

AFGHANISTAN ARISING

A bullet of positive news from Afghanistan



A Project of Afghan Education for a Better Tomorrow

APRIL 2014

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AFGHANISTAN 2014 & BEYOND: ECONOMIC GROWTH AND STABILITY SUMMIT

On March 28, 2014, at the School of International Studies (SAIS) for Johns Hopkins University, the Rebuild Afghanistan Summit held a symposium presenting emerging business, social, and policy trailblazers who are leading Afghanistan's transformation. The conference attendees had a wide variety of specific interests in Afghanistan but were focused on one aspect – the need to look beyond 2014 to a new and rising Afghanistan. The symposium was sponsored by:

-[Afghan Education for a Better Tomorrow](#) (AEBT), which is the parent organization of the Rebuild Afghanistan Summit and works to empower the Afghan people through building knowledge and skills in education and health.

-[Metis Solutions](#) is a woman-owned small business founded by experienced leaders in strategic solutions for defense, homeland defense, intelligence, and commercial organizations. It can support investors and companies seeking entry into emerging markets as well as local enterprises seeking to break out into the international marketplace.

-[Onsite OHS](#) Onsite Occupational Health and Safety, Inc.

(Onsite OHS) works in developing countries and areas of limited healthcare access. Onsite OHS is on the front lines providing, in some cases, the only form of healthcare available, and operates more than 50 medical clinics worldwide.

-[The Stability Institute](#) uses its broad experience in underdeveloped areas to foster enduring stability in ungoverned spaces.

-The [Bayat Foundation](#) supports the neediest and most at-risk Afghans by providing a wide range of materials and services. Its goal is to rekindle a healthy and hopeful base so that all Afghans have the opportunity to prosper.

-The [Task Force for Business Stability Operations](#) (TFBSO) is an element of the U.S. Department of Defense set up to leverage American international economic power as a strategic tool for promoting economic stabilization and security.

-Breakfast items for the attendees were provided by three Afghan-American family owned restaurants: [Malmaison](#), [Napoleon Bistro & Lounge](#) and [Cafe Bonaparte](#).

-Other partnered groups included the Alliance in Support of the Afghan People (ASAP), the US Institute of Peace (USIP), and the Afghan-American Women's Association (AAWA). Each of these groups joined our efforts to develop a united community of public and private sector support to continue long-term commitments to peace and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Chris Tynes, Head of Community Relations for SAIS, welcomed the attendees. The conference facilities provided by SAIS made the entire event possible. Mr. Brad Pupello, Executive Director of Rebuild Afghanistan Summit DC, stressed the need to look beyond this current year and referred to the broad opportunities now emerging in Afghanistan. Mr. Joseph Catalino, the Acting Director of TFBSO, briefly outlined the broad scope of business development activities that the task force has supported, leveraging American international economic power as a strategic tool to promote economic stabilization and security.

A panel on investment in Afghanistan addressed the wide range of opportunities now developing. Dr. Shah Mehrabi of Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) described the central objective of the bank as maintaining price stability while supporting investments in the service sector and working to keep inflation low. At the macro-level, DAB promotes more access to capital and encourages banks to invest in Afghanistan. He outlined a developing mortgage market and promotion of the judicial reforms. Finally, Dr. Mehrabi gave an account of moves to set up an Agricultural Development Bank to broaden the scope of loans available to farmers. Then Mr. Sanzar Kakar, Chairman of the Afghan Holdings Group, gave a strongly optimistic presentation on Afghan development. Mr. Kakar noted that there is certainly risk, but underlining that risk also carries the potential for high reward. This has been reflected in a wide range of low-level developments in Kabul over the past two years, including water parks, malls, restaurants, and a flurry of start-ups. Businesses are shifting from serving mainly international clients to serving Afghans. Mr. Kakar also emphasized that the young population can be a force for change, as its dynamic spirit shows hope and optimism. The final member of this panel, Mr. Todd Wilcox of Patriot Capital, discussed how businesses are now focusing on finding entrepreneurs and identifying companies that want to build. Maturation of an equities market is moving forward with the establishment of a new Security Commission Board while banks are developing mortgage systems. Mr. Wilcox noted that more comprehensive business regulations and an improved court system are also important in order to give companies confidence.

