formidable obstacles in dealing with gender issues in Afghan culture.

RAP's future emphasis on impact and sustainability could fall short in terms of financing baseline surveys prior to project implementation and follow-up impact assessments at some point after projects are completed. In this respect, RAP's emphasis on simple, quick-acting, easily-implemented interventions detracts from the longer-term perspective that is needed for rural development.

SECTION VII COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Comparing Performance

Comparisons are difficult. VITA has been conducting cross-border operations for a longer time and was the first PVO to work in many parts of wartime Afghanistan. It is the impression of the evaluation team that VITA is widely known for this reason and because of the geographic spread of its activities; also, that CARE has established a reputation in Kunar and Paktika through its more concentrated involvement, and that MCI has done the same in Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul. RAP of IRC is one step removed from field operations, but it is well known in Peshawar and Quetta for the support it gives through other PVOs, in addition to the range of refugee activities of IRC.

Afghans are not prone to compare the work of one organization to another, at least to foreign investigators. The evaluation team heard almost no negative comments regarding any of the PVOs. Perhaps this was also because of limited knowledge about what others are doing. Asked about another PVO's activities in the same province, the respondent belonging to an Afghan NGO seemed but vaguely aware of its work, except that the other organization was also involved in *karez* cleaning. Interventions are highly compartmentalized, each in his own district, with little effort to share experience. Very little, if any, coordination seems to take place naturally. Such that exists is either in the framework of ACBAR or SWABAC meetings, where attendance is voluntary, or imposed by donors.

The evaluation team found attractive features in all the programs. In the case of VITA, these were the quality and commitment of its staff, their technical competence, their network of relationships at both headquarters and field levels, their sensitivity to local conditions and "the Afghan way" of getting things done—in short, the indigenous character of VITA despite its U.S. origins. In the case of CARE, attractive features are attention to program objectives and impact, a meticulous style of operations, a developmental orientation and outlook, giving importance to a more intersectoral approach at the village level, working with farmers in addition to improving infrastructure. MCI has a flexible and innovative approach in addressing the priority needs of people inside Afghanistan. And in the case of RAP, the emphasis placed on the process, on more rigorous standards in preparing, implementing, monitoring subprojects, and on the importance of strengthening the capabilities of Afghan PVOs impressed the team.

B. Technical Features and Quality of Subprojects

The main structures which improve the quality of a canal are intake structures, culverts, aqueducts, wash crossings and dikes. These structures reduce maintenance, particularly at intakes. Flood discharges can destroy traditional intakes, and people spend much time and energy rebuilding them. Design requires river hydrology data that usually is

not available. Engineers will often have to make assumptions about design considerations such as high flood level and probable maximum flood. But once the structure is built, the efficiency of the canal can be greatly improved for years to come.

Canal cleaning is a task done every year in most communities. The amount of sediment that must be removed depends upon the length and configuration of the canal. It is necessary to level the canal and keep its slope uniform in order to minimize erosion in some places and deposition in others. Also, improved alignment can keep the water moving as fast as possible without scouring the bed of the canal. Water losses due to infiltration tend to be less in faster moving water.

Redesign of a canal and appropriate structures to improve efficiency normally requires at least ten years of hydrological data. Inside Afghanistan, these data are generally not available. Data on cross-sections of the river upstream, downstream, and at the site of construction are also not available. So engineers and surveyors must be able to understand the complexity of designing structures in a changing hydrologic environment, using conservative safety factors because of this inadequate data. Engineering staff of VITA and CARE understand these principles and address them effectively in their technical standards and designs.

There are no major differences between VITA and CARE design since the irrigation systems they work on are similar and in similar terrain. A review of design data from surveying take-offs in the field and elaboration in the main offices indicates adherence to the same principles, which are those also contained in the RAP Manual.

Where CARE and VITA differ is in implementation. CARE depends mainly on unskilled labor and hand tools, while VITA has introduced some mechanical equipment: tractors, hand drills, trucks, small compactors, and other equipment.

Canals are unlined, but concrete is used for intake structures and aqueducts. CARE mixes the concrete by hand; VITA uses small concrete mixers. CARE excavates foundations for retaining walls, intake structures, culverts, etc. with hand tools; VITA uses small backhoes, tractor-trailers and sometimes dump trucks to haul materials. Masonry work, stone walls, and gabion structures are built in a similar manner by the two organizations. The work is done by skilled laborers assisted by unskilled workers, who transport the materials, mix the mortar and perform other tasks. Gabion mesh is supplied from the refugee camps where it is fabricated. The results are more or less the same, except time devoted to manual labor on CARE subprojects is greater.

From photographs it appears that the CARE aqueducts are of good quality (except for minor details such as the omission of expansion joints which can be added later). Intake structures with gabion and masonry walls are also of good quality, according to the documentation made available to the evaluation team. VITA road improvements are generally of a higher quality than CARE's, in including more culverts, bridges, and excavation for widening. VITA makes use of dump trucks, compressors, and small pneumatic drills in roadwork, while CARE concentrates simply on surface repairs with hand labor.

C. Implementation Modalities

Working close to the border and in concentrated areas, CARE is able to devote more attention to the valley and village *shuras* than does VITA. From discussions and reading documents, the impression is one of greater involvement on the part of the community. This is due to the labor intensity of CARE's activities (like MCI, "if it can't be done with a pick and shovel, don't do it"). It is also due to the decentralization of CARE's operations, not only the preliminary surveys after proposals are made but also the designing of structures and cost analysis.

The practice of implementing subprojects simultaneously in several villages in the same general area greatly facilitates logistics, supervision, and monitoring and permits a more intensive interaction with the villages. *Shuras* are expected to carry out specific duties, such as storing commodities, organizing work gangs (of 30 persons), and reporting on attendance and payments to workers. Under such circumstances there is more opportunity for interaction and training of *shura* representatives. When CARE's plans to engage in more agricultural activities ("second generation projects") take shape, the relationships established at the village and valley *shura* level will hopefully be reinforced—with consequently greater benefit to the people.

