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PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FINAL REPORT

AFGHANISTAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSISTANCE
PROJECT (ALGAP)

17 NOVEMBER 2005

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The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALGAP	Afghanistan Local Governance Assistance Project
ASP	Afghanistan Stabilization Project
DCN	District Communication Network
DID	District Infrastructure Development
IMTF	Inter-Ministerial Task Force
MoUDH	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing
PMU	Program Management Unit
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSF	Provincial Stabilization Fund
RFP	Request for Proposal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report covers the consultant's assignment with the ARD/Afghanistan Local Governance Assistance Project (ALGAP) for the period 1 April 2005 to 17 November 2005.

During the initial months of assignment the consultant was based at the Afghanistan Stabilization Program (ASP) office, assigned to the District Infrastructure Development (DID) department. Following the relocation of the ASP office at the end of April 2005, the consultant moved to the ALGAP office, which is in close proximity to the relocated ASP office. At the time of relocation to the ALGAP office, the ALGAP project approach and focus had been reoriented to concentrate on sub-national governance. The consultant was instructed consequently to limit the time spent with ASP. However, due to the close proximity of the two offices, the consultant was able to continue meeting with ASP management several times a week to provide comments and/or advice on project management and technical issues. At the same time, the consultant assumed responsibility for coordinating and tracking the progress of the District Communication Network (DCN) project at the request of USAID/Afghanistan.

Throughout the consultant's assignment, there was only a brief period when there was an appointed manager to direct the District Infrastructure Development department. This position was left vacant from mid-April to mid-August when the second manager was appointed. The newly appointed manager occupied his position for a month, after which a senior engineer assumed the responsibilities of the DID manager.

During the first DID manager's tenure, the consultant worked closely with him to disseminate the institutional knowledge of ASP and the DID department, and to assist him with his assignment. During the brief period the first DID manager was with ASP, he succeeded in making improvements to department administration and management, specifically in the institution of bi-weekly technical meetings within the department to review and resolve problems encountered at project work sites and at the office.

Following the departure of the first DID manager in mid-April 2005, the consultant worked closely with the Deputy Program Manager, the two senior engineers of the DID department, and the Program Officers of the Provincial Stabilization Fund (PSF) department, particularly with regard to infrastructure reconstruction matters, in addition to the preparation of designs, procurement documentation, request for proposal, tendering procedures, and post-contract supervision.

Because the consultant's Scope of Work provided for ongoing technical assistance, without specifying beginning and end dates, it is not possible to quantify the progress against particular milestones. However, it is the consultant's belief that the overall technical assistance provided was meaningful and beneficial to the management of ASP, DCN, and ALGAP. ASP has made improvements in a number of areas, including on-site monitoring/supervision, quality and progress control, and contract administration. The tracking of the district administration reconstruction projects undertaken by the various agencies and the monthly consolidated Status Report prepared by the consultant has enabled the DCN project to increase the number of districts to their Phase I implementation. Guidance provided to ALGAP Program Associates enabled them to perform basic construction-building inspections and to survey existing facilities during visits to the provinces and districts.

INTRODUCTION

ALGAP was initially intended to provide technical assistance to the Program Management Unit (PMU) of the Afghanistan Stabilization Program (ASP), by supporting it in addressing the four core components of its overall strategy: 1) implementation of a district infrastructure development program, 2) implementation of a provincial stabilization fund, 3) administrative reform, and 4) personnel capacity development. ALGAP was requested by USAID as part of its program implementation to strengthen sub-national governance; to assist with the coordination of sub-national infrastructure construction activities where substantial construction is being undertaken to provide provincial and district administration buildings, police stations, courthouses, mosques, staff housing; and to provide assistance to the District Communication Network (DCN) project. (The DCN project was a component of ASP prior to it being taken over by the Ministry of Communication.) These reconstruction projects are being implemented by a broad range of donors without a central coordinating unit to direct or oversee the integration of the activities of the various organizations.

A principal task of the consultant's assignment was to help ensure that a complete construction use plan was developed and followed for each building project, that there was coordination with other relevant infrastructure development construction within the respective districts and provinces, and that the buildings were usable in the shortest period of time. By participating in this project, it was expected the ASP staff would gain experience in supervising and completing complex public infrastructure projects in a timely manner. To assist in coordinating these efforts, the consultant would collect and disseminate information on the status of provincial- and district-level construction activities throughout the country to organizations implementing similar projects.

ASP DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Under ASP, the District Infrastructure Development (DID) department is responsible for providing architectural and engineering services for the reconstruction of administration and police buildings, staff housing, and mosques. The DID department is therefore focusing on the rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of these facilities in each district throughout the country.

