

4 U.S. ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN



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UN Humanitarian Coordinator Indrika Ratwatte visits Baghlan Province to oversee UN agencies' aid efforts for communities affected by deadly flash floods. (Photo by UNAMA)

U.S. ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN



KEY ISSUES & EVENTS

As of July 12, the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan was 23% funded, at \$710.1 million. The United States is the single largest donor, having contributed over \$231 million this year.

Some 469,500 Afghans have returned to Afghanistan since November 1, 2023, when Pakistan's "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan," which aims to repatriate over a million foreigners residing in Pakistan without valid documents, went into effect.

The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration obligated an additional \$12 million this quarter to support UNHCR's programs that provide services to displaced Afghan migrants in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The United States remains the largest donor to programs supporting the Afghan people, disbursing more than \$3.2 billion for humanitarian and development assistance since the Taliban takeover in August 2021.¹ Following the collapse of the former Afghan government, the State Department told SIGAR, "The United States remains committed to facilitating the provision of life saving assistance for all Afghans in need, provided according to humanitarian principles amid the humanitarian crisis. We coordinate with allies, partners, and the international community to do so."² In October 2023, State publicly released an updated Integrated Country Strategy for Afghanistan, prioritizing security, economic self-reliance, intra-Afghan reconciliation, and humanitarian support.³

The Taliban—an organization on the U.S. Specially Designated Global Terrorist list—are subject to sanctions, thus limiting their access to foreign funds.⁴ However, since September 2021 Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets

SIGAR Lessons Learned Report

An ongoing Lessons Learned Program report is focusing on the challenges faced by donors, the UN, and NGOs in trying to get aid to the most vulnerable populations while bypassing politically estranged regimes, like the Taliban.

SIGAR Audit

An ongoing SIGAR audit is reviewing MOUs signed by State's implementing partners to determine the extent to which such agreements with the Taliban were completed and reviewed in accordance with applicable U.S. laws and agency requirements.

Control (OFAC) has authorized a series of licenses allowing for the provision of humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan while maintaining sanctions against the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and other entities.⁵ U.S.-funded programs are implemented through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, or other third parties, which State said minimizes benefit to the Taliban to the extent possible.⁶

A SIGAR audit issued in May found that 58% of implementing partners who responded to a survey reported paying \$10.9 million in taxes, duties, fees, or utilities to the Taliban-controlled government since 2021. SIGAR determined this is likely only a fraction of the total amount of U.S. assistance funds diverted to the Taliban because UN agencies receiving U.S. funds for disbursement in Afghanistan do not collect the data or provide relevant information about their subawardees' payments.⁷ For a full summary of the audit's findings, including Taliban attempts to divert assistance, see page 98.

The Taliban also exert some control over humanitarian activities and have at times required NGOs to sign memoranda of understanding (MOUs) as a condition for operating in Afghanistan.⁸ These MOUs create a framework for NGO-Taliban coordination and delineate local regulations.⁹ Because the United States maintains a noncommittal posture on recognizing the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan, the United States Agency for International Development's Afghanistan Mission (USAID/Afghanistan) generally prohibits its partner NGOs from entering into any agreements with the Taliban.¹⁰ However, in cases where it is necessary to operate, or protect the safety and security of staff, USAID/Afghanistan may authorize implementing partners to negotiate and sign MOUs with the Taliban on a case-by-case basis in accordance with agency-specific guidance.¹¹ USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) do not follow USAID/Afghanistan's administrative protocols and have coordinated to provide their own set of guidelines for implementing partners to consider when signing MOUs.¹² For additional information on federal guidelines for signing MOUs with the Taliban, see pages 64–65 of SIGAR's January 2024 *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*.

The UN, through its Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), leads international efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance directly to Afghans, including food, shelter, cash, and household supplies. The UN requested \$3.06 billion to fund humanitarian activities in 2024. As of July 12, the HRP was 23% funded, at \$710 million. The United States is the single largest donor, having contributed nearly \$232 million this year.¹³

USAID/BHA supports 18 programs, prioritizing direct food assistance and other avenues to help reduce food insecurity, including by promoting health, nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene.¹⁴ The total award amount for these programs, as shown in Table A.1, is more than \$815 million.