This is not to criticize how VITA implements subprojects. Though less concentrated, the system is sound. It may appear somewhat scattershot given the thousands of proposals which VITA receives. No commitments are made, however, until the subproject is surveyed and included in the implementation plan, and most surveyed subprojects are eventually approved. VITA has the field staff to manage its widespread activities, but they lack mobility. The ADOs are well plugged into their areas. They have the qualifications to act as technicians and remain reasonably neutral. With more transport, they could effectively utilize one or two additional technical staff to better cover their districts. Under present conditions, the logistics are formidable, reducing the opportunity to interact closely with *shura* and villagers.

On paper at least, it appears that once the subproject is identified, the process of implementation is largely in the hands of VITA staff. On the other hand, the stipulation that beneficiaries from *karez* cleaning and surface irrigation improvement cover a quarter of the expense is a sound policy. It confirms that there is genuine local interest in the project. It probably couldn't apply in depopulated areas in Kunar where CARE, stressing repatriation, began work in some instances bringing in labor from outside and providing generous food rations. If VITA gets more involved in roads, bridges, and more complex engineering activities, the potential for local participation (other than as paid labor) will necessarily diminish. This downside should be taken into account if VITA undertakes more ambitious engineering in the future.

Compared to CARE and MCI, VITA operates under closer USAID involvement and oversight. Different standards apply which inhibit flexibility. VITA was not permitted to do village wells. VITA discussions regarding possible UNDP funding had negative repercussions with USAID. Reporting and other requirements in its cooperative agreement

appear daunting. By contrast, MCI enjoys funding from UNDP and other sources as well as WFP food rations delivered to the districts where MCI operates. As a contractor, VITA's funding is entirely from USAID. Only through its system of imprest accounts and good relations with *mujahideen* commanders from whom ARS could borrow, have VITA's activities been able to continue at all, unlike CARE during the current suspension. With other funding and local currency generations from the sale of seed wheat and fertilizer inside Afghanistan, MCI has been also able to keep going. The only serious restriction has been on the movement of personnel in and out of the country.

VITA may be faulted for not moving fast enough in contracting out the Afghan entity feasibility study. However, follow-up on the study has now been put on hold. In the meantime, VITA's future is in limbo. Its current agreement ends in May 1992. For planning purposes, VITA cannot count on extending activities beyond the end of the year "at present funding levels." This short leash complicates budgeting, the need to include the cost of severance payments, and other demobilization expenses. Besides, it inhibits longer-term planning with respect to opening additional ARS, possible transfer of headquarters into Afghanistan, deployment and other staffing arrangements, improving transport and communications, upgrading monitoring capabilities, introducing a follow-up and impact analysis into its rural infrastructure activities, and so forth.

D. Data Gathering and Analysis

The collection and appropriate use of data are crucial in preparing realistic project proposals, establishing baselines against which progress can be assessed, assuring that the project is proceeding on schedule and, if not, the management decisions that should be taken, and finally, sometime after project completion, measuring impact in terms of agricultural production, community activities, and other desired changes.

None of the organizations evaluated here have the baseline data to assess subsequent project performance. Where databases have been established, there is little or no in-house capability to analyze the information. Technical and engineering data, being more straightforward, may be the exception, and engineering capabilities in VITA, CARE, MCI, and IRC seem to be quite capable of using the data for purposes of technical evaluations. The handling of socioeconomic, agronomic, and community data, essential for measuring impact and sustainability, is quite another story.

In the case of VITA, MCI, and IRC, there is no provision in subproject surveys and approvals for post-project follow-up (which could be done on a random selection or composite of subprojects), with a corresponding budget allocation. In a PVO's proposal, IRC requires an impact estimate upon completion, but this has yet to materialize. CARE gives due attention to this important consideration, but its proposed impact study design lacks quantitative and qualitative indicators as well as data collection and analysis techniques. The study was contracted to an Afghan PVO (START) whose team of two engineers is weak in these areas.

VITA and MCI have made no provision for follow-up analysis on completed projects. They see their subprojects as too small and geographically dispersed for follow-up to be useful and cost-effective. This has important implications for subsequent project development which should be planned in a more contiguous, integrated and holistic fashion.

The Data Collection and Analysis unit, which was established by USAID in Peshawar in 1989, rationalizes data in aggregated, quantitative form from the databases of individual contractors (CCSC, MSH, UNO, and VITA). The unit also prepares maps which are meaningful to the contractors and on which project activities can be plotted. The goals of the unit are to be able to ask the right questions and come up with substantial and reliable data for planning and monitoring purposes; minimize duplication of effort; identify locations, demographic data, and make comparisons; determine whether one region is being favored over others; know how much has been spent by sector and province; and, in general, to provide a comprehensive overview of the spread of projects by location, donor, and field management.

While it doesn't have staff who can analyze aggregate data, VITA has come closer than the other contractors in providing what the unit is looking for. One problem is that the unit doesn't yet have a sufficient appreciation of the reliability of the different monitoring systems. Presently, its main task is to verify the information it receives (number of subprojects in progress, completed, etc.).

E. Monitoring Capabilities

With expatriate and training Afghan monitors, RAP is best staffed to do the job. Afghan monitors have been selected to meet their RAP's sectoral interests (i.e., agriculturalists, engineers). They operate more or less independently from other departments, reporting directly to the RAP coordinator, who in turn reports to USAID. CARE is perhaps next best in terms of their monitoring and reporting system. Both organizations have their monitors based in Peshawar, where monitoring and reporting can be closely supervised by expatriates. Monitoring missions go out as a team, Afghan and expatriate, which at present seems like the best arrangement.

MCI and VITA are similar in their approach in respect to levels of monitoring and cross-checking information from different levels and sources. There is extensive use of photographs in monitoring and, except for CARE, video as another cross-check mechanism.

On-the-job training is needed to strengthen monitoring capabilities. It must be a continuing process relating both to the collection of information in the field and, on return, preparing reports based on systematic data analysis. Expatriate monitors have a crucial role to play in this process.

