Empowering citizens
Engaging governments
Rebuilding communities

AFGHANISTAN
This report is dedicated to IRD staff and partners – our friends and colleagues – who lost their lives in service to the Afghan nation.
Empowering citizens
Engaging governments
Rebuilding communities

International Relief & Development
in Afghanistan
2006–2013

CASE STUDIES IN COMMUNITY STABILIZATION
Cover:
Top: Incarcerated youth learn skills they can use upon their release to earn a living and resist recruitment into the insurgency. (S-RAD)

Bottom: Women learn to transform household fruits and vegetables into sauces that can be canned and sold at market. (AVIPA Plus)

Copyright © by International Relief & Development (IRD) 2014

All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the US Agency for International Development or of the US government.

IRD is a nonprofit humanitarian, stabilization, and development organization whose mission is to reduce the suffering of the world’s most vulnerable groups and provide the tools and resources needed to increase their self-sufficiency.

Contents

Foreword vii

Overview 1
Emergence of the Civilian-Military (Civ-Mil) Stabilization Doctrine 1

Chapter 1 What is stabilization? 4

Chapter 2 The growing demand for stabilization programming 12

Chapter 3 Rebuilding a nation through community outreach and capacity building 16

Chapter 4 Stabilization operations and the civilian stabilization operator 20
The Sequence of Community Stabilization Operations 22

Chapter 5 Community stabilization outcomes 30
Outcome 1: Increased Security 32
Outcome 2: Growing Government Capacity, Transparency, and Responsiveness 33
Outcome 3: Improved Livelihoods 35

Chapter 6 Accountability for risk mitigation 38
What Is Accountability? 40

Chapter 7 Lessons and recommendations 42
Lesson 1: Security Always Comes First 43
Lesson 2: Manage to Requirements and Maintain Program Scope 44
Lesson 3: Manage Expectations 45
Lesson 4: Streamline Donor Activity Approval Processes 45
Lesson 5: Make Communications a Priority from the Start 47
Lesson 6: Prioritize Accountability and Systems and Documentation to Support It 47
Lesson 7: Invest Heavily in Local Staff 49
Lesson 8: Integrate Technology to Enhance Program Efficiency 49

Chapter 8 Conclusion 50

Afterword 53

Abbreviations 55
Boxes
1 Journalism Training 18
2 Remote Monitoring Is the Future 19
3 Introducing Quality Circles to National Ministries 19
4 Heading off Instability 22
5 Immediate Assistance to Conflict Victims 25
6 Cash for Work 26
7 Vouchers 27
8 Grants 28
9 Value Chain Analyses 32
10 Positive Economic Shock in Kandahar and Helmand 34
11 Improving Livelihood Prospects 35
12 Improving Stability, Capacity, and Infrastructure 36
13 Listening to Employees 40
14 Building Private Sector Capacity 45
15 Using Community Theater to Link People to Government 46
16 Good Communications 46
17 Investing in People 48

Figures
1 From the Top Down: The Nation-Building Strategic Framework 6
2 From the Bottom Up: The Community Stability Strategic Framework 6
3 IRD’s Afghanistan Stabilization Portfolio, 2006–2016 7
4 The Strategic Continuum of Stabilization to Development in Afghanistan, 2001–2025 8
5 The Transition to Afghan-Led National and Local Leadership, 2001–2025 9
6 The Sequence of Community Stabilization Operations 23
7 The Critical Role of the Stabilization Operator 24

Table
1 IRD Afghanistan Programs, 2006–2016 11
From Yugoslavia in the 1990s to Yemen, Mali, Syria, and Somalia today, fragile states have posed significant security and financial threats to the entire international community. Yet, there is a remarkable record of success by civil society groups in helping stabilize such societies by protecting vulnerable people, building resilience against renewed conflict, and rebuilding economic and governance institutions. Recent civil stabilization successes can be traced to efforts launched by IRD and others in the Balkans in the 1990s, where civil society groups became critical partners in sustaining the peace and laying the groundwork for the eventual entry of several new states into the European Union. IRD is now applying similar community-based models in other conflict and post-conflict zones, including in West Africa, Yemen, and Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the subject of this case study, the third in our series documenting IRD’s experience, lessons, and recommendations gained from our work in community stabilization since 1998.

A relatively recent development is that NGOs and donors now cooperate, coordinate, and occasionally live directly with US and international security forces. In places like Iraq and Afghanistan, the coordination has been so close that the NGOs’ community stabilization work has been viewed as illustrative of effective counterinsurgency. Both military and civilian leaders repeatedly point out that civilian agencies are better equipped to understand and work directly with local communities, and they are generally better received by local governments and populations. While some development organizations say such partnerships compromise their political neutrality, beneficiaries recognize the congruency with the NGO community’s mission to assist vulnerable populations – especially those caught in armed conflict.

Among the key lessons IRD has learned from its pioneering stabilization programs is the importance of bringing in civilians early, both US government and civil society. It is also important to gain the trust of the host community, in partnership with the donor and implementer. Distrust is endemic in unstable environments, so modeling accountability by both words and deeds is by far the most important aspect of trust building. Reducing security risks for staff and beneficiaries is another key component of stability operations, and that includes disabusing ourselves of any expectation that development activities on their own create security where none exists. There are many other important lessons for future stabilization efforts, explained in detail in the following pages.

Community stabilization is an important tool, and it is rightly an element of any concerned nation’s development portfolio. It should be used appropriately to help set a community, nation, or region back on the path toward sustainable development, by which we mean responsive, transparent, and accountable governance; free markets; investments in infrastructure; and equitable access to services such as healthcare and education. We should not limit development assistance to peaceful and stable countries: we need to help all in need, especially the most vulnerable. That is IRD’s mission.

Dr. Arthur B. Keys Jr.
President and CEO
Overview

Gender team training for female peace shuras as part of community outreach and capacity building. (SPR-SEA)
Instability across nations and communities, and the challenges of reestablishing stability, have been with mankind since the beginning of recorded history, but in modern times the pace of destabilizing events has been steadily rising. Since the early 1990s, the United States and its allies have sent hundreds of thousands of troops to Somalia, Haiti, the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan, and invested trillions of dollars in counterinsurgency and stabilization and reconstruction efforts. According to Ambassador James Dobbins, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, in addition to responding to these large-scale events, smaller scale destabilizing events have required international intervention as frequently as every two to three weeks. These range from Libya and Mali on a larger scale, to Nigeria, Myanmar, and the Special Forces hunt for Joseph Kony in central Africa on a smaller scale. From these experiences, we have learned much about how to optimize counterinsurgency and stabilization programs, and equally important, what missteps to avoid.

At a July 2013 conference sponsored by CSIS and IRD, “Rethinking Civilian Stabilization and Reconstruction,” Dobbins summarized the findings of a recent analysis of 20 countries emerging from conflict with US and other international assistance over the past 10 years. Of the 20, 16 were “peaceful,” meaning that the analysis showed positive trends in most indicators, including a faster economic growth rate than in other countries (Conference Digest, IRD, p. 3, bit.ly/1dvgGTq). These indicate that while the need for stabilization programs is growing, the opportunities to achieve stability may be greater than ever.

**Emergence of the Civilian-Military (Civ-Mil) Stabilization Doctrine**


> America’s future abroad is unlikely to resemble Afghanistan or Iraq, where we grapple with the burden of nation-building under fire. … Achieving victory will assume new dimensions
as we strengthen our ability to generate “soft” power to promote participation in government, spur economic development, and address the root causes of conflict. …At the heart of this effort is a comprehensive approach to stability operations that integrates the tools of statecraft with our military forces, international partners, humanitarian organizations, and the private sector. …It postures the military to perform a role common throughout history – ensuring the safety and security of the local populace, assisting with reconstruction, and providing basic sustenance and public services. Equally important, it defines the role of military forces in support of the civilian agencies charged with leading these complex endeavors. (Foreword)

The Department of Defense reinforced the need for this comprehensive approach in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review Report:

The QDR has placed special emphasis on ensuring that the men and women fighting today’s conflicts have the tools and resources they need to succeed. …Successful COIN [counterinsurgency], stability, and CT [counterterrorism] operations are necessarily the products of strategies that orchestrate the activities of military and civilian agencies, as well as those of indigenous governments and partner states. Enhancements to the capabilities and capacity of the US Armed Forces, then, are being pursued in the context of continued growth in the capabilities of other US agencies and in the contributions of allied and partner governments. (p. 21)

Almost in parallel, the Department of State and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) noted in the inaugural Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR):

Our civilian capabilities have largely been ad hoc and poorly integrated with those of other federal agencies and partner nations. We must learn from our experiences as we define the civilian mission and give our people the training, tools, and structures they need. (p. xiii)

[We must also] “build a civilian capacity to prevent and respond to crisis and conflict and give our military the partner it needs and deserves. (QDDR fact sheet, bit.ly/17pGGxz)

The admission that civilian agencies face challenges in integrating their efforts is echoed by the 2010 finding of the independent QDR Review Panel that:

…civilian departments and agencies lack the capacity to provide the array of capabilities required for effective support to the Department of Defense in stability and reconstruction operations in unstable host nations. In many cases, even pre-conflict and certainly post-conflict, our civilians will be deployed in situations of “security insecurity” and thus will have to be able to operate in an integrated way with security forces [whether with indigenous forces (especially in a pre-conflict, failing state case), with international peacekeepers, or with US forces (especially in post-conflict situations)]. (The QDR in Perspective: Meeting America’s National Security Needs in the 21st Century, p. x)

But left out of the QDR and QDDR discussions is any mention of the vital perspectives, roles, and comparative advantages of the stabilization operator, the grantee or contractor hired by civilian agencies to execute the stabilization strategy. Using US government funding, IRD and its peer organizations applied their local knowledge and international expertise on the ground, employed tools such as community outreach and engagement, cash for work, grants to small businesses and farmers, capacity building, and gender programming, and began knitting together the fabric of communities torn apart by a stabilization crisis. This case study, the third in a series by IRD exploring civilian stabilization efforts, begins to address that gap by describing the principles, best practices, and lessons learned through IRD’s experience as a stabilization implementer since 2006 in Afghanistan. During this eight-year period, IRD experts have collaborated with a wide variety of national and local Afghan government officials; built the capacity of tradesmen and business owners; introduced fundamental management, communications, and accountability systems to multiple Afghan ministries; and stabilized the economic and social livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Afghan families.

In the following pages, this case study offers a definition of stabilization, explores the dynamics underlying the rising demand for stabilization programs, and distinguishes between top-down nation-building stabilization and shorter term “hot” stabilization at the community level. The study concludes with a description of activities undertaken by IRD and its partners, results and outcomes achieved, and lessons learned.
What is stabilization?

Farmers obtained 600,000 fruit tree saplings, which were planted by cash-for-work laborers, helping to revive thousands of hectares of overgrown and unproductive orchards. (AVIPA Plus)
Stable societies are resilient – key institutions and traditional practices assure continuity of essential community functions, even in the face of severe internal or external shocks. These critical national and community functions include security, governance, rule of law, traditional dispute resolution practices, and access to economic and livelihood opportunity, healthcare, education, and other services. When nations or communities within them become unstable and lose resilience, they may be unable to restore those functions on their own.

The destabilizing event may be a natural or manmade humanitarian disaster, an external or internal insurgency, civil war, a predatory government, rising dissatisfaction on the part of citizens, or a combination of factors. Security deteriorates, the government and people lose their ability to engage with each other, and essential services are not delivered. Afghanistan’s resiliency was already at a low point when the Soviet troops departed in 1989. By 1990 the country had begun its descent into a decade-long civil war, soon becoming a classic failed state. Failed or fragile states like Afghanistan draw the most attention from the advanced economies, due to the huge security threat they represent and the investment in troops and resources required to restore them to a threshold level of healthy functioning. As one stark example, during the 25 years since Somalia’s failure as a state, advanced economies have expended billions of dollars to counter the terrorism, humanitarian disaster, and piracy that have followed.

The stabilization and rebuilding of a failed state generally progresses through three phases: from a failed state to a fragile state to a resilient state capable of managing on its own, both nationally and locally. A key feature of the resilient state is the linkage between the national-level government and the populace at the community level.

