

THE UNITED NATIONS ROLE IN RESTRUCTURING AFGHANISTAN

Ahmad Rasool Sayeedi^{*1}, Maiwand Tasal², Farid Ahmad Hamdam³

^{*1}Assistant Professor, Department of Development Management, Kandahar University

^{2,3}Assistant Professor, Department of Public Administration, Kandahar University

¹Rasool.sayedy@gmail.com, ²momand.tasal@gmail.com, ³f.hamdam@kdru.edu.af

Corresponding Author: *

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14932935>

Received: 04 January, 2025

Revised: 04 February, 2025

Accepted: 19 February, 2025

Published: 26 February, 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper examines Afghanistan's post-war reconstruction and argues that the process has the potential to lead to a significant social transformation. Given the international community's hesitation to recognize the Taliban government, the United Nations (UN) can play a crucial role in alleviating Afghanistan's ongoing crisis. The UN stands as one of the few international organizations capable of assisting Afghanistan in overcoming its severe economic and humanitarian challenges. While many of its member states remain divided over recognizing the Taliban regime, the UN can still serve as a vital source of support for the Afghan population.

The paper specifically explores the UN's role before and after 2021, analyzing its humanitarian operations and strategic interventions aimed at rebuilding Afghan society. The UN has engaged in various efforts, including providing essential aid, supporting infrastructure development, and facilitating social programs to improve the lives of Afghan citizens. Despite its significant contributions, the paper argues that the UN has been unable to establish long-term political stability and peace in Afghanistan. This failure is attributed to a combination of internal and external factors, including geopolitical influences, regional conflicts, and the Taliban's governance approach. Nonetheless, the UN has remained a crucial entity in aiding ordinary Afghan citizens. Its initiatives have helped mitigate some of the worst humanitarian crises, offering food, medical supplies, and economic assistance to vulnerable communities. While political challenges persist, the UN's role in reconstruction efforts underscores its importance as a humanitarian force in Afghanistan. The paper concludes that although the UN has been instrumental in post-war rebuilding, its efforts alone have not been enough to secure lasting peace and stability in the country. However, it remains a key actor in supporting Afghanistan's long-term recovery and addressing its humanitarian needs.

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan became a member of the United Nations in 1946. Since then, the UN has had some sort of role in the country, but since 1980, that involvement has grown. Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan with the signing of the Geneva Peace Accord in 1988, the UN vowed to remain actively involved in the country, and its institutional framework has continued to

function in that role ever since. It was able to lobby for a peace agreement that would enable long-term development during the 1990s civil war because it had separate offices for political and peace procedures, as well as for humanitarian and reconstruction activities.

In the post-Taliban era, its responsibilities have grown; the Under Secretary General for Special

Assignments, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria, is most noteworthy for having established this position. Since October 3, 2001, when Kofi Annan designated him as a special representative with a “widened mandate entailing overall authority for the humanitarian and political endeavours of the United Nations in Afghanistan,” he has been responsible for giving the UN a clear direction regarding its engagement in the country.²⁽¹⁾ Ambassador Brahimi prepared a new UN mandate for it, based on the country's conditions and available resources, to model future UN activities around it. Up until 2004, when Mr Jean Arnault, a deputy, took over, the ambassador was in charge of UNAMA. The UN Security Council established the UNAMA in its resolution 1401 from March 2002. In pursuit of his vision of a developed Afghanistan, Brahimi secured the backing of the German government as he organised a conference in Bonn from November 27 to December 5, 2001, bringing together representatives from four opposing Afghan factions, UN officials, officials from other governments, and experts from various sectors.¹

The Bonn Agreement was the outcome of the deliberations in Bonn and was an agreement on “provisional arrangements in Afghanistan, pending the reestablishment of permanent government institution”. The agreement was approved by the UN Security Council in resolution 1383 from 2001. Under UN support, Afghan participants convened to prepare the foundation for a possible political revolution in their nation, and on December 22, 2001, they created the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA).

The AIA had thirty members, and Hamid Karzai, the first president, served as its chair. As per the agreement, an emergency “Loya Jirga”, or traditional Afghan assembly, was to be called within six months of the AIA's inception. In June 2002, this was finally completed, and the AIA was replaced with a “transitional authority”.

The Bonn Agreement also required that a “Constitutional Loya Jirga” be called within eighteen months after the establishment of this transitional government in order to approve a new constitution for Afghanistan. As a result, the UN-led agreement's implementation deadline was fulfilled, and the text

was approved by a constitutional Loya Jirga in January 2004.

October 2004 saw the election of Hamid Karzai as president of Afghanistan as the political process moved forward. September 2005 saw legislative and provincial elections. However, the agreement also called for the establishment of a Supreme Court and a Judicial Commission, thus its suggestions went beyond politics.² It anticipated significant levels of collaboration between the UN and governments and organisations across the globe in both political and non-political spheres, including drug abuse, crime, terrorism, elections, and rebuilding. UN attempts to achieve these goals under both Brahimi and his successor resulted in other donor conferences in addition to the Bonn conference; the results of some of these will be covered in the section that follows.