VITA's field monitors are trainable and highly motivated.

USAID's DC&A unit does spot-check monitoring of contractor activities. This is done by a team of four, cross-border, led by an Afghan engineer. He is assisted by a

political scientist, an agricultural economist and an Afghan teacher by profession, who has monitored UNO-supported primary schools inside Afghanistan. In addition, non-American consultants furnished by LBI will be used to monitor VITA activities.

The main purpose of USAID monitoring is for quantitative verification of outputs. The main purpose of VITA and PVO monitoring should be to improve implementation and to measure impact, which includes qualitative considerations. For this purpose VITA should, in addition to its three levels of monitoring, continue to rely heavily on informal feedback from commanders and other agencies in the field. Even more important in the long run, however, is feedback from the beneficiaries themselves. To provide valuable feedback, the beneficiaries must understand exactly what the subproject is supposed to accomplish so that they can check on whether the results are as anticipated and can advise VITA. In short, more attention should be given to training *shura* representatives and working with villagers in a more multidimensional way.

F. Adequacy of Training Activities

While RAP's training unit is just getting off the ground, there is every sign that training programs are based on the various elements of sound management. VITA should collaborate with the RAP unit, initially in jointly designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating a training course for monitors. Three training events are envisaged: a one-day orientation course for VITA senior staff; when a course for one group of monitors together with their ARS officers; then a course for a second group of monitors. If feasible, VITA staff should be combined for training purposes with representatives of *shuras* so as to provide an element of community involvement. This ideally should be done inside Afghanistan to ensure more local involvement.

This initial collaboration with RAP would be more effective if handled by a consultant who would serve as a counterpart to VITA's training director. Training content would include overall ASSP/ARR and subproject objectives, the project cycle, the monitoring mission, data collection methods and techniques, data analysis, report writing, and English language instruction.

The various elements of management of training should include: needs assessment, revision of existing training modules and materials, training approach and methodology; hand-outs; monitoring and evaluation of the training process; practical experience with VITA forms as a training exercise; and Afghan-specific case studies.

Later, other collaborative training should be planned in such areas as community development, supporting (and organizing) water users' associations to assume wider responsibilities for irrigation, potable water supplies, village sanitation, etc.

G. Current and Future Staffing Needs

VITA headquarters staff are technically competent and even overqualified for the level of construction activity now undertaken. On the basis of educational levels and three

interviews of AROs, the technical qualifications of field staff also seemed fully adequate to the tasks. The problems they face are more of a political, public relations, and logistical nature calling for sensitivity and good judgment rather than sophisticated technical expertise. The same general observation could be made for CARE and MCI.

The extent to which staff are overqualified should not be a matter of concern in that VITA can be regarded as preparing a cadre of Afghans for larger-scale reconstruction in the future. This is how Sediq sees it. Engineers will look for more technically challenging work in the Afghan government or in projects funded by international development banks. Junior engineers and technicians will take their places in labor-intensive and appropriate technology work, to improving small irrigation structures and farm-to-market roads.

It was difficult to determine if VITA is overstaffed at headquarters, but the impression was that it is not. VITA is very field oriented, and if, as everyone should hope, its center of operations can be transferred into Afghanistan in the near future, the distinction between headquarters and field will no longer be as relevant.

To do its job better as conditions permit in each province, VITA needs to supply its ARS staff with pick-up vehicles (or funds to rent them) to give engineers and technicians the mobility they need to better supervise and monitor subproject planning, implementation, and follow-up, and to devote more time to training village *shura*. One or two additional technicians may be needed in certain ARS. In this regard, the more intensive interaction of CARE staff at the valley and village-level provides useful comparisons and lessons for VITA.

To deepen its involvement at the local level, VITA's program should have a supporting agricultural dimension. Peshawar headquarters and each ARS office should include an agriculturalist, extensionist, or community development expert. He should be a senior person in order to give importance to his position and not become dominated by an engineering perspective. He should be responsible for organizing baseline and follow-up surveys; working with *shura* and training village leaders; assessing the impact of irrigation and road improvements on crop yields, agricultural inputs, and marketing of outputs; improvements in village conditions; etc., all of which are essential for determining impact.

VITA's agricultural and community interventions should be organized as part of rural rehabilitation, that is, at the same time as infrastructure improvements are planned. They also should be monitored and evaluated as part of an integrated development process. Such highly localized interventions cannot be done bureaucratically by two separate agencies, although at the macro level there is much room for VITA, DAI, MSH, and UNO to share information and coordinate their respective program activities.

Agricultural development and training staff under the Private Sector Agribusiness component of ASSP provide extension, demonstration, and technology promotion services to communities inside Afghanistan. Ideally, their activities should be jointly planned and closely coordinated with the rural rehabilitation activities of ARS staff. Many ADT staff were formerly with VITA and are familiar with its operations. Explicitly relinking the two

programs at the field level to ensure coordinated action would correct the current lack of an agricultural dimension in VITA's work. Interventions at the village level would be handled jointly, beginning with the collection of crop production data at the same time as technical surveys of irrigation requirements are conducted, then carrying out extension activities and farmer training while irrigation improvements are in progress, and concluding with a joint evaluation of impact of infrastructure improvements on production.

H. PVO Coordination

CARE regularly attends ACBAR meetings and relevant subcommittee meetings even though they take up a lot of time. Because of the demand on staff time, VITA is less regular in its attendance, although Sediq will attend if policy-level issues are to be discussed. Jespersen of MCI chairs the agricultural subcommittee of SWABAC. In general, while lip-service is given to the need to coordinate, there is little enthusiasm or real interest in the process unless the subject is of immediate operational concern.