Stabilization of a failed state begins with the effort to reestablish a functional national government capable of carrying out its basic functions of border and internal security, minimal levels of the rule of law, stable governance, a sustainable economy, and the provision of basic social services. While threshold levels of national capability are being achieved, it is

Stabilization refers to efforts to end social, economic, and political upheaval, and to begin reconstruction. It includes efforts to develop or redevelop institutions that foster self-governance, social and economic development, and security. Stabilization is critical to securing political objectives before, during, or after conflict.

– National Defense Research Institute,

*Improving Capacity for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*
also important to begin addressing stabilization needs at the community level, and building bridges between the two. Taken together, these top-down and bottom-up dimensions constitute the two nation-building vectors (figures 1 and 2).

Afghanistan, which had been without an internationally recognized government since 1979, began the nation-building progression at the December 2001 Bonn Conference, where leading Afghan statesmen met under United Nations auspices to create the legal framework for reestablishing a legitimate government. The resulting Bonn Agreement authorized the Afghan Interim Authority, Transitional Authority, Constitutional Loya Jirga, Judicial Commission, and the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). December 2001 also marked the arrival of USAID and Department of State scoping missions that would design initial relief and stabilization activities (figure 3).

The expected trajectory was that the US government and international community partners would focus first on building the capacity of the Afghan Government at the national level, and work with it over time to extend the writ of its authorities, governance, and provision of services to the local levels. Hence, beginning in 2002, the US and international community partners, together with the Afghan national government, began a stabilization effort focused first on building national institutions – the presidency, the Afghan legislature, the court system, and key ministries, including Finance, Education and Higher Education, Health, Public Works, Justice, Energy and Water, Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and Agriculture.

To address the bottom-up community stabilization efforts, the US and ISAF rolled out the provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs, beginning with nine US-led forward operating bases (FOBs) predominantly in the eastern and southeastern regions of Afghanistan (closer to Pakistan). By 2006, 27 PRTs

Beginning in 2002, the US and international community partners, together with Afghan national government, began a stabilization effort focused first on building national institutions.
On more than one occasion, USAID capacity builders arrived at a ministry to find that US military personnel were already there independently conducting activities with ministerial staff.

were operating, providing coverage for all 34 provinces. At both the national and community levels, the aim was for leadership of security, governance, and development decision-making to transition from the international community to the national government over time, as the capacity of national institutions grew.

The US Embassy and USAID coordinated US government development planning with the international community and the Afghan national government. However, US forces provided technical assistance, capacity building, and CERP-funded development activities* for an increasing number of key government institutions at the Kabul level. Sometimes these efforts resulted in significant short-term development outcomes due to coordination on an individual basis. For example, CERP funds paid for perimeter fencing and other security improvements at Kabul University, while USAID simultaneously began to build the capacity of engineering, agriculture, computer

* Commander’s Emergency Response Program, or CERP, are Defense Department funds for use by civil affairs officers to mount small-scale, quick-response projects in communities where US and coalition troops were operating. In the early years of the Afghan campaign, these often were the only readily available funds at the PRT level for stabilization and reconstruction programming.

Figure 3 IRD’s Afghanistan Stabilization Portfolio, 2006–2016

Top-Down
- Third-party monitoring of infrastructure redevelopment
- Building government capacity to provide services
- Linking government to communities

HRLS I
HRLS II
EQUALS I
EQUALS II
ARTF
DAFA III

AVIPA
AVIPA Plus
S-RAD
SIKA-east
SIKA-South
CTTC
SPR-SEA

Bottom-Up
- Stabilizing communities
- Restoring infrastructure & the agricultural economy
- Supporting livelihoods (vocational training, cash for work, vouchers, grants)
- Restoring trust between communities & government

Source: IRD
science, and law faculties. However, sometimes the urgency to show results and development implementation created confusion and inefficiency. For example, on more than one occasion, USAID capacity builders arrived at a ministry to find that US military personnel were already there independently conducting activities with ministerial staff.

At the PRT level, the US government’s civ-mil team was feeling its way during the early years. Because of the nearly complete absence of locally based Afghan government officials (and their limited capacity when present), and the dearth of government program resources at the provincial and district levels, PRTs often served as de facto local government responders for community needs. It was also unfortunate that for many years all USAID projects and activities were programmed and directed by the US Embassy, working with counterpart government ministries. USAID and State Department representatives in the PRTs had no effective control or even influence over USAID activities in any given province. In 2008 a modest amount of funding and contractor support was placed directly in the hands of USAID PRT staff for use on projects identified in concert with their local government counterparts. This model matured over time, and the PRTs adopted an integrated command group (comprising the FOB commander and USAID and

---

**Figure 4** The Strategic Continuum of Stabilization to Development in Afghanistan, 2001–2025

**STAGE 3**
2011–2025

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

- Secure & Stable Security
- Effective & Legitimate Government
- Market-based, Licit Economy

**STAGE 2**
2006–2010

**RECONSTRUCTION**

- Stabilized Environment for Development
- Thriving Licit Economy Led by the Private Sector
- Democratic Governance with Broad Citizen Participation
- Better Educated & Healthier Population

**STAGE 1**
2001–2005

**RELIEF & STABILIZATION**

- Humanitarian Assistance
- Infrastructure Reconstruction
- Social Services Provision
- Economic Restructuring
- Support of Bonn Process

Source: IRD
Department of State officers) as the internal decision-making team. US military leadership stressed the importance of engaging local government leadership and the use of village shuras to identify CERP governance and development priority activities.

Starting in 2006, the preparation of the *Afghan National Development Strategy* (ANDS) marked a significant turning point in the emergence of Afghan leadership of reconstruction and development at the national level. During this two-year process, US and international community experts – military and civilians – supported the government as it sounded out key stakeholder groups at the national level; established priority areas of security, governance, and development; and identified broad program focus areas. One key step in finalizing the ANDS was the provincial consultation process, whereby governors consulted with key leaders throughout their provinces and identified a priority list of projects. This was an important step by the Afghan government to establish linkages from the central level to the provincial, district, and community levels. This effort was facilitated through extensive support from the PRT civ-mil team, including training, transport, and security for Afghan government provincial staff as they undertook the engagement and consultation process.

Afghanistan was manifesting a typical transition in the governance and development continuum (figure 4). At the national level, as the Bonn Process unfolded, Afghans began to play a more prominent role. At the community level, however, the bottom-up stabilization and nation-building vector was in many ways absent, because almost all development activities were driven from Kabul, either through the ministries directly or via contractors responding to US and international partner nation embassies. Local communities and provincial government officials had little ability to obtain resources for community needs they had identified.

While unintentional and not explicitly planned, this void was partially filled by the PRTs. The expectation was that in the 2007–2009 period, substantial

---

*We soon learned that there is a large grey space between the termination of conflict and the successful transition of a community back to a resilient and stable locale.*

– Colonel John Agoglia

---

**Figure 5** The Transition to Afghan-Led National and Local Leadership, 2001–2025

![](image-url)
No matter what the components are at the community level, if there are not significant, robust, frequent, and recognizable improvements in conditions taking place on the ground through action within the targeted communities, civil stabilization fails.
Table 1  IRD Afghanistan Programs, 2006–2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IRD Program</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Years Active</th>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Chief Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRLS</td>
<td>Human Resources &amp; Logistics Support</td>
<td>2006–2011</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Technical support &amp; quality assurance, infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTTC</td>
<td>Construction Trades Training Center</td>
<td>2006–2007</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Trades skills training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR-SEA</td>
<td>Strategic Provincial Roads–Southern &amp; Eastern Afghanistan Program</td>
<td>2007–2013</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Community stabilization &amp; capacity building through road construction and rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVIPA/AVIPA Plus</td>
<td>Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Productive Agriculture</td>
<td>2008–2013</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Community stabilization through agricultural development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S-RAD</td>
<td>Southern Regional Agricultural Development Program</td>
<td>2011–2012</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Build livelihoods, incomes &amp; civil society through agricultural development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQUALS</td>
<td>Engineering, Quality Assurance &amp; Logistical Support</td>
<td>2011–2016</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Technical support &amp; quality assurance, infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACAP II</td>
<td>Afghan Civilian Assistance Program II</td>
<td>2011–2014</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Conflict victim assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund Monitoring Agent for the Investment Portfolio</td>
<td>2011–2014</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Third-party monitoring, infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIKA-East</td>
<td>Stability in Key Areas–East</td>
<td>2011–2014</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Community stabilization through support of local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIKA-South</td>
<td>Stability in Key Areas–South</td>
<td>2012–2014</td>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Community stabilization through communications &amp; capacity building at provincial &amp; district levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAFA III</td>
<td>Development Assistance Facility for Afghanistan III</td>
<td>2012–2015</td>
<td>Australian Aid</td>
<td>Capacity building for key line ministries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

easy to disrupt traditional community patterns such as volunteer labor, or have the benefits go disproportionately to a favored population, official, or leader – which is destabilizing in the long run. Instead, the challenge is to link quick-impact activities to a meaningful development continuum where responsibility for identifying, resourcing, managing, and accounting for results rests with the local leaders and local host-government officials.
The growing demand for stabilization programming

A steel-reinforced all-weather concrete bridge nears completion. (SPR-SEA)
Effective stabilization capability at the community level is an important US national security tool. Today, stabilization efforts are underway, or being launched or planned, in broad swaths of Africa, the Middle East, and across the arc of Asia. And demand for stability services is expected to grow. The Global Trends 2030 exercise attributes insufficient natural resources (such as water and arable land) and high levels of unemployed or underemployed young men to the increased risk of domestic conflict breaking out (as in much of sub-Saharan Africa and South and East Asia). (Global Trends 2030: Alternate World, National Intelligence Council, 2012.)

Beyond the Last War: Balancing Ground Forces and Future Challenges Risk in USCENTCOM and USPACOM concurs with this view:

Increased competition for local authority, resources, or sectarian or ethnic primacy will increase the likelihood of civil conflict, human insecurity, and mass atrocity in regions that are important to the United States. ... These areas also harbor great potential for contagious instability that could undermine core interests. At times, seemingly local conflicts could rapidly transcend boundaries and trigger infectious security challenges, manifesting as direct threats to the commons, strategic resources and infrastructure, vulnerable populations of important US partners, and a stable regional order. (CSIS, 2013, p. 25)

Robert D. Lamb, director of the CSIS Program on Crisis, Conflict, and Cooperation led a forthcoming study of the world’s 400 major protests, conflicts, and coups since 1989. The study demonstrates that the demand for civilian-led response and civilian response tools often exceeds the supply. In addition, he said, civilian programs do not always benefit from the same levels of funding and support as their military counterparts for transition, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts. (IRD, 2013, p. 2)

Paradoxically, the most promising global trend – a rising pressure for democratization – is also a potentially significant contributor to instability. Ian Bremmer explains in the J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall that stability is highest in repressive autocracies and mature democracies, but instability climbs precipitously during the transition between the two (Simon and Schuster, 2006). Thomas Friedman also noted recently that due to the widespread availability of social media, “Autocracy is less sustainable than ever. Democracies are more prevalent than ever – but
they will also be more volatile than ever. Look for more people in the streets more often over more issues with more independent means to tell their stories at ever-louder decibels (Washington Post, “Takin’ It To The Streets,” 29 June 2013). Bremmer’s and Friedman’s subtext is that instability, within countries and across borders, is a growing and potentially decisive dynamic in global events for the next generation or longer as democracies continue to emerge from autocratic societies.

As an example of this dynamic, Andrew Cordesman writes that

The Arab Spring has become the Arab Decade, if not the Arab Quarter Century. The key challenge the US now faces in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and the Islamic world … [is] to help create stability in a broad range of MENA countries where violence is only one major challenge. The causes are matters of religion and culture and involve basic problems in the legitimacy and competence of governments. They are the product of deep structural problems in the economy and gross inequalities in income distribution. They involve demographic problems and employment issues, and most involve deep ethnic and tribal divisions that mean the current climate of instability will generally last at least a decade. (Changing US Strategy: The Search for Stability and the “Non-War” Against “Non-Terrorism,” CSIS, 2013, p. v)

The overthrow of the autocrat and cessation of hostilities is just the beginning of a very fluid, irregular, and unpredictable process. The daily news out of Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Mali, Central African Republic, and Pakistan are testimony to this volatility and uncertainty.

