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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

FINAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION



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Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) Project

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ACRONYMS AND OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

AGE	antigovernment element
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
CADG	Central Asian Development Group
CDP	Community Development Program
COIN	counterinsurgency
DDA	District Development Assembly
DDP	District Development Plan
FIRUP	Food Insecurity Response to Urban Populations
FPO	Field Program Officer
FY	fiscal year
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GPS	global positioning system
IED	improvised explosive device
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
KTD	key terrain district
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock
MISTI	Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Initiatives
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OSM	Onsite Monitor
PMP	Performance Management Plan
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From March 2009 to September 2013, the Central Asian Development Group (CADG) implemented hundreds of labor-intensive infrastructure projects in some of the most insecure areas of Afghanistan under a cooperative agreement with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The Community Development Program (CDP), which changed names over the years, represented one of USAID's longest-running stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. With a ceiling of approximately \$266 million, it was also one of the greatest investments. Its closure in September 2013 marks an opportunity to document CDP successes and challenges and to reflect on lessons learned that can be applied in future stabilization programs, both in Afghanistan and elsewhere. This report describes the findings from the final performance evaluation of CDP's fourth and fifth program phases, in which CADG implemented 73 projects in seven provinces of eastern and southern Afghanistan from April 2012 through August 2013.

Originally called the Food Insecurity Response to Urban Populations, the program officially adopted stabilization objectives in September 2010 and shifted focus to primarily rural areas identified by USAID field staff in coordination with International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). Despite changing program objectives, over its lifespan CDP implemented the same type of infrastructure projects, without relying on subcontractors. CDP employed many combat-age men to work on labor-intensive infrastructure projects, usually for 30 to 90 days. Unlike many USAID partners, CDP took a low-profile approach to security instead of hiring a security firm. By the fourth phase of CDP, efforts to create more linkage and visibility between communities and government were included.

Following the evaluation scope of work, the team considered the following key questions:

- Were projects designed with the appropriate stakeholders, and did they meet the criteria for selection?
- Were community engagement processes effective?
- Were government engagement processes effective?
- Was laborer recruitment appropriately targeted and perceived to be fair?
- Were payment processes perceived to be effective, fair, and transparent?
- Were procurement processes perceived as fair, efficient, and transparent?
- Were training and maintenance plans well designed and effective?
- How did stakeholders (including the community) perceive the project in terms of attribution and quality of work?
- Were monitoring systems effective?
- Was coordination between USAID and CADG effective?
- Did the program meet its Performance Management Plan targets?

The evaluation team consisted of one expatriate and one Afghan evaluator, based in Kabul, and at least one interviewer in each province who could travel in the project districts. In total, more than 300 interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including USAID and CADG staff, Afghan government officials, community elders, project laborers, and other members of the community in all seven provinces where CDP worked during phases 4 and 5. The Kabul-based team reviewed project documents and conducted interviews with key USAID and CADG staff. Local interviewers traveled to at least three

project sites in each province to view the project and interview stakeholders. Because of security concerns, CADG asked the evaluation team to avoid working in CDP districts while projects were being implemented. The evaluation began in January 2013 with Ghazni and Paktika provinces where the CDP offices had recently closed, but it was extended through August 2013 after several CDP extensions delayed the evaluation in other provinces while CADG had ongoing projects.

Key Findings

Based on the data, the evaluation team identified the following key findings and recommendations:

- Many of the strengths of CDP’s phase 4 and 5 programs—including speed, flexibility, responsiveness, strong relationships, and high-capacity staff—were built over time.
- While CDP benefited from the experience of nearly five years of implementation, it didn’t have a planning advantage, since the program was never envisioned to be so long. Multiple short extensions lengthened its life by months at a time, which led to inefficient periods of ramping up and closing down.
- USAID was unable to systematically track the outcomes or impacts associated with its large investment, since no one planned for the program to continue as long as it did.
- Direct implementation gave CDP control over laborer recruitment, payment, and quality—all aspects that help determine whether projects will ultimately have a stabilizing effect. It also allowed the program to stay flexible.
- CADG’s multilayered monitoring systems were unable to prevent at least one serious corruption incident, although it was eventually detected. CADG further strengthened its procedures by requiring verification for all signing authorities, including the managers.
- By virtue of its location and approach, CDP faced a high risk of corruption at the same time as it faced high hurdles to effective monitoring.
- The military sometimes pushed for projects in strategic areas that may have been too insecure to have a good chance for success.
- Many CDP projects featured positive coordination between the Afghan government (typically the District Governor or Provincial Governor) and the Afghan National Security Forces, although this coordination was typically secured in an ad hoc fashion or was facilitated by USAID.
- Unlike other stabilization programs, once CDP areas were identified, projects were selected based on community requests rather than analysis or a stabilization rationale. This approach is consistent with the program’s theory of change.
- Programs like CDP can run the risk of damaging traditional systems of *hashar* when wages are paid for work that communities normally do for free.
- Projects were sometimes too large for available human resources. Especially where labor shortages were anticipated.

Recommendations

- Even stabilization programs that are not expected to have long-term results should be given enough time to build systems and staff capacity.

- USAID stabilization programs should directly implement projects, where possible, and avoid subcontracting that does not allow the implementing partner control over laborer recruitment, payment, and quality.
- Apart from having robust internal monitoring and evaluation systems, stabilization programs should have a third-party monitoring/verification component.
- Anti-corruption procedures should be strengthened by requiring verification for all signing authorities, including provincial managers.
- Programs such as CDP should have clear security criteria that all stakeholders, including the military, agree to uphold.
- Future stabilization projects should consider hiring fewer workers for longer periods of time.

Conclusions

The findings of this evaluation suggest that CDP was quick and flexible, and displayed a remarkable ability to work in some of Afghanistan’s most difficult areas. In general, projects facilitated positive interactions between communities and the government and were positively perceived by communities.

CDP’s success can largely be attributed to its longevity and CADG’s strong relationships with USAID, the Afghan government, and communities. By the final phase of the nearly five-year program, CDP systems were well honed. Directly implementing projects rather than relying on subcontractors allowed the program to be more responsive and to have better control over recruitment, implementation, and involvement of the Afghan government.

However, CDP was not immune to the pressures of a challenging environment. Corruption was known to be a significant issue, and this evaluation’s findings indicate that it may have been more widespread than previously documented. The findings suggest that the risks were highest where security was the worst. Interestingly, even though many respondents acknowledged that the Taliban influenced the community’s ability to work on a CDP project, the Taliban was not implicated in any of the allegations of corruption recorded by the evaluation team. In fact, corruption and attempted corruption were usually instigated by community elders or (sometimes) Afghan government officials.

CDP suffered greatly from attacks, murders, kidnappings, improvised explosive device (IED) explosions, and threats from antigovernment elements. From April 2012 to August 2013, several laborers, supervisors, and vendors were killed. At least 10 people were kidnapped (all eventually released), and many more were injured. Some incidents were the result of indirect fire, but many were direct attacks against CDP.*

CDP was a product of the military surge in Afghanistan. In keeping with the trend of transition, future USAID stabilization programs are likely to promote civilian–military cooperation within the Afghan government. While some lessons from CDP may apply, many may not. For example, while CDP worked through temporary systems for coordination between USAID and ISAF, Afghan coordination is more likely to require strengthening of permanent policies and institutions, with coordination centered on provincial and district governors.

* MISTI has been tasked to use CDP data to produce a peer-review paper that further explores the relationship between employment on labor-intensive development and infrastructure activities and patterns of violence against the security forces and local civilian population.

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the Community Development Program (CDP), a cooperative agreement that ran from March 2009 through August 2013, the Central Asian Development Group (CADG) implemented 337 infrastructure projects across 19 provinces of Afghanistan, which employed 373,859 laborers on a short-term basis. This report describes the findings from the final performance evaluation of CDP's fourth and fifth program phases, in which CADG implemented 73 projects in seven provinces of eastern and southern Afghanistan from April 2012 through August 2013.