ACBAR suffers from this grudging acceptance of its role and possible usefulness. This attitude is reflected in the fact that USAID agricultural project staff don't participate in ACBAR meetings. It is unfortunate in view of the fact that ACBAR has taken welcome initiatives to standardize the planning and implementation of rehabilitation projects inside Afghanistan. ACBAR has provided a forum for agencies working in the sector to share experience and reach consensus in the form of general guidelines (e.g., discouraging the use of pumps which can draw down the water table and displace *karezes*). When more urgent problems arise, such as the difficulties encountered by PVOs transiting Bermal district in Paktika, ACBAR has taken a collective decision in an effort to prevent local commanders from dividing the PVO community. But in pressing for a boycott it came into direct disagreement with the USAID Regional Affairs Officer, CARE, and to a lesser extent, VITA.

Given the importance of the PVO community in Peshawar both in terms of numbers (61 members of ACBAR) and the magnitude of PVO cross-border work, there is a need to establish certain standards and norms governing operations inside Afghanistan. Otherwise, an agency might:

- Pay higher wages than another working in the same area.
- Pay a *shura* for services which are not in the *shura* tradition.
- Submit to unreasonable demands of a particular commander, opening up others to blackmail.
- Conduct surveys without follow-up action, creating resentment on the part of *shura*, individual commanders and the people in general.

Also, as the overall political situation improves, there will be increasing need to formulate integrated provincial and district rehabilitation plans, as opposed to current "targets of opportunity." PVO activities will have to be closely coordinated. For the time being, ACBAR is best situated to do this, at least at the Peshawar level.

As a practical matter, coordination can only really take place in the field. All reports suggest that this is not happening. Contact between CARE staff and VITA's ARS staff in the same province has been limited. Any contact that takes place is restricted to technical consultations and seldom deals with coordination of field activities. Small Afghan PVOs don't know specifically where others are working and what they are doing. In Kunar, the Food and Agriculture Organization arranges periodic meetings of a number of PVOs working in the agricultural sector. This is a useful role that UNDP can fill in the future, either at the provincial level or working out of important economic centers.

I. USAID-VITA and PVO Relationships

There is a qualitative difference in VITA's relations with USAID under the ASSP as opposed to those of CARE and MCI under the PVO Support project. In terms of USAID "substantial involvement" provisions, the language contained in the VITA cooperating agreement is more detailed and restrictive than that of the other PVOs in terms of USAID review and approval of implementation plan updates, in authorizing expenditures, and in approving staff appointments. The agreement stipulated that VITA should seek outside training assistance (University of Wyoming), and subcontracts for engineering services (LBI), and for assessing the feasibility of establishing an independent Afghan entity (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). The types of subprojects which VITA can implement are restricted to rural works and as such are more limited in scope than those handled by CARE and MCI or by subgrantees under RAP. The splitting off of the agricultural program had a damaging effect in ARS were engineers and agriculturalists had been working together. VITA has also been at a disadvantage in not having the flexibility which other PVOs derive from other sources of funding, notably from UNDP and WFP.

VITA began activities under a grant, then acquired a contract, and since 1990 operates under a cooperative agreement. The different contracting arrangements contributed to an unstable relationship. VITA's home office didn't like being linked to a commercial firm (Chemonics) in order to bid on a contract. This contracting role did not fit easily in the orientation and content of VITA's programs as determined by its board of directors. As a nonprofit institution, VITA wanted to preserve more freedom of action which, as the equivalent of a contractor, it couldn't do. USAID and VITA perceptions of VITA's role did not coincide. While, properly speaking, VITA is a grantee like other PVOs, the degree of USAID's "substantial involvement" under the cooperative agreement is virtually the same as in the case of contractors such as DAI.

VITA's funding levels and scale of activity have been much larger than those of the others. Dependence on a significant level of USAID funding is a double-edge sword since USAID must exercise greater control. At risk in the process, however, are PVO strengths: a high level of commitment, good contacts inside Afghanistan, and low operating costs relative to other implementing organizations. Certainly, these apply to VITA's program despite its present ambiguous status. If VITA is to continue to concentrate its energies and efforts at the participatory, appropriate technology level (as the evaluation teams believe it should), then it should be allowed to act more as a PVO and less as a contractor.

The current bureaucratic arrangements covering USAID's trans-border activities are compartmentalized and confused, given the fact that VITA, CARE, MCI, and the PVOs funded by RAP are all engaged largely in simple rehabilitation. MCI may also undertake input distribution and agricultural extension and CARE may contemplate future engagement in "second generation" agricultural activities, but this doesn't alter the comparability of activities in terms of the level of intervention and the clientele served. The implications are obvious: all activities should fall under a single USAID office with oversight responsibilities appropriate to the PVO style of operations. PVOs should not be treated as if they are USAID contractors, but as a flexible, innovative, and more indirect means of addressing needs at the grassroots where USAID and government organizations cannot work effectively. For example, once general guidelines are established regarding appropriate types of intervention, USAID should not interfere in the selection of staff and subprojects.

This having been said, however, there is an important caveat: Don't rock the boat. There should be no restructuring in the present unsettled political conditions, but only after conditions settle down and USAID establishes a presence inside Afghanistan. Besides, VITA, CARE, MCI, and RAP are performing effectively under existing arrangements and should be left alone in order to keep up the good work. There were no complaints made to the evaluation team regarding current relationships with USAID program offices; rather, good communications, timely approvals, and positive support were acknowledged. Even the volume of reports required by USAID can be delivered, thanks to standardized formats and efficient capture and retrieval of data by computers.

There is general agreement that regular meetings with USAID would be valuable. Advisory committee meetings of only those agencies working in the agriculture sector seem too restricted in attendance. VITA and MCI are invited, but not CARE. Instead, the meeting every two or three months should include all USAID-backed organizations involved in cross-border rural rehabilitation to, among other things, coordinate database management, map activities intersectorally, and develop common positions on field-level coordination or the handling of pesticide issues.

J. Transition Period Needs and Institutional Arrangements

It may be convenient for USAID to use VITA as a means to call upon LBI-type services in connection with more complex engineering projects. VITA should lend its technical help to MCI in placing gabions needed for lower Helmand irrigation rehabilitation. And there will be other large-scale activities in which VITA's engineering staff can be involved, rendering a service which will be professionally satisfying. However, VITA should not be distracted from its primary focus, which is working at the village level on simple irrigation systems and farm-to-market roads. Only projects at this level lend themselves to substantial self-help involvement and maintenance.