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TABLE A.1

USAID/BHA ACTIVE PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN				
Program Supported	Implementer	Start Date	End Date	Award Amount
Emergency Food and Nutrition Assistance and Air Services	UN WFP	12/7/2022	4/30/2024	\$345,634,491
Emergency Food and Nutrition Assistance and Air Services	UN WFP	1/16/2024	1/15/2025	150,000,000
WASH Response and Humanitarian Assistance Program	IOM	7/1/2022	7/31/2025	86,230,000
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	12/19/2022	11/18/2024	43,000,000
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	12/19/2022	11/18/2024	36,000,000
Integrated Nutrition, Cash, WASH, and Protection Services	UNICEF	12/14/2023	12/13/2024	30,245,916
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	1/1/2023	11/30/2024	28,000,000
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	1/1/2023	11/30/2024	20,500,000
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	12/1/2023	10/31/2024	19,390,000
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	5/1/2023	3/31/2025	14,900,000
Scale Up Plan for Health Cluster Coordination Structure	UN WHO	12/26/2022	5/31/2024	10,583,333
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	12/1/2022	10/31/2024	10,500,000
Project Name Withheld at Request of USAID	(redacted)	3/1/2022	6/30/2025	9,756,243
Protection	UNDP	6/10/2024	6/9/2026	5,000,000
Provision of Lifesaving GBV Prevention and Response, MRH services in Emergency through Mobile Health Teams & Strengthen the AAP mechanism and capacity/human resources	UNFPA	8/7/2023	8/6/2024	3,450,000
Information Mgmt. for Disaster Risk Reduction and Response	UN OCHA	1/1/2024	12/31/2024	1,200,000
Information Mgmt. for Disaster Risk Reduction and Response	UN FAO	1/1/2024	12/31/2024	500,000
Information Mgmt. for Disaster Risk Reduction and Response	UNFPA	1/1/2022	6/30/2024	361,800
Total				\$815,251,783

Source: USAID, BHA, response to SIGAR data call, 7/12/2024.

USAID PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

USAID/Afghanistan continues to fund humanitarian programs in Afghanistan through its Office of Livelihoods, Office of Democracy, Gender, and Rights, Office of Social Services, Office of Program and Project Development, and Office of Infrastructure, Energy, and Engineering. Quarterly updates are listed thematically below.

Economic Growth Programs

USAID’s Office of Livelihoods (OLH) supports two active economic growth programs—the Afghanistan Competitiveness of Export-Oriented Businesses Activity (ACEBA) and the Turquoise Mountain Trust (TMT) - Exports, Jobs, and Market Linkages in Carpet and Jewelry Value Chains activity.¹⁵ Together, these programs have total estimated costs of more than \$120 million, as shown in Table A.2.

TABLE A.2

USAID ACTIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/12/2024
Afghanistan Competitiveness of Export-Oriented Businesses Activity (ACEBA)	1/27/2020	1/26/2025	\$105,722,822	\$85,584,798
Carpet and Jewelry Value Chains	1/31/2019	4/30/2025	14,935,752	11,875,219
Total			\$120,660,000	\$97,460,018

Note: Numbers have been rounded.

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/12/2024.

Afghanistan Competitiveness of Export-Oriented Businesses Activity

USAID’s five-year, \$105.7 million Afghanistan Competitiveness of Export-Oriented Businesses Activity (ACEBA) is designed to provide technical assistance and grants to small and medium export-oriented enterprises. Since the Taliban takeover, ACEBA has prioritized livelihood support in 22 provinces. Livelihood support includes facilitating access to credit, bolstering private sector efforts to increase liquidity, helping the jobless secure apprenticeships, and assisting private sector suppliers of humanitarian goods to start or sustain production.¹⁶ ACEBA’s apprenticeship activity focuses on four value chains: cashmere, saffron, carpets, and humanitarian goods and services.¹⁷ Throughout its duration, ACEBA expects to support 1,100 small- and medium-sized enterprises, assist 82,000 individuals through livelihood restoration, provide 27,900 individuals with telemedicine consultations, supply 940 firms with working capital, and see a 50% increase in sales of supported firms.¹⁸

ACEBA’s April 2024 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan said that in its fourth year, the program benefited 76,000 individuals through its livelihoods support program, supported 173 exporters and 1,011 small and medium enterprises, and provided 700 firms with working capital. ACEBA participants were 35% women, according to the program’s most recent report.¹⁹

Turquoise Mountain Trust - Exports, Jobs, and Market Linkages in Carpet and Jewelry Value Chains

Turquoise Mountain Trust’s six-year, \$14.9 million project aims to create jobs within the carpet weaving and jewelry industries by providing development assistance to micro-, small-, and medium-size enterprises in Kabul, Jowzjan, and Bamyan Provinces. This program was scheduled to end on April 30, 2023, but USAID extended it until 2025 and increased funding by \$5 million.²⁰ According to the most recently available USAID implementer report from the October–December 2023, Turquoise Mountain Trust created a total of 6,103 jobs in the Afghan carpet and jewelry industries. Turquoise Mountain Trust also reported that it continues to support 12 carpet producing companies and 15 jewelry businesses.²¹

Education Programs

USAID’s Office of Social Services (OSS) supports four education development programs in Afghanistan, with total estimated costs of \$171 million, as shown in Table A.3.²² USAID continues to support primary school education for girls and boys as well as women’s and men’s higher education, but reported that the Taliban’s ban on girls’ secondary and higher education has directly affected OSS programs.²³ OSS focuses on sustaining higher education opportunities for women and girls in fields granted special exemptions by the Taliban ministry of health, such as midwifery degree programs, and through virtual, online, and distance learning, while prioritizing the safety and privacy of female students and educators.²⁴

TABLE A.3

USAID ACTIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/12/2024
Accessible and Quality Basic Education (AQBE)	10/1/2023	9/30/2028	\$79,249,987	\$1,779,714
Women Scholarship Endowment (WSE)	9/27/2018	9/26/2028	60,000,000	50,000,000
Supporting Student Success in Afghanistan (SSSA)	1/1/2023	12/31/2026	27,284,620	8,208,700
Young Women Lead (YWL)	9/28/2023	9/27/2025	4,935,797	349,441
Total			\$171,470,404	\$60,337,855

Note: Numbers have been rounded.
Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/12/2024.