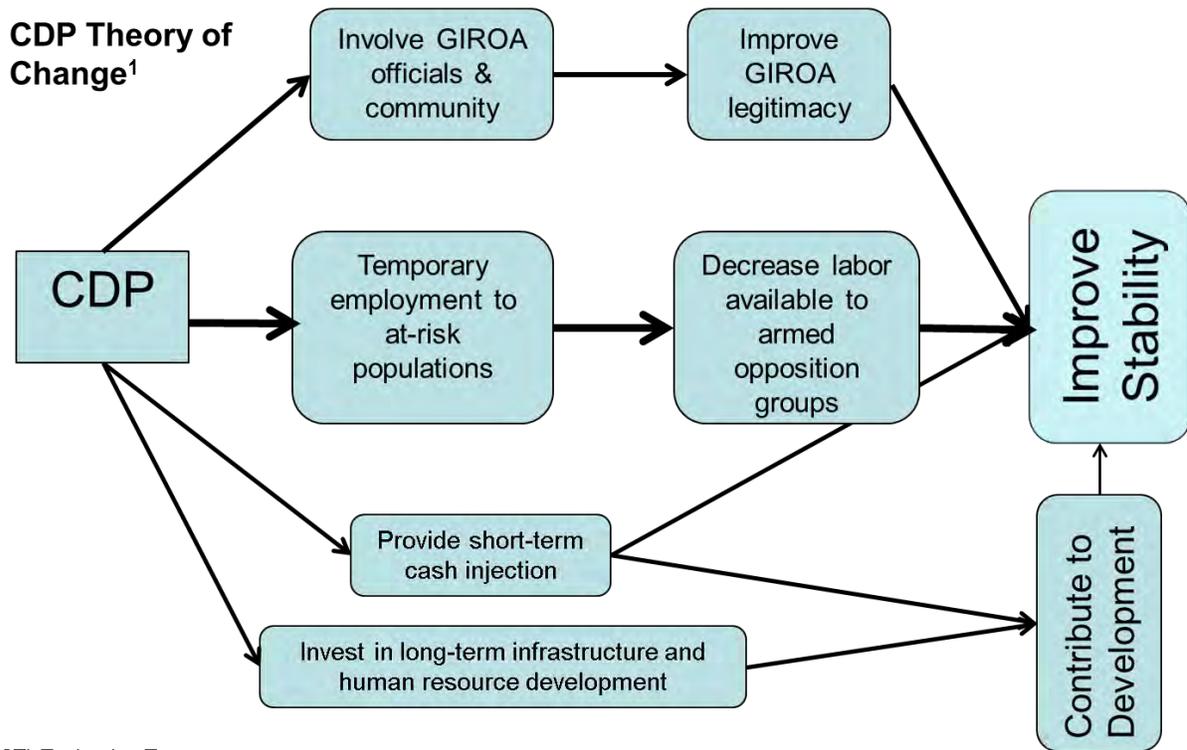
The CDP program evolved from an earlier USAID program called Food Insecurity Response to Urban Populations (FIRUP), which began in March 2009 and provided short-term employment in urban areas. Over five phases of implementation, the program shifted objectives substantially. Beginning in September 2010, the program adopted stabilization objectives and shifted concentration from working in urban areas to primarily working in rural areas. Selecting labor-intensive projects and spending at least 60 percent of the project cost on labor meant that CDP employed many combat-age men, usually for 30–90 days. Later projects had a component linking the Afghan government with the communities to promote stronger relationships. A modest on-the-job training component was included in phase 4 to develop the skills necessary for the maintenance of the rehabilitated infrastructure. Also, where feasible, employment opportunities were extended to vulnerable populations, including women and the disabled. While other organizations also implemented the FIRUP and CDP program in the earlier phases, CADG is the only organization to implement every phase of the program.

Project districts were chosen in response to requests from International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and locations were often at the request of ISAF or the Afghan government, based on CDP's ability to work in some of the least secure areas of the country. Projects themselves were chosen with community and government involvement to ensure that they reflected local priorities and that the community would guarantee their security with government support. CDP featured

- Short-term employment with local community laborers
- Highly valued, labor-intensive, community infrastructure projects implemented in collaboration with the Afghan government
- Project selection guidance and concurrence provided by USAID Field Program Officers (FPOs) with project approval by the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) according to the substantial involvement clause of the cooperative agreement and program description
- Direct implementation with very limited subcontracting, using community foremen

Based on interviews, the evaluation team created a theory of change diagram to illustrate how stakeholders understood the primary and secondary effects of the program. CADG staff emphasized the primary aim of keeping combat-age men in key areas busy, to reduce the availability of men to join the insurgency or participate in criminal activities. USAID staff acknowledged this as an important function of the program and emphasized the importance of linking communities to the government. CADG staff were more likely to say that the next important function of the program was to provide a cash injection to households and communities. Investing in infrastructure and human capacity to support long-term development was considered the least critical of the major pathways to reaching CDP objectives.

FIGURE I: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM THEORY OF CHANGE



¹ MISTI Evaluation Team

Context

CDP maintained coordination with ISAF from the beginning, but the evolution of FIRUP to CDP occurred during the military surge, when USAID vastly increased its presence of FPOs at the military bases. The counterinsurgency strategy entailed a four-stage approach whereby the military would plan to enter areas controlled by insurgents (the “Shape” or pre-Clear phase), remove the insurgent threat (“Clear” phase), and maintain security in the area (“Hold” phase). This sequence was done to prepare the area for development efforts (“Build” phase). CDP was originally designed to work in pre-military and post-military clearance operations, typically, in military-designated key terrain districts (KTDs).

While most contractors used security firms to work in KTDs, CDP maintained a low profile even in the most dangerous locations by hiring expatriate personnel with a military or police background to manage projects. Managers would often live in the provincial center and travel to various projects sites. Given CDP’s capabilities and its relatively fast response time, military and USAID field staff made many demands on the program. Over its five-year history, the program was called on to work in areas that were

key to supporting counternarcotic objectives, the Special Forces' Village Stabilization Operations,^{*} and development priorities such as the Gardez–Khost Road and the Kandahar Helmand Power Project.

While reading the findings that follow, it is important to keep the security context in mind. As illustrated by Figure 2, CDP worked in eastern and southern districts with some of the highest rates of security incidents. Communities were often under the influence of Taliban or other antigovernment elements (AGEs) in the area. Risks to CDP included both targeted threats and the risk of collateral damage from the kinetic environment. During the six months of phase 5, the following incidents were recorded:

- One laborer and one CADG supervisor were killed, and one laborer and one CADG supervisor were wounded in targeted attacks.
- One laborer was kidnapped (and later released).
- Two laborers and two supervisors were wounded in collateral damage from IEDs, nearby fighting, or indirect fire.
- Two projects received night letters.[†]
- Two projects received threatening phone calls.
- One project site was threatened by AGE in person.

^{*}Village Stabilization Operations were the platform for establishing Afghan Local Police, a force that comes under the authority of the Ministry of Interior.

[†]A tactic employed by the Taliban and other extremist groups in Afghanistan to intimidate supporters of secular government and education.

**FIGURE 2: SECURITY INCIDENTS AND CDP DISTRICTS
(APRIL 2012 THROUGH OCTOBER 2013)**

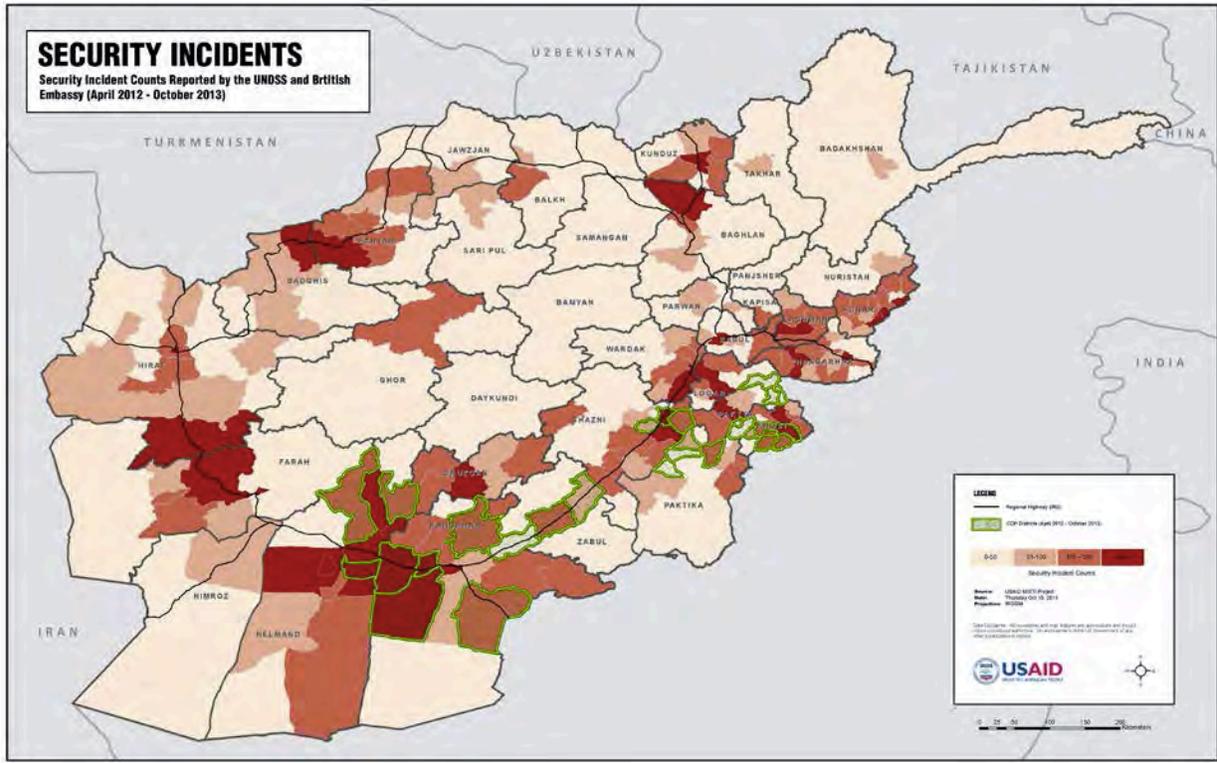


TABLE I: PHASES OF FIRUP/CDP

	Timeframe	Program	Geographic	Objectives
Phase I & II	March 2009 - Sep 2010	Food Insecurity Resonse to Urban Populations (FIRUP)	13 urban centers	FIRUP first launched in Kandahar, Jalalabad, Lashkar Gah, Tirin Kot and Gardez and then expanded. The aim was to provide short-term employment to vulnerable urban population centers at risk of acute food insecurity. Original objectives: 1) ensure that households are better able to meet their basic needs and 2) avoid urban turmoil in southern Afghanistan
Phase III	October 2010 - March 2012	Community Development Program, South, East, and West (CDP-SEW)	19 provinces	CDP was integrated into the USAID Stabilization Unit and played a part in the counterinsurgency effort, by going into pre- and post-clearance areas, although formally pulled out of pre-clearance areas, owing to risks, in 2011. Shifted focus from urban to rural areas and added two objectives: 1) contribute to stabilization and improved security in the implementation areas, and 2) contribute to improved relations between community and government.
Phase IV	April 2012 - December 2012	Community Development Program (CDP)	Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, Paktya, Paktika, Khost and Ghazni	Stabilization objectives, formally endorsed, included: support to post military clearing operations, multi-stakeholder community development, sustainable community infrastructure using labor-intensive methods, natural disaster response (in some cases), support to DDP districts, and support to VSO activities where warranted.
Phase V	March 2012 - August 2013	Community Development Program (CDP)	Kandahar, Helmand and districts in Paktya and Khost near the Gardez-Khost road	Support to on-going and planned USG development priorities: Kandahar Helmand Power Project, Gardez-Khost Road and other strategic priorities. Program will be executed to address the following situations: post military clearing operations, counter-narcotics, multi-stakeholder community development, sustainable community infrastructure using labor-intensive

CDP recorded similar incidents of murder, kidnapping, and threats during phase 4. Of the 73 phase 4 and 5 projects, only 3 were canceled because of security (or a combination of reasons including security).