Following the first panel, there were two presentations on social developments. Ms. Leslie Schweitzer, Senior Vice President for International Business Development at Capitalize LLC, stressed that the impressive size of the total US investment in Afghanistan made it by far the largest reconstruction

effort in recent history. This investment has produced many significant improvements in Afghan life and demonstrates the deep commitment of the United States. Ms. Schweitzer emphasized that 2014 is not a deadline, but a challenge. She continued to explain developments at the American University of Afghanistan (AUAF). In its eight years of operation, AUAF has grown from some 50 students to a current graduating class of around 2,000. 55% of these students are women, and they represent all 34 Afghan provinces as well as a significant representation of Afghans now living in neighboring countries. The university has a modern building and is dedicated to collaboration, working to become a hub for entrepreneurs looking to develop profitable businesses in a dynamic and democratic society. Moving from the highest levels of education to the grass roots, Ms. Benafsha Tasmim gave a dynamic presentation on Skateistan, a youth center combining sports and education. Using the attraction of skateboarding, the project works with nearly 400 students each week, many of whom are young women. Skateistan has become the largest female sports facility in the country. Skateistan provides opportunities for disadvantaged children, promotes the integration of its students into the standard school system, and has developed programs for disabled youth, along with art education programs and cultural exchanges. All of this is focused on developing the leadership potential of young people.

The second morning panel addressed public-private partnerships, a central tool for promoting broad commercial expansion. Mr. Steven Landrigan, a coordinator for the Afghan Carpet and Textile Industries, gave forceful comments on the huge commercial potential of this sector. Pakistani middlemen created the market for Afghan carpets, but Afghans are ready to take the leadership role in this sector. Mr. John Aldonas from the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) described the long-term growth capacity for innovative Afghan companies and support for projects that have included housing and hotel construction, milk, juice and water production, marble quarrying, and other consumer-related projects. OPIC supports the Afghan Rural Investment Corporation, providing Islamic Financing in the private sector. Mr. Aldonas stressed how the Afghan government needs to improve the investment climate with an upgraded court system. He also spoke about education's critical role in work force development, including in the agricultural sector. Mr. David Bailey, Senior Private Sector Adviser for the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA) at the US Agency for International Development (USAID), described how Afghans are showing resolve and commitment in taking ownership of projects and making needed infrastructure improvements. USAID has a robust focus on the agriculture sector, private sector development, the operations and maintenance of infrastructure investments, and the future potential of the extractives industry. USAID is also helping facilitate greater regional integration through Central and South Asian trade corridors with public-private partnerships helping to finance necessary infrastructure. Mr. Brendan O'Donoghue, the Program Manager of Investment and Entrepreneurship at TFBSO, focused on this potential for public-private partnerships, using public money to catalyze private development. He also noted the importance of AUAF as a business investment hub and discussed the privatization of hospitals. The next panelist was Ms. Malalai Wassil, recently the Chief Legal Officer for Roshan. As the largest private employer in Afghanistan, Roshan supports over 25,000 jobs and provides a significant share of tax revenues to the government. Its M-Paisa mobile money system supports direct payment of

salaries, significantly reducing the potential for intermediaries to drain away earned wages. Roshan has actively supported disaster relief operations as well as micro financing loans, and has encouraged social networking, e-learning centers, food kitchens, and playgrounds. The last speaker of the morning was Mr. Shakib Noori, the former Economic Attaché at the Afghan Embassy. He focused attention on the role of investment in supporting jobs. In the longer run, the mineral and natural

resources of the country will support its economic development and address the current large trade imbalance.