VITA, CARE, MCI and perhaps also RAP should participate actively with UNDP in rural infrastructure planning to the same extent that DAI, MSH, and UNO promote a more rational allocation of agricultural, health, and education services.

"Headed by Afghans, collectively Afghan NGOs are a huge resource of expertise. Most formerly were civil servants from government ministries or were faculty members at Kabul University...Most work exclusively in Afghanistan...Without exception they are convinced that they can make a difference, bring suitable change and want to play strong roles...What they lack in experience they make up for in creativity and risk taking...."¹

RAP efforts to strengthen the capacity of Afghan PVOs should be strongly supported. But unfortunately there is an impatience and negative attitude about some Afghan PVOs on the part of foreign aid agencies which question their credibility.

As noted earlier, most Afghan PVOs do not have the resources to undertake surveys and design projects which meet standards acceptable to RAP and USAID. RAP is reluctant to fund these project development costs. This is unfortunate since, as conditions improve, Afghan PVOs will be in a good position to conduct surveys of needs at the grassroots and develop viable projects—especially in the interior provinces of Afghanistan where few expatriate PVOs are operating. There should be a mechanism established (not necessarily through RAP) to provide Afghan PVOs with project development funds they can count on provided their projects are subsequently approved. This would mitigate the danger of conducting surveys without following through with concrete action. A RAP study currently underway on the advantages and disadvantages of funding Afghan PVOs, including the sociopolitical issues, and the possible adoption by RAP of less stringent requirements, should be helpful in determining how to better utilize these important indigenous resources.

The evaluation team discussed with Sediq the possibility of establishing a collaborative arrangement between VITA and an Afghan PVO. The Afghan NGO would benefit from VITA's experience. VITA would acquire some of the advantages of an Afghan institution. However, this collaboration could only take place if VITA functioned strictly as an independent PVO and not as a USAID grantee-cum-contractor. ESAR or the Consulting Bureau for Reconstruction might be suitable partners. Otherwise, linking up with an Afghan NGO having agricultural expertise would have the attraction of creating multipurpose capabilities. Sediq is on the boards of many Afghan PVOs and knows them all. This idea might be explored as a more straightforward alternative to the creation of a new Afghan entity. Strengthened through work with VITA, the Afghan PVO would be able to compete for new sources of bilateral and international funding. Besides, VITA would continue to be identified with the longer-term rehabilitation of Afghanistan, which is appropriate given the solid reputation it has established.

The fact that there was no traditional "PVO sector" in pre-war Afghanistan makes the status and acceptability of PVOs, even Afghan PVOs, under the future government uncertain. Of course, USAID will not be able to continue its support of VITA, CARE, and other PVOs if the government does not approve. Even a strengthened Afghan PVO linked to VITA may not be officially accepted. In short, Afghan PVOs—including the nongovernmental, nonprofit entity proposed by MIT—may not have a future.

¹ Jane Thomas, Introduction to Afghan NGOs, N.Y., February 1991.

On the other hand, with their political connections and record of achievement under difficult wartime conditions, there may be a future for PVOs. The new regime will not be in a strong position to carry out rehabilitation and reconstruction activities on its own. In fact, only the private sector can work effectively at the grassroots. Also, because Afghanistan does have a tradition of private business, trade, self-help, and community initiatives, the conditions for a continuing PVO involvement may be more positive than some believe. The evaluation team believes that it is on this basis that planning should take place.

SECTION VIII RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) VITA should develop construction schedules for the whole program together with detailed schedules of inputs for all structures on a subproject-by-subproject basis, against which cash flows should be developed for funding purposes and calculating cost-effectiveness. These construction schedules (programs) should be updated on a monthly basis for management purposes.

(2) As security conditions inside Afghanistan permit and more attention is paid to integrating infrastructure programs on a provincial basis, greater attention should be given to the adoption of standards of construction to ensure uniform quality and ease of maintenance. The UNDP should probably take the leadership in establishing these standards.

(3) For purposes of verifying outputs, monitoring should be done by the DC&A unit or an independent organization such as LBI, which is the normal practice in the construction industry.

(4) ARS staff should be provided with such additional vehicles as are needed to improve their mobility and supervision of widely-dispersed subproject activities.

(5) A supportive agricultural dimension should be introduced in VITA field operations to deepen involvement with village *shura* and participating communities. This could require the addition at VITA headquarters and in each ARS of a senior agriculturalist or extensionist responsible for conducting base-level surveys and impact assessments and organizing agricultural interventions related to irrigation improvements. Alternatively, ADT and ARS field staff should be operationally relinked at the field level, or a close, collaborative relationship should be established between VITA and an Afghan PVO with agricultural expertise.

(6) ARR/VITA should continue to focus activities on participatory, appropriate technologies which call for the cooperation of local *shuras* and community contributions. Limited interventions of a larger-scale, more complex nature should not divert VITA from this primary focus.

(7) USAID should develop provisions for funding project identification and formulation costs incurred by Afghan PVOs, with the understanding that within certain limits implementation costs will be subsequently funded provided the proposed project is approved.

(8) Regular meetings along the lines of chiefs of party meetings in the past should be reinstated and include all USAID contractors and PVOs engaged in the different sectors in trans-border programs.

(9) There should be no restructuring or rationalizing at the present time of cross-border programs with respect to USAID programming, oversight, and monitoring responsibilities. Once conditions permit and USAID establishes a presence inside Afghanistan, restructuring will be appropriate in order to facilitate strategic planning and coordination.

(10) VITA should strengthen its data/information system. It should undertake on a continuing basis comprehensive in-house training of Afghan monitoring staff in basic applied research methodology for purposes of collecting data in the field and analysis for monitoring implementation and impact evaluation. This recommendation also applies to the other PVOs.

(11) Collaborative training with other PVOs is recommended for VITA monitors, making use of the facilities and programs of RAP's PVO training unit to design, manage, monitor, and evaluate training activities. Training should include *shura* representatives together with VITA senior staff. This initial collaboration should be handled by a consultant to VITA's training director.