In addition to security difficulties, districts where CDP worked were challenging in other ways, including remoteness. Particularly in rural areas, the population was generally very poor and uneducated with limited work opportunities. They may have rarely interacted with or received services from the Afghan government, which, in many provinces, maintains a presence only in cities or district centers.

Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation examines the performance of CDP from April 2012 through August 2013 (phases 4 and 5) according to its approved program objectives. Key evaluation questions were derived from the program description and Performance Management Plan (PMP). Although it was not an impact evaluation, as a secondary aim the evaluation team sought to validate the program's theory of change and report any evidence of impact of interventions to the extent possible given the methodology. The primary audience for the evaluation is management of USAID's Stabilization Unit and the Office of Program and Project Development. The evaluation is intended to inform the design of future stabilizations programs and management decisions.

Key Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were examined through the evaluation.

Project Design and Engagement

- Were projects designed with the appropriate stakeholders, and did they meet the criteria for selection?
- Were community engagement processes effective?
- Were government engagement processes effective?

Implementation

- Was laborer recruitment appropriately targeted and perceived to be fair?
- Were payment processes perceived to be effective, fair, and transparent?
- Were procurement processes perceived as fair, efficient, and transparent?
- Were training and maintenance plans well designed and effective?

Perceptions and Outcomes

- How did stakeholders (including the community) perceive the project in terms of attribution and quality of work?
- What were project outcomes?
- How did projects benefit laborers and their families (particularly marginalized groups such as women, the disabled, and returnees)?

Oversight and Coordination

- Were monitoring systems effective?
- Was coordination between USAID and CADG effective?
- Did the program meet its PMP targets?

Methodology

This performance evaluation used qualitative methods, including observation, interviews, and a desk review of project documents to evaluate CDP performance. The Kabul-based evaluation team consisted of one expatriate and one Afghan evaluator who conducted interviews with CADG staff, USAID staff, and project stakeholders to understand the processes, challenges, and lessons learned of the program. The expatriate evaluator in Kabul conducted many interviews with USAID field staff by telephone and interviewed CADG Program Managers and Deputy Program Managers when they traveled through Kabul. The Afghan evaluator traveled to Kandahar city, Khost city, and Lashkar Gar for interviews and managed a team of field interviewers who traveled to CDP districts.

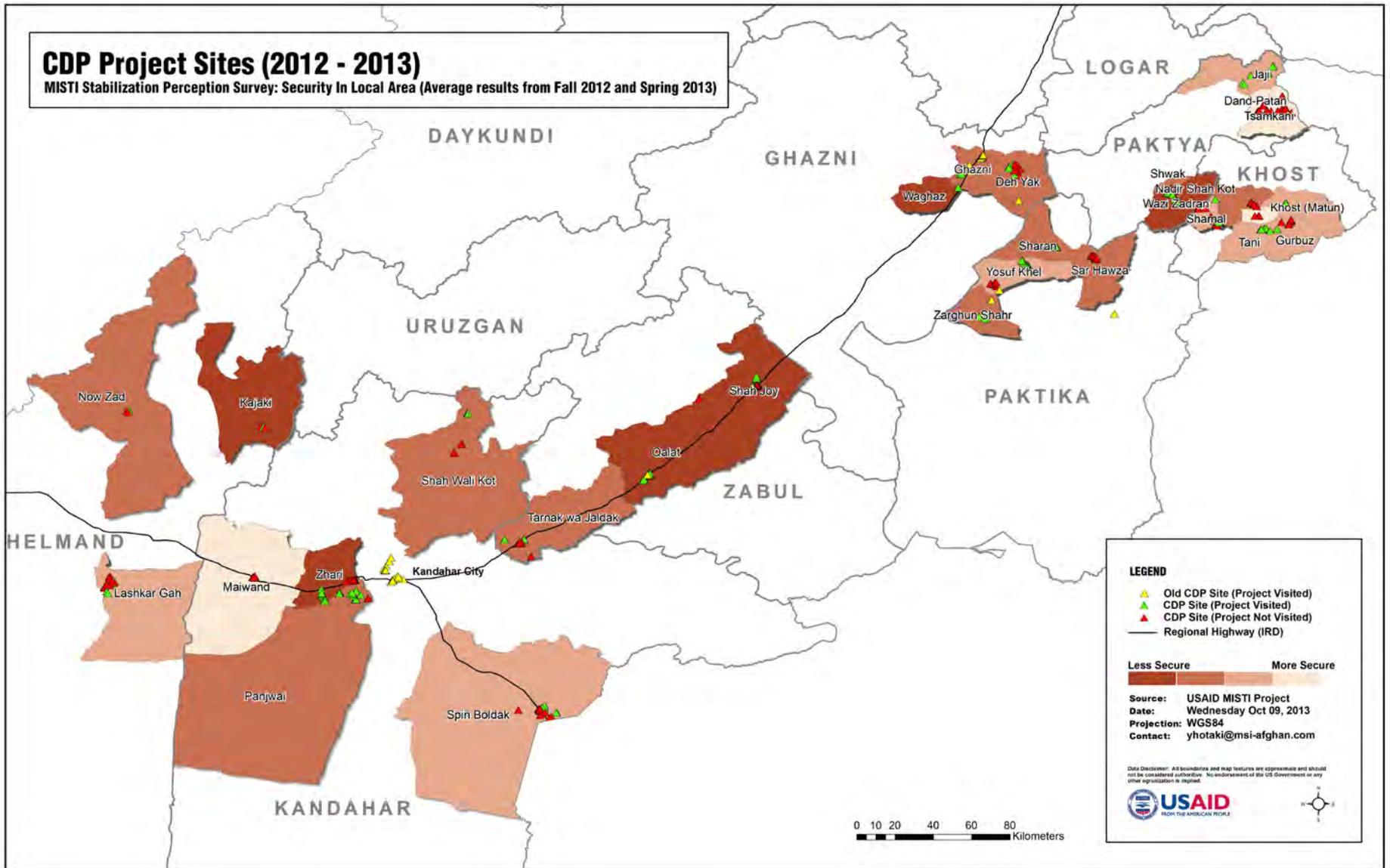
To gain a deeper understanding of how the program performed in the field, the evaluation team selected three to six phase 4 and 5 projects from each province (more than one third of the total number of projects) for closer study. CDP project data were examined to understand how projects varied in terms of type, value, beneficiaries, and location. Survey data from the Measuring Impact of Stabilization

Initiatives (MISTI) Stability Survey were used to characterize project districts in terms of variables such as overall stability and security. Together, this information allowed the team to select study projects that were relatively representative of the universe of CDP projects. The map (Figure 3) shows all CDP projects sites for phases 4 and 5, with those visited by the evaluation team marked by a red dot. A complete list of projects visited appears as Annex A.

Security conditions in the project areas prohibited the Kabul-based Afghan evaluator from conducting site visits. Instead, the team recruited and trained one or two interviewers from each province to visit the selected project sites and interview direct and indirect beneficiaries and project stakeholders such as elders who were involved in project oversight. Local interviewers documented perceptions of project quality, fairness of laborer selection and laborer payment, strength of community buy-in, and the degree to which communities recognized Afghan government involvement. The evaluation team did not employ engineers to inspect projects or accountants to review records; perceptions were considered a sufficient proxy. The evaluation was designed to examine community perceptions of outputs, processes, and some outcomes. The ability to measure program impact was limited.

While phases 4 and 5 were the primary concentration of the evaluation, the evaluation team took the opportunity to examine projects from earlier phases. Thus, 2 to 6 projects in Ghazni, Kandahar city, Paktika, and Zabul were studied, for a total of 14 earlier projects. The objective of looking at earlier projects was to examine the lasting effects of cash-for-work projects.

FIGURE 3: MAP OF CDP PROJECT SITES AND EVALUATION SITE VISITS



As a security measure, USAID and CADG requested that the evaluation team avoid sending interviewers to villages while CDP projects were ongoing in a district. Thus, the selection of districts and timing of fieldwork depended on the completion of CDP projects. Following this principle, the first round of data was collected in January and February 2012, covering six projects in Ghazni and six projects in Paktika following the end of CDP programming in those provinces. The second round of data was collected in selected areas of Kandahar in February and March, and in Zabul province in April following the completion schedule of all projects. The evaluation team covered the rest of Helmand, Kandahar, Khost, and Paktya provinces in August and September of 2013, following completion of phase 5 projects.