Stabilization efforts operate in the political context of the affected country and of the countries providing the stabilization support. But political memories are typically short. Facing severe fiscal and economic pressures, Western economies are rapidly downsizing their military, diplomatic, and development workforces, and the accumulated knowledge of best practices and lessons learned at great cost are ebbing away. That does not mean that the need for these efforts diminishes, as General David Petraeus sagely observed in a 2013 speech to the Royal United Services Institute in London, on receiving the Chesney Gold Medal:

Shedding our capabilities for stability operations will not make the need for these capabilities disappear. All future operations will continue to include some mix of offense, defense, and stabilization; and most will be comprehensive civil-military endeavors, requiring us to employ every tool in our diplomatic, economic, and defense arsenals.
THEDEMANDFOR
STABILIZATION
PROGRAMMING
Rebuilding a nation through community outreach and capacity building

Third-party site monitoring can be done by trained local engineers in less secure or difficult to reach locations through use of smartphones, as for the middle school these girls attend in Bamyan. (ARTF)
Rebuilding a society emerging from conflict is a challenge in the best of circumstances, but one of the most important success factors is the extent to which national ministries are able to reach out and engage with communities. To begin reaching those communities, USAID began executing contracts to construct hundreds of roads, clinics, hospitals, and schools nation-wide. However, USAID’s security constraints led it to turn to IRD as its third-party monitor to help ensure the proper use of taxpayer dollars in support of its mission.

Third-party monitoring is a process through which international donors use outside contractors or agents to track, monitor, and report on the performance and quality of roads, buildings, energy, and water projects they finance that are being built by private contractors. The third-party monitor brings expertise and capabilities such as language, cultural insights, and freedom of movement to the monitoring task that the government agency lacks, allowing for more accurate and effective reporting to stakeholders. It is a key element of governmental accountability.

IRD quickly mobilized a team of Afghan professional engineers, guided by a small team of expatriates to put “eyes” on the projects throughout Afghanistan. Over the ensuing eight years this has proven the validity of the third-party monitoring concept as a “force multiplier” in fragile, insecure environments. It is now widely used by donors, and the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has indicated that it may adapt third-party monitoring practices to conduct the field portions of its audit oversight functions as the US forces draw down in 2014.

With USAID support, IRD took third-party monitoring a step forward, using it as a framework to build the capacity of Afghan government ministries to track, assess, and report on their infrastructure portfolios, both to the international donors, the broader Afghan government, and civil society. Towards that end, IRD implemented an innovative journalism training program to improve the government’s interface with the growing Afghan independent media, and through it, start establishing links between the government and the people (box 1).

Applying the principles of community outreach and capacity building to this task, third-party monitoring has become a significant contributor to national stability and capacity. First, IRD staff treated the national ministry staff as they would a community, working patiently to build confidence and distinguish

“The only way you can create durable national stabilization is through building a mosaic out of the thousands of communities spread the length and breadth of Afghanistan.”

– Richard Owens, IRD
the activity from the typical short-term technical assistance that was being deployed to Afghanistan. As IRD Program Coordinator Mary Ann Callahan noted, an expert might fly in, work, and fly out: “Often the experts would employ substantial technical terminology, in English, and the Afghans would be too polite or ill at ease to say they hadn’t understood. But because we had gained their confidence they would come to us and we would be able facilitate a more effective interaction and outcome from the external experts.”

Second, IRD trained national ministry staff to plan, manage, and analyze construction monitoring reporting collected by district and provincial staff. Since monitoring done by IRD staff on the donor’s behalf is necessarily more expensive, using Afghan government personnel allowed for broader-based coverage at much-reduced cost. As part of this process, IRD personnel helped the ministry staff at both the national and provincial levels to identify and remedy communication breakdowns that were undermining the performance and accountability of ministries at both of these levels. “Before, we may have just as well sent our questions into the trash basket; they just disappeared when we sent them up to the ministries,” an IRD staffer reported hearing from a provincial counterpart.

More recently IRD introduced the concept of community-based monitoring that, while more rudimentary, is more frequent and far less expensive.

Box 1 Journalism Training

Opening up lines of communication between the government and the people is one of the fundamental constructs of nation-building, made particularly challenging in Afghanistan with its low literacy levels, rugged geography, poor infrastructure, and limited tradition of local government function or services. IRD began working with a core group of aspiring journalists to more accurately report on the challenges and benefits of reconstruction and infrastructure improvement projects around the country. Their growing understanding and more informed questioning of Afghan officials at press conferences could have stirred up a backlash from the new government. Instead the officials and IRD worked together to improve the content and accuracy of their public outreach. IRD worked with them to take advantage of these press and media capabilities.

Mary Ann Callahan, IRD’s capacity building program coordinator at the time, said the Afghan government began to experience a rising problem with theft of metal parts as it constructed electrical distribution towers. They mounted a broad campaign of interviews and other media outreach to explain the new electricity distribution program and the importance of the new towers. Soon citizens began returning the stolen parts. Follow-up campaigns focused on the danger of illegal connections and the importance of paying for service, the positive role of the Afghan Army in protecting electricity projects, and other improvements in electricity.

Fareedoone Aryan, the director of the journalism program, noted “The style was so much more multichannel and user-friendly than the only thing they had known before – the Soviet-style bullhorn in the streets. We started with electricity but the concept went viral, and other ministries, the Presidency, Parliament, and the Environmental Protection Agency began calling. By the time the program wrapped up, we had professional journalists in 20-plus government institutions. The result has been both a more informed citizenry and a more accountable government.”
Involving the community, in addition to building skills and meeting a key government accountability objective, promotes a two-way dialogue on national government investments in meeting community needs.

Community residents are trained and supported as they photograph and transmit reports on construction occurring in their own communities. Involving the community, in addition to building skills and meeting a key government accountability objective, promotes a two-way dialogue on national government investments in meeting community needs and that will pay dividends long after the 2014 transition.

Most important, these tiered approaches to monitoring have had the additional outcome of stronger communications between the beneficiary communities and the local government, and between local and national officials. Beginning with Human Resources and Logistic Support (HRLS I) and three follow-on iterations in Afghanistan, IRD has extended the concept of accountability and capacity building through third-party monitoring to cover billions of dollars of infrastructure programs from multiple donors, in both Afghanistan and Yemen.

**Box 2  Remote Monitoring Is the Future**

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction John F. Sopko recently said he wants US contractors and NGOs to collect “best practices” from Afghanistan to guide future reconstruction efforts. Sopko also noted the window for direct oversight of US aid spending in Afghanistan is quickly closing and expects no more than 20 percent of Afghanistan’s territory will be accessible to US oversight personnel by the end of the transition period in 2014. That lack of accessibility will fundamentally change the way program oversight is conducted in the country, with much greater importance placed on the role of remote and third-party monitoring to ensure projects are being implemented as intended.

“SIGAR is motivated by a sense of urgency to do as much as possible in as little time as we may have,” Sopko said, adding, “Remote monitoring is the future.”


**Box 3  Introducing Quality Circles to National Ministries**

“Stovepipe” ministries, where each ministry performs independently of all the others, even when facing common problems and sharing related objectives, present a serious obstacle to improvement in Afghan government performance. IRD placed mentors in a number of ministries, coached the Afghans as they established an infrastructure data capture and management working group, where they could identify problems common to all of them and share approaches to mitigating them. Isanullah Batori, of the Ministry of Public Works said, “We had working groups with the ministries of Public Health, Mines, Education, and Economy. We discussed different issues like how to identify the data each ministry required from other ministries. Currently we are working on how to build an official communication mechanism between the mentioned ministries in order to exchange our required data. Informally, we are also beginning to share ways to tackle common communication and performance problems between our Kabul ministries and our provincial and district officials. And of course it is the modern and useful way to have good communication with other ministries.”
Stabilization operations
and the civilian stabilization operator

Over 200,000 Afghans (many fighting-age men) improved their construction and agriculture skills through cash-for-work programs that restored agricultural land, cleaned irrigation canals, and rehabilitated roads and other vital infrastructure. (S-RAD)
While simple on its face, community stabilization is a devilishly complex process of establishing sufficient security, governance, and development to restore a country or community’s resiliency.

The design and execution of community stabilization programs typically relies on a whole-of-government civ-mil team, and implementation roles are divided among them based on their comparative advantages. The military is clearly responsible for establishing security, and the civilian US government officials generally oversee – but do not execute – efforts to improve governance, build infrastructure, and launch or relaunch economic and social services. For execution they turn to one or more “stabilization operators.”

The stabilization operator is typically an organization hired by government civilian agencies to execute the major part of the stabilization activities. As an area is cleared, the civ-mil team and stabilization operator begin an engagement process to gain the confidence of the community and its leaders. To facilitate this, they launch quick-response community employment activities, distribute humanitarian supplies, and repair battle damage. The aim is to then quickly turn to addressing governance issues, including working with local officials and community members to engage with each other on identification and prioritization of decisions related to security, governance, health, education, and development. Finally, community stabilization begins to shift its focus toward a transition from engagement to development, launching activities that have both economic effects (cash for work, quick-impact projects, vouchers for purchase of agricultural inputs) and the potential to mature into longer term economic and commercial opportunities (e.g., fruit saplings, two-wheel tractors, and road construction).

Due to their small numbers and lack of specific expertise, the civilian agencies turn to stabilization operators – contractors and grantees – to implement the key components of the stabilization program (figure 7). These stabilization operators then deploy large numbers of host-country personnel to engage village leaders, participate in shuras, help them identify and prioritize potential community needs and activities, facilitate engagements between them and local government officials, distribute and account for vouchers, link villagers to local suppliers, oversee cash-for-work projects, and report back to donors. They are often the most visible “boots-on-the-ground” of the stabilization campaign.
While security, governance, and development are discrete components of stabilization, the reality is that effective stabilization operations require weaving these three interdependent threads together. Stabilization operations are fragile and dynamic, with progress in one area often offset by fraying and unraveling in another. The challenge for the civ-mil team is to adjust inputs and processes to respond to changes and new insights, and no one is more critical to this process than the stabilization operator.

**The Sequence of Community Stabilization Operations**

Most community stabilization campaigns unite external peace-building organizations such as security forces, civilian implementers and donors, and nongovernmental or multilateral entities. They focus on building internal security, reestablishing community-level structures such as shuras, establishing relationships and a modicum of trust between government and the people, and restoring essential services (Dobbins et al., *The Beginner’s Guide to Nation Building*, Rand 2007, p. xxi). While initially the stabilization operator implements the program directly with affected villagers, it also seeks to step back quickly and begin running activities under government auspices and seeking to remain behind the scenes. In doing so, the stability operator engenders trust and confidence in community leaders and allows them to demonstrate their capacity to improve basic living conditions for constituents.

Community stabilization programs provide inputs that aim to mitigate or remove the sources of instability and promote the return to or establishment of community resilience. Restored security, strengthened governance, and improved economic and social opportunities are the expected outcomes. It is a virtuous circle wherein progress on the security front stimulates and reinforces prospects on governance and development. As resilience rebounds, the prospects for enduring stability improve. However, in the early stages, overall stability is fragile: it ebbs, flows, and sometimes reverses course. Security is paramount, particularly people’s perception of security. Once a sufficient threshold of security is achieved, governance and economic and social prospects can begin to improve, especially those that form the foundation for longer term economic and social growth.

The sequencing and timing of stabilization is thus critical (figure 6). At its origin it is a military sequence, informed by 12 years of increasingly active participation by civilians and their stabilization operators. It begins with a detailed planning step (shape), followed by often-kinetic actions to remove or

---

**Box 4 Heading off Instability**

Stabilization efforts, while most often seen as restorative, need not wait until communities descend completely into chaos. Food security programs in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, and community mobilization programs in Yemen, have shown the potential to arrest the descent into instability and to strengthen community resiliency against violence. IRD mitigated the destabilizing effects of an Afghan drought affecting 17 provinces through distribution of vouchers for wheat seeds and fertilizers from local vendors for a 20 percent copayment. Seed varieties were chosen so that a portion of the resulting crop could be saved and replanted the next year, or sold as seeds to neighboring farmers, giving farmers the capacity to capitalize their assets and mitigate against future drought. This work eventually led to a strengthened agriculture value chain that is now stimulating longer term, self-sustaining development of the country’s agriculture system.
It is easy to generalize about formal and informal power structures of Afghan villages, but the particular relationships that define the power structure in each locale are unique.

neutralize adversaries (clear), a two-step engagement and governance phase (holds A and B) and a transition to longer term sustainable reconstruction and development (build).