(12) MCI should initiate a training program, using an each-one-teach-one strategy, for nomad women in views of their active role in livestock herding, thus establishing a precedent which may be extended later to other women in Afghanistan.

(13) VITA's agreement with USAID should be amended to provide more flexibility in the kinds of cross-border activities that VITA can undertake, to facilitate collaboration with an Afghan PVO, and to allow VITA to receive funding and other support from UNDP, WFP, and other sources.

(14) The possibility of VITA establishing a collaborative arrangement with an Afghan PVO should be explored as an alternative to the creation of a new Afghan entity.

ANNEX A
PERSONS CONTACTED

AID/Washington

John Gunning, former Program Officer, AID/Rep
Larry Crandall, former AID Representative

Office of the AID/Rep

Bob Bakley, Representative for Afghan Affairs
Jonathan Sperling, Deputy Representative
Gary Lewis, Chief, Office of Agriculture and Rural Development
Fred Smith, Agricultural Projects Manager
Curt Wolters, Program Officer
Ray Renfro, Deputy Chief, Office of Agriculture and Rural Development
Hank Cushing, Regional Affairs Officer, Peshawar
Zia Mojadedi, Regional Affairs Officer, Quetta
Albert Nehoda, Area Specialist, Project Manager, RAP
Roger Helms, Head, Data Collection and Analysis Unit
Asif Ikram, Monitor, Data Collection and Analysis Unit

VITA/Virginia

Henry R. Norman, President
Vicki Tsiliopoulos, Assistant to the President
Amy Saxton, Financial Analyst

VITA/Pakistan

Mohammed Sediq Ashan, Chief of Party
Robert B. MacMakin, Deputy Chief of Party
A.A. Bahrami, Chief Engineering Services Officer
Russell Wallace, Chief Financial Officer
Islamuddin Imam, Director, Field Coordination
M. Ayub, Head, Monitoring and Evaluation Department
G. Faruq, Chief, Engineering Services
Shrindil Safi, Director, Training Department
Tahiri, VITA representative, Quetta
Mohammed Dawood, ADO, Parwan Province
Shajaruddin Zayee, ADO, Herat Province
Serajuddin, ADO, Kandahar Province
Aziz Mohammed, field monitor, Tokhar province

Abbas, field monitor, Paktia province
Qadir Khil, field monitor, Kabul province
Abdul Bashir, field monitor, Paktika province
Mohammad Yasin, field monitor, Parwan province
Mohammed Faraq, field monitor, Baghlan province

CARE/New York

Shelly Kessler, Regional Manager, Asia
Christine Legett, Deputy Manager, Asia
Carol Cheng, Food Program Assistant

CARE/Peshawar

Dale Harrison, Chief of Mission
William Huth, Program Manager, Afghan Village Assistance
Asif Rahimi, Assistant Program Manager (Projects)
John Stiles, Assistant Program Manager (Finance)
Ghazi, Program Technical Advisor
Noorallah, Field Monitor
Bismullah, Field Monitor
Gulaqa Hashimi, Program Administrator, Kunar Province
Mohammed Nader, Konar Technical Assistance
Sayed Salih Sediq, Program Administrator, Paktika Province

IRC/New York

Roy Williams
Canice Lawler

IRC/RAP Peshawar

Toc Dunlap, Deputy Director - Refugee Affairs
Andrew Wilder, Coordinator, Rural Assistance Program
Jim Robertson, Manager, Monitoring Department
Terry Leary, Assistant Manager, Training Unit
M. Hodayun Abid, Training Advisor
Olwen Herbison, Consultant, Curriculum Development
Christine O'Grady, Project Officer, Reporting Department

MCI/Quetta

Neil R. Huff, Country Director
Myron Jespersen, Agriculture Project Coordinator
Ramatullah, Division Head for Agriculture
Cheryl Ann Miller, Information Officer

Samir Ahmad, Information assistant
Karimullah, Information assistant

ESAR

Hayatullah Hakimi, Co-Director
Hakim Gul Ahmadi, Co-Director

CoAR

Professor Alem, Deputy Director
Shaheer Zaheen

RAFA

Eng. M. Sediq, Technical Board Member
Eng. Sh. M. Kamin, Technical Board Member

WFP

J.B. Burathoki, Senior Advisor
Gerard Viguie, Head of Cross-Border Operations

DAI

Abdul Wakil, former agriculture chief, VITA
Arif Noori, previously with VITA
Miles F. Toder, Deputy Chief of Party

ACBAR

Jon Bennett, Executive Director
Nancy H. Dupree, Afghan WID issues

START

Lowgar Khan

Asia Foundation

Elizabeth H. White, Director, Afghan Program

Shuaha Clinic for Afghan Women & Children, Quetta

Dr. Sima Samar

ANNEX B
DOCUMENTS CONSULTED

During the course of this evaluation, team members consulted many project documents, agreements, and contracts related to the VITA, CARE, IRC, and MCI cross-border assistance activities. Only some of the key documents are noted below:

ACBAR *Guidelines for the Planning and Implementation of Projects for Agricultural Rehabilitation in Afghanistan*, January 1990

ACBAR
and

GTZ *A Discussion of Afghan Involvement In Reconstruction and Relief Programmes*, April 1990

AID/Rep *Proposed Strategy for Afghanistan*, May 9, 1991

CARE *Multiyear Plan for the Afghan Village Assistance Program, March 1989-October 1991*, March 27, 1989

CARE *Evaluation of the Pilot Phase of the Afghan Village Assistance Program*, September 9, 1991

CARE *Afghan Village Assistance Program, Proposal for FY-92*, January 6, 1991

DAI *Evaluation of the Afghanistan PVO Co-financing and Rural Assistance Projects*, January 1990

IRC *Rural Assistance Program, Annual Report 1990*

IRC *Rural Assistance Program Manual*, August, 1990

MCI *Agriculture in the Lower Helmand River Valley*, August 1991

MCI *PVO Support Project Cooperative Agreement, Quarterly Report, October 1-December 31, 1990 and April 1-June 30, 1991*

MIT

Center for International Studies

Engineering and Planning for Rural Reconstruction in Afghanistan, October 1991

Ronco

Consulting Corporation and Devres Inc.