In total, the evaluation team conducted 317 interviews: 22 with USAID staff, 25 with CADG staff, 55 with Afghan government officials and 215 with community members (elders, laborers, and other community members). A table with interviews by province appears as Annex B.

It is anticipated that MISTI’s semiannual survey will be able to analyze the impact of phase 5 projects quantitatively in terms of changes in stability, perceptions of government legitimacy, and quality of life. The MISTI survey, which uses probabilistic sampling, collected a baseline for many phase 5 implementation areas and is scheduled to revisit these areas in November and December 2013 to capture the change in areas with CDP projects that can be compared with similar areas without CDP projects. Because of the timing of the survey, results won’t be available until early 2014.

TABLE 2: DATA COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Province	Data Collection	Province	Data Collection
Ghazni, Paktika	January and February 2013	Zabul	April 2013
Kandahar City	February and March 2013	Khost, Paktya, Helmand, districts of Kandahar	August & September, 2013

Limitations

The evaluation design had many strengths, including the collection of data from all provinces and multiple project sites. In addition, the evaluation team has previous experience evaluating USAID stabilization programs in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, some limitations should be noted. Since only one or two local interviewers were hired in each province, the depth of information differed, so results should not be compared by province. In addition, all but one of the Afghan interviewers were male. Therefore, owing to cultural constraints, only a few women in Kandahar city and Lashkar Gah were interviewed—although this limitation is mitigated by the fact that no female laborers were hired on phase 4 or 5 projects except in Helmand province, where women working on sewing projects made up just 10 percent of laborers.

Turnover of USAID, CADG, and Afghan government staff sometimes made it difficult to conduct all intended interviews. Also, because the evaluation team was not allowed to visit project sites during implementation, it was sometimes hard to locate enough laborers or stakeholders from each project. The

team conducted interviews with stakeholders and staff from all provinces, and site visits covered approximately one third of all 2012 and 2013 projects, and a much smaller percentage of older projects.

Finally, CDP areas were fairly volatile. Many factors other than CDP may have affected perceptions of the project or other variables such as perceptions of the government. It was often difficult to understand how perceptions were formed, which is one reason so many interviews were conducted.

FINDINGS

Project Design and Engagement

Were Projects Designed With the Appropriate Stakeholders, and Did They Meet the Three Criteria for Selection? Were Government and Community Engagement Processes Effective?

Although the process differed slightly from project to project and across provinces, USAID usually consulted with or took requests from the military to determine the Community Development Program districts and, sometimes, sub-district areas. In 2011, Central Afghan Development Group decided (under USAID guidance) to abandon working in “pre-Clear” areas because it found that implementation was often not feasible where there was a heavy presence of antigovernment elements. Nevertheless, the military continued to request CDP assistance in highly kinetic areas, and USAID and CADG often complied. USAID Field Program Officers (FPOs) who had recently joined USAID were more likely to complain about CDP’s unwillingness to go to certain areas they had requested, whereas FPOs who had served more than a year were more likely to complain about the military’s unreasonable requests. One seasoned FPO in Kandahar province noted that CDP was supposed to go “behind, not in front” of the military, but they often found themselves in the latter situation. USAID FPOs resided on military bases and had limited mobility or information outside of what the military provided, so their enthusiasm for working in the most challenging areas was understandable. However, longer serving FPOs were more realistic about where CDP should operate.

For the military, attracting development projects to strategic and insecure areas was beneficial and with little risk. However, sending CDP to such areas had several implications, which will be discussed throughout this report, including

- Higher risk of project cancellation. Canceled projects tended to occur in the most dangerous districts, such as Deh Yak of Ghazni and Shah Joy of Zabul (phase 4 cancellations).
- Higher costs attributable to materials transportation. CDP had to pay \$10,000 for security of a 20-truck convoy of bricks to Helmand province, following the death of a truck driver in a previous shipment.
- Higher risk of harm to workers involved.
- Higher risk of fraud, corruption, or coercion by local powerbrokers.
- Poor access to areas for monitoring and management.

Once areas were chosen, USAID and CADG consulted district government officials and communities

about what type of projects should be done. Typically, the district governor, the District Development Assembly (DDA), and some part of the Afghan National Security Forces were involved in planning; sometimes line department representatives or provincial council members were also involved. In cities, the mayor was a key figure. District officials sometimes suggested projects from the District Development Plan (DDP) or projects that communities had previously prioritized or requested or they held consultations with community leaders. Government officials, particularly in municipalities, sometimes directly requested projects from CDP.

It is worth noting that once CDP areas were identified, projects were selected based on community requests rather than analysis or a stabilization rationale. Unlike other USAID stabilization programs, CDP had no process for evaluating a proposed project's stabilization effect; instead, it was assumed that any short-term, labor-intensive project, if done in a critical location, would help the program reach CDP's goal. Identifying needs- or wants-based projects was also relatively easy and fast. Selection was based on technical feasibility and community buy-in rather than how the project directly related to stabilization objectives. One exception was when the Kandahar city chief of police requested a project to repair a damaged sidewalk because it posed a risk for easy planting of explosives. In Zarghun Shahr, Paktika, the district governor used the CDP project as an incentive for the community to participate in the Afghan Local Police (ALP). However, projects typically were chosen because they were requested by the community and/or government and were labor intensive.

The CDP phase 4 program description mentions the use of the following three criteria for project selection, which were used in other counterinsurgency (COIN) programs:

- Does the project increase support for the Afghan government?
- Does the project decrease support for AGEs?
- Does the project increase institutional and societal (community) capacity?

On the one hand, the evaluation team found that these criteria were not used in practice. On the other hand, it is not clear that analyzing the projects, which were often irrigation or infrastructure rehabilitation, would have yielded different results. Applying the three questions to area selection may have been useful, but it was already done at an earlier stage.

Communities were generally satisfied with project selection, but problems arose where the consultation process was not thorough. Often the problem was not the proposed project itself but the details of its design or its exact location. In Maiwand district for example, shopkeepers strongly opposed the CDP bazaar rehabilitation project since it resulted in the narrowing of the road so that two trucks could no longer pass at once. In Tani district, one intake was denounced as useless by community respondents because it was located near the district center, where it did not benefit anyone. In this case, one government official said the documents were signed reluctantly, after the insistence of CADG.

Sometimes dissatisfaction about the project selection arose from misunderstanding about the project scope. When CDP decided to rehabilitate a clinic in Helmand, the director of economy thought that CDP would rehabilitate the entire building, whereas the plan was to work on the clinic rooms only. Similarly, in Khost, the principal of a school which CDP rehabilitated had expected that the project's toilet construction component would be done on the school grounds. He was disappointed to learn that it was to

be installed in the district center instead. Such miscommunications resulted in frustration and could have easily been avoided.

Involving Afghan officials sometimes created problems. Particularly in the South, several USAID and CADG staff said that officials were unhappy to learn that the project would not be subcontracted (which limited their ability to demand a cut or otherwise profit from subcontractors working in their district). One USAID Onsite Monitor (OSM) in Zabul surmised that the district governor's lackluster effort to work with CADG was most likely due to the fact that he was unable to profit from the projects. USAID and CADG staff noted that it sometimes took a while to convince government officials to work with CDP, since they would often hold out for implementation arrangements that could be more easily exploited.

Elders, too, sometimes demanded money for projects or were otherwise difficult to work with. As an example, in Paktika, two powerful elders explained to the local interviewer that they were responsible for bringing a CDP project to their area. Other community members on the project confirmed that the two elders intimidated the district governor into moving the project to their district. In Spin Boldak, a tribal shura leader misled CADG into beginning work in the wrong location—a property that belonged to him. Luckily, the scheme was caught before it was too late.

CDP project selection took into consideration community preferences and ISAF and Afghan government priorities. Even so, some projects were more supportive to long-term development than others. Traditionally, the Afghan system of hashar draws people together for voluntary work that benefits the whole community. Canal and road maintenance is done through hashar. As has been noted in other reports, paying wages for work that is typically done by hashar has had a negative effect in many Afghan communities. Villagers who have been paid to clean karezes through donor-funded cash-for-work projects sometimes develop expectations for payment and may not do such work voluntarily in the future. Many areas where CDP works have had little or no exposure to development projects. In Kajaki, one respondent who had worked on a CDP project said he was surprised that someone was going to pay them to work on projects that were for their village. Programs such as CDP should take care not to damage this important institution.

Some CDP projects, such as intake rehabilitation, consisted of tasks that communities cannot do alone. These projects presented no threat to hashar. Other projects included some complex tasks and some simpler tasks, such as refuse removal. CDP could have better supported traditional practices by either focusing entirely on projects that were sufficiently complex to require outside engineering assistance, or to require community contribution for simpler tasks that might be traditionally done through hashar, such as refuse removal.

According to the 2013 CDP Performance Management Plan (PMP), CADG planned that “implementation and all of the paperwork generated will be fully transparent.” Making paperwork available and even getting signatures may be one step toward transparency, but is not a substitute for communicating the important aspects of a project verbally. Government officials may not read project proposals in enough detail even if they sign them. Sharing documents can potentially cause a misunderstanding. In Kandahar province, the interviewer noted many complaints from laborers that a specific number of people were supposed to be hired but fewer were actually hired, sparking rumors that someone was taking the difference in wages paid. While it is not clear what happened, one possible explanation may be that

people heard the planned number of laborers and mistook it for the number of laborers being paid (often the planned number was higher than the number of workers who could be recruited).