**Shape (Unsecure)**

Shaping refers to the critical planning and decision-making process of stabilization, which brings together key civilian and military stakeholders, the host government, and the stabilization operator to identify communities that are potentially ripe for stabilization. Shaping identifies who (in the clearing and early hold processes) will do what, where, and when related to security, and the initial engagements with the people and leaders of the target communities. Most importantly, the shaping stage offers a headstart on situational awareness, one of the most vexing challenges of stabilization operations.

Situational awareness is shorthand for understanding the local power structure: the key leaders, their roles, and the relationships between formal and informal authorities. It is easy to generalize about formal and informal power structures of Afghan villages, but the particular relationships that define the power structure in each locale are unique. The oft-heard expression that “if you’ve seen one Afghan village, you’ve seen one Afghan village” captures the risk of hasty generalization. “Few people from the outside really know who is who, or what is really going on,” says a seasoned US government civilian when shaping the Argandhab stabilization campaign. “Everything is connected to everything else,” noted Anthony Zinni, a retired Marine Corps General, commenting on the Somalia stabilization campaign.

In some cases, military commanders use CERP funds as they seek to quickly demonstrate improvements...
Poorly informed distribution of resources may “cause resentment by reinforcing existing inequalities and further strengthening dominant groups, often allied with political leaders and regional strongmen, at the expense of others.”

on the ground within vulnerable or insurgent-infested communities. However, without sufficient situational awareness, military forces are vulnerable to manipulation when deciding the type of activity to undertake, where to locate it, and who will benefit. Well-intentioned but uninformed decisions can easily further destabilize the village and district, especially in resource-poor communities (like Afghanistan’s) where everyone is competing fiercely just to subsist.

According to Fishstein and Wilder, poorly informed distribution of resources may “cause resentment by reinforcing existing inequalities and further strengthening dominant groups, often allied with political leaders and regional strongmen, at the expense of others. ... The root causes of insecurity and conflict are often political, especially in terms of competition for power and resources between groups” (Winning Hearts and Minds, Feinstein International Center, 2012, p. 3). US and ISAF military leadership came to appreciate – at great financial cost – the principal tenet of international development intervention, which is to do no harm. This was particularly difficult in the military culture, which values problem-solving and works under very tight timelines to accomplish its mission, but over time the military has become better at resisting the allure of a “quick fix” to the apparent problems at the village level.

One of the key lessons IRD learned from the Balkans, reinforced in Iraq, and reapplied in an Afghanistan context is the significant contribution that host-country staff deployed by the stabilization operator can make to improved situational awareness. Fully 95 percent of IRD AVIPA Plus staff were Afghan, if not necessarily from the locality being stabilized, thoroughly knowledgeable of it, and not threatening to it. “You need to find technically qualified staff and pair them up with staff that are street smart when it comes to the ins and outs of the communities being entered,” noted IRD’s Andrew Wilson. Indeed, many times during stabilization programs the allegiances and commitments of community leaders or other partners of implementers on the ground, may shift

Figure 7  The Critical Role of the Stabilization Operator

- Southern Afghans Engaged by Stabilization Operator
  - 200,000: Afghans engaged in cash-for-work
  - 67,000: Afghan families receiving seeds, fertilizer, implements
  - 207,000: Afghans trained on appropriate agricultural techniques
  - $211 million: Dollars directly injected into the economy
  - $500 million: Multiplier effect

- <200: US Civilians
- 30,000: US and ISAF troops
- 1,800: Stabilization operator
The stabilization operator may be less fettered by security constraints and able to join in engagements much earlier than US government civilian personnel.

due to unforeseen military, political, cultural, or tribal developments. Effective host-country staff can help track and manage those relationships so that programming can continue or, if necessary, be redesigned to meet the new conditions on the ground.

**Clear (Unstable)**

Clearing refers to the military-led process of neutralizing or removing insurgents, criminals, warlords, and other elements that control an area and are a major source or enabler of instability. Clearing is both a military and a stabilization challenge, because it is the first opportunity to engage skeptical, conflict-weary villagers for whom the arrival of outsiders, particularly in uniform, has traditionally brought only bad news or distress for the community.

Due to the high-risk, kinetic nature of the clearing operation, civilian governance and development specialists in prior efforts had been arriving well after these initial engagements, forcing the military to rely on its own resources to launch engagement activities. This lack of timeliness had been a source of considerable frustration within the US government’s civ-mil team on the ground.

However, the stabilization operator may be less fettered by security constraints and able to join in engagements much earlier than US government civilian personnel. IRD stabilization programs showed that skillfully and safely inserting professional Afghan and expatriate staff early in the clearing timetable provided the best opportunity to support the military clearing and engagement process. One seasoned US government civilian, expecting a long wait for stabilization support, noted with surprise, “Up rolled IRD staff in lightly armored SUVs to join the clearing forces as they identified and began engaging village and district leaders.”

**Hold-A (Fragile Hold)**

Once security, however tenuous, has been established, the hold phases of the stabilization timeline kicks off. The objective of the Hold-A phase is to launch and embed the governance and development legs of the stabilization strategy. Conventional wisdom, learned in the Balkans and Iraq, is that affected villagers need to see an immediate improvement of their circumstances from the arrival of the external security forces. Hence, in Afghanistan IRD launched its efforts through engagements with

---

**Box 5 Immediate Assistance to Conflict Victims**

The Afghan Civilian Assistance Program (ACAP II) assists innocent Afghan families suffering violent conflict and losses from military operations or insurgent attacks. It provides direct in-kind assistance such as household goods, agricultural equipment, and livestock, as well as vocational training or livelihood support and limited reconstruction of damaged dwellings. Like food security programs, it is designed to restore the foundation of resiliency under communities and families before they descend further into instability and chaos. The program also refers families to local NGOs and Afghan government programs that can provide critical services, further reinforcing the fabric of the community. By responding regardless of whether the damage is caused by the insurgents or inadvertently by US and Afghan forces, ACAP II is a significant demonstration to the Afghan people that the Afghan government and their international partners are on their side.
Participation and visible leadership by Afghan officials from the beginning of the process is absolutely critical to successful stabilization.

**Box 6 Cash for Work**

The Arghandab Valley in Kandahar Province was once known as the orchard of Central Asia, producing pomegranates, apricots, and plums for export around the world. But decades of war left many orchards and vineyards in ruin. Ali Mateen, an elderly apricot farmer, was one of 60 village elders at a shura discussing AVIPA Plus orchard rehabilitation projects. “I remember the days before the Russians came here, this was a green paradise. However, they destroyed our canals and with no irrigation, our trees died. Now my apricot trees can breathe, and the trees are heavy with fruit.” Over the course of a year, farmers obtained 600,000 fruit tree saplings, which were planted by cash-for-work laborers, who also were trained and employed to prune thousands of hectares of existing overgrown and unproductive orchard plots. Farmers received training in the latest pest management techniques, including simple, eco-friendly methods.

When Hajji Mohammed, head of the District Development Assembly, asked, “Who will earn more with your orchards this year?” heads nodded and hands shot up. One farmer said he expected his annual income to rise from $6,000 to more than $30,000. Cash-for-work projects provided $2.5 million in wages to more than 12,000 laborers in Arghandhab, offering income alternatives to those who might be tempted to join the insurgency. “Many of our young men have done small jobs for the Taliban because they had no other options,” Hajji Mohammed said. “We said to them, ‘We have a better alternative.’ Whether you’re a farmer or a laborer, everyone deserves a fresh start.”

Vouchers for distribution of agricultural inputs – seeds for wheat and other safety-net crops on the one hand, and vegetable seeds on the other, accompanied with fertilizers, toolkits, and other implements – were planted with a high degree of adoption, which relaunched seasonal agriculture, created near-term income and employment, and stimulated local market activity.

Cash for work draws in fighting-age men (away from the temptations of insurgency) and generates immediate income as they clean irrigation canals, repair farm roads, clear the effects of battle damage, plant saplings, and prune and revive neglected orchards. This also prepares the ground for longer term development to occur because it improves infrastructure and access to markets and social services. The military was very appreciative of cash for work, seeing it “as the tip of its spear.” IRD could quickly provide resources and a positive reason for the villagers from the cleared (but still fragile) community to come together and begin engaging with the military and civilians.

Cash for work, vouchers, and grants are matched with activities that build farmers’ productive capacity (pruning, pest management, canal cleaning, tractor training, and repair), the small agro-business suppliers who serviced them (low and high tunnel manufacture), and local agricultural officials (extension and agro-business facilitation). These activities contribute to a virtuous circle: the extra cash provides immediate purchase capacity for farm households; households buy the expanded variety and quantity of crops available; vendors spend their increased revenue on additional local investment and consumption; and
This transition places a premium on strong, transparent decision-making processes led by Afghan stakeholders, along with effective accountability mechanisms on the part of the stabilization operator.

The increased economic activity prevents prices from dropping as they typically would when agricultural produce is in surplus. Seeds that can be replanted, improved irrigation canals, small tractors, and high and low tunnels – all improved the infrastructure of the agricultural economy, setting the foundation for longer term sustainable development.

Participation and visible leadership by Afghan officials from the beginning of the process is absolutely critical to successful stabilization. The typical relationship between the government and Afghan villagers was adversarial or neutral at best, with very low expectations by the people of service or support from provincial or district officials. The IRD AVIPA Plus program resources and personnel served as a positive motivation for the villagers and the government officials to convene shuras. The stabilization resources served as a basis for meaningful engagement between them (often for the first time) as they worked through a process to identify specific cash-for-work activities and locations, determined eligibility, vetted beneficiaries, and debated the content of the voucher packages and the amount of co-pays to be borne by the villagers.

“This may have been the first time in years, if ever, that villagers and the government had a positive reason for dialogue,” said Kevin Melton, the lead US government stabilization coordinator in Arghandab, of the community outreach and capacity building approach.

These engagements and program distributions may initially have occurred at forward operating bases, but discussions and engagements quickly shifted to the district-level government, reinforcing the budding governance relationship. In concert with the AVIPA Plus discussion, the civ-mil team and the stabilization operator were working with the Afghan government to regularize these ad hoc shuras as a sustainable, consistent, and dependable governance practice.

Box 7 Vouchers

AVIPA Plus not only improved farm production in Afghanistan, it also helped create trust between farmers and their government, giving them an introduction to the potential benefits that come with governance. But in the Mian Poshtay area of Garmser District, Helmand Province, farmers faced death threats and intimidation from the Taliban, which was preventing them from traveling to district centers to participate in the program. During one distribution to this remote area, AVIPA Plus cooperated closely with the military to ensure that seed and low tunnel components reached intended recipients. The military transported AVIPA Plus staff nine hours through the desert by convoy to reach 200 farmer beneficiaries who would not have otherwise participated in the vouchers program.

Over the life of AVIPA, 256,811 agricultural vouchers were redeemed by an estimated 91,600 farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces. These agricultural inputs – vegetable seeds, fertilizer, tool packages, greenhouse and shade kits, storage bags for dry grains and forage, and water pumps to farmers – were valued at $59 million. For the farmers in Mian Poshtay, while the inputs were valuable, they also saw a potentially greater benefit – a positive helpful interaction between them and their government. This feeling of trust that their government, with the help of its international partners, was willing to help them might be the most important “seed” planted by the program.
Hold-B (Durable Hold)

Throughout Hold-A, external actors, including the stabilization operator, play a decisive role, energizing, nurturing, and protecting the governance processes and delivering the cash for work, vouchers, and other stabilization inputs. The Hold-B stage commences once the governance processes have sufficient momentum to continue on their own without extensive outsider participation. At this stage, communities begin holding their own shuras to identify their needs and build community cohesion. The district governor begins conducting regular security, governance, and development shuras that facilitate dialogue and community input.

At this point, the civ-mil coalition and the stabilization operators face the most sensitive and nuanced challenge of the stabilization process, to gradually but definitively withdraw to the background and place control over program decisions and resources squarely in Afghan hands. This entails multiple risks, as it increases the vulnerability of the program and its resources to misappropriation and to the resurfacing of malign actors and destabilizing practices. To say the least, this transition places a premium on strong,
As risky as they are, the transition and transfer to host-country leadership and ownership are central to the stabilization process, just as they are in traditional development. ...We may have been over-protective in this regard.

transparent decision-making processes led by Afghan stakeholders, along with effective accountability mechanisms on the part of the stabilization operator.