United Nations Conventions

As part of its efforts in Afghanistan, the UN held several donor conferences with the help of international parties, which led to decisions about development and reconstruction. An overview of these donor conferences can be seen below, with the intention of highlighting the numerous funding sources, quantity of stakeholders, coordination efforts, and diverse difficulties that Afghanistan faced.

Islamabad Conference

A three-day conference on “Preparing for Afghanistan's Reconstruction” was arranged by UNDP in collaboration with the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Islamabad on November 27, 2001. All three sponsors agreed to work together after conferring with the Afghans and the international donor community during the gathering, which drew over 350 participants, many of whom were from Afghanistan. It was necessary to determine the development and reconstruction process's priorities, potential roadblocks, and opportunities. In this regard, the UNDP, WB, and ADB sought to gather additional data, including a systematic evaluation of Afghanistan's reconstruction requirements following the conflict.³

Bonn Conference

The UNDP provided support for the meeting, which was held on December 22, 2001, in Bonn, Germany. The Bonn agreement's interim administration, whose reconstruction plans have already been carefully examined, gave a presentation during the conference. Through a trust fund established by the UNDP, participants, including domestic and foreign non-governmental organisations, offered financial support.⁴

Tokyo Conference

Japan, the US, the EU, and Saudi Arabia convened a meeting in Tokyo on January 21-22, 2002. Despite the UN not having a co-hosting role, Secretary General Kofi Annan spoke to the delegates and provided possible donors with a framework for supporting goals in Afghanistan.

Meeting materials included a “preliminary needs assessment plan for recovery and reconstruction for the country from 2002-2006” and a UN Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme with recommendations for short-term aid to Afghanistan. The UN was commended for its engagement in the country, and the UNDP's early recovery initiatives were acknowledged globally for their leadership.

The conference resolution called for the creation of a Single Trust Fund to be overseen by the World Bank. In addition to choosing how much money to distribute, the UNDP, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Islamic Development Bank had to consult with the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and collaborate closely with the Afghan Government.⁵

Berlin Conference

German Federal Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and his Afghan counterpart, Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, co-hosted a symposium on April 1, 2004, in Berlin, Germany. In addition to Mr. Jean Arnault, who spoke on behalf of the UN, the conference, entitled “Afghanistan and the International Community—a Partnership for the Future,” was attended by 65 leaders from donor countries and international institutions.

The agenda's three primary objectives were: (1) obtaining funding for reconstruction; (2) enlisting the aid of foreign parties in the long run; and (3)

initiating serious preparations for the post-Bonn stage of rehabilitation. Planning for the future and evaluating the achievements of the previous two years was the first task.

In a paper on safeguarding Afghanistan's future (SAF), the UN, along with the WB and ADB, stated that eighty percent of the population was to be pulled out of poverty within seven years. The document outlined the primary goals for a state rehabilitation strategy and assessed different national sectors.

The programme outlined three pillars that would support the rebuilding: physical capital, which included essential services and infrastructure; human capital and social protection, which covered social security, health, and education; and security, law, private sector development, and public administration. It was estimated that each would require \$7 billion, \$13 billion, and \$7.5 billion.⁶ The UN ambassador expressed gratitude to the donor countries for their commitment to the Afghan cause and acknowledged their \$8.2 billion contribution over the next three years.

London Conference

Kofi Annan and Hamid Karzai co-chaired this summit, which took place in the UK on February 1, 2006. It happened in London. The international community and the Afghan government signed the London Agreement, sometimes referred to as the Afghan Compact. Its goal was to give the nation's development initiatives over the next five years a structure. Concurrently, the government released its Interim National Development Strategy, including development objectives such as enhancing governance, fighting drug trafficking, and boosting up security. A massive \$10.5 billion pledge was made during the conference.⁷

Paris Conference

An “International Conference in Support of Afghanistan” was co-chaired in Paris on June 12, 2008 by Afghan Minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta, UN Special Representative for Afghanistan Kai Eide, and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner. The conference is notable because during this platform debate, the UN Special Representative called for new and enhanced cooperation between

the international community and the Afghan government that addresses a range of social, political, and economic challenges.⁸

The following essential components and actions were highlighted during the conference as being crucial for the safety and welfare of the Afghan people: Supporting the National Development Strategy (ANDS) of Afghanistan, endorsing democracy in the nation, Encouraging investment in infrastructure, energy, and agriculture, creating opportunities through the growth of the private sector, bolstering Afghan institutions and improving the quality of services, improving the effectiveness of aid, taking on corruption, intensifying anti-drug initiatives, encouraging greater participation from civil society in the process of nation-building, promoting respect for human rights for all Afghans, Strengthening cooperation throughout the board.