Luncheon presentations by Mr. Chris McDonald, a Special Advisor to the Afghan Premier League, and Mr. Zaid Mohseni, the Chief Operations Officer of the MOBY Group, described how they used a reality show to create the Afghan Premier League. The league's recent win in the South Asian championship promoted a national euphoria and showed how sports programs can build aspirations and unity. This was presented as one example of how MOBY media's efforts counter the negative international press. Mr. Mohseni expressed his optimism on Afghanistan, showing confidence of the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces.

The first afternoon panel addressed the daunting question of security. Mr. Milt Bearden, President of the Asia-Africa Projects Group, stressed that the future of the country is now up to the Afghans. A real national dialogue, broader regional cooperation, and exploitation of mineral wealth can serve as a basis for Afghans to decide their fate. Mr. Michael Waltz, the President of METIS Solutions, expressed how critical mistakes, including an emphasis on withdrawal, have exacerbated political and security uncertainties within Afghanistan. Mr. Scott Mann, the founder of the Stability Institute, rounded out the panel by recounting how Special Forces came to recognize the importance of traditional society and relations at the local level. He emphasized paying attention to rural areas as the basis of national development.

The next panel addressed social enterprise in Afghanistan. Ms. Mariam Atash, the President of AMDI, Inc., gave a strong talk on the need for companies to take risks and get in on the ground floor. Ms. Roz Rustigian spoke about how the Initiative to Educate Afghan Women has brought young women to study in the United States. One of these students, Marzia, gave a moving presentation on what the program had meant to her individually. Mr. Masud Roshan helped establish the Afghanistan Technical Vocational Institute which now has 6,000 students at three locations. The institute works to develop skilled labor. Finally, Ms. Melissa Bertenthal of ARZU Studio Hope described how its approach begins with empowerment, providing economic opportunity, literacy training, and basic health services.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Brad Pupello issued a challenge to those in the audience: to not allow the unique synergy of so many diverse and powerful participants to end at the conclusion of the Summit. Mr. Pupello identified several of the key groups such as USIP, ASAP, AAWA, the Stability Institute, Marshall Plan Charities, and many others in the audience who will continue their support shaping policy, aiding development, and serving the people of Afghanistan in some of the most remote terrains. Mr. Pupello encouraged business participants to connect with the diverse financial firms who are experienced and well-versed in the challenging, but promising pre-frontier marketplace of Afghanistan. Finally, he encouraged those same two entities to meet and collaborate with representatives from OPIC, TFBSO, USAID, and Afghan ministries who are actively courting partners to share in the developmental opportunities slated to continue long after the drawdown of ISAF personnel. The elections will come and go; the country will move forward. It is time for those who are sitting on the sidelines in anticipation to start shaping events, rather than be shaped by them.

SILVER LINING

“A Mylar blanket can literally be a lifesaver if used properly.” These blankets, made of thin plastic material, are heat reflective, wind and waterproof, and are designed to reduce body heat loss. For the second winter, the Aschiana Foundation has purchased Mylar blankets for distribution in and around Kabul with life-saving results.

Inspiration for using the blankets came from Dr. Craig Garfield of Northwestern University Medical Center, who was moved by news stories of children freezing to death in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps. When he contacted the Aschiana Foundation last year, a process was quickly set in place to ship and distribute the blankets. Due to very positive reports from doctors and recipients, 7,200 Mylar blankets were shipped this year.

Dr. Mark Scofield of American Overseas Relief (AMOR) went to Afghanistan this February to help with distribution of Mylar blankets to approximately 900 families living in IDP camps supported by the Aschiana Children’s Center. AMOR partners with Aschiana in the operation of a health clinic in the Children’s Center and operates a hospital in Kabul.

The people in the camps live in mud huts, tents, and makeshift situations consisting of cardboard or canvas, with little or no heat. Multiple people share blankets and sleep on bare ground with only a thin rug or covering. Even with sunny days, the nights are often below zero, and the warmth of another body may be the only heat source.

