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Preface

The continuous war had damaged the country and hence it was one of the most backward country at the times of 9/11. However, after the collapse of Taliban regime, the new government and the international donors started post-war reconstruction programs, the most important of which was National Solidarity Program (NSP).

NSP commenced in 2003 and has implemented tens of thousands of development projects in the past fourteen years. The program was designed by the current Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, it pursued various objectives, however the question lies whether it has achieved its desired objectives or not, and how much the program has helped the reconstruction of the country? these are the issues that are analyzed in the Weekly Analysis of the Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS).

The Evaluation of the “National Solidarity Program” in Afghanistan



After 14 years of activity, the Afghan government shut down the National Solidarity Program (NSP)-the program to develop and rehabilitate the villages- in the ongoing month and instead the “Citizen Charter Program” (CCP) is to be launched. According to the Afghan Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Nasir Ahmad Durrani, the CCP would also implement infrastructural projects, but this time it would focus on undeveloped and backward cities rather than villages and remote areas, and it would launch projects in the areas of health, education and drinkable water.

The Afghan Ministries of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Urban Development and Housing, and Agriculture Irrigation and Livestock released their 1395 report. According to the spokespersons of these ministries, the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development has implemented 9077 development projects in 6326 villages in 326 district of the country’s 34 provinces. These projects were in various fields such as irrigation, agriculture, health, education, electricity, road construction, and providing access to clean water. The

projects have cost \$245.2m and have provided short-term jobs for 750 thousand people. In addition, the Afghan Ministry of Urban Development and Housing and Ministry of Irrigation and Livestock have respectively implemented 446 and 90 projects.

What was the National Solidarity Program? Did it achieve its goals? And what is the impact of such programs on the country's economy? These are the questions that are analyzed here.

NSP, from the beginning to the end

After the overthrow of the Taliban regime, under the leadership of Hamid Karzai, a new democratic and capitalist government was established in Afghanistan. At that time Afghanistan was one of the most backward countries in the world in various sectors including health, infrastructures (roads, electricity, construction and etc), education and some other areas. In an attempt to build the public trust in the new government and to eradicate unemployment, in 2002, the NSP was designed by Ashraf Ghani (the current Afghan President) and implemented by the Minister of newly created Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Hanif Atmar.

NSP is the biggest project/program in Afghan history. The two Afghan traditions, which are *Jirga* (the consulting assemblies) and *Ashar* (that is public volunteering for doing public works), were included in this program.

NSP had two basic purposes: first, to bolster government institutions in the society. Second, to support various local projects, which were managed by the councils of different regions and which provided access to social, productive, and other fundamental services for the people of a region.

The NSP was first launched in 2003, and until its termination in 2017, it passed through three stages. The first phase started in May 2003 and ended in March 2007. The second phase began in April 2007 and ended in September 2011, and the third stage started in October 2011 and ended in February 2017.¹

¹ Visit the official Website of NSP:
<http://www.nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=183>

In these three stages of NSP, 86 projects were implemented, which cost \$1.5bn. These projects were mostly funded by the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development, Danish International Development and Assistance Agency, the Canadian International Development Agency, and the US Agency for International Development. The two German firms of GTZ and DAI were also acting as the oversight and consultant in this program.²

Did NSP achieve its objectives?

Besides the two important objectives mentioned above, the four important parts were as:

1. Establishment of the Community Development Councils (CDC);
2. Building the capacities of CDCs in a variety of areas primarily in local governance and in development;
3. To fund approved subprojects identified, prioritized and managed by the communities;
4. Linking CDCs to government agencies, NGOs, and donors to improve access to services and resources.³

If one evaluates these objectives of NSP, it has, to a greater extent, achieved its goals, because it has accomplished the following activities until the end of 1395:

- 35075 councils were elected;
- 34255 councils were financed;
- 85918 sub-projects were completed;
- Approximately 298365 men and 151764 women were the members of these councils.⁴

In addition, projects are applied in a variety of areas such as water wells, water supplies, water canals, electricity (power grids, and Diesel, solar and wind

² Read the following analysis in this regard: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/530E-Fine-Tuning-the-NSP-WP-print.pdf>

³ In this regard, read more on the official website of the NSP: <http://www.nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=183>

⁴ Read more on NSP's website: <http://www.nspafghanistan.org/default.aspx?sel=194>

electricity), education and professional training which will be discussed in details bellow.

The impacts of the NSP on the country

If one evaluate the development in Afghanistan in the past one and a half decade, one will find out that the country has progressed in areas of building infrastructures, transport, education, health, providing access to the services, higher education, professional education, media, communication and some other areas. In some parts of these developments, NSP has played a significant role.

Here we have specifically mentioned how NSP has affected the situation, and especially the economic situation, in the country (most of the statistics are until the beginning of 2013):

- **The role in the democratization of the society:** NSP paved the way for the Community Development Councils to be established through elections, and then, given the priorities of their communities, these councils decided which sub-project can better benefit their communities. Hence, 35075 councils were created. These councils had 450129 members (298365 men and 151764 women). Due to this process, development projects were launched in 380 districts of 34 provinces of the country. The vast and widespread public participation in these projects played a decisive role in the observation from this project, which can be the reason why, compared to the other projects of the government, in NSP corruption was at its lowest levels.
- **Transport;** based on the NSP, 9656 projects of constructing third-degree roads were implemented in the country, which cost \$201m and has constructed 53km roads in the country. Furthermore, besides the construction of the roads, 4472 projects of building canals beneath the roads and bridges were implemented with a cost of \$46m. 16760 other projects were applied in the areas of transport with \$303m expenditures.
- **Energy;** 7327 projects were implemented in the areas of energy which have cost approximately \$163m. Most of the Projects of energy were in areas of electricity (2417 projects worth \$61m), solar energy (2270 projects with an

expenditure of \$49m and besides that around 100 thousand electricity and solar machines were installed), Diesel energy (1680 projects worth \$30m), electricity grid (929 projects with \$23m expenditures) and etc.

- **Health;** some clinics were constructed, and until the end of 2013, 8897 projects of providing clean water were applied which cost \$103m. According to the Afghan Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the NSP has dug 100 thousand wells in the past 14 years to facilitate access to drinkable water.
- **Education:** according to the Afghan Minister Nasir Ahmad Durrani, 60 thousand classes were built through NSP. Moreover, until the beginning of 2013, 966 projects were implemented to repair the school buildings, which cost \$27m. NSP also implemented 4136 other projects to enhance professional educations with \$11m expenditures.
- **Agriculture;** Agriculture is like the backbone of the Afghan economy. NSP implemented some projects in this area as well. For instance, NSP spent \$18m to implement 1040 projects of digging deep wells, applied 1568 water supply projects with \$25m expenditures, 2743 projects of water canals worth \$62m, 1186 project of constructing small water dams cost \$19m, and 4004 projects of retaining walls with \$70m of expenditures.

If one evaluates the NSP briefly, the program provided short-term jobs for many people, and implemented various projects in different areas, although they did not have overall impacts and were limited to the local communities.

The end

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Note: Please let us know your feedback and suggestions for the improvement of Weekly analysis.