Assessment of the Agricultural Sector Support Project, December 1988

USAID *Request for Proposals, ASSP, June 16, 1989*

VITA *Briefing Book for the Afghan Entity Feasibility Study, June 1991*

VITA *Consolidated Annual Implementation Plan—FY 1990/91, May 15, 1990*

VITA *Consolidated Annual Implementation Plan—Second Year, May 30, 1991*

VITA *Quarterly Report—June-September 1991, October 1991*

ANNEX C SCOPE OF WORK

A. Introduction and Purpose

The Office of the AID Representative for Afghanistan (O/AID/Rep) presently supports several programs designed to rehabilitate agriculture-related infrastructure, e.g., small-scale irrigation systems (well and canal cleaning and repair), farm-to-market roads, bridges, culverts, replacement, and repair. These programs are implemented by different organizations, have different target areas inside Afghanistan, and vary as to the amount of AID funding to date and the amount of time each has been active. Thus far, AID has assisted in the rehabilitation of agriculture related infrastructure through four cooperative agreements: (1) the Mission's Agriculture Sector Support project (ASSP) with Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA); (2) a food-for-work program implemented with CARE; (3) an agriculture development program for southern Afghanistan with Mercy Corps International (MCI); and (4) the Rural Assistance Program with the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Although the first activity forms part of the Mission's Agriculture Sector Support project and the latter three are components of the Mission's PVO Support project, all support the rehabilitation of agriculture related infrastructure, using a mix of community resources and AID-financed inputs.

The purpose of this evaluation is twofold: first, to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the Agricultural and Rural Rehabilitation which VITA has been implementing under the ASSP, and second, to review the progress and performance of each of the other programs in terms of their discrete objectives. The evaluation will also: compare different approaches taken, problems faced, and accomplishments of each activity, indicating lessons learned; and provide AID with a series of recommendations to improve the effectiveness of each presently supported activity. Evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations will also be used to assist in the design of future AID assistance to rehabilitate agriculture related infrastructure in Afghanistan, in light of AID strategy for Afghanistan and given constraints on the delivery of assistance and possible future funding levels.

B. Background

1. VITA Program

In March 1987, AID authorized a \$6.0 million Agriculture Sector Support project (ASSP) as part of its cross border humanitarian assistance program for Afghanistan. At the outset the ASSP concentrated on rural reconstruction or irrigation systems and farm-to-market roads. The project was administered through a contract with Volunteers in Technical Assistance. In March 1990, AID amended ASSP to increase project funding to \$60 million and add a private sector agribusiness component to foster the return of normal commercial trade between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the U.S., and other western countries.

VITA continued to conduct the infrastructure rehabilitation activities of the ASSP under a cooperative agreement with AID. The cooperative agreement also tasked VITA with examining the feasibility of establishing an Afghan entity capable of carrying out ARR activities and attracting financial support from a range of donors and private sources (e.g., UN, World Bank, AID, etc.). Current PACD of the ASSP is 12/31/92; the current expiration date of the cooperative agreement with VITA is 5/31/92. Current AID funding for the VITA program totals \$20 million.

2. MCI Program

Mercy Corps International undertakes activities to restore agricultural capacity in southwest Afghanistan. Currently eligible for support are those activities which promote the production, marketing, and processing of food grain and cash crops. The cooperative agreement initiated in June 1990 includes three program areas: seed wheat production and distribution; orchard and vineyard rehabilitation; and cash crop pilot activities for cumin, caraway, and apricots. The cooperative agreement with MCI currently runs until July 1, 1992. AID's contribution presently totals \$1.725 million from the PVO Support project funding.

3. CARE Program

The goals of the CARE food-for-work program are: (1) to facilitate refugee return by supporting a range of reconstruction activities; and (2) to help participating villagers achieve food security by focusing on the repair of rural agricultural works. In January 1989, AID authorized a grant of \$125,000 to CARE for the preparation of a food needs assessment for Afghanistan. The assessment became the basis for the design of an initial food-for-work project for 30,000 persons in Kunar Province. In June 1990, under the PVO Support project, a Cooperative Agreement of \$1.3 million was signed with CARE to conduct food-for-work activities in Kunar and Paktika provinces to reach approximately 114,000 beneficiaries. The focus of the program is on enhancing refugee return by involving villagers in the repair of roads, irrigation canals and other components of the agriculture infrastructure. Cash, from the proceeds of commercial PL 480 wheat sales, is added to food in payment for work. In late FY 91, AID is planning to increase funding under the cooperative agreement by \$1.4 million in order to expand program activities and extend the expiry date of the cooperative agreement until August 1992.

4. IRC (RAP) Program

The overall objectives of the Rural Assistance Program (RAP) are to increase food availability and cash incomes for basic necessities for the people remaining inside Afghanistan and those who return, and to provide relief and survival assistance as needs dictate. Initiated in 1988, RAP is implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) under a cooperative agreement with AID. The RAP mechanism provides subgrants primarily to Afghan NGOs to finance activities in three program categories: survival assistance, rural rehabilitation assistance, and resettlement assistance.

The rural rehabilitation category includes simple, short-term production and income oriented activities which assist communities to renew agricultural production through infrastructure rehabilitation, the supply of inputs for crop production, animal health care, and other rural and agricultural activities as appropriate. The greatest demand for assistance in this category is for rehabilitation or irrigation systems. Total estimated AID contribution for RAP is presently \$18,850 million, and present expiry date of the agreement is December 31, 1992.

C. Scope of Activities

It is estimated that, at a minimum, a three-person contractor team will be needed to conduct this evaluation. (O/AID/Rep is currently seeking participation of a fourth team member from AID/W in the field work portion of the evaluation. However, this participation is conditioned on availability of funding and staff.)