While high risk, Hold-B brings welcome opportunities to advance both governance and development capabilities that were born through the initial quick-response activities of Hold-A. Hold-B shifts to program inputs and activities that have longer term economic and governance payoffs. The stabilization operator uses the same tools: cash for work, vouchers, and grants, but with a higher level of complexity and expected durability. In Afghanistan, IRD rolled out community development (cooperatives, health and education, literacy, and livelihoods skills training), infrastructure, and further development of the agriculture value chain (strengthening agro-business providers of inputs, processing, transportation and marketing functions, and mechanization resources).

On the governance front, Hold-B is the point at which stabilization activities begin to focus on building the technical capacity of local, provincial, and even national government officials.

**Build (Transfer)**

Just as Hold-A prioritization and quick-impact activities become the foundation for Hold-B governance and development activities, Hold-B efforts are the foundation for longer term social and economic development programs, whether Afghan-led or externally supported. This is the Build stage, with its own risks but the necessary and potentially concluding step in the stabilization campaign. Moving to this stage marks the transition from hot stabilization to traditional, long-term sustainable development. In Afghanistan, IRD identified the challenges of this stage when it followed AVIPA Plus with the Southern Regional Agriculture Development Program (S-RAD), a one-year program designed to assure the continued provision of Hold-B stabilization programs where needed, the wind-down of stabilization activities where not needed, and the inception of a longer term agricultural development program. Drawn-out contracting processes and changes of program direction place a premium on communications among all the stakeholders – beneficiaries, suppliers, national and local Afghan officials, and the US military and civilian teams. However, IRD’s focus on a robust communication strategy and its ability to roll over experienced, proven staff helped it to smooth out this transition process.

As risky as they are, the transition and transfer to host-country leadership and ownership are central to the stabilization process, just as they are in traditional development. In fact, US experience in Afghanistan suggests that we may have been over-protective in this regard, wary of ceding greater autonomy to Afghan counterparts, due to low literacy, low capacity, and the pervasive risk of corruption and malfeasance. One long-serving State Department governance advisor noted, “We probably overstayed our usefulness by participating in the meetings and shuras too long. When we thought we were helping, we were probably holding them back.” Being there to launch, energize, and guide these governance efforts is critical, but so is releasing from the systems once they are functioning. These lessons were pressed home during IRD’s CSP efforts in Falluja and Basra, Iraq, and adapted for the Afghanistan stabilization programs.
The Construction Trades Training Center continues to improve skills among the local workforce and drive the country’s sustainable reconstruction. (CTTC)
The program logic of stabilization programs is straightforward: deliver inputs that mitigate sources of instability and strengthen community resilience. The desired outcomes are enduring security, more effective governance, and improved prospects for long-term economic development and social opportunity. As already noted, these outcomes are interdependent. Progress on security improves prospects for improved governance, and improved governance forms the basis of the country’s economic development. In the early stages, the newly established stability is fragile and security is the most critical component. However, as security becomes more durable and apparent, people’s confidence increases and their willingness to engage with government and make demands of it also improves.

IRD’s stabilization model in Afghanistan posited that agriculture-focused activities would result in meaningful agricultural outputs that in turn would lead to developmental effects at the outcome level and stabilization effects at the impact level. AVIPA Plus was thus a stabilization program that used agricultural development as the vehicle to address and mitigate sources of instability and restore community resiliency, strengthen governance, and set the conditions for longer term economic and social progress. Hence, the program had three key outcomes – security, strengthened local and national governance, and improved livelihoods.

A predominantly agricultural economy like Afghanistan’s lends itself to effective sequencing. The initial inputs employed by the stabilization operator to attract the community, government, and businesses, when wisely chosen will immediately address sources of instability by rapidly increasing incomes. They also divert fighting-age young men away from insurgency and strengthen the agricultural value chain over the medium and long term. They effectively facilitate the return of resiliency and begin the transition of the community from a survival focus to longer term social and economic opportunities.

But it is not enough to identify ways to employ large numbers of Afghan men, distribute seeds and fertilizers, provide training, and walk away. The activities need to be selected for both their ability

“The military loved cash for work, which is relatively easy to implement (e.g., wages, a few tools) and to maintain accountability because it was clean, something very tangible that they could bring to their discussions with the village elders when they asked for security cooperation. They called it the ‘tip of their spear.’”

– Andrew Wilson, IRD AVIPA Deputy Chief of Party
With Afghans visibly out front – engaging villagers, leaders, and government officials, and applying their superior language and cultural insights – security threats were more quickly perceived and responded to.

Outcome 1: Increased Security

As expected in a hard-fought counterinsurgency campaign, security was a continual challenge to stabilization operations. For example, IRD AVIPA Plus staff, government leaders, and beneficiaries were regularly warned, targeted, coerced, assaulted, attacked, or abducted. Tangible security threats led to the cancellation of more than 140 activities in the early months of the program. IRD took a page out of its Iraq book and maintained its commitment to an Afghan face on its program. With Afghans visibly out front – engaging villagers, leaders, and government officials, and applying their superior language and cultural insights – security threats were more quickly perceived and responded to. Sometimes the appropriate response was increased force and presence of US and Afghan security forces; at other times a tactical retreat was more judicious.

Box 9 Value Chain Analyses

Facing a dramatically shortened timeframe for launching the agricultural components of the 2009 Afghan surge, IRD turned to a small cadre of its seasoned agriculture experts, tasking them to identify the best mix of crops and activities that would produce both immediate impact and support longer term economic opportunity. This team of US and Afghan specialists marshaled information from a variety of sources and in just six weeks, conducted value chain analyses for grapes and raisins; pomegranate, apricots, figs and almonds; a basket of local vegetables; and fibers (wool, cashmere, cotton, and leather). Based on these analyses, the program staff and Ministry of Agriculture officials in Kabul and the region identified 18 high-value crops. Within weeks program staff and local and provincial agriculture officials were distributing vouchers for seeds, fertilizers, and tools to war-weary residents. Equally important, these activities directly supported longer term national agriculture strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture.
The question has always been how durable any improvements would be. Recent observations suggest that they are holding steady or improving.

The IRD civ-mil partnership proved very fruitful from a security perspective. IRD provided quick and flexible support to high-priority military clearing operations, accompanying the military to remote, high-risk areas of Helmand. There they got an early start distributing seed and fertilizer packages and identifying potential cash-for-work opportunities. In Kandahar, IRD engineers were using cash-for-work to rebuild the Robat Road when they started receiving security threats. The US and Afghan military beefed up security and escort services for IRD staff and the road work teams, and the road, linking far-flung villages to the strategic Spin Boldak–Kandahar City corridor, was completed and put into service. In both of these examples, emerging threats to clearing or cleared areas were mitigated by this partnership.

Across the AVIPA Plus project area, security improved and freedom of movement increased. At night, IED placements decreased and citizens took more responsibility for maintaining security. From the stabilization operator’s perspective, however, the ability to implement program activities is the best proxy indicator of increased security. In that regard, as seen below, IRD successfully implemented thousands of activities, engaging tens of thousands of Helmand and Kandahar farmers and their families and expending almost $300 million over the life of the stabilization programs in the south. Successful operations on this scale would not have been possible in the absence of security.

Also telling is the durability of the improved security. The senior US stabilization coordinator recently observed the weekly security Shura of Daman District, Kandahar, where the governor reported that “the overall security in Daman is very good… [and] attacks on Kandahar Airfield are not occurring as frequently. The district police chief stated that they found only one IED near a village, and the provincial explosive ordinance disposal team arrived from Kandahar City within an hour. The ANSF overall agreed with the military that the security is very good in the district.”

**Outcome 2: Growing Government Capacity, Transparency, and Responsiveness**

As noted above, IRD executed an enormous number of stabilization activities over a wide swath of southern Afghanistan in a tightly compressed period of 36 months. Over the course of the Hold-A and Hold-B stages, Afghan government officials progressively took over leadership of the governance process, becoming more visible, viable, and reliable partners of affected villages and their leaders in identifying activities, target areas, beneficiaries, and community contributions. All told, 2,600 projects were implemented by IRD through this stabilization governance process, restoring resilience to this critical people-government relationship.

The question has always been how durable any improvements would be. Would these improved governance processes survive the withdrawal of US troops and civilians? Recent observations suggest that they are holding steady or improving. For example, a long-serving State Department official reported that government leaders “continue to conduct regular shuras and other consultative activities in all Kandahar AVIPA Plus districts, 21 months after closeout. And they’re traveling to the provincial GIRoA offices to advocate on behalf of their district and village shuras.”

Another State Department official reported his observations from a visit to Daman, a strategic district near Kandahar City, where the district governor holds three scheduled shuras each week, on security, staffing, and community development: “The District
One of the key governance outcomes of stability, writ nationally, is the strengthened links between the national ministry officials and their local officers at the provincial and district levels, where the key interface with the people occurs.

Governor claimed there were no major problems affecting crop or livestock, and any minor issues were addressed by the extension agent and plant protection official. It was also stated that both DAIL [District Ministry of Agriculture] reps are frequently at the district center and attended weekly staff meetings where past and planned weekly activities are reported and discussed.

In Zharai District, the new district governor indicated that his appointment was the result of a request by the people directly to President Karzai. Noting that his biggest problem was with his staff — poor attendance and weak qualifications — he said he had already begun to initiate corrective personnel actions. Throughout the insurgency, government officials were no-shows in their assigned districts, and no one was able to hold them accountable. Overall in 2012, filled staffing positions grew by 30 percent across the Kandahar region, an important step forward in governance capacity.

In nearby Helmand Province, the provincial governor successfully advocated with the Office of the President to retain the district community councils that he established in concert with AVIPA Plus; he appreciated the value of this governance channel as an important voice between the communities to their government officials.

Community stabilization, while targeted locally, contributed markedly to top-down national-level government capacity. One of the key governance outcomes of stability, writ nationally, is the strengthened links between the national ministry officials and their local officers at the provincial and district levels, where the key interface with the people occurs. Brought in early, national-level officials welcomed their inclusion in stabilization programs, from the strategy development and program design steps through execution, evaluation, and closeout. The Ministry of Agriculture viewed AVIPA Plus as an effective

Box 10 Positive Economic Shock in Kandahar and Helmand

Twenty-year-old Husain Shah is a day laborer by trade. Like most itinerant workers he hires himself out to clean canals and help at harvest time. But it’s not a stable source of income and work is usually hard to come by. “One month of employment means a lot when you don’t know from one day to the next whether you’ll have work,” he says. “And it’s good to work on a project that you know is benefitting local farmers.” Workers like Shah are vulnerable to recruitment by the insurgency. The short-term jobs provided by S-RAD drew thousands of fighting-age men away from illicit activity, encouraging greater stability in the region.

Stabilization and counterinsurgency lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan have taught the importance of delivering immediate and meaningful benefits to the population as a precursor to the many hard adjustments that are a part of nation-building. One knowledgeable stabilization expert termed it “creating a positive buzz.” In 18 months, IRD delivered a positive buzz through its cash-for-work, voucher, and training programs:

- $62 million in cash for work, employing more than 170,000 people, the equivalent of 33,000 full time jobs
- $58 million of seed, fertilizer, and tool voucher packages, purchased from local vendors
- $91 million of crop production from the first cycle of vegetable plantings, creating the equivalent of 56,000 private sector farm jobs
enabler of its national agriculture strategy, including national seed distribution, mechanization, research and extension, and education.

They also saw IRD stabilization and food security programs as a learning lab for rollout of strategic programs nationally. Viewed from the lens of preventive stabilization, AVIPA Plus’s food security component helped the ministry reach the citizens of all 34 Afghan provinces, working through provincial- and district-level officials to increase the use of improved seeds, fertilizer, pest management, and other improved practices. Adoption of these improved approaches reached 80 percent or higher, compared to the 25 percent uptake typically seen in a traditional agriculture development program.

The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) is working at the national level to extend service delivery levels begun under IRD cash-for-work infrastructure programs and to adopt AVIPA Plus practices for working in conflict zones. Moreover both MRRD and the IDLG (the presidential office charged with coordination provincial and district level governance) have adopted the district and community development councils rejuvenated in concert with AVIPA Plus as the key representational bodies throughout Helmand Province. The ministries of Education and Public Health used AVIPA Plus governance mechanisms to make sure that local desires for education and health facilities would fit within their national rollout strategies, and assure sustainability.