In order to ensure that the Afghan people had enough resources, Mr. Eide insisted that the help be provided with greater coherence and that more financing be secured. The summit strongly advocated for enhanced donor cooperation and reiterated the Special Representative's expanded responsibility in all aspects of coordination, including UNAMA's (UNAMA).⁹

Hague Conference

The "International Conference for Afghanistan: A Comprehensive Strategy in a Regional Context" was held in The Hague on March 31, 2009, under the auspices of the United Nations Association for Mutual Aid and the Dutch government. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon the then Secretary General of the United Nations reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to Afghanistan and said that his special envoy would continue working with the government and other international organisations to support the country's efforts to strengthen its institutions, improve governance and food security, impose the rule of law, and combat corruption.¹⁰

Additionally, Mr. Eide stated that significant progress was being made in the private sector's development and that a reform package for the agriculture industry would be unveiled shortly. He agreed with the Secretary General to reiterate the UN's commitment to the Afghan cause and said the organisation was ready to expand across the country.

The Hague conference essentially called for a more explicit plan for Afghanistan, emphasising the necessity of continued civilian capacity and institutions in vital areas including security, governance, and economic growth. The meeting supported a significant role for UNAMA as a checker of international action and assistance in addition to trying to reach an agreement on regional cooperation in managing the situation in Afghanistan.¹¹

London Conference

At the last summit, which was co-hosted by the United Nations, the United Kingdom, and the Afghan government and took place in London on January 28, 2010, it was agreed that a comprehensive plan was required for the phased handover of ownership to the Afghans, subject to certain conditions being met by the end of 2010 or early 2011. It was decided that the government should be in charge of more than half of all national spending, provided it could fight corruption.

President Obama had just unveiled a new strategy for the war in Afghanistan that aimed to integrate civilian leadership with military-led operations, making this a significant meeting. It was decided to attempt using financial incentives to persuade former Taliban fighters to return to a regular life as part of an effort by the UN and its co-hosts to urge citizens to shun violent groupings and acquire jobs in various areas of the country.

The administration planned to create a national council for peace, reconciliation, and reintegration in order to achieve these objectives. This would control the flow of development funds to provide alternate means of livelihood to Taliban fighters who agreed to surrender their weapons. For the program's inaugural year, a global fund has pledged to provide \$140 million. In addition to promoting business, cultural exchange, and the creation of conditions that will enable refugees to return home, the summit called for regional cooperation in the fight against terrorism and the drug trade.

The main goal of these seminars was to devise all-encompassing, well-coordinated stabilisation strategies for Afghanistan. It also meant discussing human rights from the perspective of the international community in relation to the country.

Another motivator was the potential new outlook the UN would provide for Afghanistan's political, social, and economic sustainability. To support its numerous programmes, it established the previously mentioned United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and held conferences to raise funds.¹²

Literature Review

The existing literature explores the multiple sides of the role of United Nations in Afghanistan. Hasegawa (2008), develops a conflict resolution approach for UN peace operations while studying the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan through a conflict transformation framework. The paper asserts that United Nations operations now base their impartiality on human security values and responsibility protection principles which requires detailed exploration of performance implications and meanings.

Saikal (2012) explains that the United Nations together with international partners and Afghan government received criticism for their inability to establish democratic structures and good governance after NATO's lengthy campaign in Afghanistan. This research analyzes the reasoning behind the progressive United Nations approach toward 'democratizing' Afghanistan. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) operates without effective skills and lacks sufficient determination to fulfill its extensive democratization goals because of major historical and organizational obstacles. UNAMA should dedicate efforts to establishing three core elements for country stability: an appropriate political structure, documentable regional relations and domestic unity for peace.

Bosi (2003) explores United Nations involvement in rebuilding Afghanistan through post-conflict activities after 2001. The research explores how the United Nations united forces to rebuild Afghan society through delivering humanitarian assistance combined with economic backing coupled with governance involvement and infrastructure construction projects. The research examines the methods through which the United Nations stabilized Afghan society and political structures while resolving humanitarian emergencies. Bosi explores the difficulties that the UN encountered

while serving Afghanistan post-conflict such as security matters and political instability as well as outer pressures. The research investigates how the UN guides Afghan reconstruction efforts while recognizing that external and domestic elements prevent prolonged security and stability in Afghanistan.

The United Nations' presence in Afghanistan spanned from 2001 to 2011 according to Tanin (2011). According to her the United Nations mission in Afghanistan stands as one of the most vital. The Afghan leadership together with international donors now engage in a debate about how to structure and what role the UN should play during and after the transition period. In this context, any projections on the future role of the organisation in Afghanistan should take into account three structural issues: its alignment with the country's medium- and long-term objectives; the establishment, in coordination with the Afghan government, of a clear and targeted timetable for achieving objectives related to the transfer of responsibility for conducting development support activities; and the improvement of management by streamlining the organisation's operations through the application of the "One UN" principle.

Research Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and focuses on the role of the United Nations (UN) in Afghanistan before the Taliban took control in 2021. It examines the UN's involvement in providing economic support, training, aid, and other essential services to the Afghan people. The study seeks to understand how the UN continues to operate and offer assistance despite the challenges posed by the Taliban government. By analyzing the UN's efforts, the study aims to shed light on the ways in which the organization navigates the complex political and humanitarian landscape of Afghanistan.

