AFGHANISTAN
PROSPECTS FOR REHABILITATION AND
RECONSTRUCTION

A Symposium Sponsored by
CARE USA and the Refugee Policy Group

Washington, D.C.
October 29-30, 1996

SUMMARY REPORT

CARE-USA (CARE) and The Refugee Policy Group (RPG) hosted the symposium on October 29-30, 1996 to examine the opportunities to move from relief to development in Afghanistan. Peter Bell, President and CEO of CARE and Dennis Gallagher, Executive Director of the RPG welcomed the participants and opened the symposium on behalf of both organizations. They noted that the joint CARE/RPG initiative on Afghanistan grew out of the long term interest, concern and involvement of both organizations with Afghanistan. The purpose of the joint initiative was to provoke constructive dialogue on Afghanistan. That country, although plagued by varying levels of conflict during the last several years, has nevertheless experienced relative stability in at least 70% of its territory. As a result, the people of Afghanistan, UN Agencies and NGOs such as CARE have been able to be constructively employed in the social and economic recovery of the country. The symposium sought to determine what are the prospects for life sustaining and sustainable activities to rehabilitate civil society and help advance expectations away from conflict towards peace.

The discussion focused on those economic, social and political factors that must be addressed to facilitate peace, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Afghanistan. It was recognized that concerted economic and political efforts were essential in order to bring about political stability and economic and social recovery.
Even though peace is not likely in the near future, the international community should use every opportunity to assist Afghanistan. Without such action conditions in that country could deteriorate further with dangerous consequences.

The discussion of symposium participants dealt with three main themes: prospects for reconstruction and development; human rights concerns; and prospects for peace.

Prospects for Reconstruction and Development

For the past 18 or so years NGOs, and UN agencies have been running programs in Afghanistan in a broad range of sectors, despite widespread instability. These organizations have been able to implement programs in the areas which have been relatively free of armed conflict as well as in the city of Kabul.

Their programs have included emergency relief, demining and mine awareness education, food-for-work, hospitals, clinics and orthopedic centers, immunization campaigns, rural agriculture rehabilitation [Afghanistan, despite the conflict, is currently producing 65% of the wheat it produced in 1979], rebuilding roads, irrigations canals and dams. Projects specifically aimed at women including widows have sought to build their capacity to provide for their families. It was noted that the “home bakeries project” was owned and operated mostly by women. They have been able to do this within the confines of Islamic law and culture. Programs aimed at children included education, immunization, and addressing the psychological trauma inflicted by the conflict.

The following emerged as important issues in the rehabilitation, reconstruction and development debate for Afghanistan:

The foremost constraint was the lack of sufficient resources for long term rehabilitation and reconstruction projects. The Afghan people themselves are doing far more to rebuild their lives than the international community. The country remains the third poorest country in the world according the UN human development index, and has one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates. The limitations on the ability of the international aid community to assist the people of Afghanistan were attributed to many factors: donor fatigue; competing humanitarian crises in other parts of the world; end of the Cold War (meaning that Afghanistan is no longer of strategic interest); and dwindling development budgets in donor countries. Since available resources come from the humanitarian budgets of donors, agencies are restricted to certain types of short term relief activities rather than engaging in programs which would have a longer term impact and assist in social and economic recovery.

Despite these limitations on funding, organizations have incorporated rehabilitation
and reconstruction activities into their programs, to ensure sustainability through training and capacity building mechanisms. The mandates of organizations have stretched and evolved to respond to the needs of the country. Some organizations have very few expatriate staff and run their programs with large numbers of Afghan staff, and some have been able to turn over their programs entirely to local Afghan organizations.