**Outcome 3: Improved Livelihoods**

The third outcome of community stabilization is improved prospects for economic growth, a significant contributor to resiliency. IRD staff documented through perception surveys that small farmers reluctantly turn to poppies when traditional food crops and income are threatened by insecurity, drought, poor inputs, low-quality production, post-harvest spoilage, and transportation losses. But poppy production is a major vector of instability through its associated corruption, funding insurgency and violence. Hence, community stabilization efforts focused on accelerating economic resiliency through a two-staged effort. The first of these was the rapid rollout of cash-for-work activities to provide battle-aged young men, local families, and nearby businesses with immediate income. Properly chosen, these first-stage investments also lead to

### Box 11 Improving Livelihood Prospects

AVIPA-Plus fostered the livelihood skills of hundreds of thousands of Afghan individuals and households.

- **208,000 people acquired practical on-farm skillsets through hands on training.**
- **200,000 Afghans (many fighting-age males) improved their construction and agriculture skills through an ambitious range of cash-for-work assignments.**
- **$23 million in small grants for farm machinery and ag-business facilities strengthened the capabilities and prospects of 60,000 families.**
- **60,000 meters of irrigation tunnels newly repaired through cash for work, along with the rehabilitation of numerous reservoirs and sluice gates, brought 383,000 hectares of farmland under improved irrigation and water management.**
- **275 raisin-drying sheds constructed through cash for work, along with substantial improvements to Ministry of Agriculture buildings, demonstration farms, and small-farmer support facilities have improved both the economic and governance prospects for village and district households.**
Cash-for-work wages were immediately spent in the local economy, buying the newly grown vegetables, seeds, building materials, school supplies, and other household investments that will lead to a more prosperous future.

better prospects for agriculture income over the long term. This is a positive economic shock, and recent research has shown that injections of cash to poor communities allow households to build assets, increase consumption, reduce hunger, increase investment in and revenue from small businesses, and increase a sense of psychological wellbeing ("Pennies From Heaven," The Economist, 26 October 2013).

IRD outcomes and impacts on livelihoods through its stabilization programs in Afghanistan are instructive. It is important to note the significant multiplier effect of these cash injections. Cash-for-work wages were immediately spent in the local economy, buying the newly grown vegetables, seeds, building materials, school supplies, and other household investments that will lead to a more prosperous future.

Box 12 Improving Stability, Capacity, and Infrastructure

The Strategic Provincial Roads (SPR-SEA) program rehabilitated rural roads in the southern and eastern provinces to an international all-weather standard, built the capacity of the private sector in road design and construction, and strengthened government institutions and communities to support the construction and maintain the roads.

What Was Achieved

Infrastructure: SPR increased capacity throughout the local construction market in design, construction, and project and financial management. SPR subcontractors and staff completed detailed design of 1,000 kilometers of roads and constructed or made substantial improvements to nearly 700 kilometers of roads. Two major bridges and thousands of stone masonry culverts and causeways were completed, and road quality and safety were vastly improved.

Capacity: Afghan firms gained the ability to design roads to international standards and experience in developing road profiles and sections, designing hydraulic structures, and using digital terrain modeling and industry-standard software. SPR Afghan staff gained experience in design review and subcontractor management. SPR subcontractors successfully mobilized to remote, high-risk locations. SPR collaborated with and strengthened national institutions, especially those that form the backbone of the construction industry.

Community Stabilization: In collaboration with local community development councils, SPR community mobilizers helped communities conduct rapid assessments to prioritize development needs and apply for grants to complete the projects. Nearly 200 grants worth over $7 million were completed, benefiting nearly 400,000 people. SPR worked with community groups to resolve 600 local disputes and obtain over 1,600 cooperation agreements in support of the road construction.
investments that will lead to a more prosperous future. A detailed study conducted for IRD buttressed what economists have long termed the “multiplier effect.” This multiplier effect increases the impact of each dollar by a factor of 2.5 to 1. Hence the $211 million of cash injected into Helmand and Kandahar provinces potentially boosted the economy by up to the equivalent of $527 million (interview with Dr. Ken Swanberg, July 2013).

Box 12  Improving Stability, Capacity, and Infrastructure (continued)

Lessons from SPR

• Because of the urgency to begin construction and maintain a high standard of road design, it was important that SPR had the flexibility to adjust program strategies and schedules.

• Roads longer than 20 kilometers using design-build experienced delays and increased costs because of the need for community outreach across larger areas, greater capacity building needs of local contractors, and higher security costs.

• While design-build worked well on shorter segments, subcontractors who were provided with preliminary designs completed detailed designs earlier and developed higher quality proposals.

• For large capacity-building projects in conflict environments, direct and regular expatriate oversight is required to maintain schedules and compliance.

• Improving access to financial services and insurance should be a component of infrastructure capacity-building efforts.

• Manual construction techniques can be effective – even on large-scale projects – and can achieve comparable results while providing significant local employment and capacity-building opportunities.

• Coordination with the donor, national leadership, and international military commands, along with flexibility to respond to shifting objectives, are critically important. Nevertheless, donor objectives shifted as USAID attempted to simultaneously support security forces and build the capacity of the fledgling contracting industry.

• Anticorruption efforts require time and resources to ensure the appropriate and effective use of donor funds in conflict areas. Localized corruption led to termination of grants and local staff and required additional redundancy in compliance procedures.
Accountability for risk mitigation

Quality assurance engineers oversaw the reconstruction of these students’ primary school, ensuring it met safety and construction standards. (HRLS)
One of the biggest challenges of community stabilization in Afghanistan is overcoming the mistrust that exists among all parties, most significantly, between communities, ethnic groups, and the local and national government, not to mention between Afghans and outsiders. In Afghanistan, it is often government behavior that is destabilizing, a result of indifference, exploitation, and corruption by local and national officials. Both the US military and civilians have, despite their good intentions, contributed to the climate of mistrust. In earlier periods the military cleared areas and asked for security cooperation from the communities, but was unable to remain on site, leaving the population vulnerable.

Both the military and civilian experts deployed CERP (military funds for small stabilization projects) and other resources in ways that undermined community resilience, exacerbated existing tensions, or otherwise contributed to instability. Most significant was the mistrust that stemmed from promises, or the perception of promises, made by civilian or military units that were not kept. It is easy to understand how this could occur in the chaos of a stability operation, but trust is the lifeblood of productive stability operations, just as the distrust and cynicism from broken promises are the death knell. Accountability is trust expressed. It is arguably the most important input, output, outcome, and impact of stability operations.

The reality of community stabilization operations – a chaotic environment of insecurity, compressed timelines, high “OpTempo” (operational tempo) and missions of the multiple parties – is that they are often poorly aligned or coordinated. Residents and leaders of the affected community, the host government at the local and national level, the US and coalition military, and the civilian governance and development officials form a volatile mix of sometimes competing interests. Most are war-weary and eager for stability to return. But some individuals – warlords, corrupt officials, and insurgents – benefit from the status quo and resist change.

This mix is a recipe for chaos and misunderstanding. In the middle of the mix is the stabilization operator, the USAID implementing partner charged with engaging communities, local government, and the US government civilians and military. They are the legs, arms, face, and hands of the Agency. The security mission is the realm of the US military and Afghans (civilian and military). While not alone, the stabilization operator bears the predominant responsibility for delivering the program inputs, restoring resiliency, and

“We bring over the best of the US business practices. We exemplify them, showcase them, teach them, and tailor them to a particular market context. Leading by example is one of the strongest, most effective capacity building tools.”
– Olga Wall, Director of Contracts and Agreements, IRD
establishing or reestablishing the foundation for future development. Thus the stabilization operator is key to aligning the interested parties, both those who crave stability and those who seek to maintain the unstable status quo.

One of the key lessons IRD has learned is the importance of good planning and effective management of expectations to successful stabilization outcomes. However, misunderstandings are a near certainty, and the risks inherent in these misunderstandings can threaten the very stability the program seeks to accomplish. IRD’s experience in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan has shown that accountability on the part of the stabilization operator is the antidote to misunderstanding and key to mitigating these risks.

What Is Accountability?

For IRD, accountability is multilayered and deeply embedded throughout its day-to-day internal and external activities. It is central to IRD’s mission.

As a core value, accountability reflects an organization’s values and is inculcated in its employees. For one IRD sector team leader, Dave Hinkle, it means “I am accountable to my own values and those of my organization.” Another IRD sector team leader, Jim Weeks, says “It also means the employer is accountable to the staff – to give them the support needed – equipment, training, non-compliance reporting pathways. We need to have the employees know that we have their backs.”

As a core capability, accountability is modeled in IRD’s interactions with all stakeholders in a stabilization environment like Afghanistan: the US government and taxpayers, its partners in the international community, and the host country government and people it is assisting.

IRD Chief of Compliance Jean Hacken says that building accountability “starts with your organization. Emphasize prevention but with the ability to roll out remedial actions. The staff can see the immediate results. In Afghanistan, IRD posted highly visible notices in multiple languages directing Afghans to call

Box 13  Listening to Employees

IRD invested significant effort in introducing US standards of business ethics and codes of conduct to Afghan staff. But ethics is a two-way street, which meant listening to employees discuss how the code might create conflict with accepted local cultural practices. At the suggestion of local employees, IRD began prominently inserting a clause in all local procurements:

IRD’s policy is that no gifts of any kind or of any value may be exchanged between vendors/contractors/grantees and IRD personnel. Discovery of any gifts being offered to or accepted by IRD personnel will be grounds for disqualification of the vendor/contractor/grantee from participation in the current or any future IRD’s procurements/competitions and may result in disciplinary actions against IRD personnel involved in such discovered transactions.

Afghan staff welcomed this statement as a means of protecting them from pressure to engage in noncompliant activity.
As a core capacity, accountability is a set of principles and practices that IRD intently focuses on transferring to the host country, first through its own host country staff, but also to community leaders, local and national government officials, and the business community. For example, IRD’s implementation of third-party monitoring strengthens communications between communities and their leaders, between communities and local government, and between local and national ministry officials, steadily improving accountability. Similarly, IRD supported local officials to publicly and transparently conduct quality assurance checks of construction inputs such as cement and to verify that distribution of seed and fertilizer went to the intended recipients. These actions helped introduce public accountability behaviors to government and private sector transactions with clear benefits to the general public. Radio call-in shows and traveling theater (box 14) were also effective at promoting a culture of accountability by providing a venue for communities, most with low literacy, to speak up, identify problems, and seek answers from their leaders. In parallel, IRD mentored government officials through its journalism program and regular coaching to view these interactions with the public as opportunities to better inform them and gain their support.
Farmers like this one received vouchers for high-quality wheat seed and fertilizer at a reduced cost. They also received training in best wheat production practices. (AVIPA)
Community stabilization programs in Iraq and Afghanistan were mounted under intense time pressure, and enormous US national interests rested on their success. The programs enjoyed many successes and proved to be powerful learning labs. The key lessons and recommendations IRD has learned from its civilian stabilization and reconstruction work in Afghanistan are as follows.

Lesson 1: Security Always Comes First

“You can’t kill your way to victory” General Petraeus often repeated to his charges, reinforcing the point that the lives of the populace also needed to improve, and soon, in order for the physical security to hold. A seasoned PRT commander in Zabul adds, “Yes, but neither can you develop your way to security.” Under the Strategic Provincial Roads Program (SPR), IRD was assured that it would rehabilitate roads only after the areas were cleared and secure. Yet as the operational tempo of the 2009 “surge” rose, military priorities in some cases took precedence, and those roads were seen more as a tool for military counterinsurgency than civilian stabilization programming. Occasionally, road construction teams were asked to arrive in insecure areas before clearing had begun. SPR program staff, local partners, and Afghan subcontractors soon became targets for insurgent activities. This changed the decision-making approach of the US, Afghan, and ISAF civ-mil leaders and reduced program impact. For example, IRD was directed to push a road into a remote, insecure district of Zabul on the expectation that the communities benefiting would provide security while it was being built and keep it open after. The result was serious delays, and worse, severe casualties as IRD local staff attempted to mount program activities in contested or highly vulnerable territories. Rather than extending the writ of the government, as the road project was intended to do, its delay and ultimate cancellation served to reinforce the insurgent message.