A central aspect of the study is the question of the UN's role in Afghanistan before 2021. It investigates how the organization functioned in the country prior to the Taliban's return to power and compares its past and present engagements. This comparison helps in understanding whether the UN's strategies and operations have changed over time and how

external and internal factors have influenced its effectiveness.

The study collects data from multiple sources, including news outlets, official records, and notifications issued by both the United Nations and the new Afghan government. By using these diverse sources, the research aims to provide a comprehensive view of the UN's work in Afghanistan and assess its impact on Afghan society. A key focus of the study is the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), the primary UN agency dedicated to the country. UNAMA plays a critical role in coordinating humanitarian aid, supporting development programs, and advocating for human rights in Afghanistan. Additionally, the study explores the UN's role in international forums, where it engages with the global community to address Afghanistan's ongoing challenges and secure international support for its reconstruction efforts.

The role of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

UNAMA was established by a resolution passed by the UN Security Council on March 28, 2002. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations declared it a "political and integrated mission," acting on a request from the Security Council to support the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. As a result, it was assigned a wide range of responsibilities, including managing operations for relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction; holding elections; and providing political and tactical advice for the peace process. UNAMA oversees the operations of the eighteen agencies that make up the UN country team in Afghanistan. It co-chairs the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), which oversees the implementation processes for the Afghanistan national development strategy of 2008 and the Afghan compact of 2006, in addition to having twelve province offices and eight regional offices. It also harmonises the ways in which the international community and the Afghan government function.

Afghan Compact

Adopted during the February 2006 meeting in London, the Afghan Compact called for the end of

the drug trade and provided a five-year (2006–2011) plan for enhancing governance, human rights, security, rule of law, and growth in the economy and society. The agreement was based on the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS), which aimed to create a long-term cooperative endeavour between Afghanistan and the international world. Creating wealth, fostering economic progress, and lowering poverty and vulnerability were among its goals.

Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS)

The Afghan Compact served as the foundation for ANDS, which the government unveiled during a conference in Paris on June 12, 2008. This plan is part of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and is meant to act as a document for the Afghan Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS). Security, infrastructure and natural resources, good governance, education and culture, health and nutrition, agriculture and rural development, social protection, economic governance, and private sector development are among its primary objectives.¹³

Role of UNAMA

In an editorial titled "Afghanistan's critical elections," the head of UNAMA and the UN envoy to the country, Mr. Kai Eide, emphasised that the elections for the country's next president and provincial council members are more about "legitimacy of leadership" than they are about electing new leaders. The first presidential elections conducted entirely by the Afghan Independent Election Commission (AIFC) were held on August 20, 2009, with assistance from UNAMA and UNDP. These organisations were crucial in assisting the Afghan government with the registration and nomination of candidates.¹⁴

Furthermore, once the president's term expired, the UN mission helped resolve disagreements about dates and the president's authority. It provided technical assistance in addition to managing each party participating in the process, whether directly or indirectly. Representatives from foreign groups, candidates, supporters, election officials, and members of the media were present at these parties.¹⁵ The election process needed to be effectively concluded for the UN to be able to claim that its

years of effort had paid off and to try to bring back a healthy political environment in Afghanistan. The UN should not be held accountable for its shortcomings, despite the fact that there were many anomalies, as this was an admirable attempt to create the framework for a future state with robust institutions.

UNAMA has worked with the Civil Service Commission to develop a unified curriculum that addresses five common civil service responsibilities in addition to supporting the election process. These include of the development of policies, project management, accounting, purchasing, and human resources. This curriculum will be used to train around 15,000 civil service professionals over the next two years. Some donors have previously supplied curricula that did not demonstrate relevance to the Afghan context, but instead was based on their own beliefs. It is clear that developing a single curriculum was a critically important undertaking that provided a more organised and contextualised method of developing ability.¹⁶

As the humanitarian assistance coordinator, UNAMA issued a \$604 million humanitarian action plan to aid the poorest Afghans.¹⁷ On October 24, 2009, the UN launched the \$4 billion UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Afghanistan on the eve of UN Day.¹⁸ In this approach, UNAMA has not only been able to participate in the policy-making process but has also taken the lead in generating funds and awareness and working with the administration to resurrect an active political process in the nation.

UN Development Assistance Framework

To prepare the UNDAF, partners from both domestic and international institutions collaborated. \$4 billion in UN funding will be provided between 2010 and 2013, as the JCMB will be collaborating with the UN to implement the framework. Within the ANDS, the UNDAF has designated three areas of focus:

Stability, peace, and governance

In order to improve governance, peace, and stability, the UN works with numerous Afghan ministries. Thirteen It has focused on supporting the central state while also intervening at sub-national

government institutions, on the theory that severe instability is caused by poor governance. The objective is to establish institutions that address community needs in order to lay the foundation for the widespread provision of security and social services. The plan also aims to increase the ability of different civil society organisations and cultivate a culture of accountability. The motivations stem from three expected outcomes: improved public services, increased stability, and strengthened democratic institutions.