Security arrangements were the responsibility of both communities and the government. The government made arrangements with available forces, or sometimes at the request of USAID. There appeared to be no policy for how development projects should be protected. In different districts, officials arranged for security of the project through the Afghan National Army (ANA), the Afghan National Police (ANP), the National Directorate of Security (NDS), or the ALP. Government security arrangements were generally effective.

To participate in CDP, community leaders had to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with CADG that described the community's responsibility for protecting the project and workers from threats. Some communities wanted CDP projects but could not agree to the terms of the MOU. This was the case in Andar district of Ghazni, where, at the request of USAID, CADG explored the possibility of implementing projects only to conclude that the communities were not able to guarantee security. Other communities, such as the communities of Waghez district in Ghazni and Jaji district of Khost, sought permission from the Taliban to ensure that they could do the project. Other communities miscalculated the risk. In Shah Joy district of Zabul, the Taliban intimidated laborers from the rural areas who then quit, leaving only laborers from the district center to finish the work.

In general, local interviewers found that most community members were unaware of the security guarantees signed by their elders. Since the whole community was called on to guarantee the project, holding a public forum would have helped ensure that the entire community understood the agreement.

Implementation

Direct implementation was one of the most important factors behind CDP's success. CADG managed all aspects of project implementation, including security, with the result that they were much faster and more flexible than many USAID contractors working in similar areas. Subcontracting, the prevailing alternative to direct implementation, often carries high overhead costs and lengthy processes. Especially in insecure areas where monitoring access is limited, subcontractors have been known to prioritize speed over quality. Once contracts are signed, the prime organization may have limited influence over how the subcontractor conducts its work and limited ability to refocus efforts if needed. For stabilization programs in particular, this is a serious handicap since the use of local labor, procurement of local materials, and participation of Afghan government officials are essential parts of the program. Direct implementation gave CADG much more control over these aspects, as well as quality, speed, and cost. One reason that direct implementation was not more common is that it requires contractors to assume the full responsibility for program success and failure.

While CDP often worked in areas that were targeted for operations, it is not exactly accurate to say that CDP played a "post-Clear" role envisioned in the COIN strategy. According to USAID FPOs, there was usually little notice before operations were launched. CDP was fast but had to follow certain procedures for concept development, consultations with the Afghan government officials and communities, approvals, mobilization and procurement—all of which took at least 30 days. In addition, CDP projects were usually planned in phases. Choosing a location that was expected to be cleared could lead to project

delays should the operations be delayed. At least during phases 4 and 5, CDP did not often, if ever, plan projects to directly follow military clearance operations.

Was Laborer Recruitment Appropriately Targeted and Perceived to Be Fair? Were Payment Processes Perceived to Be Effective, Fair, and Transparent?

In most cases, labor recruitment and payment processes were perceived to be fair. CDP recruited laborers through announcements at mosques, on the radio, or by introduction from community leaders or government officials. In Khost and Paktya where tribal systems are strong, unskilled laborers were recruited by tribal quota, which was accepted by all respondents interviewed. Wages were similar across provinces and tended to be comparable or slightly higher than labor wages paid in the local market.*

In all provinces, most laborers fit the target population and were from the local area. However, there were numerous exceptions. Interviewers heard several allegations that government officials, elders, and even CADG staff had undue influence on labor recruitment. The most common report was that unqualified people were being introduced for skilled labor positions.† By contrast, in Khost, skilled laborers had to pass a test, a requirement that was not heard of in other provinces but one that could be easily replicated. For some projects CADG had to hire skilled laborers from outside the community because there was a shortage of skilled laborers. Respondents agreed that hiring outside skilled labor was acceptable in such cases.

Two of CDP's main performance targets were the number of laborers hired and person-days worked, so keeping these figures high was a priority for CADG staff. From field interviews, it seemed that sometimes the number of laborers planned was perhaps more than the actual project requirements. Several laborers reported that they worked less than a full day's work and that sometimes there were more laborers than the day's task required. Laborers were paid on days when rain or supply shortages prevented work from being done. While hiring as many people as possible did further the goal of keeping combat-age men employed, it should be remembered that CDP projects were being linked to the Afghan government. Laborers from these poor communities who had had little exposure to government services were sometimes critical of what they saw as a waste of resources, even if the wages went to local laborers.

While there were often more laborers planned than necessary, for some projects it was difficult for CADG to recruit the target number of laborers either because of competing work opportunities, the limits of available labor in rural areas, or intimidation by antigovernment elements. One FPO working in Kandahar explained that it is difficult to find labor during poppy harvesting season. Interviewers confirmed that laborers during poppy season can expect wages approximately double what CDP offered.

Payment processes were mostly perceived to be fair and transparent, but there were complaints in Khost province, including laborers who claimed they were not paid for the final five days of work. Several laborers as well as one Afghan government official reported that some people who did not take part in work showed up on the day of payment.

*Daily wages were usually 300 Afs for unskilled labor (approximately \$6) and 600–700 for skilled labor (approximately \$12–\$13).

†Unqualified laborers were said to have been introduced as skilled laborers by influential people (PK 019), by CADG staff (GN 018), by the police chief (KN 047) and by the DDA (KN 043).

In Khost and Kandahar, it was reported that ALP members were being paid as unskilled laborers. In Khost the community accepted that ALP was being paid since they were providing ongoing security; in Maiwand district of Kandahar, respondents were upset that ALP came only on payday to collect money. Also in Maiwand, the police chief was reported to have introduced 15 ghost workers and came to collect their wages on pay day. In Ghazni, there were reports that the powerful elder involved in the Zarghun Shahr district road project pressed CADG to make his son a foreman and to give him wages for days he didn't work.

Were Procurement Processes Perceived as Fair, Efficient, and Transparent?

By directly implementing projects, CDP could ensure that laborers were local residents and materials were locally procured, as far as possible, so that the project funds stayed in the local community. Local procurement presented challenges in the rural, unstable areas where CDP worked. Often there were few suppliers and even fewer who could deliver quality materials. Because of these constraints, sometimes materials had to be sourced from the provincial capital or farther. CDP was generally successful at sourcing materials and ensuring timely delivery, although occasional delays halted projects temporarily.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of procurement was the bidding process. The practice of accepting the lowest bid for materials works well in a competitive environment, but CDP's environment was not always conducive to fair competition. Several respondents from the communities noted that prices for materials were high. Having so few suppliers in the local area may have led to collusion for higher-than-normal quotes, even if the bidding process was technically followed. An extreme example was seen in Maiwand district of Kandahar where CADG had to deal with a union of vendors that set prices abnormally high. Since CDP didn't subcontract projects, procurement was one of the few avenues for local powerbrokers to attempt to exploit. In Kandahar, respondents noted that DDA members and even district governors got contracts.

Local procurement has many merits, but in the areas where CDP worked it can't be assumed to work as smoothly as in a perfectly competitive environment. CADG had to take a more proactive role in managing procurement outcomes, which sometimes worked favorably and other times probably unduly benefited power brokers.

Were Training and Maintenance Plans Well Designed and Effective?

The contract modification for phase 4 included new language that every project "where feasible" should have "a small, focused on-the-job training component to develop the skills necessary for the maintenance of the infrastructure being constructed or improved."^{*} The training component was often as simple as skilled laborers showing unskilled laborers how to perform tasks such as mixing cement or installing stone. Some respondents found the training useless, while others said they mastered new skills. While reviews were mixed, the fact that many laborers did find the training useful suggests that with minor improvements, the training could have even greater effects. This new component of CDP did not require much effort to implement but appears to be a worthwhile addition to the program.

When asked about their ability to maintain the projects, communities had varied responses. The rural communities with the least exposure to prior development—particularly those in Khost, Paktika, and

^{*}Phase 4 Program Description, Feb. 1, 2012.

Paktya provinces—were the most likely to say that they would protect the project. “We tried very hard for that project because it benefited us a lot, so if anything is happening to it in the future, we will protect and maintain it,” said one elder in Paktika, of an intake constructed in 2012. An officer of the Paktika Department of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock explained that the government didn’t have funds to maintain the project, but with the tools and leftover stone and training provided the villagers would be able to maintain their projects. When visiting a 2011 canal and reservoir project in Sar Hawza district of Paktika, an interviewer found that the community had already reconstructed a portion of it which had been damaged. In Khost and Paktya provinces, communities felt confident that they would be able to maintain the projects through hashar, using tools left at the end of the project.

Respondents in the South, particularly in Helmand province, tended to say that project maintenance was the responsibility of the government. The difference might be explained by the fact that more southern projects were in cities like Lashkar Gah or in district centers, compared with the eastern provinces. In Kandahar city, the mayor described how the municipality had been maintaining the earlier CDP projects (from 2011 and before), such as sidewalks that the city removed and relaid when pipes were recently installed.

Perceptions and Outcomes

How Did Stakeholders (Including the Community) Perceive the Project in Terms of Attribution and Quality of Work?

The quality of most CDP projects was praised by the community and stakeholders. The head of the Paktika Provincial Assembly said: “I would give 120 points out of 100 to this [nongovernmental organization] NGO. I am very impressed by the quality work they have done.” The district governor of Panjwai said that the quality of work was very good, and added, “The canal repair in Spirwan village and Salihan village road repair were very effective projects of CDP because they gave job opportunities to a lot of people, they were a primary need of the community, and they will last a long time.”