The response to UNOCHA’s Consolidated Appeal for 1996 was less than 60%. Furthermore, sectors with long term rehabilitation and reconstruction projects received very little donor support or none at all. The Consolidated Appeal, although a useful tool, failed to link relief and development activities sufficiently and listed too many sub-sectoral programs which donors find difficult to comprehend. The Mid-Term Review of the Consolidated Appeal recognized the need to link relief and development activities. UN agencies, NGOs, IGOs, and the donor community involved in Afghanistan will meet in Islamabad in December 1996 under the auspices of the UN to develop a strategy for the consolidated appeal as well as to formulate a concerted strategy for Afghanistan.

The absence of multilateral development agencies in the planning stages of humanitarian activity affected the long term effectiveness of programs. Development agencies such as the World Bank claimed that the absence of a government in Afghanistan precluded their involvement there. However, a participant who has had recent experience in other similar situations as in Somalia and the West Bank pointed out that World Bank has found ways to work in those countries under conditions, in his opinion, similar to or even worse than in Afghanistan.

The know-how of multi-lateral development organizations will prove valuable to humanitarian organizations in developing programs which are sustainable in the long term. Development organizations need not be running projects but can assist humanitarian agencies to design programs which can serve as building blocks for macro-level development and post-conflict reconstruction. Development organizations can identify sectors of the economy and internal resources which can be tapped and built upon. There is a need to identify the dynamics of economic activity currently taking place in Afghanistan, including the destination of taxes collected by the regional authorities and money generated from the lucrative drug trade. Afghanistan is second only to Burma in money so generated. The involvement of multi-lateral development agencies at the beginning, albeit passively, is necessary to enable organizations to design effective post-conflict developmental and reconstruction programs.

The relief/development debate in Afghanistan must link with similar situations worldwide. All of the countries currently in complex emergency situations share similar characteristics: long term volatility; high level of complexity; organizational incapacity; and diminishing resources. The experiences in similar situations worldwide should provide lessons for Afghanistan and vice-versa. The participants debated the possibility of more coordinated effort by the humanitarian community.
The role of the private sector in revitalizing the economy is important but should be approached with caution. Oil pipeline projects, while promising to generate cash flow for Afghanistan, thereby assisting in rebuilding infrastructure, may bring dangers as well. Participants stressed the need to ensure that the Afghan people equitably benefit from the revenues derived from pipeline projects.

Human Rights Concerns

The issue of human rights and women's rights generated much discussion and debate. Organizations grappling with the formulation of appropriate policies and operational strategies need to balance responses to humanitarian needs with human rights concerns. It was noted that Afghanistan has been a human rights disaster for the last two decades. Women have been treated as spoils of war and subject to all kinds of abuse. Hundreds of thousands of civilians including children have been killed or maimed as a result of shelling, bombing, and mines. With the Taliban takeover of areas, strict Sharia law enforcement and the enforcement of the Taliban version of Islamic law on women (where women are restricted to their homes and denied education and employment) are among the issues that have come to the fore.

The international community must address human rights issues in a pragmatic fashion. The humanitarian aid community is confronted with the dilemma of providing much needed humanitarian aid and rehabilitation assistance, and assuring equitable access of males and females to their services. Rather than follow a confrontational course which would prove counterproductive and serve to isolate the Taliban, organizations were urged to enter into dialogue with the Taliban on a low profile, case-by-case, to impress upon them the impracticability of specific policies relating to women.

Individual organizations have been able to forge agreements with the Taliban on operating principles. By explaining to the Taliban that without the female staff they would have to shut down the hospitals some organizations have persuaded the Taliban to allow women to work in hospitals. There have been instances where the Afghan women themselves have persuaded the Taliban to allow them to participate in food-for-work programs.