To combat instability, the UN has created a three-pronged plan. In particular, the UN has assisted the government in creating a number of employment-related policies and regulatory frameworks. In addition, it has the advantage of addressing a number of highly destabilising factors, including border management, law enforcement, policing, drug trafficking, and disarmament; two, it has provided backing to regional human rights initiatives; and three, it attempts to facilitate the reintegration of marginalised groups into mainstream institutions in order to enhance public services. Additionally, it promotes female involvement and aids in the administrative and capacity-building skill development of government servants. But it requires regional teams to establish provincial coordinating mechanisms.

In order to strengthen democratic institutions, the UN helps to provide training to members of elected councils, the National Assembly, and other independent bodies that make up the state. In addition, initiatives have been undertaken to create public-private partnerships, strengthen civil society and the media, and promote an open culture.¹⁹

Agriculture, food security, and economic prospects for sustainable livelihoods

The UN assists the government in formulating and carrying out policies that promote economic expansion in the agricultural sector and other domains. As the UN strives to lower poverty rates through specific projects, better wheat seed and the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) facility have received significant support.

In order to boost family access to a wider variety of foods and agricultural output, the UN supports cooperative coordinating systems. In order to do this,

production means are developed, notably irrigation networks, high-quality seeds, plant protection, animal feed, and health services. Additionally, food security initiatives are implemented through the educational system. It additionally endeavours to effectively oversee natural resources and dangers to lessen susceptibility to calamities.

Expanding and expanding livelihood options particularly for the less fortunate members of society by linking rural development, private sector revival, and vocational training has been a key feature of UN projects. Collaborations have been established with other ministries to provide training to members on how to aid their fellow citizens more effectively.²⁰

Fundamental Social Services

The Afghan government is receiving assistance from the UN in providing basic social services such as access to clean water, health care, education, and sanitation. The UN employs a two-pronged strategy: it works with relevant ministries and partners to build mechanisms for access to high-quality services, and it participates in community development committees to include significant stakeholders like shuras and religious leaders. It seeks to encourage community members, families, and people to take an active role in the management and acquisition of health and educational opportunities by utilising them.²¹

The \$4 billion UNDAF effort, which backs the government-proposed national strategy (ANDS), is a notable move by the UN. But the real implementation is likely to face many challenges because it requires forming a strong relationship with what is often believed to be a corrupt political apparatus. The UN country staff must carefully control the finances and supervise their execution with support from local governments. thirty-two UN agencies collaborated to write the text, and they are now working on different implementation duties. A few of these agencies' most notable undertakings are examined below.

United Nations Development Programme

UNDP has been actively involved in Afghanistan since the beginning of the peace process in that nation in 2002. It has made major contributions, particularly in the political arena, where it assisted in setting up the grand political council, or “Loya

Jirga|”, a gathering for the purpose of resolving grave political conflicts. It also provided counsellors and experts with comparable experience, and it helped with the creation of the constitution. Through the UN Office of Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supervised and managed the first presidential election in addition to the legislature and provincial elections.

Its emphasis on institutional development during its partnership with UNAMA to establish an Independent Electoral Commission and its endeavours to inaugurate the Lower House (Wolesi Jirga) and Upper House (Meshrano Jirga) in 2004 are further achievements. The UNDP has provided trainings and international exposure to members of the parliament and senate, which has enhanced their comprehension of the legislative process and their constitutional tasks, rights, and obligations.

During Afghanistan's early recovery phase, the UNDP helped re-establish the judiciary, one of the main elements of which was the Law-and-order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOFTA), which is managed by the UN. It also helped the Treasury Department of the Ministry of Finance create a \$2 billion policy-based annual national budget IN 2008. It is not unexpected that its work is varied considering its broad scope. In addition to aiding in the development of political systems, legal frameworks, and institutions, UNDP has contributed to the field of sustainable livelihoods. In order to enhance livelihoods and fight poverty in rural Afghanistan, it worked with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation to develop the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) in 2002.

The NABDP, which is present in all thirty-four provinces of the country, has greatly improved the capacity of provincial government. Nine hundred projects have been completed or are currently being completed; most of them involve the construction of physical buildings and small-scale infrastructure. As the world's administrator in Afghanistan, UNDP has positioned itself to handle large financial contributions for governments and donors on behalf of the UN and the development industry.²²

UN World Food Programme

The UNWFP has been present in every province of Afghanistan since 1963. Its original purpose of providing emergency assistance has expanded to encompass Afghanistan's full recuperation and restoration. Nearly 9 million Afghans, primarily those living in rural areas with limited food supplies, received food assistance from it in 2009.

The UNWFP launched a school lunch initiative to help with the educational system's restoration. This programme gave 1.4 million students take-home food rations to encourage enrolment; as an extra benefit, 568,600 female students received vegetable oil, which helped bridge the gender gap.

The UNWFP has started a second project called Food for Training in an attempt to raise the standard of living and teach the destitute employable skills. It provided meals to 180,000 Afghans in 2009 alone when they joined in classes for reading, childcare, carpentry, plumbing, and handcraft manufacturing. It also assists some 4.4 million people through its Food for Work programme, which feeds labourers while they build or maintain communal assets including roads, bridges, reservoirs, and irrigation systems.