However, several phase 4 and 5 projects were not highly regarded, including the following:

Maiwand district, Kandahar province: Respondents were very unhappy with the Maiwand district bazaar project (KN 047), particularly the shopkeepers who were supposed to benefit the most. One DDA member said that CDP did not alleviate their problem, but rather increased it since the project narrowed the market road sufficiently that two cars could no longer pass at the same time. Respondents agreed that a project was needed to divert rain, which was damaging goods, but they were unhappy with the project design.

Zarghun Shahr district, Paktika province: Both the phase 4 and phase 3 projects in Zarghun Shahr were perceived to be of poor quality by many, but not all, respondents. The Mohammad Dost village road rehabilitation (PK 019), completed during phase 4, was said to be constructed with poor-quality dirt such that it was expected to wash out soon. Also noted was that the road was different widths in different parts.

Qalat district, Zabul province: According to respondents, some parts of the Sinak village market access and drainage rehabilitation project (ZB 027) have already been destroyed, perhaps because of poorly qualified skilled laborers who did not mix enough cement with sand.

Khost (Matun) district, Khost province: Respondents were disappointed that the Toot intake, which was part of the Khabash Khel village irrigation rehabilitation (KO 039), was not drawing water. They believed that the problem stemmed from the design, which was based on a survey done years before, and a delay in receiving materials, which left little time left for construction.

Shamal district, Khost province: Just three months after it was constructed, 35 meters of the Anarbagh village protection wall (KO 036) was reportedly destroyed by floods.

Wazi Zadran district, Paktya province: Weeks after completion, heavy floods destroyed part of the protection wall of KO 047, the Peri Kheil and Kang Kheil irrigation rehabilitation project.

Interviewers asked respondents in the communities who was responsible for bringing the project. Most common responses included an NGO (some named CADG), USAID, the provincial reconstruction team, the Afghan government, and community elders. One concern associated with working in places where access was negotiated through the Taliban is that the Taliban would be given credit. There was no evidence that communities directly credited the Taliban with the project, although it would be difficult to measure whether by giving permission the Taliban improved its image.

PT 044 Jaji district irrigation rehabilitation (left) and flood damage at KO 047 Wazi Zadran Peri Kheil and Kang Kheil irrigation rehabilitation (right).



What Were the Project Outcomes?

CDP projects were designed to produce outcomes leading to greater stability. The easiest outcome to examine through the performance evaluation was whether projects were associated with positive development outcomes. When asked whether 2012 irrigation projects had any effect on their crops, rural respondents from areas with irrigation rehabilitation projects replied that the projects improved their access to water, which led to greater crop yields, at least in areas where project quality was perceived to be high (see previous section). Respondents in cities or district centers were less likely than respondents in rural areas to notice benefits.

The more difficult question to answer was whether CDP reduced the supply of labor available for AGE or criminal activities. Here, the evaluation can point to just a few anecdotes. The most direct example comes

from Jaji district of Paktya, where the district governor and one elder reported that 12 Taliban worked on the CDP project. Once the irrigation project improved their land, all reportedly left the Taliban and started farming their land. One respondent in Sharana district of Paktika also mentioned that Taliban members worked on the project but did not say what effect their participation had on their involvement with the Taliban. A laborer from Ghazni said that CDP helped redirect some young men who were idle and at risk for drug addiction or other antisocial behavior. Finally, one young man in Zarghun Shahr district of Paktika said that, because of his involvement with the CDP project, he now he plans to join the Afghan National Police and hopes to serve his country and earn a good salary.

An FPO in Kandahar was asked whether he had any evidence that CDP worked and replied: “It’s hard to see. By working, you imply that you would see a drop in attacks and more engagement with the district government. [In my district] there aren’t enough projects to reach a critical mass and make that happen.” Without baseline figures it is difficult to know whether CDP improved Afghan government legitimacy. However, the projects certainly facilitated more contact with Afghan government official. In the majority of cases the contact was positive, suggesting that if CDP had any effect, it might also be positive. The MISTI survey will be able to examine whether CDP projects were associated with greater perceived government legitimacy.

How Did Projects Benefit Laborers and Their Families (Including Marginalized Groups Such as Women, the Disabled, and Returnees)?

Laborers were appreciative of the opportunity to earn money through short-term employment, even if it usually did not have a sustained impact on their economic situation. In Paktya, special effort was made to recruit returnees who had been living in Pakistan. In fact, many Afghan laborers who were living in Pakistan were said to have returned with their families because of the project, although it is uncertain whether they remained.

On most projects CADG hired disabled people in the community and gave them tasks they could do. Interviewers spoke with four disabled laborers who worked on different CDP projects, all of whom were grateful for employment. One disabled man said that thanks to CDP he was able to open a small shoemaking shop to provide for his family. Hiring disabled laborers was well received by the whole community.

The CDP phase 4 program description says: “The implementing partner will make every effort to continue to design projects similar to the construction projects that used almost exclusively women as designers, foremen, and laborers in Farah and Nangarhar provinces in 2011. The implementing partner will make every effort to continue to create innovative, nontraditional jobs for women.” Such women’s projects were not implemented in phases 4 and 5. The only projects for female laborers were implemented in Helmand province, where a total of 174 women worked for an average of 36 days to sew curtains or girls’ school uniforms. CDP designed the projects and recruited laborers with the coordination of the Department of Women’s Affairs director, who appreciated the opportunity to respond to needy women in the community—many of whom were widows and returnees from Iran. Working on the CDP projects provided much needed cash for the women and their families, albeit briefly.

Observations from Phase 2 and 3 Projects

While the focus of the evaluation was phases 4 and 5 of CDP, the evaluation team took the opportunity to visit a handful of older project sites, to learn more about the longer-term effects of projects and test the feasibility of evaluating projects after so many years. Interviewers in Ghazni, Kandahar, Paktika, and Zabul visited projects that were completed in 2010 or 2011. Rural projects were easy for interviewers to examine. Although it was often difficult to find government officials who had been involved in the project, community members could usually provide insight into the project even though some details of the project may have been forgotten. Municipal projects, including projects in Kandahar city and Zabul province district centers, were relatively more difficult to evaluate. Especially in Kandahar city, it was often difficult to locate the projects. One CDP sidewalk project, for example, was exactly adjacent to a similar project conducted by Habitat for Humanity. Officials with information about the projects were more easily found in municipalities than in district centers, but it was nearly impossible to find laborers who worked on urban projects. Nevertheless, interviewers managed to collect enough information to understand general perceptions of projects.

Perceptions of earlier CDP projects were similar to those of later CDP projects. Most were well regarded, while some had major issues. Of the 14 earlier projects visited, a reservoir in Zarghun Shahr district of Paktika and a municipal bridge in Qalat city were reported to be in bad condition. In addition, a car park project in Sharana city was well constructed, but after completion of the project a man who claimed to own the land destroyed it with a bulldozer.

Project quality was easy to ascertain from interviews in the community, but the stabilization effects of earlier projects were more difficult to understand. The district governor of Sar Hawza credited CDP with having brought the community closer to the government, although it was also noted that Sar Hawza security improved in the same timeframe because of what was at least initially a successful introduction of ALP to the district.

Oversight and Coordination

Were Monitoring Systems Effective?

“There is a certain amount of corruption which you can’t avoid.... The district government insists on some things like ghost workers and other small issues.”

—*USAID Field Program Officer based in Kandahar province*

By their nature, CDP projects faced very high risk for corruption and fraud. USAID had limited ability to detect issues because its OSMs lived on military bases and had little visibility on the projects, apart from military supported visits. CADG put systems into place to attempt to dissuade and identify corruption. Still, many problems were found during CDP implementation, and local interviewers recorded numerous additional allegations of corruption.

Perhaps the biggest vulnerability was the problem of ghost workers on the payroll. Numerous respondents, including USAID and CADG staff and laborers, told interviewers that people who had not worked on the program came for payment. In the largest incident recorded, three local CADG staff in Zabul province colluded to steal \$445,808 over the second half of 2012 by fabricating payroll sheets that the provincial manager approved without a proper review. CADG internal auditors found the problem when no attendance sheets were found to support the payment. CADG then reported the incident to USAID and is cooperating with an investigation by the Inspector General’s office.

An incident in Spin Boldak province of Kandahar illustrates why commonplace corruption (Zabul being an unusual case) is so difficult to prevent. The head of the Spin Boldak DDA, the body charged with monitoring development projects in the district, demanded that the CADG engineer give him money from the CDP project budget (according to some accounts, through the registering of ghost workers). When the engineer refused, the DDA head physically assaulted him.

CADG took many steps to prevent ghost workers and added an additional layer of verification after the Zabul incident. Workers were issued a CADG identification card, which was required for collection of wages. Attendance was checked by several methods. Foremen were responsible for daily attendance records, which were reviewed and approved by the site supervisor. These records were submitted to the operations manager. Monitoring officers conducted an independent count of workers physically present, usually three times a week, and reported to the monitoring and evaluation manager in Kabul who was responsible for identifying any discrepancy between reports. Payment of wages was based on attendance sheets as tallied by the cashier and checked by the finance officer. Whenever possible, laborers were paid at the district center so that government officials could be present to provide additional monitoring. Following the Zabul incident, CADG's home office conducted an additional check of attendance sheets and payment sheets to verify the provincial managers' review.

Most laborers told interviewers that they frequently saw people monitoring projects, including CADG engineers and monitors, elders, and Afghan government officials such as the district governor, the mayor, or a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL). CADG staff conducted quality inspections and tracked the physical progress of the work through global positioning system (GPS)-enabled cameras and physical site visits.

