



Ministry of Finance

**Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation
& Development**

Ministry of Public Works



Annual Report

of

National Rural Access Program (NRAP)

1386 (March 2007 - March 2008)

The National Rural Access Program

(NRAP) which emerged from the former National Emergency Employment Program (NEEP) is one of the most effective programs run by the Government of Afghanistan. The core principles of NRAP are:

- **Connectivity**
of the rural road network
- **Quality**
compliance of engineering standards
- **Sustainability**
maintenance

NRAP Vision

Attempt to enhance human security and promote equitable economic growth by ensuring year-round access to basic services and facilities in rural Afghanistan.

NRAP Objective

N National wide Coverage
R Rural Connection
A Access Services
P Priority Program of GoA



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Preface

In the name of Almighty Allah

Dear reader,

It is a great pleasure that I present you the first annual report of National Rural Access Program (NRAP), which will give you brief but crucial information on this program.

NRAP is one of the most successful programs run by the Government of Afghanistan. It is a joint effort by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Finance. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) provides support in project implementation for the program.

The rural road access network is not only vital in the economic sector, but it is very crucial for security of the country. Afghanistan is situated in the center of Asia and for this reason investment in rural road network confirms the importance of the country as bridge linking Central Asia to Southern Asia and the Middle East. When our road network is completed, the time to travel villages to regions will take shorter.

As impressive as NRAP achievements have been so far, much more remains to be done. The Government of Afghanistan through the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the Afghanistan Compact is committed to enhance rural development to benefit over 25 million people.

I am happy to announce that by the end of SY 1386 more than 9700 km of rural roads through NRAP have been rehabilitated or newly constructed.

Let me hope that we with a joint effort extend our comprehensive work in achieving the goals set by NRAP.

Thank you
Eng. Abdul Satar Salim
National Coordinator of NRAP

NRAP at a glance

National Rural Access Program (NRAP) is one of the priority programs of the government of Afghanistan. NRAP aims to enhance human security and promote equitable economic growth by ensuring year-round access to basic services and facilities in rural Afghanistan through promoting local productive capacity, and private sector development of essential rural access infrastructure and employment creation for the rural poor. NRAP does this through the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of essential rural access infrastructure using appropriate labour-based approaches. In order to achieve these objectives, NRAP has adopted three core principles:

- Connectivity – of the rural road network
- Quality – compliance of engineering standards
- Sustainability – maintenance

NRAP is supported by the donor community (DFID, EC, USAID, Japan, and WB) and several other donors have expressed interest to participate. Government has requested additional funding from the World Bank and has started the preparation of the National Emergency Rural Access Project with a scope of \$112 m.

The IDA grant allocation of the proposed project is US \$112 million which will be implemented over a three year period (four World Bank fiscal years). The achievements of the NRAP program from inception to the end of 1386 are the result of the efforts to provide basic access in 34 provinces. A strategy for the rural roads maintenance is presently under process. The Rural road inventory and IRRIP basic data collection on rural roads in the country are a huge achievement of the program. NRAP has also made some improvements in the organizational structure of its operation throughout the country to better manage the activities as well as to lead the preparation facility (PPF) process for the NRAP project on behalf of the two ministries (MRRD and MoPW).

The PPF progress made in the project cycle has successfully completed the first four targets of the cycle including Country Assistance Strategy, Identification, Preparation and Appraisal. The work of NRAP improves and facilitates access of the rural community to educational centers, health agencies and the marketplace which is a very significant step towards developing the living standards of the community. The related population will be benefiting economically, socially, politically and this rural access encourages the community to continue their privilege to live in their home villages and not have to move to larger urban areas to access education and health centers and employment opportunities. NRAP covers the 34 provinces of Afghanistan and tries to ensure year-round access to the rural population.