Total districts contracted as of this writing was 92 for Phase I, and 6 for the Pilot Phase, with construction site work started in 78 districts, including the Pilot Phase districts. Only four Pilot Phase district construction projects had been completed, with two officially handed over as of this report date.

CONSULTANT ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

Construction Monitoring

Advice and assistance in the supervision of construction works were provided to ASP staff during the consultant's assignment, especially to the DID and PSF senior engineers. Guidance and advice were provided to the site monitors on the vital stages of construction subject to inspection and on specific areas requiring special attention, and inspecting and approving work prior to the contractor commencing the next stage of construction.



Shaka Dara – Poor form work



Kalakan – Good form work

On-site advice and guidance was provided to the engineers of DID and PSF during site inspections of the construction projects at Mohammad Agha, Pul-e-Alam in Logar province; Ghorband in Parwan province; and Shakar Dara, Kalakan, and Istalif in Kabul province. Unfortunately, the quality of the work and standard of workmanship at these districts are very poor, with the exception of Kalakan where the work is satisfactory. This could be attributed to the insufficient number of site monitors resulting in infrequent visits and work inspection, in addition to the site engineers specializing in design who were assigned by the Ministries having minimal construction site experience. This was evidenced by the fact that the sites supervised directly by monitors recruited by ASP had greater progress and better quality of construction work than those sites by the seconded monitors.

During consultant inspections, the site engineers were instructed and given demonstrations on how to check the alignment and plumb of door frames and columns without the use of instruments. Explanations were also given for the need to use space blocks for concreting to ensure proper coverage of the steel reinforcement, and inspection and quality control of the different construction trades. The consultant was satisfied with the subsequent improvement in the efforts of the site monitors, particularly for quality control and in taking initiative to resolve problems encountered at the construction site.



Istalif – Poor wall alignment



Kalakan – Satisfactory wall alignment

The consultant's assessment of work at locations not visited was limited to reports received from DID site monitors and PSF provincial representatives and information provided by the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Some of these reports were reviewed by the consultant with the DID department manager and/or the two senior engineers. It was found that the reports contradicted the information received from the PRT and ALGAP Program Associates regarding the progress and quality of work. Nevertheless, later reports received were more detailed and accurate.

It is clearly recognized that experienced site supervision and monitoring were not adequately available to ensure the timely completion and required quality of work for the construction projects. In consideration of the general lack of experience of the site monitors it was proposed to form teams comprised of DID and PSF personnel for assignment to the different regions, thereby increasing the frequency of site inspection and reducing the required travel time to the various construction projects. Each region would therefore have a team leader responsible for reporting the activities of the region to the senior engineer at ASP. A further nine members were recruited to supplement the total number of the regional teams as summarized in the table below.

REGIONAL CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISION, MONITORING TEAMS				
Region	Province	No. Dist.	Engineers	
			PR	SM
I	Hirat, Ghor, Badghis, Farah, Nimroz	5	5	2
II	Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan.	10	4	4
III	Kandahar, Zabul, Hilmand, Uruzgan	9	4	2
IV	Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-i-pul, Faryab, Samangan	7	6	3
V	Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman, Nuristan	20	4	3
VI	Paktya, Paktyka, Khost, Ghazni	10	4	3
DID/ASP	Wardak, Logar, Pansjher, Parwan Bamyam, Kapisa, Daykundi	15	7	10
Kabul	Kabul	6	1	1

Dist = District; PR = Provincial Representative; SM = Site Monitor

The ALGAP Chief of Party suggested an additional proposal for improving the quality of construction site monitoring by having the consultant develop *Guidelines for Site Supervision and Monitoring* to assist the site supervisors and monitors in the performance of their duties. The said document would help with the scheduling of site inspection. This document was made available to ALGAP Program Associates to assist them in basic inspection and monitoring during their frequent travel to the provinces.

A workshop was organized and conducted to review the *Guidelines for Site Supervision and Monitoring* of district and provincial construction sites. The workshop trainers included two engineers from MSI, Eng. Meena from ASP, and the consultant. The objective of the workshop was to provide basic training in monitoring construction for the ALGAP staff and eight participants from ASP, with the emphasis on the principal items to check and the basic tasks required in performing a technical inspection. The draft English document was translated into Dari for subsequent distribution to MSI, ASP, and ALGAP staff for final review and comments.