Some projects, such as those in Deh Yak and Ghazni districts of Ghazni province, were not easily accessible to CADG staff. Elders of Deh Yak said they did the majority of the monitoring and reported progress by phone to CADG engineers. That project faced numerous security incidents and was canceled several days before completion because of a kidnapping incident.

Most obviously, CADG's request that evaluation team members visit project areas only after all CDP projects in the district had been finished meant that the evaluation team could not verify numbers of laborers reported. When the evaluation team presented its preliminary results to CADG, one CADG staff member said, "There is no way your staff went to that site," implying that the area was too dangerous. This raises at least two questions: If project sites are too dangerous for third-party evaluators, how was CADG able to implement projects and independently monitor them? How was USAID able to verify the project's reports? Where it is not secure enough to monitor or verify projects, it should be assumed that the risk for corruption is extremely high. Implementing projects without proper monitoring should be done when the benefits—in this case, contributing to the military strategy—clearly outweigh the sizeable risks.

Compounding the difficulty of security, project locations were usually places where the Afghan government had limited or no presence. Elders and warlords controlled the area, and antigovernment elements often had significant influence. Just as many government officials saw development projects as a way to make money or increase their influence, so did many powerful people in the communities. From various accounts, we can assume that CADG staff were pressured to facilitate corruption, bend recruitment rules, locate projects in areas for the benefit of one family, or influence procurement—all

threats that could jeopardize implementation schedules. Without the cooperation of the elders, projects could be delayed or even canceled. CDP worked on tight schedules.

Since elders and government officials reportedly pressed CADG for personal gain, it is logical to ask whether Taliban used its influence in the same way. There is no evidence that this happened. Given that interviewers heard numerous stories of corruption, and even some stories about the Taliban “taxing” poppy (with no relation to CDP), there is reason to believe that the interviewers may have heard of such Taliban pressure if it had happened. In fact, Taliban intimidation seemed limited to trying to stop projects altogether.

Allegations of corruption were most frequent in the most dangerous areas, where fewer people had access and it was easiest to evade the checks and balances built into the CDP system. Monitoring officers may have reported to the Kabul monitoring and evaluation manager, but they still worked in the same offices with staff whose work they verified. To ensure independence of reports, CDP would have benefited from a third-party monitoring system with ongoing project verification.

USAID had OSMs assigned to military bases in CDP districts. Movement of OSMs was extremely restricted, far more so than for CADG staff. When they did move, OSMs traveled to villages in a mine-resistant–ambush-protected convoy, which posed risks to the project and the laborers.

Was Coordination between USAID and CADG Effective?

Although CDP was a cooperative agreement rather than a contract, USAID’s FPOs and OSMs were highly involved in planning and approving CDP projects because of the need for coordination with the military. Generally, USAID and CADG had a strong, positive working relationship.

Most USAID staff members spoke highly of CADG’s expatriate and Afghan staff members, who were regarded as responsive and qualified, and of the relationships they built with Afghan officials and communities over time. USAID staff members were very pleased with CADG’s speed and responsiveness, especially when compared with other USAID programs in their areas, even in the very difficult areas where they worked. USAID personnel also identified detailed, timely CADG reporting as a particular strength.

CADG staff were generally satisfied with their working relationships with USAID. However, Agency field staff were mostly confined to military bases and relied on military information about the environment, which sometimes made it difficult for them to gauge what was realistic for civilian organizations to accomplish. Especially in Kandahar, the military paid a lot of attention to CDP since it was usually one of few USAID programs working in its district. In the midst of pressure to work in strategic areas, Agency field staff sometimes requested CDP to do projects outside its scope or to venture into areas that were not permissive. The more-experienced FPOs had a better understanding of the environment and how to use CDP’s capabilities. Less-experienced FPOs/OSMs sometimes voiced frustration over what they saw as unwillingness to push out into less secure areas. Better communication within USAID may have helped calibrate expectations.

CDP sometimes found that it was competing for labor against other USAID programs, particularly in the South. USAID should ensure coordination of multiple programs to avoid such problems.

Did the Program Meet Its Performance Management Plan Targets?

Because of the qualitative nature of the evaluation and the fact that fieldwork was conducted after implementation, this evaluation question could not be answered as originally posed. Instead, it should have asked, “Did Performance Management Plan targets help USAID and CADG adequately monitor progress?” The evaluation team was unable to verify that CDP met its PMP targets as reported because it was prohibited from visiting projects while work was ongoing and could not verify the accuracy of CDP’s reported figures. Verification is best done by a third-party monitor with access to project sites while the program is being implemented.

Nevertheless, the evaluation team made several comments about the PMP indicators and targets. CDP tracked and reported on only four key indicators regularly. The indicators are listed below, with reference to the USAID Intermediate Results to which they are linked.

Intermediate Result 7.1: Local sources of instability in target areas addressed

- 7.1.2e—number of person days of employment created through stabilization programs
- 7.1.2d—number of laborers reporting that the project was fair and transparent in payroll

Intermediate Result 7.2: Basic governance established

- 7.2b—number of projects completed with community and Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) involvement

Intermediate Result 7.3: Transition from stabilization assistance to sustainable development facilitated

- 7.3.1b—number of project meetings involving GIROA authorities

These indicators tell only about the process and outputs of the program and do not facilitate the monitoring of outcomes or impact over time. One reason for the superficiality of the PMP is the short-term planning of CDP. With an original timeframe of merely six months, it would not have been possible to measure much more than these four indicators. As CDP expanded, it did so in only small increments so that there was no rationale for establishing a baseline from which to measure more meaningful indicators, such as “confidence in local government.” Indeed, exact indicators of CDP success, including “number of AGE recruits in the local area” would have been extremely difficult for any organization, particularly a civilian one, to track.

The method of collecting data for indicator 7.1.2d, “number of laborers reporting that the project was fair and transparent in payroll,” was misleading. CDP reported the total number of laborers who signed to receive their payment, since the payment sheet stated that signatures affirmed “fair and transparent payment.” But even if workers could read the payment sheet, they were unlikely to report problems of transparency and fairness out of fear that they would not be paid. The indicator should have been strengthened with spot-checks by a third-party monitor who could interview workers confidentially, outside of the actual payment context.

The other challenge to understanding the PMP targets is the way in which they were tracked, which did not match how CDP planned. For example, in trying to understand the fiscal year (FY) 2012 targets, it becomes apparent that laborers who were counted in FY 2012 could have performed “person-days” of work in both FY 2012 and FY 2013 since projects were not neatly contained within one fiscal year. Therefore, one cannot use these numbers to understand, for example, how many days the average person

worked. CDP could have alleviated this problem by keeping tracking systems for both the project phase, which tells them clearly how they implemented what they planned, and for the fiscal year, which is how USAID requested data.

While more sophisticated indicators were not possible for CDP monitoring during its life, the MISTI program, which was begun only in the middle of CDP phase 4, was designed to track such indicators for USAID stabilization programs in the future. MISTI is attempting to analyze CDP project effects on security using retrospective data on security incidents. Once the next wave of the MISTI data is available, MISTI may also be able to comment on the extent to which phase 5 projects affected perceptions of government legitimacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the evaluation team made observations and recommendations as follows.

Observations

- Many CDP projects featured positive coordination between the Afghan government (typically the district governor or provincial governor) and Afghan National Security Forces, although this coordination was typically secured in an ad hoc fashion or was facilitated by USAID. The team found no evidence of a functional Afghan government policy that dictates how development projects should be secured.
- Unlike other USAID stabilization programs, once CDP areas were identified, projects were selected based on community requests rather than analysis or a stabilization rationale. This approach is consistent with the program's theory of change.
- The theory that stabilization programs can implement projects directly after military clearance operations is often unrealistic owing to the incompatibility of military timelines, which can be fast and unpredictable, and project timelines, which involve a minimum of weeks of planning.
- Hiring women and the disabled men was not directly linked to the stability objective of reducing available labor for AGE, but it did showcase the government response to the neediest people. In addition, wages for women and the disabled may have indirect benefits on family members, including combat-age men.
- The evaluation team's attempt to evaluate 2010 and 2011 projects was complicated by the fact that laborers and stakeholders were difficult to find in urban settings. However, visiting old projects in rural areas was much easier. The findings point to similar project quality across the CDP phases.
- Perceptions of rural and urban projects were quite different. Rural communities tended to value the projects more and take greater ownership, while municipal governments tended to take ownership of the urban projects.
- The data pointed to many examples of past development programs where subcontracting, at least in the unstable areas where CDP worked, provided an easy avenue for government officials to profit since they could easily demand a share of the project. Direct implementation worked better.

- CADG took far more risks than most USAID partners in placing its expatriate managers in provincial offices and encouraging low-profile travel to project sites where possible. The benefit was that managers had a realistic sense of how projects were working on the ground.
- There were many drawbacks to short-term contracting of USAID programs. While CDP spanned almost five years and represented a large expenditure of money and effort, USAID was unable to track outcomes or impact systematically since the program was contracted only in three-month to one-year extensions.
- The practice of accepting the lowest bid for materials works well in a competitive environment, but CDP's environment was not always conducive to fair competition. USAID programs should explore alternative methods for procurement in such environments.