The evaluation with an emphasis on the ARR activities of VITA will examine performance and accomplishments to date activities covered. Technical, institutional and administrative aspects of these activities will be examined. Together the team members will examine how these activities contribute to AID's strategy for Afghanistan. For each of the programs described in the Background section, the evaluation will address the following:

1. Progress to Date

Describe what each organization has accomplished to date—road and irrigation system reconstruction; staff training; institutional development; community development—and assess how these have contributed to AID's assistance goals in Afghanistan. Indicate lessons learned particularly regarding how rehabilitation activities have been identified, selected and conducted inside Afghanistan, particularly as regards local community participation in these efforts.

2. Implementation Procedures

Identify constraints (e.g., communications, logistics, technical staff capacity) to implementation and describe how each organization has responded to them. Specifically, indicate how local resources have been mobilized to get the job done. Review Pakistan field office organization and staff and evaluate their qualifications, effectiveness and quality of in-service training. Describe how local currencies (Afghanis and Rupees) are converted, handled, and utilized. Evaluate the measures taken for the safeguard and use of local currencies. Describe how the mix of food and cash is determined, managed and utilized, in the case of the CARE program. For VITA only, review and evaluate its home-office support for field activities.

3. "Afghanization"

Review steps taken by each organization to define and implement Afghanization for itself, e.g. hiring and training of Afghan staff, development of Afghan

NGOs. For VITA only, review the steps taken to date to determine the feasibility of a technically and financially viable Afghan entity to conduct rural infrastructure rehabilitation activities inside Afghanistan. Evaluate how the contractor has arranged for the takeover of infrastructure rehabilitation activities by such an entity.

4. Monitoring Procedures

Assess what each organization has accomplished in developing procedures to:
(a) measure the impact of its project activities on beneficiaries, including women and girls; and (b) verify completion of rural reconstruction activities.

5. Program Management and Coordination

Describe how AID manages each activity. Describe how rehabilitation efforts are coordinated at the field and management level by AID and the organizations involved.

6. Recommendations

- Recommend what changes AID and/or the organizations involved might introduce in the operation of the evaluated programs to improve effectiveness in meeting respective program objectives.
- Indicate which programs seem to be the most or least effective in contributing to the achievement of their respective project goals and overall AID strategy goals, and therefore should be expanded or contracted.
- In light of needs for further agriculture related infrastructure rehabilitation, identify potential activities and what the nature of future activities might be.
- Provide a brief description of a possible AID funded follow-on project or activity based on evaluation findings and recommendations.

D. Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation will be conducted using the following techniques:

- **Documentation review.** Examination of relevant project and program documentation, e.g. work plans quarterly reports and special reports available in each organization's home and field offices and in AID/W and O/AID/Rep in Pakistan.
- **Personal interviews.** Discussions with each organization's project staff, appropriate AID/W and AID field officers, representatives of pertinent Afghan NGOs, and any accessible independent Afghan beneficiaries.

- **On-site inspection.** Examination of facilities and activities except as constrained by security conditions—e.g., travel inside Afghanistan by USG funded American citizens is not possible at this time.

E. Evaluation Team Members' Qualifications

Each evaluation team member will be a specialist in a discipline related to the area of examination to which he/she is assigned:

The **engineering specialist** should have: (a) hands-on experience in civil engineering projects—e.g., roads, irrigation systems, bridges; (b) work experience in developing country environments preferably in Asia; and (c) knowledge of AID development assistance procedures.

The **institutional development specialist** should have training in organizational systems and experience implementing agricultural projects in developing countries, preferably in Asia. Public administration and business management would be examples of the fields of experience particularly relevant. Familiarity with AID development assistance programs is also required.

The **rural sociologist** should have training and experience in community development in developing countries preferably in Asia. This team member should also be familiar with the study of rural community structures and with the collection and reporting of data for monitoring the performance of developing country rural development activities.

The **evaluation team leader**, in addition to being a specialist in one of the three substantive areas listed above, should have experience in evaluating and/or managing AID projects in the agriculture sector in Asia. He/she must also have proven leadership and strong oral and written communications skills. The evaluation team leader will be responsible for overseeing the work of team members including organizing and scheduling the team's work and orchestrating the drafting of the evaluation team's final report presenting to AID/W and to O/AID/REP the team's findings and recommendations.

F. Work Period and Locations

This evaluation is scheduled to begin in late September 1991 in Washington, D.C., with the compilation and review of relevant documentation and appointments with appropriate AID/W and VITA's home-office staff. Prior to departure for Pakistan to begin the field work phase of the evaluation, team members should also organize team responsibilities and prepare a draft outline of the evaluation report for review with O/AID/Rep upon arrival in the field. An estimated two days will be necessary at the VITA contractor's home office for the team to ascertain the timeliness, level of effort, and quality of the technical and administrative support provided to the field operations in Pakistan; and two days should be budgeted for briefings with AID/W staff. This phase of the evaluation is estimated to take about five work days.

The fieldwork phase of the evaluation will begin with the arrival of the evaluation team in Pakistan in October. The evaluation team will begin first in Islamabad to meet with O/AID/REP staff, organize its in-country work, and reach agreement on the structure of the final evaluation report to be prepared. The evaluation team will then travel to Peshawar and Quetta to meet with field staff of the four organizations whose work is being evaluated. The team will then return to Islamabad for debriefings and for submission of draft and final reports. The fieldwork phase of the evaluation is expected to last not more than 31 days.

G. Reports

On the basis of the Washington, D.C. documentation review and staff interviews, the evaluation team will prepare an outline of the draft evaluation report. This outline should be presented and discussed with O/AID/Rep staff upon arrival in Pakistan. No later than seven days before its departure from Pakistan the evaluation team will prepare and submit to O/AID/Rep a draft evaluation report together with a draft AID Evaluation Summary (AES). On the basis of a team debriefing and on Mission comments on the draft report, the team will prepare and submit a final evaluation report and AES prior to departing Pakistan.