Site Supervision and Monitoring Workshop Participants

The workshop received positive responses and feedback, especially from the engineers of MSI, and ASP and the ALGAP Program Associates. ALGAP plans to review, revise, and package the workshop content and format for future training at provincial and district levels of additional ASP staff, government officials, and others with construction project monitoring responsibilities. ALGAP intends to make the workshop materials available in several formats and languages to ensure broader use with audiences of varying degrees of literacy.

The consultant provided further advice and assistance to ASP in preparing and organizing a workshop on contractor obligations in accordance with the conditions of the contract. The workshop addressed the preparation and updating of the construction project program, quality and progress controls, certification of the Certificate of Payment, claims for additional costs and extension of time procedures, daily recording of site situation, approval of work, and completion notification.

The workshop was characterized by the active participation of the contractors' representatives in group discussions, voicing their problems and concerns as well as providing useful comments and suggestions to the workshop. The primary problems noted by the contractors were the length of time between the tender offer submission and the contract award decision, construction site changes after contractor mobilization, and late payment. The workshop was attended by representatives from 45 contractors and 20 ASP staff from various departments. All the participants agreed similar workshops need to be conducted at regular intervals to include the contractors who were unable to attend the past workshop as well as new contractors.

The site reports submitted to the DID department were presented in a format developed by the consultant. The reports were first reviewed by the senior monitor and engineer responsible for site monitoring and then passed on with comments to the DID manager. The first DID manager reviewed the reports with the consultant from early February 2005 up to the time of the manager's departure in mid-April 2005. As most of the work had just started during the period of February to mid-April 2005, the primary issues were at the site level involving the setting out of the various buildings where no benchmark had been planted at the site during the initial topographic site survey. The Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MoUDH) was responsible for monitoring the six districts of the Pilot Phase, started in early 2004, until this responsibility and staff were transferred to ASP in late 2004. The first DID manager and the consultant had reviewed the reports of the Pilot Phase districts which stated there were no problems with the construction work, and the quality of workmanship and finishing were satisfactory. However, upon visiting the sites at Mohammad Agah and Ghorband, a significant number of problems were found, especially with the quality of the finishing trades.

Very few of the monitors' reports were made available to the consultant following the departure of the first DID manager in mid-April 2005. The consultant was only called upon occasionally to review the conflicting reports received from different monitors involving issues of setting out and the location of the various buildings during the period following the departure of the first DID manager until the engagement of the new DID manager in mid-August. It should be noted that the reports reviewed by the consultant did not contain sufficient detailed information of the work and actions taken to resolve problems experienced at the sites. It is the consultant's belief the site monitors did not have the ability, experience, or willingness to make the necessary on-site decisions required, as most of the site problems are referred to the two senior engineers at the DID office.

Additional areas of concern to the consultant were the long intervals between site visits and the length of time taken by the DID department to resolve the reported construction site problems. This inevitably affected the quality of the work and delayed construction progress. Following the advice and insistence of the consultant, the DID manager conducted departmental bi-weekly meetings to review monitoring reports, the resolution of problems encountered at the sites, various administrative and management issues, and the preparation of bi-weekly plans, including site inspection scheduling. However, with the departure of the first manager, the bi-weekly meetings ceased to be held.

In the opinion of the consultant, the new manager recruited for the DID department in August 2005 did not have the required qualifications for the position as set out in the position terms of reference. He particularly lacked adequate experience in project management and contract administration. The consultant was requested on very short notice to participate in the interview and selection panel for the new DID department manager. However, in the absence of sufficient background information on the recruitment process, the consultant declined to participate. The candidate selected held the position for less than a month before resigning.

Site Survey

The purpose of the site survey is to identify land that is suitable for accommodating the number of buildings that need to be constructed at the location. The survey is used to gather information including but not limited to land topography, soil condition, and type of vegetation; the prevalence of water courses such as rivers and streams and their potential impact on flooding; existing structures and their conditions; and availability and access to electricity services and clean water supply. This information is necessary to prepare the building designs, location plan, and accurate requests for proposal for each district. The survey template was utilized by the surveyors at every site surveyed. However, the information gathered at some sites was incomplete and required that the sites be surveyed anew. This resulted in some earlier contracts having increased costs and construction delays due to additional work of site leveling (cut and fill), increase in foundation depths, and the demolition of existing structures.

The original survey template was prepared by the consultant based on the assumption that the districts selected for Phase I implementation had no infrastructure or the infrastructure had been completely destroyed, and that the land of the selected construction sites was owned by the government. This assumption proved not to apply to all locations, leading to extended delays in construction in seven districts due to land ownership disputes, and problems in four districts where structurally sound buildings already existed. In consideration of these and similar circumstances, the survey template was revised in early April 2005 with additional sections included to provide more information.