Accessible Quality Basic Education

Accessible Quality Basic Education (AQBE) is a five-year, \$79.2 million program that began in October 2023 and aims to improve safe and equitable access to quality education for primary-aged girls and boys and secondary school-aged girls. AQBE identified four goals in its preliminary stage: (1) to achieve improved delivery of quality instruction in foundational skills and delivery of support for student well-being by educators; (2) to reinforce community school management and family engagement to sustain access to safe public and community-based education; (3) to increase transition rate of community-based education students into public primary schools; and (4) to sustain secondary education engagement and learning opportunities for adolescent girls.²⁵

Last quarter, AQBE conducted a Rapid Education Risk Analysis (RERA), a toolkit that supports the first steps of understanding the education system in complex, volatile contexts. RERA guides USAID education staff on procuring and overseeing RERA implementation, and its partners on implementing RERA. This analysis aims to inform geographic location coverage, strategic planning, and decision-making, “ensuring that educational interventions are contextually relevant and effectively address the unique

challenges with each community.” In addition to the analysis, AQBE registered with the Taliban ministry of economy to continue operations.²⁶

Young Women Lead

Young Women Lead (YWL), which started in September 2023, is a two-year, \$4.9 million program to expand post-secondary education opportunities for Afghan young women. YWL aims to reach 650 Afghan youths, with the minimum goal of 85% female participation, and provide young Afghan women with post-secondary education opportunities, as well as enhanced job readiness skills and professional networks. To support students inside Afghanistan, YWL focuses on post-secondary programs in female-specific, exempted fields of study, such as allied health fields (anesthesia, dental prosthesis, medical technology, midwifery, nursing, and pharmacy), education, agriculture, and information technology.²⁷ In its most recent quarterly report to USAID, YWL reported that it started its ramp-up phase, which included hiring and onboarding of U.S.- and Kabul-based staff. YWL also submitted the required program deliverables to USAID as it explores options to partner with local institutions in Afghanistan.²⁸

Supporting Student Success in Afghanistan

In January 2023, USAID began supporting a new American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) program, Supporting Student Success in Afghanistan (SSSA). SSSA aims to sustain access to and improve retention in local higher education opportunities for students.²⁹

Following the closure of AUAF's Kabul campus after the Taliban takeover, AUAF opened a campus in Doha, Qatar, and implemented an online education model. AUAF continued to provide a hybrid-flexible model of education to its students this quarter, offering in-person classes to students in Qatar and online classes to students elsewhere.³⁰ Last quarter, AUAF reported a 100% retention rate for its students at the Doha campus, and a 91% retention rate for its students enrolled remotely from Afghanistan for the 2023 spring and fall semesters.³¹ According to USAID, SSSA provides most of the funding for AUAF operations. USAID told SIGAR early this year that AUAF also receives “other sources of funding as cost-share to USAID’s award.”³²

Women’s Scholarship Endowment

The Women’s Scholarship Endowment (WSE), under USAID’s Office of Social Services, helps Afghan women obtain a university or graduate degree in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). WSE aims to develop and implement a scholarship program for Afghan women, strengthen the organizational capacity at local partner universities, and provide beneficiaries with career development and leadership training.³³



Afghan women at an IOM Community Resource Center in Nangarhar. (Photo by UN Women/Alison Davidian)

Nine students are currently enrolled in online classes from Afghanistan, while 48 female scholars are attending classes in-person at the AUAF's Doha campus.³⁴

Agriculture Programs

USAID's Office of Livelihoods (OLH) continued to support two agriculture activities in Afghanistan with total estimated costs of more than \$155 million, as shown in Table A.4.

USAID agriculture programs intend to mitigate the immediate hardships on farm households and agribusinesses stemming from drought, political instability, and financial illiquidity, and to improve food security and the sustainability of key agricultural value chains. Activities include (1) training, technical assistance, and extension services (education, marketing, health, business assistance) to smaller-scale farmers; (2) supplying seeds, fertilizer, and other items to farmers to help increase production; (3) providing veterinary services and other support to the livestock and dairy industries to improve animal health, maintain productive assets, and increase production

TABLE A.4

USAID ACTIVE AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/12/2024
Strengthening Rural Livelihoods and Food Security (SRL-FS)	7/25/2022	7/24/2026	\$80,000,000	\$40,000,000
Afghanistan Value Chains Program (AVCP)	6/9/2018	6/8/2025	75,762,170	59,715,057
Total			\$155,762,170	\$99,715,057

Note: Numbers have been rounded.
Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/12/2024.

and incomes; and (4) improving domestic market linkages and creating additional value.³⁵

USAID OLH programs face continuing implementation challenges due to the Taliban banning women from working for national and international NGOs, in addition to varying interpretations of their other edicts.³⁶