Due to illiteracy, a demonstration with the silver side of the blanket up is required for effective use. Only men have attended these sessions, and attempts to provide instruction directly to the women have been unsuccessful. Four Mylar blankets, one bag of rice, beans, and cooking oil were given to each family. Providing blankets to families with newborn infants or young children has the greatest impact on saving lives.

Approximately 3,600 blankets were distributed in the camps. Additional blankets will be distributed from Aschiana’s clinic and other outreach clinics where approximately 1,200 women are seen each month. The remaining blankets will be held for use in the fall of 2014. Mylar blankets, developed by NASA for use in space, have had a dramatic life-saving impact on people living in the some of the most basic living conditions on earth.

AGRICULTURE IN BADAKHSHAN

Badakhshan agriculture district departments learn how to support farmers in the province



*From Wadsam.com**

A 21-day training workshop in English and computer skills for district agricultural departments came to close in Faizabad, Badakhshan. As part of the Afghan-German cooperation initiative, the training is an additional support measure of a large-scale office and IT equipment delivery project for the district offices of Badakhshan's Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Department.

A total of 20 participants from various districts, including Ishkashem, Keshem, Shuhada, Teshkan, Argo, Baharak, Yatali Payan, Jurm and Shugnand, took courses in basic English and computing to improve IT and software operating skills, for better quantitative and qualitative agricultural service delivery to the population of Badakhshan.

The training was part of larger project proposed by the Director of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation (DAIL) in Badakhshan and was approved by the Badakhshan Provincial Development Committee (PDC). Technical support came from the Regional Capacity Development Fund (RCDF) and funding came from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

As part of the Afghan-German Cooperation strategy, the RCDF is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. The RCDF provides supports for its Afghan partners' development priorities both on a provincial and a district level in six of Afghanistan's Northern provinces. At the same time, the RCDF provides training and coaching programs for civil servants. With its broad range of activities, the RCDF aims to increase Afghan ownership of the development process, strengthen Afghan state institutions on the sub-national level and promote transparency and inclusiveness.

*Note: This article was originally written by Wadsam.com on March 20, 2014 (<http://www.wadsam.com/badakhshan-agriculture-district-departments-learn-how-to-support-farmers-in-the-province-232/>)

GETTING THEIR GOATS



In conjunction with a model village effort in Khairabad, Herat Province, Rick Burns, an American veteran, has established the [Karadah Project International](#) to focus on sustainable projects in Afghanistan. The project has provided a life-changing gift for local people who have very few possessions: goats. The goats can reproduce up to twice a year so the herd can multiply while providing milk, yogurt, and cheese that can be made at a local processing center. "So it's better nutrition as well as a new revenue stream for their family," said Burns.

The Karadah Project, supported by generous donors, purchased 40 goats for Khairabad. Fifteen families were given 2 goats each, helping them address the daily problems faced by living in an unstable society. The remaining 10 goats are held by their Afghan nonprofit partner, the [Shindand Women Social Foundation](#) (SWSF), for breeding and program maintenance. Each of the fifteen families is required to give the first goat offspring to other families, so those who receive also become givers. Additionally, the project includes centrally-located milk processing equipment, training, goat vaccinations/feed, and ongoing support.

The Karadah Project works closely with the SWSF to track the goats within these families. Quarterly audits measure the growth rate of the goat herds within the villages and help adjust the program over time for maximum results. The intent is to use the goats as a basis for building more broad-based and self-sustaining plans in the future that will include governance, health, education, economic development, and infrastructure in order to develop self-sustaining communities. For the moment, however, "we are satisfied to ensure the work we do is having the outcomes we envision – by small efforts come great things." See [more....](#)

STANDING TALL



With emphasis on military operations, it is easy to lose sight of the civilian casualties that occur on a daily basis in Afghanistan. This is a story of one of these crises, a heart-warming story of determination and perseverance.