The updated survey template is used primarily to gather information during pre-construction site visits. ASP has utilized this template in its latest survey of the Group V districts. As a result, the information obtained from the 18 Group V districts is significantly more detailed.

Further assistance was provided to ASP in preparing detailed survey plans and in determining the locations of the various buildings to be constructed at the sites. Suggestions were given to the design team to include the site preparation and leveling costs in all future tender documents.

The consultant and ALGAP Program Associates developed a comprehensive *Needs Assessment Survey Questionnaire*. This document is divided into sections addressing actual and planned staffing, existing facilities and services, general public opinion of the District Administration office, its services to the local population, and the representation of central government and their personnel in the districts and provinces. Parts of the document were used for two surveys conducted by ALGAP and ASP.

The first needs assessment survey was carried out in three districts of Wazi Zadran, Gerda Serrai, and Shwak in Paktya province by an ALGAP Program Associate and an ASP Engineer assisted by Paktya's PRT. This first survey served as a test of the reception by district and provincial officials and the general public in providing the required information. The information gathered was compiled by the ALGAP Program Associate and the ASP Engineer. The experience gained from the performance of this first survey resulted in the need to make changes to the questionnaire format and presentation to tailor it and the information requested to the specific data required. The data gathered during this first survey proved to be particularly useful in obtaining information about existing district administrative structures, in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of local staff, and in identifying existing facilities.

A second needs assessment survey was performed by ALGAP Program Associates in seven districts of Dedahdi, Balkh, Chahar Bolak in Balkh; Aqcha, Madgajak in Jawzjan; Hazart Sultant, Dara Soof Paen in Samangan; and three provincial capitals of Mazar-e-Sharif, Aybak, and Shibirghan in Balkh, Samangan, and Jawzjan provinces, where reconstruction activities were planned or recently started. The survey team was well received and succeeded in gathering information useful to ALGAP capacity-building and training activities. In all the districts visited it was found that the majority of the staff did not know their job responsibilities and a number of positions in the organization structure remained vacant. The majority of the staff interviewed indicated computer training as a priority need. The survey team was also able to gather information on the progress and quality of the reconstruction projects in the provinces. It was found that the progress was slow and the quality of the workmanship poor, especially at Dara Soof Paen District, in spite of regular site monitor visits. Another area of expressed concern was the failure of implementing agencies to coordinate and/or share information with one another.

Facilities Development and Usage

The consultant completed reviews of the existing building designs with the manager and senior engineers of the DID department to reduce the overall coverage area and construction costs in each district. The consultant also assisted ASP in developing a number of draft designs for administration, police, and residential buildings of the smaller districts, and reviewed designs prepared by the DID department.

One construction design for each type of building has been approved by the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Interior and is now being executed. The consultant had concerns with the approved designs and specifically advised consideration of changes to the economical use of space in the administration buildings and toilet facilities, and to reduce the drainage work proposed for police buildings. However, the changes suggested by the consultant could not be considered by the Program Manager because the Deputy Minister of Interior had approved the initial designs.

Another concern was the consultant's belief that structural calculations were over-designed. However, the consultant's concern was ignored given the designers' considerations for additional earthquake safety factors. As a consequence, in some districts the tender offer received for the smaller administration and police buildings was equivalent to, and in some instances higher than, the amounts tendered previously

for significantly larger buildings. The DID department was revisiting the two building designs in an attempt to reduce non-functional space and over-design of structural calculations leading to a reduction in construction costs.

To date, only four administration buildings of the Pilot Phase have been completed at Mohammad Agha, Ghorband, Sayed Karam, and Muqur, and have been handed over officially only in Mohammad Agha and Ghorband. The furnishing and allocation of the offices of these buildings of the Pilot Phase, which include Nahrin and Yakowlan, to the various departments and Ministries representative had been prepared sometime ago by the previous Program Manager and the consultant. However, due to delays in completion, changes of requirements and reduced consultant involvement, little was achieved with regard to facilities development and usage for Phase I administration buildings except for design and space allocation.

Procurement Planning

The consultant provided guidance to the ASP Engineer in charge of procurement in assessing the amount of equipment and furnishing that would be needed for the district administration building of the Pilot Phase projects. Similar advice was provided to ASP to schedule the procurement of the furnishing and equipment to be provided for the 80 districts under Phase I projects in progress. However, ASP elected to call for bids for the supply of furnishings and equipment for all 80 districts in one tender, irrespective of the different sizes of the buildings and various completion timeframes. The tender offers had been negotiated and accepted by ASP, but no decision had been made for the contract award as of this writing.