Strengthening Rural Livelihoods and Food Security

USAID’s four-year, \$80 million Strengthening Rural Livelihoods and Food Security program began in July 2022, and supports food security and resilience among vulnerable Afghan households.³⁷ The UN Food and Agriculture Organization implements this activity in eight provinces (Badakhshan, Daykundi, Ghor, Jowzjan, Nimroz, Nuristan, Paktika, and Parwan). These provinces are all classified at the Phase 4 (Emergency) level of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), meaning that households have very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality.³⁸

This program seeks to improve the efficiency of staple crops such as wheat, beans and legumes, and fresh fruits and vegetables; expand households’ access to nutritious food; support livestock; increase production of fodder crops (for livestock grazing); strengthen farmers’ knowledge of climate smart cultivation/production practices; connect farmers with domestic markets to provide a short-term income boost; and collect data from all of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces for the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis.³⁹

As of March 31, the most recent data available, the program had selected 50,066 smallholder farming and vulnerable households as direct beneficiaries and established 188 Livestock Farmer Field Schools and 20 Wheat Farmer Field Schools to support 9,760 farmers and 2,600 farmers, respectively.⁴⁰ Heavy snowfall and precipitation from January to March hindered the program’s activities.⁴¹

Afghanistan Value Chains Program

USAID’s \$75.6 million Afghanistan Value Chains Program (AVCP), a combination of two former programs—AVC–Livestock and AVC–Crops—operates throughout Afghanistan with regional offices in Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Jalalabad, and Kandahar.⁴² AVCP is a market-driven, private sector program, aiming to increase the income, employment, commercial viability, and productivity of anchor firms in livestock and crops value chains to support food security and women in agriculture. AVCP also supports sustainable, agriculture-led economic growth by partnering with anchor firms, providing credit, and collaborating with key stakeholders to better respond to market opportunities. According to the most recent data available in March, 6,218 households, about 50% of the project’s overall goal, benefited directly from AVCP activities and 29% of all beneficiaries were women.⁴³

Benefited directly: “Households where one or more members received goods or services, [including] farm inputs, such as feed, fertilizer, farm tools,” and so on. Indirect beneficiaries are those households that receive assistance that is “not significant or enough to result in progress that can be attributed to AVCP interventions.”

Source: USAID, Mission, response to SIGAR vetting, 10/12/2023.

Public Health Programs

USAID currently implements its public health programs through the Office of Social Services (OSS). USAID-funded health-related programs have a total estimated cost of more than \$545 million, as seen in Table A.5.

In late 2023, the Taliban ministry of health issued a letter banning specific health services and activities, including public health awareness campaigns, women-friendly health centers, social behavioral change, and mental health services.⁴⁴ According to one health program implementing partner that addresses women’s health and family planning, “these restrictions augment existing barriers to creating demand and addressing reproductive health-related myths and misconceptions prevalent among women and men. The imposition of restrictive policies and Taliban threats have heightened awareness of and potential for insecurity among project staff.”⁴⁵ USAID reported that the extent to which restrictions are enforced by local authorities differs by province. Restrictions are more rigidly enforced in the more conservative provinces of Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, and Nangarhar.⁴⁶

TABLE A.5

USAID ACTIVE HEALTH PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/12/2024
Local Health System Sustainability (LHSS)	8/29/2019	8/28/2025	\$251,772,216	\$6,639,591
Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive (AFIAT)	7/10/2020	7/9/2025	117,000,000	64,556,721
Urban Health Initiative (UHI) Program	10/14/2020	10/13/2025	104,000,000	58,418,183
New DEWS Plus	2/2/2022	9/30/2031	50,000,000	16,883,741
Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey (ADHS) Follow-On	10/9/2018	9/9/2023	10,500,000	165,269
Consolidated Grant - COVID-19 Response	9/30/2021	9/29/2026	6,000,000	5,997,325
Central Contraceptive Procurement (CCP)	4/20/2015	11/28/2023	3,599,998	3,676,081
Modeling American Healthcare, Standards & Values in Afghanistan	10/1/2020	9/30/2024	1,092,601	1,084,065
TB Data, Impact Assessment and Communications Hub (TB DIAH)	9/24/2018	9/24/2023	600,000	600,000
Meeting Targets & Maintaining Epidemic Control	4/15/2019	4/14/2024	270,000	1,155,000
Global Health Supply Chain Management (GHSCM-PSM)	4/20/2015	11/28/2023	176,568	5,918,995
Total			\$545,011,383	\$165,094,972

Note: Numbers have been rounded.
Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/12/2024.

Local Health System Sustainability

The Local Health System Sustainability (LHSS) is a USAID Integrated Health Systems IDIQ [Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity contract] program. LHSS aims to help low- and middle-income countries transition to

self-financed health systems.⁴⁷ Through partnerships with the Afghanistan Social Marketing Organization (ASMO) and other grantees, LHSS helps reduce the cost of health care by supporting partner sales of affordable, socially marketed health products focused on women and children.⁴⁸

In the second quarter of 2024, grantees supported by LHSS served 86,259 low-income and women patients with free or discounted services during this period, and services expanded to 56 new markets.⁴⁹

LHSS also continued its efforts to advance integrated health systems by convening workshops on lessons learned and best practices. Additionally, LHSS helped ASMO with its organizational strategy and sustainability plan, developing a “vision statement” and identifying the actions required to progress over the next two to three years.⁵⁰

Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive

Assistance for Families and Indigent Afghans to Thrive (AFIAT), an OSS program that began in 2020, aims to improve health outcomes for Afghans, particularly women of childbearing age and preschool children, in rural and peri-urban Afghanistan. AFIAT worked in 14 provinces this quarter to improve health and nutrition services and access to those services, increase the adoption of ideal health and nutrition behaviors in communities, and help partners plan, finance, and manage Afghanistan’s public health system.⁵¹ According to AFIAT, the program continues to adapt to Taliban restrictions and entered into an MOU with the Taliban ministry of public health on March 10, 2024.⁵²

In its fourth year, AFIAT plans to advocate for the institutionalization of its interventions within the USAID-supported Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund’s Health Emergency Response Project, such as adopting its safety bundle for expecting mothers, safe cesarean surgery procedures, and antenatal/postnatal care. AFIAT worked in all 14 of its targeted provinces in Q2 FY2024, according to the most recent reporting available. During this period, AFIAT assessed the quality of care at 353 health facilities. Performance reportedly improved by 21% in 104 facilities, and 11% in an additional 84. Over 2,400 health workers received mentorship and interventions to manage post-partum hemorrhage were introduced in 27 facilities. In total, 54,788 infants were delivered in AFIAT-supported health facilities.⁵³

Urban Health Initiative

The Urban Health Initiative (UHI) program is a five-year cooperative agreement funded by USAID OSS and implemented by a consortium of partners. UHI aims to support the health service ecosystem and improve access to primary care and lifesaving secondary and referral care for Afghans in urban areas, with a focus on women, children, and other vulnerable populations.⁵⁴

During the second quarter of 2024, the most recent reporting available, UHI coordinated implementation of this activity with the Taliban ministry of public health at the national and provincial levels, in alignment with the program’s MOU. Coordination addressed service needs for a number of Taliban ministry of public health-related task forces, including the reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health task force; maternal and newborn health technical subcommittee; nutrition taskforce; child health task force; and TB taskforce, among other platforms. UHI also reported that the Taliban provincial public health directorates supported various aspects of its tuberculosis response, and supported the establishment of a midwifery-led maternity center in Mazar-e Sharif.⁵⁵

BHA Support for World Health Organization Initiatives

USAID/BHA supports WHO to provide primary health care services, maintain a pharmaceutical pipeline for emergency health service providers, respond to disease outbreaks, and lead the Afghanistan Health Cluster coordination. As of June 13, BHA had provided WHO with nearly \$3.6 million in 2024.⁵⁶ For more information on public health in Afghanistan, see page 55.

Democracy, Gender, and Rights Programs

USAID manages several programs in Afghanistan focused on providing support to civil society organizations, the media sector, Afghan women and girls, and conflict-affected civilians through its Office of Democracy, Gender, and Rights (ODGR) and its Office of Social Services (OSS).⁵⁷ Total estimated costs for these active programs are \$98 million, as seen in Table A.6.

USAID continues to receive reports of implementing partner staff being detained by the Taliban’s general directorate of intelligence. ODGR implementers also reported an increase in the arrest, detention, and intimidation of Afghan citizens by the ministry for the propagation of virtue and prevention of vice.⁵⁸ Due to safety concerns, some information about these programs have been withheld to protect staff and beneficiaries in Afghanistan.

TABLE A.6

USAID ACTIVE DEMOCRACY, GENDER, AND RIGHTS PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 7/12/2024
Enabling Essential Services for Afghan Women and Girls	7/25/2022	7/24/2025	\$30,000,000	\$21,291,247
Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan's Recovery (STAR)	2/18/2021	12/31/2024	28,338,901	21,929,199
Afghan Support Project	9/16/2022	9/15/2025	25,884,633	10,942,493
Information, Dialogue, and Rights	9/23/2022	9/1/2025	14,079,528	3,100,000
Total			\$98,303,062	\$57,262,941

Note: Numbers have been rounded.
Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 7/12/2024.

Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan’s Recovery (STAR)

Since February 2021, USAID’s STAR program has aimed to build resilience in some of Afghanistan’s poorest and most conflict-affected communities by strengthening food and livelihood security through a consortium of implementing partners. The program provides cash assistance, agricultural and livestock support, and supported market skills and linkages across nine provinces. STAR was scheduled to end operations in September 2023, but was extended to December 31, 2024, after an implementing partner requested a cost extension to meet some project targets before the activity closed.⁵⁹

According to USAID, the STAR implementing partners reported security incidents this quarter in their areas of operation, causing some international staff to depart Afghanistan to work remotely.⁶⁰

Enabling Essential Services for Afghan Women and Girls

The UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) implements the USAID-funded Enabling Essential Services for Afghan Women and Girls activity to respond to violence against women, strengthen opportunities for women’s economic empowerment, and safeguard spaces for women’s civil society organizations. It also works with implementing partners.⁶¹

According to UN Women, during Q2 FY 2024, “a further litany of directives, decrees, edicts, and various other forms of commandments were issued” by the Taliban, while existing decrees “continued to severely impact the rights of Afghanistan’s women and girls.” As a result, women’s access to education, health care, legal support, and economic activities are limited, and the Taliban are “effectively excluding [women and girls] from public spaces and full participation in daily Afghan life.”⁶²