Rahmutullah is a 14-year-old boy from the village of Safid Rawan in the Kandahar Province who lost both his legs to an Improvised Explosive Device. Since both his father and grandfather had been killed in earlier years of fighting, he was the breadwinner for his mother. Addressing this obvious need, the [Marshall Plan Charities](#) Afghanistan activity collaborated with the local US Army to transport Rahmutullah to Kabul for orthopedic support from [A Leg to Stand On](#), a non-profit organization providing free orthopedic care to children in the developing world. Over the course of two months, he received two prosthetic limbs and physical therapy to enable him to regain his strength, mobility, and will to live.

He is one of several hundred children who have received free orthopedic support in Kabul over the last two years. In many cases, this has allowed them to start a new chapter in their lives, on their way to becoming productive citizens in their country. Quiet stories like this tend to get lost in the din of daily struggles. Rahmutullah is a reminder to us of the dedicated efforts often going on behind the scenes.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

The Center for Naval Analysis recently published an [Independent Assessment of the Afghan National Security Forces](#). It projects that with the drawdown and the presence of Taliban sanctuaries in Pakistan, pressure will probably increase in the years ahead. The Taliban will likely test Afghan forces first in outlying areas. Pakistan is unlikely to take action against Afghan-focused insurgent groups until there is greater clarity on the new regime in Kabul.

The Afghan Analysts Network has published a broad range of new reports, many focusing on the elections. Their security assessment is more optimistic—“[Can the Taleban outwrestle the government?](#) An assessment of the insurgency’s military capability” sees the Afghan National Security Forces holding their ground. Although the Taliban are poised to bounce back, the insurgency does not (yet) look to be showing any signs of winning – whether in the fight on the battlefield or the one for minds. Indeed, the assessment concludes that the Taliban can win on the battlefield only if the future government loses legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Another assessment, “Time is Running Out in Afghanistan: The April 5th Election is Only the Prelude to Transition,” by the Center for Strategic & International Studies notes that the US forces have stopped issuing status reports and sees little leadership from the White House in months. Much of this report assesses testimony by General Joseph F. Dunford, the Commander of US Forces in Afghanistan, to the Senate and House Armed Service Committees. His conclusion was that the Taliban-led insurgency does not represent an existential threat to Afghanistan, but the security forces do need a great deal of help in developing the systems, the processes, and the institutions necessary to run a modern, professional army and police force.

A commentary on “[Why Afghanistan Matters](#)” sets the effort into a broader need to promote development and prosperity on a global scale. In its monthly [newsletter](#), the Embassy of Afghanistan focused attention on regional issues, including the Afghan Chairmanship of the UN Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia and President Karzai’s participation in a Trilateral Summit with the Presidents of Turkey and Pakistan. You can sign up for this newsletter on the left side of the embassy’s [home page](#).

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) publishes an annual [A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance](#) to enhance understanding of the actors, structures, and government processes related to aid and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. It offers a comprehensive glossary of assistance terms, an overview of Afghanistan’s system of government, key primary documents, political overview of the 34 provinces, and an extensive contacts directory.

The [Kabul-e-news](#) provides a weekly summary of good news and development news on Afghanistan, as well as links to other on-line newspapers and websites. You can subscribe [here](#).

The latest Overview of Economic Indicators for Afghanistan continues to project a 6.5% real GDP Growth Rate in 2014, with inflation at 8% or below for the next two years. Nominal GDP is projected to be \$25.9 billion in 2014, up from \$23.0 billion in 2013. Food price inflation has slowed and non-food prices dropped sharply the same month.

INFORMATION

OUR MISSION & OBJECTIVES

1. Mobilize the local community to get involved with the organizations and businesses that are working to improve the lives of the people in Afghanistan
2. Provide a platform (at a one-day annual event) to help the organizations and businesses expand their projects

The Rebuild Afghanistan Summit is a project of Afghan Education for a Better Tomorrow (AEBT). AEBT is a non-profit organization, registered in California, Alaska, and Virginia, and is an IRS 501(C)(3) tax exempt organization. AEBT is also registered with Ministry of Economy in Afghanistan as an NGO. PO Box 395, Tracy, CA 95378, USA, www.afghansummit.org, +1-510-612-5566
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