NRAP achievements since inception

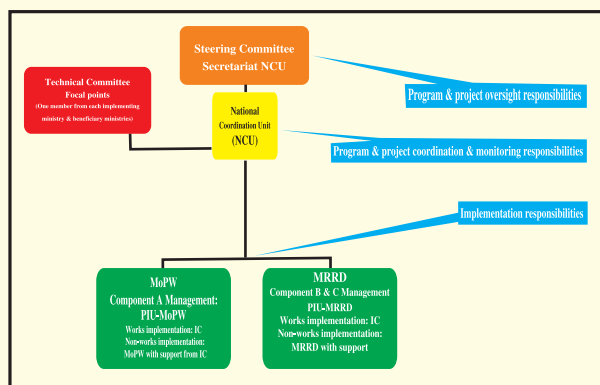
As of March 2008, the achievements of NRAP include:

Labour-days Generated (million)	14.3
Buildings Rehabilitated	209
Nurseries Rehabilitated	29
Wells/Reservoirs Rehabilitated	546
Irrigation Schemes Rehabilitated	187
Bridges constructed	108
Airfields rehabilitated	14
Rural Roads Rehabilitated (km)	9,794
Structures Completed (meters)	41,965
Country wide coverage (provinces)	34

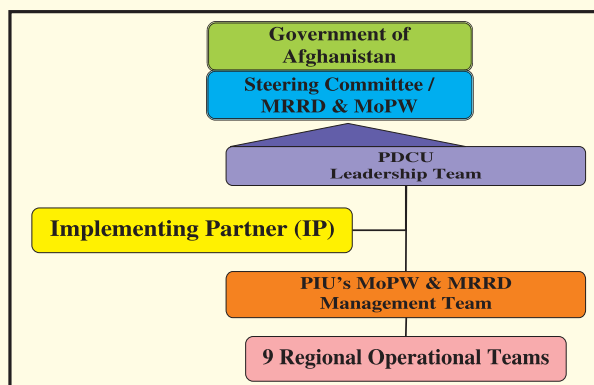
Overview of NRAP achievements in 1386

Project Code	NUM of Bridge	RM of Bridge	NUM of Structures	RM of Structures	KM	Generated Labour days	Budget (USD)
NRAP-MRRD	8	116.35	1089	12,849.70	606.20	676,787	15,512,447
NRAP-MoPW	3	72	127	1,710	68.53	221,180	3,170,988.69

NRAP's institutional set up



NRAP Institutional Framework



National Rural Access Policy

A team of engineers and officials from NRAP program in ministries of MoPW and MRRD have prepared a draft National Rural Access Policy and submitted to the authorities of the program and concerned key ministries for approval.

According to one the member in that Commission of National Rural Access draft Policy, the creation of such a national and overall policy is counted as a valuable guideline and by using that it is possible to design and implement sophisticated and multilateral plans.

Based on the current figures more than 120.000 km of rural roads exists all over the country, which all of them need to be rehabilitated or renewed.

Due to the lack of rural roads in some areas people still don't have access to initial services, and this is the reason for social, economical, cultural and political degrading. In order to create and construct roads with a unique standard, the key ministries and other organizations should take practical steps regarding this issue.

Dedication of a specific financial source for the maintenance of rural roads, capacity building of technical personnel, program contractors and also recreation of working capacities based on labour force in the program framework are the most significant points that are mentioned in the draft of the National Rural Access Policy.

With contemplation of all that and overcoming on the requirements of the National Rural Access Program, a need for a solitary and unique road network master plan can be considered.



Community contracting through NRAP

Works on village to village roads is carried out by local communities who are assisted at all stages of the project cycle. The main goal of NRAP is the establishment of a quality rural road network that connects all villages of Afghanistan to the services and infrastructure of their districts and provinces. A critical secondary goal for the program is to provide employment to the most vulnerable rural poor, using a combination of local labour and community based contracts to the greatest extent possible. These contracts, known as Level 1 Contracts, are given to the communities where the work will take place. The local