UN Women, however, launched a regional project this quarter, entitled “Empowering Afghan Women Artisans through Strengthening Trade and Networks across the Silk Road.” The project will engage 300 women artisans in six Afghan provinces to facilitate income-generating activities from crafts, access to domestic and international markets, and advocacy with relevant stakeholders to improve women’s access to artisan import-export activities. The project will help women improve their work while connecting them to online market platforms.⁶³

UN Women also reported signing letters of agreement with three private sector companies this quarter to ensure internship opportunities for Afghan women.⁶⁴

Afghan Support Project

The Afghan Support Project (ASP), in USAID’s Office of Democracy, Gender, and Rights, aims to support civil society organizations, civic activists, human rights defenders, and journalists in their efforts to protect basic rights and freedoms and ensure access to credible media. ASP also supports efforts to combat trafficking in persons and raise awareness of the issue.⁶⁵



UN Women Representative in Afghanistan Alison Davidian meets with Afghan women in Nangarhar. (Photo by UN Women/Alison Davidian)

ASP advances its objectives by providing financial, operation, and professional development support to media and civil society. Its activities are implemented by a consortium of NGOs and media partners.⁶⁶ In the second quarter of 2024, ASP provided a number of new grants to human rights defenders, continued to deliver technical assistance to civil society organizations, and organized advocacy events for Afghan women.⁶⁷ During the same period, ASP reported a number of grantee arrests and interrogations by the Taliban for alleged policy violations.⁶⁸

USAID reported that the Taliban general directorate of intelligence (GDI) is increasing surveillance of civil society organizations, media, and individual activists. The GDI continue to raid, interrogate, and threaten civil society organization workers and journalists, and media and civil society organizations are pressured to hire Taliban staff. In January, the Taliban limited the independence of organizations involved in construction or social work. A Taliban member of the ministry of economy is mandated to attend contract signings, especially those with international organizations. A new Taliban mandate now requires media outlets, such as radio stations, publications, and television stations to pay annual registration fees to operate.⁶⁹

Information, Dialogue, and Rights in Afghanistan

In September 2022, USAID signed an agreement for the \$6.1 million Supporting Media Freedom and Access to Information in Afghanistan program.⁷⁰ USAID modified the program to include a second component called “Supporting National Dialogue and Rights Advocacy” and changed the program name to Information, Dialogue, and Rights (IDR) in Afghanistan. The program’s total estimated cost increased to \$11,798,379 and the performance period was extended to June 30, 2026.⁷¹

The program's objective is to help deliver news and educational content to national audiences that strengthens Afghanistan's human capital and enables citizens to freely organize and communicate. IDR aims to accomplish this by supporting independent media and reporting on rights and governance issues; developing a strong cadre of female journalists and producers; supporting journalists to operate safely; and informing Afghan citizens about critical issues of public interest.⁷² In the second quarter of FY 2024, IDR organized training sessions for journalists, granted 45 awards to journalists to conduct innovative reporting, and held three virtual media working group meeting among donors, editors, and media support organizations.⁷³

STATE DEPARTMENT PROGRAMS IN AFGHANISTAN

Democracy and Human Rights

In support of U.S. foreign policy objectives for Afghanistan, State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) supports a diverse range of programs protecting rights of Afghanistan civil society, independent media, women and girls, and human rights actors. DRL helps to protect victims of gender-based-violence, strengthens and supports freedom of association by supporting civil society organizations and national NGOs, and provides access to independent sources of information by supporting media outlets and journalists.⁷⁴

DRL also promotes respect for human rights, especially for ethnic and religious minority groups, as well as other vulnerable communities, and strengthens community resilience through cross-cutting interventions. Since the drawdown of U.S. troops in 2021, DRL has provided more than \$26 million in emergency, resiliency, and advocacy assistance to almost 900 members of civil society, including Afghan women leaders, and over 1,600 women, girls, and their families, both inside and outside the country. At State's request, additional details of its DRL programs have been withheld to protect the safety of staff and beneficiaries in Afghanistan.⁷⁵

Refugees and Internally Displaced People

USAID and the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) continue to implement assistance to support Afghan refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). Humanitarian efforts have been concentrated on Afghan returnees from Pakistan since Pakistan's government began implementing its "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan" in November 2023 authorizing the arrest, detention, and deportation of all unregistered migrants.⁷⁶

In response, the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) issued a Border Consortium Appeal to support the immediate needs of

Afghan returnees at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, including protection screening, shelter, and transportation to areas of origin or return. This quarter, PRM provided \$2.5 million to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and \$5 million to other implementing partners working under the Border Consortium Appeal.⁷⁷

PRM told SIGAR that UN agencies report a “massive need for scaled up services” in rural and peri-urban areas to meet the needs of returnees and their host communities. PRM prioritizes funding to partners along Afghanistan’s borders with Iran and Pakistan and in areas of return to address immediate humanitarian needs, including health care, shelter, psychological support, protection, non-food items, nutrition, livelihood assistance, and water sanitation and hygiene. Approximately 4,000–5,000 people return daily, totaling 573,000 returns since January 2024.⁷⁸

For more information on Afghan refugees and internally displaced people, see pages 50–54.