This is not to say that IRD cadres waited behind the lines until the all-clear was sounded. As noted above, IRD and the military often planned and deployed hand-in-hand to launch stabilization activities under very challenging security conditions, or to reinforce an active project site that was beginning to be targeted by the insurgents.
Lesson 2: Manage to Requirements and Maintain Program Scope

Attempting complex development activities as part of a stabilization strategy should be approached cautiously. Contracting officers, grant managers, auditors, inspectors, and politicians will measure the stabilization operator’s results against the achievement of the program requirements as defined in the contract or grant agreement. There will be pressures to change, amend, or realign implementation planning by various stakeholders, but in the end the stabilization operator’s “word and deed” as defined by those agreements is what the US government will hold the organization accountable to.

For example, construction of rural mountain roads are traditional and effective development investments, but they are complex projects that require time and patience to do right. As one IRD staffer observed, “One of the SPR roads was 60 miles long. How long would it take to complete a 60-mile road in the US – easily three years or more! Why would we expect to accomplish it any sooner in the mountains of Afghanistan during wartime?” Multifaceted, complex, and challenging activities such as this should not be pursued within a stabilization timeframe – they simply take too long to bring to conclusion. That is not to say that transport and road activities as part of a stabilization campaign should be avoided. Rehabilitation of smaller road segments proved very effective as cash-for-work and other short-duration, community-led activities. Nor is it to say that major transportation projects should be dropped. Under SPR, Afghan contractors were mentored as they introduced complex and sophisticated bridge and highway programs in critical, but uncontested, areas of the country.

Similarly, the AVIPA Plus tractor distribution component showed that activities with high-value inputs need to be carefully considered. At one level, tractors are appealing because mechanization is often a logical step in increasing agricultural productivity and it fit well with the government’s agriculture strategy as defined by the minister and his professional staff. However, maintaining accountability for these high-value items is critical in order to maintain the credibility with the typical Afghan villager, and with the many institutions and media scrutinizing the program for any possible missteps. In response, the AVIPA Plus design required the establishment community cooperatives to own, operate, and maintain accountability for these tractors, a developmentally sound but complex and time-consuming process. This requirement proved a step too far for several districts in Afghanistan.

Lesson 3: Manage Expectations

In a whole-of-US government effort such as Afghanistan, the natural tendency was for each civilian or military entity to expect its needs to be met through any and all stabilization programs that appeared on the horizon. Given the importance of rapid implementation and scaling inherent in the civ-mil construct, actors must resist the tendency to design programs that are all things to all people. “The art of stability operations is the ability to say no,” said Kevin Melton, who helped guide the stabilization rollout in Argandhab, a high-priority district of Kandahar.

For example, villagers and the US military identified the need for a health clinic as a key contributor to village resiliency, and asked IRD engineers to construct one using cash for work resources. However, a health clinic requires a number of systemic supports to be effective, including trained personnel, a reliable source
Since the early days in Serbia and Montenegro, IRD demonstrated the value of building confidence among the residents, local government, and the business community, as well as their confidence in IRD as the stabilization operator.

of medicines and other supplies, and ongoing support from the health ministry. The stabilization program could not assure that the critical success factors could be satisfied. A failed health clinic could easily reinforce the insurgents’ message and undo much of the stabilization progress. In this case, IRD brought in USAID counterparts to work with the provincial Ministry of Public Health to take the lead in moving this request up through appropriate government channels to be met by national Ministry of Health programs. This had two benefits – it supported emerging Afghan governance processes, and it allowed the stabilization program to remain focused on program inputs more directly related to the mission.

On the other hand, during clearing operations in Kandahar, insurgents began hiding home-made bombs in traditional mud-walled raisin drying sheds. The US military approached IRD about constructing less vulnerable brick sheds using cash for work. Although this was outside planned program parameters, IRD approached USAID for approval and proceeded to implement these life-saving steps.

Lesson 4: Streamline Donor Activity Approval Processes

Since the early days in Serbia and Montenegro, IRD demonstrated the value of building confidence among the residents, local government, and the business community, as well as their confidence in IRD as the stabilization operator. IRD emphasized keeping its promises and strived to instill a culture of accountability for commitments made by the local government to the villagers. Nowhere was it proven more decisive than in Nad-e-Ali, in southern Afghanistan, where a fiercely contested stabilization campaign had been underway. AVIPA Plus, although having started operations in Nad-e-Ali only recently, was already changing the everyday lives of many residents. The road and canal restoration projects employed more than 6,800 laborers. These quick employment opportunities quickly injected over $3.5 million in wages and tools into the local economy. Tens of thousands of farmers received training, seed packages, fertilizer, and low tunnels that AVIPA Plus purchased from local fabricators. “Each time a new

Box 14  Building Private Sector Capacity

Delawar Faizan founded and operated Azad Construction, a major Afghan construction company but found that he and his company were severely tested when trying to design and construct two vital mountain roads in eastern Afghanistan. “We faced many problems – design problems, community problems, Afghan government problems, financing problems, and security problems. The combination was often overwhelming, to us and to IRD. But they stood with us, bringing our engineers into their offices to teach us how to use survey, planning, and design software, and on the job site to build international standard sub-bases using local materials and technology, and accommodate Afghanistan’s unique hydrology challenges. But it was more than a technical education. As a business owner, I learned a lot about relating to international agencies, punctuality, language and dress, and timely, accurate, and complete reporting.” Azad successfully completed one road, but the security situation worsened and IRD was forced to terminate the second contract. “[IRD] worked with me to prepare a claim that eventually ran to more than 100 pages. I’m still applying what I learned each day in my business.” Delawar’s company is currently constructing a $10 million hospital in Afghanistan as a subcontractor with the US Army Corps of Engineers.
Activity starts in Nad Ali,” the governor remarked, “people rejoice as if Eid ul-Fitr has started.” (Eid ul-Fitr, an important local holiday, means “a festival of fast breaking.”)

One key to credibility in the Afghan culture is to deliver on promises, both in quality and in timeliness, a core element of IRD’s accountability culture. It’s also rare in the Afghan context, where broken promises between government and the people have typically been the norm. Imagine the frustration however, when activities conceived by village shuras, negotiated between them and district-level officials, and then passed upward for informal approval by provincial leaders, were then subjected to repeated delays by the donors, due to a complex, arcane, and sometimes humiliating approval process. Instead of being a positive example of the value of collaborating with both the government and the donors, beneficiaries saw it as another broken promise.

Lesson 5: Make Communications a Priority from the Start

An extensive and aggressive communications program is a critical component of stabilization and should be directed at both the community beneficiaries and government officials. IRD communications experts developed several innovative uses of radio programming, a readily accessible technology for Afghans, both urban dwellers but particularly villagers. A suite of radio programs was developed to discuss new farming, health, household management, and other basic functions such as prices for agricultural outputs in local markets. Radio programs proved an effective way to reach women too, which is especially challenging within the Afghan culture. Other programs were constructed around cellphone call-ins by villagers and residents, where

Box 15 Using Community Theater to Link People to Government

Given Afghanistan’s strong oral tradition, drama has proven an effective vehicle for building bridges between people. IRD developed 50 district Agriculture ministry-branded radio dramas. Each 8–10-minute module offered instruction in basic horticultural and livestock techniques. The dramas were uploaded to a third-party site and made available to the US civ-mil teams for use in their areas. The programs were downloaded more than 3,000 times. IRD staff also deployed a traveling theater troupe to extend stabilization messages. These proved “hugely successful,” says Will Everett, IRD’s AVIPA Plus communications officer. “Often hundreds of farmers would show up at a performance.” Staff recorded a live performance in Dand district and added interviews with farmers and the district governor. Following heavy on-air promotion, the program aired on Ariana TV in 33 provinces.

Box 16 Good Communications

Due to government decisions, villagers outside a city boundary were eligible for program benefits, while those across the street but inside the city were not. Much potential ill will was avoided by having the government take the lead in explaining publicly why this apparent discrimination was taking place. Otherwise, the Afghans would have assumed that someone was paid off, either to get the benefits distributed to one group or to deny them to the other.
In a fast-paced stabilization environment, persistent rumor-mongering, sometimes fed by bureaucratic infighting and ill will from overworked and over-stressed partners, is common.

They could pose questions to local government officials, agricultural experts, and others on a range of community interests and concerns.

In addition to improving program outcomes such as increased participation and better skills transfer, a good communications program reinforces government leadership and directly supports its growing governance capacities.

There also needs to be a parallel communications effort with major donors and stakeholders, including the US government and other partners. Over the course of AVIPA Plus, IRD purchased and distributed a million fruit and nut saplings, a highly effective livelihood input. When an ill-informed US government official, looking at a stock of the saplings observed that “most of the saplings had died,” word began to spread among the civ-mil leadership community that IRD had made an expensive mistake. However, IRD used its strong communications channels to quickly respond that the saplings were not dead, but in dormancy. In this case, effective communications spiked a potential chain of rumors and maintained the credibility for both the program and its operator.

In a fast-paced stabilization environment, persistent rumor-mongering, sometimes fed by bureaucratic infighting and ill will from overworked and over-stressed partners (working inside a war zone), is common. The best antidote is regular communications and calm inclusive discourse over program approaches, outcomes, and impacts and results.

Lastly, the regular, planned, and accountable reporting of program results is critical, not only for clear programmatic measurement inside the host nation and donor community, including diplomacy, development, and defense, but for articulating program achievement outside the program space to international media, international development and humanitarian partners, legislative and financial stakeholders (Congress and OMB), as well as host-nation diaspora who are desperate for information on how programming is helping their nation.

Lesson 6: Prioritize Accountability and Systems and Documentation to Support It

Afghanistan received enormous amounts of foreign assistance funding over a sustained period of time largely because of its failed state status. This funding combined with high levels of political and media visibility, and sometimes even higher expectations that come with stability operations in response to an attack on our home territory. So prioritizing accountability and documentation for each taxpayer dollar is critical to meeting and exceeding these expectations.

IRD recommends establishing robust management systems and detailed, written standard operating procedures (in both English and local language) in advance of launching field operations. These rule books provide simple, clear directions to local and expatriate staff on how to identify proposed activities and, more importantly, how to document approvals or concurrence within the project, from government, and the bilateral or international funding authorities. They describe how to identify beneficiaries, and record and account for the distribution of benefits such as cash for work wages, voucher packages of seeds and fertilizers to each recipient, and how to document deviations and anomalies within planned activities. Finally, they describe what to do when confronted with illegal or corrupt behavior.

IRD learned from its Iraq Community Stabilization Program (CSP) that civ-mil urgency to launch and scale operations can quickly overwhelm back
In Afghanistan, as an operator, IRD was an innovator; applying technologies to the accountability and documentation challenge every day and across programs.

IRD learned this lesson well and focused intently on transferring its documentation and accountability systems proven in Iraq to Afghanistan. This approach, combined with investing sufficient time and resources in building host country staff capacity through training on these systems, has yielded enormous benefits in the short and long term of the program cycle. It is building a culture of accountability, an IRD core value, into its staff and operations. Modeling accountability is an important input to stabilization, because it demonstrates to the host government an alternative to the more traditional, personalized and discriminatory way of distributing government resources. As IRD’s Director of Contracts and Agreements Olga Wall noted, “We bring over the best of the US business practices. We exemplify them, showcase them, teach them, and tailor them to a particular market context. Leading by example is one of the strongest, most effective capacity building tools.”

In Afghanistan, as an operator, IRD was an innovator, applying technologies to the accountability and documentation challenge every day and across programs. IRD collected hard copy receipts, with thumb prints, and videotaped each recipient receiving his voucher or cash for work wage at time of distribution. Available technologies such as thumb print and retina scanners will make this easier over time, and cloud-based storage technologies and data collection, transmission, and management approaches should also be applied wherever applicable and achievable.