UN Development Fund for Women

UNIFEM started working in Afghanistan after the Taliban government was overthrown in 2002. Its objective is to empower women and increase their opportunities in all areas of life, just like in other countries. Additionally, it provides technical and financial support through innovative strategies and projects that promote women's rights, political participation, and financial security.

UNIFEM's main office is in Kabul, with extension offices spread across six other provinces: Herat, Jalaabad, Parwan, Kapisa, Panshir, and Ghazni. Furthermore, there are coordination offices located in Ghazni, Herat, and Parwan. The group supports the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), a UNESCO initiative in Afghanistan, and works closely with the government and UNAMA on a number of joint initiatives, including the Girls Education Initiative and the Afghanistan Integrated Functional Literacy Initiative.

In order to achieve its objectives, UNIFEM manages a range of programmes in Afghanistan. For instance,

the Gender and Justice programme seeks to protect women from abuse in all its manifestations and to allow them access to political participation in both rural and urban settings. Consequently, in an effort to give Afghan women a voice and to protect their rights, UNIFEM has backed legislative and policy reform measures.

The Community Empowerment and Economic Development branch of UNIFEM helps women's economic security in six provinces by offering training in interests-related skills so they can become self-sufficient. UNIFEM has also started an Institutional Capacity Building effort, overseen by the Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA), with the aim of guaranteeing that the budgets, protocols, and systems of government ministries and institutions are gender-neutral. After that, UNIFEM provided technical assistance for the development, implementation, and supervision of a ten-year National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) and assisted in mainstreaming gender in the ANDS.²³

United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF)

In order to teach 12,000 pupils, UNICEF reports that twelve new schools are being built in the province of Baghlan in northern Afghanistan. In addition, a working plan has been signed with the Ministry of Public Health to promote national goals including school health, maternal health, and immunisation.

UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

In keeping with other UN agencies, the UNODC has sent sixty used computers to the Afghanistan Women and Children's Rights Association in support of girls' schools in Kunduz, in the country's northeast.

UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock have launched a \$2 million effort to assist poor farmers in the north-eastern province of Baghlan. Over 100 gardens covering 110 acres of agricultural land were planted with 6,600 fruit trees, including plum, apricot, peach, and almond kinds, as part of the programme.

In addition, the FAO has started a dairy effort aimed at increasing 1,600 Afghan households' income. In Kabul and the provinces of Logar, Wardak, Mazar, and Kunduz, household earnings have increased from \$130 to \$650 annually thanks in part to the dairy effort. Since its launch in 2003, FAO's effort has assisted many families and been a major success.²⁴ In addition to the agencies mentioned above, there are other groups that are vital to Afghanistan's progress. These include, for instance, the UN Office for Project Services, which worked with the Swedish embassy to build a road between Sar-i-Pul and Sosma Qala, and UNESCO, which, in partnership with the Italian government, launched a \$1 million plan to improve the capacities of educational radio and television.

Thus, in addition to their collaborative efforts, every UN aid organisation is vitally and independently contributing to the reconstruction of the lives of the Afghan people in their own special ways—often through collaborations with other organisations and donors. This does not mean, however, that the work has been easy; on the contrary, aid agencies and the projects they fund always face a number of challenges. In the section that follows, these challenges and the approaches being taken to address them will be thoroughly examined.

Challenges to the United Nations

Reconstruction and development following a conflict can only be successful in an environment that is safe and conducive to the work being done. Unfortunately, security concerns remain a major barrier for UN agencies functioning in Afghanistan, thus this hasn't happened. During the elections in September 2009, UN personnel members were subjected to numerous threats and warnings, and the threat has continued ever since. In actuality, aid agencies have suffered several attacks as well as a loss of staff and equipment. Two UNAMA staff members were killed and another was injured in a vehicle-borne suicide bombing on a foreign military convoy in Kabul on September 18, 2009. An incident happened at the Bakhtar Guesthouse in Kabul, where thirty-four UN personnel were staying. Five more UN workers were killed, and numerous others were injured. The UN removed a number of its foreign workers from the country after this incident.

Things seem to be getting worse in Afghanistan, where 2009 was the deadliest year since the Taliban's fall in 2001. 2009 saw a rise in security occurrences from 741 in 2008 to an average of 960 each month. December 2008 saw approximately 50% fewer civilian deaths than December 2009. The security situation deteriorated further in January 2010, with 40% more security incidents than in January 2009.²⁵ Due to the deteriorating security conditions, fifty UN personnel left Afghanistan in 2009, leaving large gaps in the operation.

UNAMA recruiting is another issue the UN is facing because of its laborious employment procedures in New York. Even though the funding is there, UNAMA is unable to efficiently utilise its resources because it takes around a year to hire more employees in order to extend its operation in Afghanistan. Lack of human resources is a major barrier keeping it from achieving its bold objective in Afghanistan. Finding the right people to carry out certain tasks assigned at the local level has proven to be quite challenging; problems with trust, training, capacity building, and corruption all contribute to local efforts being shelved or delayed.