Another area of assistance in procurement planning included a review of the *Request for Proposal (RFP)* document developed previously by the consultant. Revisions/changes to this document included the following:

- **Sub-clause 14.1:** The period of validity of bids is reduced from six months to four months.
- **Sub-clause 25.1:** Addition of item (c)
“If there is a discrepancy between the unit rates of same line item from one bill with another bill, the lower rate will apply to that line item throughout the works.”
- **Clause 26:** Addition of Sub-clause 26.2:
“To assist in the examination, evaluation and comparison of bids, the employer may, at the employer’s discretion, ask the bidder for clarification of the bidder’s bids, including breakdowns of unit rates.”
- **Clause 32:** Addition of Sub-clause 32.2
“Notwithstanding to the above, the 15% advance payment will be calculated on the basis of total number of components instructed by the Employer to commence construction work at any one time.”
- **Clause 33:** Addition of Dispute Settlement to Sub-clause 33.1
“If any dispute arises between the two parties relating to any aspects of this Agreement, the parties shall first attempt to settle the dispute through mutual and amicable consultation. Sub-clause 33.2 – In the event of agreement not being reached, the matter will be referred for arbitration by a Sole Arbitrator not below the level of retired Superintending Engineer, PWD to be appointed by the Employer. The decision of the Arbitrator shall be final and binding on both parties.”

- Forms and samples:
 - Bid;
 - Contractor's Qualification Information;
 - Curriculum Vitae format for proposed professional staff;
 - Letter of Acceptance;
 - Articles of Agreement;
 - Bank Guarantee for Advance Payment;
 - Performance Guarantee.

This revised RFP was translated into Dari and used in the Group IV and Group V districts tenders.

Assistance and advice were also provided in the evaluation of the Group IV tenders to ensure that the contractors were suitably qualified and that the rates listed in the offers were consistent. However, there was no evaluation of Group V bids for which the Program Manager announced at the tender opening the contract would be awarded to the lowest bid. As a result of this decision, the contracts for the Group V districts were not accepted by one of the members of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force (IMTF). It was ordered the bids be reviewed and re-evaluated to consider the contractor suitability, experience, and rates. However, due to the length of time taken for the initial evaluation and subsequent re-evaluation of the bids (exceeding the revised four-month limit stipulated in the RFP), the contractors have requested a revision to the rate allowances.

Monthly District and Provincial Construction Status Report

The monthly status report of the district and provincial construction activities undertaken by ASP, USAID, PRT, and other implementing agencies was prepared and maintained by the consultant and posted to the Share Point of USAID. The distribution list for this spreadsheet data was updated monthly to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of the information. Coordination in obtaining timely and accurate tracking information was an ongoing problem. Because providing this information is voluntary, the consultant was required to constantly request some of the agencies to furnish the needed information. Consequently, the report data was not necessarily indicative of project status from one month to the next.

In cases where a district appeared not to have made any progress for a number of months—for ASP projects in particular—the consultant made enquiries into the reasons for the lack of progress and, where applicable, provided advice for actions to be taken. On the advice of the consultant, an official letter was sent to the contractors by ASP reminding them of their contractual obligations and responsibility and requested an explanation for delays in progress when this was the cause for lack of project progress. However, very little action, if any, was taken in response to the correspondence.

Ministry of Communication District Communication Network Project and Other Activities

Coordination of District Communication Network (DCN) Project: In mid-April 2005, ALGAP was requested by USAID to provide coordination assistance to the DCN Project. Specific tasks undertaken by the consultant included tracking the status for district and provincial construction, shipment, and the installation and commissioning of telecommunication equipment of the DCN network. The monthly status report was distributed to all interested parties and posted at USAID Share Point. As of this writing, equipment for 32 provinces had been installed and operational, and equipment had been shipped and was being installed in 71 districts with 3 districts operational.

Coordination of MSI District Administration Building Projects: At the April 2005 meeting with USAID, ALGAP was also requested to provide coordination assistance to MSI in identifying and prioritizing construction of district administration buildings from funding that was earmarked initially for ASP. Several meetings were held for district selections and to determine respective building designs. Work was started in eight districts. The consultant had the opportunity to visit the Shinwari District site and was satisfied with the quality and progress of the work up to the time of the visit.

ASP Administrative Support: During the course of the consultant's assignment, assistance was provided regularly to ASP for the preparation of reports for donors' meeting, terms of reference for recruitment purposes, and participation in meetings and discussion for improved ASP management.

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