Counternarcotics

From 2003 until the fall of the Afghan government in August 2021, the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) operated multiple programs in Afghanistan to reform the criminal justice system and limit the production and trafficking of illegal drugs.⁷⁹ For more information on Afghanistan’s narcotics production and seizures, see page 61.

Ongoing Programs

Since Q4 FY 2021, INL has obligated \$62.3 million for counternarcotics programming, including \$20.8 million in newly obligated funds and \$41.5 million in realigned funds from other State programs, to support research, alternative livelihoods, and prevention and treatment services programs in Afghanistan.⁸⁰ INL said that the Taliban’s April 2022 narcotics ban has not affected INL programs, but that their international organization partners face occasional challenges, like other U.S.-funded implementing partners, without providing specifics.⁸¹

Research Programs

INL supports counternarcotics oversight and messaging efforts, by funding programs through the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The Afghanistan Opium Surveys utilize data collected by UNODC through remote sensing, surveys, and global data collection on drugs to predict medium- and long-term trends in the narcotics industry.⁸² The Afghan Opiate Trade Project (AOTP) monitors and analyzes trends in Afghanistan’s opiate industry to support the international response to the illicit drug economy.⁸³ INL has disbursed \$28.3 million for the Afghanistan Opium Surveys since 2006 and \$10.3 million for the AOTP since December 2011.⁸⁴ Since 2019, INL disbursed \$6.9 million for the Drugs Monitoring Platform

that captures near-real time data on drug seizure and trafficking for drugs originating and produced in Afghanistan.⁸⁵

Alternative Livelihoods Programs

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has implemented INL-funded alternative livelihood programs in six provinces with a history of high poppy cultivation to support farmers with licit crop production and facilitate market linkages. Since 2016, INL has disbursed approximately \$85.4 million to implement these programs, \$28.4 million of which has been disbursed through one active program since January 2024.⁸⁶

This quarter, severe flooding affected over 700 farmers and their families in INL's UNDP alternative livelihood program. INL and UNDP said some beneficiaries were injured or killed, in addition to land and infrastructure destroyed in Laghman and Nangarhar Provinces.⁸⁷

Prevention and Treatment Services Programs

INL supports several prevention and treatment services programs implemented by the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) and the Colombo Plan. USAGM facilitates antinarcotics messaging via television, radio, and online news, with total INL disbursements of \$5.2 million since February 2017. The Colombo Plan supports over 20 drug treatment centers for women and children in Afghanistan, with total INL disbursements of \$11.2 million since September 2022.⁸⁸

Removing Explosive Remnants of War

State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs' Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) manages the Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD) program in Afghanistan and—due to the ongoing risk to civilians—continues to fund landmine and explosive remnants of war (ERW) clearance activities through implementing partners. PM/WRA currently supports four Afghan NGOs, three international NGOs, and two public international organizations to help clear areas in Afghanistan contaminated by ERW and conventional weapons (e.g., unexploded mortar rounds). State has provided \$492 million in weapons-destruction and mine-action assistance to Afghanistan since 1997.⁸⁹

Operating Environment

Direct U.S. assistance to the Directorate for Mine Action Coordination (DMAC), an Afghan government entity, was canceled on September 9, 2021, in compliance with international sanctions against specially designated terrorist groups following the Taliban's takeover.⁹⁰ PM/WRA implementing partners have signed MOUs with DMAC, but none have signed agreements with Taliban provincial and district officials this quarter.⁹¹

The Directorate for Mine Action Coordination

The Directorate for Mine Action Coordination is an Afghan government entity, now Taliban-run, that manages, coordinates, regulates, and monitors humanitarian mine action activities that are implemented by national and international NGOs and companies. DMAC is a directorate of the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority. DMAC coordinates with the Mine Action Technical Cell, which is directed by the UN Mine Action Service.

DMAC does not conduct or fund demining operations or programs. It also lacks the resources to fully operate the national mine database and conduct quality assurance practices. DMAC has supported humanitarian mine programs by working with the UN when local officials have attempted to interfere with regular clearance operations.

Source: State, PM/WRA, response to SIGAR data call, 6/11/2024; State, PM/WRA, response to SIGAR vetting, 1/12/2024; Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, DMAC (Directorate of Mine Action Coordination), accessed 6/20/2024.