Corruption is the greatest problem Afghans are expected to confront. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) observed insecurity in a survey done in January 2010. Sadly, this scourge has not only affected the Afghan people but also the UN, which is struggling with corruption even within its own aid staff. In order to finance his lifestyle, Gary K. Helseth, the chief of the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) from 2002 to 2006, was charged by the UN Procurement Task Force of mismanaging funds totalling half a million dollars from roads, schools, and hospitals.³⁰ Certain reports indicate that several UNOPS initiatives are not meeting targets and may even fail. There are plenty of minor corruption cases even though there aren't many huge corruption cases. Nevertheless, in order to properly address more serious issues in Afghan society, the UN needs to act swiftly to put an end to such financial mismanagement from within its own ranks. Uneven project funding is a major problem for the UN, with a growing gap between the amount promised and the amount really contributed by international contributors. This makes projects

unsustainable and even well-intentioned ideas quickly out of date.

Concerns regarding the assistance sector's poor cooperation and coordination in the use of funds have been voiced by the UN. The EU, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative, and UNAMA are the three coordinating civilian bodies in Afghanistan that recommend funding for activities. A lack of coordination among them can occasionally cause delays or even jeopardise the completion of entire projects in any Afghan province, which concerns all parties concerned.²⁶

Reliable security is necessary for development work, and security in Afghanistan needs to be significantly improved before aid agencies like the UN can carry out their mandates. The international community needs to take several steps to win over the hearts and minds of the local people in order to tackle a resurgence in insurgency. For instance, the army and police services need to be completely reorganised. Despite efforts to educate Afghan soldiers, the police continue to have a negative reputation. There have been allegations of police involvement in kidnapping, extortion, and smuggling, according to reports filed to UNAMA field offices.³¹ When security agents seem to be terrorising the public instead of providing any security at all, frustration naturally grows and rebel groups become more prevalent.

As a result, the UN faces difficulties in conducting its business. This does not lessen the need for the UN to function more efficiently. In fact, it needs to make better use of the resources available, giving funding to projects that significantly improve the lives of numerous people in the places where the most urgent medical attention is needed. For example, it should increase its efforts in building and maintaining infrastructure, especially in the form of roads and facilities for students to receive technical education, and deepen its role in the agricultural sector. Furthermore, in the aftermath of the conflict, the UN needs to adapt to the particular needs of Afghanistan by allocating funds for children who have lost both of their parents and are now responsible for supporting entire families. This may be accomplished, for instance, by offering them a liveable income and imparting knowledge and skills—as long as they stay in school. First and foremost, given its institutional significance, the UN needs to

adequately address the problem of corruption within its institutions. It needs to find other ways to increase openness and ensure that recipient offices aren't embezzling or misusing the money.

This can be accomplished, for instance, by including the community or ensuring that all finances go through a different organisation created specifically for this reason. Since drugs have become a serious global issue, the UN is the only institution equipped to address the problem of drugs thanks to its broad mandate. It has actually been somewhat successful in lowering the growth of poppies; the UNODC reported in February 2010 that eight more provinces (Baghlan, Faryab, Sari Pul, Badakhshan, Kabul, Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar) may become poppy-free in 2010 if immediate aid is given. Based on a poll of farmers' intentions at planting, this data was gathered. Even though there has been a 36% decline in opium cultivation over the past two years, much more work needs to be done if the substance is to be controlled or even totally eliminated. The UN should try to encourage farmers to diversify their products by including non-food crops like fruit, wheat, and maize, and should also aim to support farmers more in the agricultural sector. Minimal opium growing will help combat militancy as well as provide livelihoods because the opium trade is a major source of funding for militants. UNAMA, the principal organisation involved in the reconstruction effort, has to improve its protocols for coordinating with other major stakeholders, international donors, and other UN agencies. In the end, this will allow the agencies to work on certain tasks more fully and lead to a more efficient use of resources.

It is time for the UN to adopt a new strategy, especially in Afghanistan, and target the influential local religious leaders known as “mullahs,” who are crucial to winning over millions of people. Having these people on board will honour it, provide a safe path to work, and prevent needless delays in project execution. The benefits could really be reciprocal since such cooperation might enable religious leaders to influence young people, who are the most important demographic for the growth of the country, to view religion as a positive, peaceful force. If they do not stop the radicalization, or potential radicalization, of a disillusioned and youthful population, the UN and the international

community will fail in their mission in Afghanistan. To work with UN staff on various projects, such as curriculum and schools, where many Afghans may find religion a challenging subject, qualified and experienced Islamic teachers can also be hired by the UN. If they do not stop the radicalization, or potential radicalization, of a disillusioned and youthful population, the UN and the international community will fail in their mission in Afghanistan. To work with UN staff on various projects, such as curriculum and schools, where many Afghans may find religion a challenging subject, qualified and experienced Islamic teachers can also be hired by the UN.