Lesson 7: Invest in Local Staff

One of the strategic components of IRD’s stabilization program is its commitment to pair experienced,

Ahmed Tariq Popalzai joined IRD Afghanistan in 2004, serving as a human resources assistant. On cross-cultural awareness: “IRD was always willing to invest the time to build awareness across the two cultures. I never saw an expat man try to shake hands with an Afghan female, just as I never saw an expat woman hug an Afghan man.” On accountability: “Every single employee was taught what is expected of him. Each individual – even the cleaner – was responsible and accountable for his own behavior. This corresponds directly to Islam. If you are accountable for your own behavior, then you will never do anything wrong.” On investing in local staff: “Staff should know the value of the aid that is coming from America and understand that IRD sees that building skills is investing in the next generation of Afghans. I learned both technical and managerial skills, including how to relate to donor officials and meet the highest standards of accountability. We cross-checked everything, and kept even the boarding passes from flights.” In 2013 Popalzai concluded his ninth year with IRD, having risen to serving as IRD’s country representative. Over that time, he has contributed a great deal to IRD’s success, and attributes much of that to the commitment of IRD to his skills growth, cultural sensitivity, and culture of accountability. More important, he is one of hundreds of IRD Afghan staff who will contribute to the nation’s development as they move on to other jobs and challenges.
IRD has hired large numbers of local experts, and leveraged their natural advantages in language, culture, and religion to improve the effectiveness of program inputs at dramatically reduced program costs.

Culturally sensitive, expatriate management, reinforced by highly skilled technical experts in agriculture, construction, communication, adult learning, and the like with large numbers of local staff, who form the primary interface with host country individuals. From the Balkans to Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and Africa, IRD has hired large numbers of local experts, and leveraged their natural advantages in language, culture, and religion to improve the effectiveness of program inputs at dramatically reduced program costs. IRD has learned to invest heavily in their skills development, beginning with the accountability and ethics training noted above to technical skills involved in third-party monitoring and agriculture value chains and modern management practices of communication, reporting, and advocacy.

In making these investments, IRD has strengthened the program inputs and improved program outputs and outcomes. For example, in the AVIPA and AVIPA plus stabilization programs, IRD deployed more than 2,000 Afghans, who performed all facets of the program, from back office accounting and reporting to preparing radio scripts to leading engagements with suspicious village leaders and shuras throughout Afghanistan’s 34 provinces. Similar skills have been built in the SPR, CTTC, ACAP, HRLS, and EQUALS staffs numbering in the hundreds. As a result, not only have immediate program outcomes been improved, this strategy is also contributing to long-term national development outcomes, as the thousands of IRD employees will carry these skills forward into their careers long after the programs have closed.

Lesson 8: Integrate Technology to Enhance Program Efficiency

Rapidly expanding use of modern information technologies has the potential to dramatically strengthen the effectiveness of stabilization programming, just as it is transforming all other aspects of the global economy. In Afghanistan, a good example is the CMORE (Common Monitoring and Reporting) platform developed by IRD in response to the lessons it learned as a third-party monitor in Afghanistan. CMORE is a collection of information technology tools, processes, and organizational concepts that allow governments, contractors, and stabilization operators to cost-effectively collect, process, and analyze project data. CMORE is based on a package of mobile and cloud-based applications that collect and transmit data, manage field staff, and support a wide range of data visualization and analysis based on GIS software. Through this information, donors, national governments, and other agencies strengthen the delivery of key reconstruction, development, and governance services. CMORE rides on existing telecom infrastructure and harnesses widely available technology to survey populations, monitor activities, and analyze data. The technology underlying CMORE can reach nearly 90 percent of the Afghan population, a remarkable leveraging of technology to accomplish a reach that would have been unthinkable just a few years earlier.
Conclusion

Women take possession of hens as part of a program aimed at helping Afghan women improve home poultry production. (S-RAD)
IRD’s experience in Afghanistan demonstrates that the goal of stabilization, in both the top-down nation-building sense and bottom-up community resiliency sense, is realistic, has occurred to a measurable degree, and has a material outcome. Afghan ministries are steadily increasing their ability to plan and deliver programs worth millions of dollars, and benefits are reaching citizens in their communities. Millions of Afghans are living better lives, in more resilient communities, with improved social and economic prospects.

These outcomes resulted, in part, from lessons learned in Afghanistan and from the application of insights, lessons, and recommendations IRD previously documented in case studies on community stabilization in the Balkans and in Iraq. In Iraq, for example, IRD gained an understanding of the military OpTempo, planning process, and culture. IRD also learned the paramount importance of building strong accountability systems before program activities commenced. In its Afghanistan programs, IRD revalidated the central lesson from the Balkans and Iraq, which is the importance of focusing on community-level change and capacity building.

National-level stability, while equally critical, requires decades, but restoring community-level resilience pays immediate dividends that can launch and help ground the longer term process. Complementing this insight is a new lesson learned in Afghanistan, which is that investing in national capacity to link effectively to communities can kick-start nation-building. Major General Lee Miller, recently returned from a year leading Regional Command South West, said he had been impressed by the energy and engagement of local, district, and provincial officials as they debated what to with some $7 million of development funds that were finally flowing from Kabul ministries for use in local improvement projects (A Time of Transition, The Atlantic Council, 2014). Such linkages, nurtured and sustained, increase local resilience and help dampen the up-and-down swings that nations emerging from conflict experience.

These lessons have not been cost free. On the contrary there was a steep and expensive learning curve in working effectively with the US government, the international community, the government of Afghanistan, and thousands of local communities. The “stabilization-destabilization paradox” is one area where more insight has the potential to save lives and money. The positive economic shock created by cash for work, vouchers, grants, and capacity building is an important component of stabilization in the near term, but these resource injections easily become

The complex network of Afghan, US, and international civ-mil institutions could have produced more effective, more accountable, and more sustainable outcomes if some of the issues and lessons articulated in this study had been understood and applied earlier.
At the heart of the lessons learned lie the core principles of investing in host country staff, emphasizing community resiliency, and modeling a culture of accountability at every turn.

destabilizing and counterproductive when continued too long. We are far from understanding how to time the wind-down of this resource tap. Faced with similar challenges, the complex network of Afghan, US, and international civ-mil institutions might well have produced more effective, more accountable, and less expensive outcomes if some of the issues and lessons articulated in this study had been understood or applied earlier.

This learning curve needs to continue as Afghanistan and its international partners move through the elections and transition to a new government in 2014 and then into the country’s “decade of transition and transformation.” These lessons, while painful and costly at times, were well worth learning. In a number of countries stabilization (at both the nation-building and community levels) is now or soon will be required, for example, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, central Africa, and south and Southeast Asia. Conflicts will continue to break out, and the world will continue to look to the United States to lead the response. As Robert Lamb notes, it is possible one day that the United States will find itself again in need of guidance for supporting and stabilizing a counterinsurgency on the ground (Is Revised COIN Manual Backed by Political Will? CSIS, 2014).

In any case, host countries at the national and community levels should certainly avail themselves of the timely lessons learned in Afghanistan by IRD, its funders and civ-mil partners, and the Afghan government and set forth in this case study. At the heart of them lie three core principles: invest in host country staff, emphasize community resiliency, and model a culture of accountability at every turn.
Stabilization is here to stay. Defined in this case study as “efforts to end social, economic, and political upheaval, and to begin reconstruction, including efforts to develop or redevelop institutions that foster self-governance, social and economic development and security,” stabilization will continue to be a growth industry in a world of political upheaval, climate change and natural disasters, and aspirations for social and political justice, all abetted by dramatic advances in information technology. This expectation of increased demand for stabilization services, and the consequent requirement to understand which stabilization efforts work and which do not, impelled IRD to deliver this fresh-from-the-field report out of the laboratory of Afghanistan. Supplementing the conclusions of IRD’s earlier case studies of stabilization efforts in the Balkans and Iraq, the Afghanistan case study is part of IRD’s ongoing effort to bring useful and current insights to practitioners, policymakers, and funders. IRD offers these findings and recommendations with a sense of humility derived from the complexity of the subject matter and a keen awareness of the uniqueness of each stabilization challenge. The observer quoted in this paper as saying, “If you have seen one Afghan village, you have seen one Afghan village,” knew whereof he or she spoke.

Yet IRD’s sense of humility is balanced by a sense of urgency. At one level, that urgency is driven by awareness of the high cost at which these stabilization lessons were acquired. Notable, this study is dedicated to the IRD staff and partners who lost their lives trying their best to make stabilization work in Afghanistan. At a second level, we believe the lessons gleaned by IRD over a decade as a front-line “civilian stabilization operator” in Afghanistan contain solid insights that, while fresh, should be examined carefully and debated vigorously by those contemplating stabilization strategies in Yemen, West Africa, the Mediterranean littoral, the borderlands of Russia, and a dozen other spots where getting it right is a matter of life or death, and of stability or the destabilizing chaos that undermines long-term development.

Of the stabilization recommendations offered by IRD, several reinforce lessons learned in other countries and from other analyses. IRD’s emphasis in Afghanistan on “making communications a priority from the start” is not the first instance of this observation. We live in a world where those who gain – financially or politically – from instability are prepared to employ a full range of highly agile communications tools of their own, from “night letters” to Twitter. So the urgency of outreach to core audiences never loses its relevance. Moreover, unique communications insights IRD gained in Afghanistan, such as the use of culturally relevant theater groups to reach remote villages, are highly applicable in varied stabilization venues.

Several of IRD’s findings and recommendations provide, I believe, fresh perspectives on the stabilization enterprise. Perhaps no other American NGO can match IRD’s close, recent work with coalition military partners, and this report’s careful dissection of the dynamics among conflict-affected communities, military forces, and civilian stabilization operators – at multiple stages of the engagement process – deserves careful attention. Similarly, IRD has unmatched experience among international NGOs in quality assurance, risk reduction, and accountability for remote projects in austere or conflictive environments. The insights gleaned in Afghanistan on melding local staff capabilities and high-tech inputs to ensure donors are getting what they paid for are relevant to all stabilization operations.

Undergirding the specific findings and recommendations in this report, and in the reports on the Balkans and Iraq that preceded, is IRD’s core belief in community resilience as the basis of stabilization efforts. As noted throughout this case study, IRD takes as an article of faith that communities in
conflict-affected and unstable nations once had viable, even vibrant, traditional institutions and practices that assured continuity of essential community functions, and that these core capabilities can and should be restored. Approaching stabilization from this perspective, with an unerring focus on understanding how the affected community – with carefully designed external aid – can restore its inherent resilience, is a sound basis for action.

IRD offers this case study with appreciation to our donors, partners, and the Afghan people whose courage and fortitude inspired this work. IRD offers this report in hopes that specific findings and recommendations will prove helpful to our partners, funders, and especially to those most vulnerable citizens of countries challenged by instability. If the latter benefit, however indirectly, from this research, the effort in offering this case study will have been well worth it.

James Kunder
Former USAID Acting Deputy Administrator and Assistant Administrator for Middle East Affairs
Abbreviations

ACAP II  Afghanistan Civilian Assistance Program II
ANDS  Afghan National Development Strategy
AVIPA/AVIPA Plus  Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Productive Agriculture
CERP  Commander’s Emergency Response Program (DoD funds for small stabilization projects)
CFW  Cash for Work
CMORE  Common Monitoring and Reporting
COIN  Counterterrorism
CSP  Community Stabilization Program
CT  Counterinsurgency
CTTC  Construction Trades Training Center
DAFA III  Development Assistance Facility for Afghanistan, Phase III
FOB  US-led forward operation base
EQUALS  Engineering Quality Assurance and Logistics Services
HRLS  Human Resources and Logistical Support in Afghanistan
IDLG  The presidential office charged with coordination provincial and district level governance
IED  Improvised explosive device
IRD  International Relief & Development
ISAF  International Security Assistance Force
MAIL  Ministry of Agriculture
MRRD  Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO  Nongovernmental organization
PRT  Provincial reconstruction team
SIGAR  Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction
SIKA-East/AFIKA-EAST  Afghanistan Stability in Key Areas
SIKA-South  Afghanistan Stability in Key Areas
SPR-SEA  Strategic Provincial Roads—Southern & Eastern Afghanistan
S-RAD  Southern Regional Agriculture Development Program
USAID  US Agency for International Development
This report details IRD’s role in Afghanistan from 2006 to the present as a “stabilization operator.” Through the accounts of IRD’s donors, implementers, and beneficiaries, the case study reviews how IRD is helping Afghanistan with its challenges in building a stable, self-sufficient, and well-governed society. IRD works both to strengthen government capacity (top-down) and to rebuild community resiliency and engagement with local and national leadership (bottom-up). Along the way, the study offers a new definition of stabilization, results and outcomes to date, and lessons and recommendations for future stabilization activities.