Programs in many sectors do not lend themselves as easily as the health sector to pragmatic approaches in addressing women's access to assistance and capacity building. The bottom line for some organizations is that if women and girls cannot have equal access to their programs they will suspend them. As long as women and girls benefit equally they will continue with the programs. The Secretary General's statement of October 7, 1996 provided the framework for the programs of UN Agencies in Afghanistan.
Prospects for Peace

Although the ultimate responsibility for the stability of Afghanistan rests with the Afghans themselves, there was concurrence that the international community especially the US had a responsibility to help bring about peace and stability as well as economic and social recovery in Afghanistan. The proposition that peace will come in Afghanistan once the factions face a stalemate was refuted by pointing to the dynamics in Afghan factional fighting. The military advantage keeps shifting and religious zeal propels action. The recent trend of consolidation of allegiances along ethnic and religious lines threatened to turn factional fighting into religious and ethnic fighting. For the first time in recent history Afghanistan may face disintegration. The peace process is vital for the stability and economic recovery of Afghanistan, and for the region.

There was a strong sense among participants that without energetic US and international initiative peace will not emerge in Afghanistan. It was acknowledged that the ability of the US and the countries in the region to act as peace mediators was compromised as a result of their past and present roles in the Afghan conflict. There was agreement that the UN was the appropriate body to broker a peace. Without vigorous backing by the US and the international community, however, present and future UN efforts may fail.

Absent the likelihood of peace in the immediate future, the objective is to move toward peace in Afghanistan through concerted political action and economic and social activity geared to impress on the warring factions that prospects for the future lie in the economic and social recovery of the country. Given the opportunities available in the country for long term micro level reconstruction, the donor community needs to look upon Afghanistan in developmental terms. The participants agreed that unless the international community rises to the challenge now, they would have to expend far more resources later.

Kanya D. Tampoe Sanders of the Refugee Policy Group served as Rapporteur for the Symposium.
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AGENDA

October 29, 1996

2:00 - 2:15  Welcome and Opening Remarks: Peter Bell, President, CARE-USA, and Dennis Gallagher, Executive Director, Refugee Policy Group.

2:15 - 4:15  Discussion of current political, social and economic conditions in Afghanistan and their implications for reconstruction policies and strategies.
Chair: Peter Bell
2:15 - 3:00  Robin Raphel, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for South Asia
3:00 - 4:15  Commentators: Selig Harrison (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)
              Paul Barker (CARE-USA)
              Ashraf Ghani (Johns Hopkins University)
              Marvin Weinbaum (US Institute of Peace)

4:30 - 5:45  Commentators: Qadir Amiryar (George Washington Univ.)
              Anne Willem Bijleveld (UNHCR)
              T. Kumar (Amnesty International)

5:45 - 6:00  Summing Up

6:00 - 7:30  Reception
# AGENDA

**October 30, 1996**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 9:45</td>
<td>Phyllis Oakley, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State, Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration</td>
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<td>9:45 - 12:00</td>
<td>How has the conflict in Afghanistan affected operations in Afghanistan and what have been organizational approaches?</td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Andrew Pugh</td>
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<td><strong>Commentors:</strong> Erling Dessau (UNDP)</td>
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<td>1:00 - 2:30</td>
<td>Continued: How has the conflict in Afghanistan affected operations in Afghanistan and what have been organizational approaches?</td>
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<td><strong>Commentors:</strong> Mr. Omawale (UNICEF)</td>
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<td>Mona Hammam (WFP)</td>
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<td>Joelle Tanguy (MSF)</td>
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<td>Paul Barker (CARE)</td>
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<td>2:30 - 5:00</td>
<td>What should be the policy framework and operational strategies for rehabilitation and reconstruction of Afghanistan; what policies and strategies need to be revised and/or refined?</td>
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<td><strong>Chair:</strong> Hugh Cholmondeley</td>
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<td><strong>Commentors:</strong> Steve Holtzman (The World Bank)</td>
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<td>Sultan Aziz (UNDP)</td>
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<td>Elizabeth Langdon (DHA)</td>
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<td>Lee Coldren (US State Department)</td>
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<td>5:00 - 5:30</td>
<td><strong>Closing Remarks:</strong> Dennis Gallagher, Executive Director, RPG and Dan O’Brien, Regional Director for Asia &amp; Europe, CARE.</td>
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