DMAC continued **operational accreditation** of U.S.-funded projects and PM/WRA implementing partners, though it attempted to interfere twice this quarter. One PM/WRA implementing partner's operations were suspended due to DMAC-reported "safety concerns." A U.S. third-party monitor found no operational issues and the implementing partner resumed operations after submitting a report to DMAC. DMAC threatened to suspend another PM/WRA implementing partner's activities if it did not provide DMAC with financial support. The implementing partner said it could not provide the requested support under U.S. sanctions and the issue was not pursued further. Women employed in U.S.-funded CWD projects have not reported any interference from the Taliban this quarter.⁹²

Clearance Operations

This quarter, PM/WRA implementing partners cleared over 5.5 million square meters of minefields, and destroyed 155 anti-tank mines and anti-personnel weapons, 256 items of unexploded ordnance, and 586 small arm ammunitions. After Q3 FY 2024, PM/WRA estimated there are about 1.2 billion square meters of contaminated minefields and battlefields remaining. Since 1997, PM/WRA implementing partners have cleared a total of 417.4 million square meters of land and destroyed over eight million landmines and ERW.⁹³

Funding Update

Since September 2021, PM/WRA implementing partners have paid Taliban entities over \$1.5 million in taxes, including \$180,000 this quarter, the majority of these in withheld payroll taxes.⁹⁴ PM/WRA has \$5 million in FY 2023 funds available for obligation.⁹⁵ For more information on State's contributions to the Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR) Fund, see page 136.

Operational accreditation: certifies that an organization has the technical capacity to conduct demining programs and its procedures are consistent with international and national mine action standards. These technical certifications are to assess and ensure safe and efficient operations, and not indicative of political support from any entity. Current DMAC accreditation of U.S.-funded projects and programs are extensions of those granted prior to August 2021.

Source: State, PM/WRA, response to SIGAR vetting, 1/12/2024.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PROGRAMS

U.S. Security Contract Close-Outs

Following the Taliban takeover, U.S. funding obligations of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) ceased, but disbursements to contractors continue, as necessary, until all Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) obligations incurred prior to the U.S. withdrawal are liquidated.⁹⁶

According to DOD, resolving ASFF-funded contracts is an ongoing contract-by-contract matter between contractors and the contracting office in the military departments (Army, Air Force, and Navy). ASFF obligation authority was granted by the DOD Comptroller to the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), and these organizations then delegated obligation authority to the military departments. DSCA used pseudo-Foreign Military Sales (FMS) cases to manage ASFF funds in the FMS Trust Fund.⁹⁷

Contract vendors must submit claims to begin the close-out process. Vendors typically have a five-year window after contracts are executed to submit claims, and DOD cannot force vendors to submit invoices for payment. Therefore, DOD said it cannot at this time provide information on estimated contract closing dates, the amount of funds available to be recouped, or the approximate costs of terminating each contract.⁹⁸

As seen in Table A.7, ASFF funds that were obligated by CSTC-A and its successor the **Defense Security Cooperation Management Office-Afghanistan (DSCMO-A)** have total remaining unliquidated ASFF obligations of \$50.1 million. Contracts, used to support pseudo-FMS cases managed by the military departments, have total unliquidated ASFF obligations of \$181.3 million.⁹⁹

Between FY 2002 and FY 2021, Congress appropriated \$88.8 billion to support the ANDSF.¹⁰⁰

Defense Security Cooperation Management Office-Afghanistan

(DSCMO-A): the successor to Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), which was disbanded on June 1, 2022. DSCMO-A uses ASFF funds on new contracts awarded locally by Army Contract Command-Afghanistan or as military interdepartmental purchase requests to leverage already-awarded contracts.

Source: DOD, OUSD-P, response to SIGAR vetting, 10/11/2022; DOD, OUSD-P, response to SIGAR data call, 6/15/2022.

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TABLE A.7

SUMMARY STATUS OF ASFF OBLIGATED CONTRACTS (\$ MILLIONS)				
	Cumulative Obligations	Cumulative Expenditures	Unliquidated Obligations (ULO)^a	ULO as of:
Military Departments				
Department of the Air Force				
A-29s	\$1,059,372,212	\$1,019,121,578	\$40,250,634	6/30/2024
C-130	153,070,000	112,680,000	40,390,000	6/30/2024
PC-12	40,306,651	20,738,361	19,568,290	4/10/2024*
C-208	120,903,024	115,620,239	3,181,662	8/31/2023*
Munitions	10,881,000	10,730,000	148,900	3/6/2024*
Department of the Army Obligated Contracts				
ASFF	\$342,418,035	\$300,425,657	\$41,992,378	3/30/2024*
UH-60	380,298,791	377,634,696	15,888,112	3/30/2024*
ASFF Ammunition	59,212,970	44,450,427	14,762,543	3/30/2024*
PEO STRI (simulation, training, and instrumentation)	446,987,956	445,911,279	4,118,148	3/30/2024*
Department of the Navy				
Contracts	\$30,479,439	\$29,432,184	\$1,047,255	7/7/2024
Subtotal (All Military Departments)	\$2,643,930,078	\$2,476,744,421	\$181,347,923	
Military Command				
Defense Security Cooperation Management Office-Afghanistan				
All Programs	\$175,401,370	\$125,317,913	\$50,083,456	7/10/2024
Total	\$2,819,331,448	\$2,602,062,335	\$231,431,379	

^a Unliquidated Obligations (ULOs) are equal to undisbursed obligations minus open expenses.

* DOD did not report any updates this quarter.

Source: DOD, response to SIGAR data call, 7/10/2024; DOD, "DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 11/2021, p. 295.

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“In places like Afghanistan—or even Ukraine today—where many military and civilian agencies from multiple governments and international organizations are operating, cross-agency jurisdiction and international cooperation are vital.”

—*Inspector General
John F. Sopko*