

# Afghanistan Reconstruction Project Through the Fog of Peacebuilding: Evaluating the Reconstruction of Afghanistan

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## Chart Legend

**A.** Government of Afghanistan estimate of needs over five years (\$15 billion). Source: Afghanistan High Level Strategic Forum, Brussels, 17 March 2003, Chairman's Summary.

**B.** Baseline World Bank/Asian Development Bank/UN Development Program preliminary estimate of needs over five years from (\$10.2 billion). Source: World Bank.

**C.** Total pledged at the International Conference for Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo, January 2002, for first five years of reconstruction (\$5.2 billion). Source: Transitional Government of Afghanistan, Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (ACA).

**D.** Total committed as of 15 May 2003 (\$2.6 billion). Source: ACA, "Project Overview by NDP-SubNDP" (Update version: first half of May 2003).

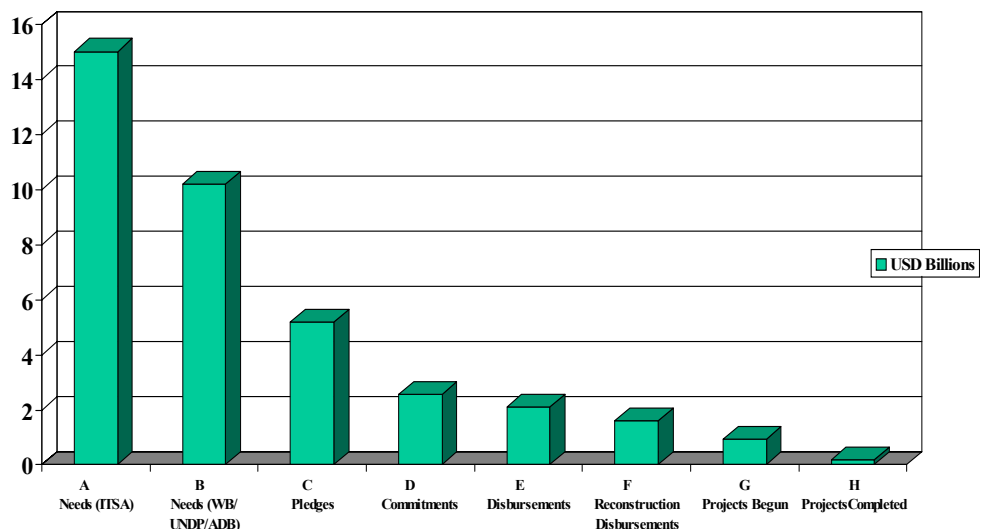
**E.** Total disbursed as of 15 May 2003 (\$2.1 billion). Source: ACA.

**F.** Total disbursed for reconstruction projects as of 15 May 2003 (\$1.6 billion), excluding humanitarian assistance, defined as refugee/IDP aid, food and relief commodity distribution, and coordination costs of international agencies. Source: ACA.

**G.** Total disbursed for reconstruction projects that have begun as of 15 May 2003 (\$.947 billion). Source: ACA.

**H.** Total expenditure on reconstruction projects that have been completed as of 15 May 2003 (\$.192 billion). Source: ACA.

**Afghanistan Reconstruction as of Mid-Year 2003: Goals vs. Results**



A year and a half after the defeat of the Taliban, anger is rising in Afghanistan at the slow pace of reconstruction. Success in reconstruction means meeting goals, not fulfilling pledges or being generous. The overriding goal is enabling Afghans to build a country that contributes to, rather than threatens, their own and global security. As the government of Afghanistan becomes better organized and articulates both this goal and what is needed to reach it more clearly, it has become evident that donors underestimated the amount of assistance required.

Initial pledges fell short even of underestimates of the needs and were far less than in other comparable cases. Initial disbursements, which in past cases have always exceeded subsequent ones, came relatively quickly and nearly met pledges, as donors have highlighted (see chart). But most of these disbursements went for emergency humanitarian needs, not reconstruction. Implementation of those reconstruction projects that have been funded has been exceedingly slow, leaving little to show on the ground. As of May 2003, donors reported that in 17 months they had completed reconstruction projects with an expenditure of only \$191 million, out of \$2.1 billion pledged to reconstruction for the first twelve months.

Furthermore, according to Afghan government figures, only 16 percent of the total disbursements (including for humanitarian purposes) had passed through channels controlled by the struggling Afghan government and had thus failed to build that government's capacity or legitimacy.

The pervasive insecurity outside of Kabul prevented implementation of major projects and sapped the public's confidence in the new authorities. Failure to strengthen the government and provide security will doom the reconstruction effort even if contributions increase. The government has articulated an ambitious policy framework for reconstruction and asked for both reconstruction and security assistance. Success is possible, and at a modest cost. Failure by the US and other major states to respond will doom Afghanistan, the region, and the world to a repetition of anarchy that gave birth to the Taliban and refuge to al-Qaida.

## Recommendations

1. ***Put security first.*** All recovery efforts will prove futile in a chronically insecure environment. At best, resources will be squandered; at worst they will be hijacked by violent power-seekers. As now planned, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams developed by the US Department of Defense are unlikely to meet the stated goal of improving the security situation. Either expanding and clarifying the mandate of the PRTs or expanding the International Security Assistance Force to key regional centers could be crucial steps. Either the coalition, ISAF, or some other international force must provide international monitors for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of militia forces.

2. ***Put more in the pipeline.*** It is now clear that the pledges made at the January 2002 Tokyo conference were insufficient to meet either the statebuilding goals of the Afghan government or the interim recovery goals posited by the initial needs assessment carried out by the World Bank, UN Development Program, and Asian Development Bank. Those pledges should be viewed as the initial step in a process of continuing reassessment and augmentation of international assistance. In fall 2003, a new pledging conference or some other means of securing additional donor commitments should mark the second anniversary of Afghanistan's new beginning. The bar should be set at or near the \$15-20 billion needs estimate of the Afghan government, and the US, as leader of the military coalition and wealthiest donor nation, should endeavor to lead the contributions in every sector.

3. ***Aim resources locally.*** Whenever feasible, donors should channel their contributions directly to accountable Afghan government and civil society mechanisms. The trust funds established by the Afghan government and its international partners provide a straightforward and transparent means of transferring resources, and they should be utilized more fully as they prove their worth. All international agencies should be encouraged to minimize their expatriate staff and to mentor Afghan NGOs and companies in the implementation of projects. Such partnerships should be a precondition of grant agreements.

4. ***Increase transparency and equitability of assistance.*** Unless donors and implementers more accurately and precisely report the geographic and sectoral distribution of their assistance and ensure it is being programmed according to need rather than logistical convenience or donor preference, rumors and resentments will continue to fester among Afghans who feel they are being shortchanged.

5. ***Monitor to stay on track.*** Donors should sign an agreement with the Afghan government stating the goals of reconstruction and committing them collectively to supplying the amounts estimated as necessary. The periodic meetings of the Afghanistan Development Forum should be occasions not only for listing contributions and making new ones, but also for monitoring progress toward overall goals and agreeing on course corrections to meet them.

**Further information and the complete report on reconstruction in Afghanistan can be found at:  
[http://www.cic.nyu.edu/conflict/conflict\\_project4.html](http://www.cic.nyu.edu/conflict/conflict_project4.html)**