General Recommendations

- Programs can greatly benefit from having enough time to build systems and staff capacity. Many of the strengths of CDP's phase 4 and 5 programs—including speed, flexibility, responsiveness, strong relationships, and high-capacity staff—were built over time.
- Wherever possible, direct implementation of stabilization programs is preferable to subcontracting.
- Local procurement can have many benefits, but in areas such as those where CDP worked markets for materials are unlikely to be perfectly competitive. To guard against price collusion, procurement must be closely monitored.
- The military sometimes pushed for projects in strategic areas that may be too insecure to have a good chance for success. Programs such as CDP should have clear security criteria that all stakeholders agree to uphold.
- USAID should coordinate to ensure that USAID projects with labor-intensive components are not competing with one another for labor, as reportedly occurred in Helmand province.
- When designing projects and obtaining approval, it is important to verbally discuss the project plans with the government officials. In Afghanistan it should not be assumed that written agreements have been thoroughly read.
- Community MOUs that include security guarantees should be discussed in a community forum so that all members understand the expectations.
- USAID projects should take care not to damage community practices of hashar. The decision of whether to pay wages should take into account whether the type of work is performed voluntarily. Requiring an appropriate community contribution should be considered.
- Projects were sometimes too large for available human resources. On the one hand, especially where labor shortages are anticipated, future projects should consider hiring fewer workers for a longer duration or simply reducing the scope of the project.
- On-the-job training was somewhat effective and not difficult to implement. Future USAID projects should consider adding such a component to similar programs.
- Because of disease and war injuries, Afghanistan has a very large number of disabled people who are among the most disadvantaged in society. CDP demonstrated that disabled people can contribute meaningfully to development projects. CDP's example should be a model for inclusion of other development programs.

- Powerbrokers at the district and local level often tried to influence the recruitment of laborers, particular skilled laborers, since their wages were substantially higher. The practice in Khost of administering a test to skilled labor candidates was well regarded in the community and should be considered a best practice.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems should allow for reporting by fiscal year as well as for reporting against the natural planning cycle of the program. For CDP, this would have meant being able to report on program phases as well as the fiscal year.
- Anti-corruption procedures should be strengthened by requiring verification for all signing authorities, including provincial managers.
- Periodic comparisons of project progress with labor records might add a different dimension of verification.
- By virtue of its location and approach, CDP faced a high risk of corruption at the same time as it faced challenges to monitoring. Such programs should have a third-party monitoring component*. While third-party monitoring introduces new security considerations, if coordinated properly, it can protect the implementing partner as well as USAID.

CONCLUSION

Over almost five years, the Community Development Program employed tens of thousands of Afghans for short periods of time and implemented hundreds of projects in some of the most insecure districts of the country. The primary aims were to keep combat-age men from joining the insurgency or participating in criminal activity and to bring communities closer to the Afghan government. CDP also intended to provide an economic boost to local economies and contribute to sustainable development. This performance evaluation was not equipped to evaluate the impact of CDP on security, but it did find that CDP facilitated positive interactions between communities and the government and gave a boost, however short lived, to household and community economies. The quality of most, though not all, infrastructure projects was well regarded, and communities reported receiving benefits such as increased agricultural yields from irrigation rehabilitation projects.

Much of CDP's success can be attributed to its longevity and its use of direct implementation. By the fourth and fifth phases of the program, CDP systems were well honed. CDP was able to execute projects quickly, respond to new requests, and work through established relationships with the Afghan government and USAID counterparts. CDP's ability to operate in dangerous environments with a low-profile approach made it more flexible and better attuned to its environment than programs operating with heavy security detail. Directly implementing projects rather than relying on subcontractors allowed CDP to be more responsive and have better control over recruitment, implementation, and involvement of the Afghan government.

For all its capabilities, CDP was not immune to the pressures of a challenging environment. Corruption was known to be a significant issue for CDP and this evaluation's findings point to the possibility that it was more widespread than previously documented. Direct implementation eliminated the easiest avenues

* During the design of MISTI, there was an internal discussion in the USAID Stabilization Unit about whether to include 3rd party monitoring in MISTI, along with impact evaluation.

for powerbrokers to profit from projects, such as demanding a portion of the funds or winning a project and skimping on quality. But many looked for other ways to benefit, including demanding the wages of ghost workers, pressing for projects to be constructed on their property, or colluding to win materials contracts with inflated prices. Though this evaluation found no evidence that they did, the CADG staff also had opportunities to profit from the projects, particularly where oversight was poorest. The findings suggest that the risks are highest where security was the worst and most likely posed by the individuals who controlled the environment; in CDP areas these were usually the elders of the community or sometimes Afghan government officials. While this report gives minor recommendations, there are no easy measures to mitigate the risk of corruption in areas where insecurity makes monitoring so challenging. Despite the difficulties associated with it, independent third-party verification may be the best mitigation strategy. Interestingly, even though many respondents acknowledged that the Taliban influenced the community's ability to work on a CDP project, no respondent mentioned that Taliban or any antigovernment element demanded anything from the project.

CDP suffered greatly from attacks, murders, kidnappings, IED explosions, and threats from AGEs. From April 2012 to August 2013, several laborers, supervisors, and vendors were killed. At least ten people were kidnapped (all eventually released), and many more were injured. Some incidents were the result of indirect fire, but many were direct attacks against CDP.*

CDP was a product of the foreign military surge in Afghanistan. In keeping with the trend of transition, future USAID stabilization programs are likely to promote civilian–military cooperation within the Afghan government. While some lessons from CDP may apply, many may not. For example, while CDP worked through temporary systems for coordination between USAID and ISAF, Afghan coordination is more likely to require strengthening of permanent policies and institutions, with coordination centered on Provincial and District Governors.

* MISTI has been tasked to use CDP data to produce a peer-review paper that further explores the relationship between employment on labor-intensive development and infrastructure activities and patterns of violence against the security forces and local civilian population.

ANNEX A. COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECT SITES VISITED

Projects Visited by MISITI Team			
Province	Project Number	Description	Phase
	HM037	Lashkar Gah District Girls' School Uniform Project	V
	HM034	Lashkar Gah District Ali Kasaba Access and Drainage Improvement	V
	HM031	Kajaki District Tangye Clinic Building Rehabilitation	V
	HM024	Lashkar Gah District Market Access and Drainage Improvements	IV
Hilmand	HM020	Naw Zad District Bazaar Rehabilitation	IV
Kandahar	KN056	Panjwai District Bazaar Irrigation Canal Rehabilitation	V
	KN055	Shah Wali Kot District, Surkhbaid Village Infrastructure Rehabilitation	IV
	KN049	Panjwai District Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
	KN047	Maiwand District Bazaar Infrastructure Rehabilitation	IV
	KN044	Zhari District Kulk, Salwaghi and Sia Choi Infrastructure Rehabilitation	IV
	KN043	Spin Boldak District Shahid Chowk and Sarkani Canal Rehabilitation	IV
Khost	KO046	Shamal District Doyee Kheil and Beekei Villages Irrigation Rehab	V
	KO039	Matun District Khabash Khel Village Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
	KO038	Shamal District High School Rehabilitation	IV
	KO036	Shamal District Anarbagh Village Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
	KO032	Tani District Irrigation System Rehabilitation	IV
Paktya	KO047	Wazi Zadran District Peri Kheil and Khang Kheil Irrigation Rehabilitation	V
	KO043	Shwak District Shabakh Kheil and Ibrahim Kheil Irrigation Rehabilitation	V
	PT044	Jaji District Jaji Aryoub Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
	PT043	Shwak District Shabak Kheil Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
Ghazni	GN018	Ghazni District Qalatee Village Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
	GN019/20	Deh Yak District West and East Ramak Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
	GN021	Waghez District Sayagel and Talabi Husseinii Irrigation Rehabilitation	IV
	GN017	Ghazni District Rawza Garisten Karez System Rehabilitation	Earlier
	GN003	Ghazni District Jungal Bagh Plantation	Earlier
	GN013	Deh Yak District Tasan Karez Refurbishment	Earlier
Paktika	PK021	Yousef Khel District Irrigation Rehab - Mushkhil (Zmarai Kot) Canals and Reservoir	IV
	PK019	Zhargun Shahr District Mohammad Dost Village Road Rehabilitation	IV
	PK017	Sharana District Irrigation Rehabilitation - Sra Kala Intake	IV
	PK012	Sar Hawza District Paraw Community Irrigation Rehabilitation	Earlier
	PK009	Khairkut District Segana Reservoir Rehabilitation	Earlier
	PK003	Sharana District Sharana Car Park	Earlier
Zabul	ZB027	Qalat District Sinak/Hazari Market Access and Drainage Rehabilitation	IV
	ZB026	Tarnak wa Jaldak District Shahr-e-Safa Regrashan Road Rehabilitation	IV
	ZB021	Shah Joy District Solaymankhel Storm Drainage Rehabilitation	IV
	ZB019	Qalat District Resala Village Infrastructure Rehabilitation	IV
	ZB018	Tarnak wa Jaldak District Shahr-e-Safa Bazaar Infrastructure Rehabilitation	IV
	ZB010	Qalat District Qalat Municipal Bridge	Earlier
	ZB015	Shah joy District Shah Joy Municipal Improvement	Earlier

	Phase V
	Phase IV
	Earlier Phase (II or III)

ANNEX B. NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS, BY PROVINCE

Province	USAID	CADG	GIROA	DDA/Elder	Laborer	Others	TOTAL
Ghazni	2	1	6	20	22	7	58
Helmand	1	7	5	4	9	5	31
Kandahar	8	6	11	15	12	3	55
Khost	2	4	7	16	25	7	61
Paktika	3	1	18	5	12	1	40
Paktya	1	0	4	7	7	3	22
Zabul	2	3	4	14	15	6	44
National/ Regional	3	3					6
TOTAL	22	25	55	81	102	32	317