The educators engaged by the UN may play a crucial role in promoting positive changes in mindsets, actively engaging in the process of reconciliation, and potentially overthrowing or convincing influential religious leaders in order to steer the upcoming generation of Muslims towards a harmonious and peaceful understanding of Islam.

Conclusion

Rebuilding Afghanistan would be difficult even under ideal conditions; the UN is working hard to reorganise multiple areas in difficult terrain. The general security situation and the frequency of violence in Afghanistan pose the biggest challenges to carrying out development projects. These factors make it impossible to complete important work and even compel individuals to flee the country.

However, the UN is showing a strong commitment to supporting the Afghan people, as evidenced by the significant roles that UNAMA and other UN agencies play in helping the organisation achieve its individual and collective objectives. However, there is still much to be done; as unrest grows, so does the need for aid, development, and reconstruction. As a result, the mission in Afghanistan demands even greater commitment, and the UN should focus on improving the capacity of the people there in both the public and private space.

Domestic labour is required for the mobilisation and transfer of many UN projects in Afghanistan. Due to the fact that a sizable fraction of the labour force is currently foreign-born, investments in human capital development may significantly improve job prospects as well as the efficacy, durability, and economical use

of project resources. The London 2010 conference decided to delegate some of the development money to the government; however, in order to guard against corruption, the UN should first put in place a strict control mechanism.

Moreover, the UN must ensure that long-term projects like the UNDAF are carried out correctly and do not succumb to inefficient and dishonest bureaucratic structures that exist both within and outside of UN ranks. However, the UN is not equipped to tackle the massive undertaking of reconstructing Afghanistan politically, economically, and socially on its own. In order to properly address the numerous and notable difficulties within the country, the support of both international and local entities is a necessary condition; sincere and long-lasting dedication to supporting the Afghan populace must originate from all relevant parties.

REFERENCES

- The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security: Report of the UN Secretary General, United Nations: New York. A/56/681, S/2001/1157. December 6, 2001. Available at: <http://daccess-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDC/677/41/PDF/N0167741.pdf?OpenElement>.
- Alex Conte. (2022). "Security Council in the 21st Century: The United Nations, Afghanistan, and Iraq", London: Routledge, 11-12.
- World Bank, 2001, Conference on 'Preparing for Afghanistan's Reconstruction, November 27-29, 2001.
- David Rohde and Carlotta Gall. "Delays Hurting US Rebuilding in Afghanistan", New York Times, November 5, 2020.
- United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan, United Nations, December 2010.
- JANN, Berlin Conference, April 1, 2004.
- Vishal Chandra. (2001-2014). "The Unfinished War in Afghanistan", Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, 2014, 302.
- Abdul Qayyum Khan. (2021). "Understanding Afghan History Politics and Economy", New Delhi: Routledge. 211-216.

- Finance Diplomatic, International Conference on Afghanistan, January 31-February 1, 2006. <http://www.diplomatic.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/english.pdf>
- Jacob W. Jankowski. (2011). "Corruption. Contractors and War loads in Afghanistan", New York: Nova.
- Rhoda Margesson. (2009). United Nations Mission in Afghanistan: Background and Policy Issues. CRS Report for Congress, July 30, 2009, 8. <http://docs.google.com/viewrs?a=v&q=cache:Sz9f3ErAsZEJ:www.fas.org/sgp/crs/>
- United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, United Nations, December 2017.
- Abdul Qayyum Khan. no.8. 190-192.
- Daniel R. Harison. (2011). "United States and United Nations Assistance for Afghanistan". UK: Nova Science Publisher Inc. 92.
- United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2009, 'Year in Review, January - December 2009', Compiled by the Strategic Communication and Spokesperson Unit Kabul, July 2009 Review. <http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?link=Publication%2fUNAMA+News%2fUNAMA+YEAR+REVIEW+2009.pdf&tabid=1741&mid=1886>
- UNAMA, 2009, 'The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for international Peace and Security', Report of the Un Secretary-General, UN: New York, A/64/364-S/2009/475. 6.
- Carter Malkasian. (2021). "The American War in Afghanistan: A History". London: Oxford University Press. 411.
- Rumki Basu. (2019). "The United Nations-Structure and Functions of an International Organisation", New Delhi: Sterling Publishers. 119.
- United Nation Development Assistance Framework: In Support of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (2010-2013) <http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?link=Publication%2fUNDAF+English.pdf&tabid=1763&mid=2026> Ibid.
- James Dobbins. (2017). "After the Taliban: Nation Building in Afghanistan". Washington, D.C: Potomac Books. 88-89. <http://afghanistan.unifem.org/media/pubs/factsheet/10/unifem.html>
- United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2009, 'Year in Review, January - December 2009', Compiled by the Strategic Communication and Spokesperson Unit Kabul, January 2019 Review.
- United Nations Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), 2009, 'Year in Review, January - December 2009', Compiled by the Strategic Communication and Spokesperson Unit Kabul, July 2009 Review. <http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?link=Publication%2fUNAMA+News%2fUNAMA+YEAR+REVIEW+2009.pdf&tabid=1741&mid=1886>
- Abdul Qayyum Khan. no.8, 192.