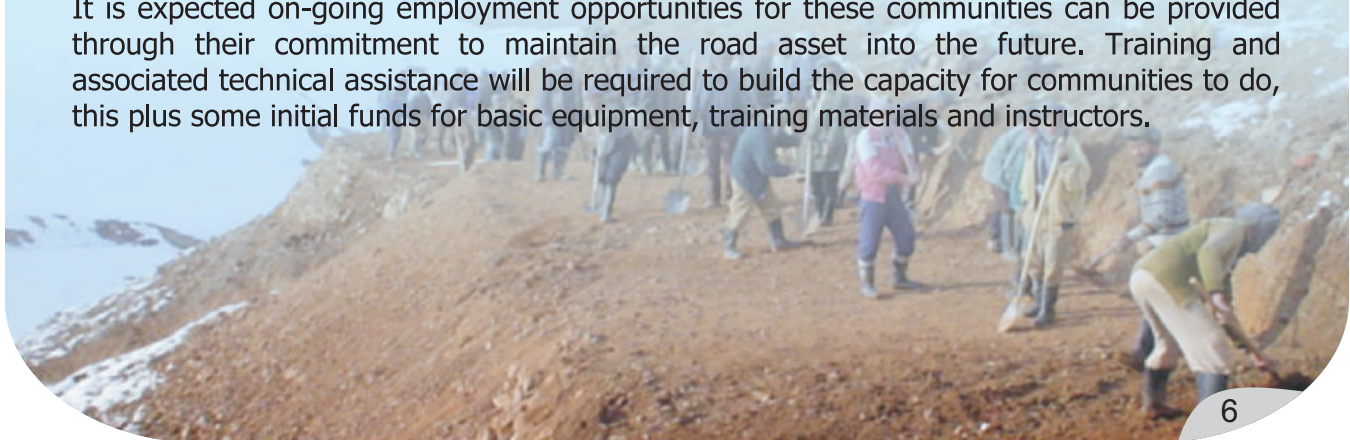
Community Development Councils or Shuras ensure that the poorest and most economically vulnerable members of the community are given jobs on the projects, from simple digging and filling work to stone shaping and gabion basket weaving. This not only ensures critical income from participation in the sub-projects, but also gives the community a sense of ownership in the work, a sense of communal responsibility for the maintenance of the work and a feeling of pride in the completed project.



Overall, in SY 1386, 773 community contracts have been let to a total value of over \$15.8m and community contracts generated 58,030 labour days for the most vulnerable rural poor, providing them and their families with a much needed income and skills that can be used in the future.

The various skills acquired including consultation and negotiation, contract preparation and oversighting, administration of the project, and various simple craft building skills, have wider application and contribute to improving the local governance and the physical development of these communities.

It is expected on-going employment opportunities for these communities can be provided through their commitment to maintain the road asset into the future. Training and associated technical assistance will be required to build the capacity for communities to do, this plus some initial funds for basic equipment, training materials and instructors.



Capacity building

Capacity building is a serious goal of NRAP. Since the start of the Program internal capacity has been built with Afghan nationals competent to provide all the technical services required including survey, design, contract documentation and project implementation including quality control. In survey, the Afghan staff has been trained to use modern equipment such as the 'Total Station' system. Staff has been trained in the use of field-based quality control kits and in Kabul the Program has built a fully functional testing laboratory which is used not just for quality assurance and quality control but also to train MoPW and MRRD staff and private contractors. To meet the future needs, men and women engineering students from the Kabul Polytechnic Institute, Al Birooni University at Kapisa, as well as from the Kabul University, have received training at the laboratory. In fact NRAP staff helped install equipment for the rehabilitation of the Engineering Faculty laboratory at the Kabul University. Region wise there has been workshops conducted by the PR & Communications Unit of NRAP. In these workshops related members of the regional offices, MRRD Provincial Directorates staff and MoPW Provincial Directorates staff have been trained in skills of report writing, writing of a human interest story and taking of quality pictures. In total 270 colleagues countrywide participated in this capacity building efforts. On the administrative side, national staff is now satisfactorily managing much of NRAP's contracting activities, where systems include a national on-line registration database. International staff from UNOPS is being supported by Afghan staff in the procurement and financial management areas.



Exit strategy

A key goal of the Government of Afghanistan has been to recover functions it was forced to outsource due to the disruptions caused through many years of conflict. The purpose of an exit strategy for NRAP was to enable MoPW and MRRD to systematically develop their systems and people to be able to fully deliver the services necessary to plan, survey, design and contract the building of rural roads, using labour-based methods provided by community and private contractors. The investment in capacity building totalled \$17.9m for consultant services, complemented by a further \$3.8m on allowances to civil service technical department staff, plus related office support. A key part of the capacity re-building strategy for MRRD and MoPW under NRAP was to provide technical assistance and experience for local staff through a three tier approach whereby international consultants trained national consultants who in turn trained civil service counterparts. At the same time, the necessary systems, procedures and technical standards were put in place using a collaborative approach. Through this process, considerable capacity building value has been added. This was confirmed by an independent World Bank assessment team in 1386 who found that sufficient capacity had been added so the institutional set up and new project of the Program (NERAP) required only the services of an implementing consultant rather than an implementing partner. Primary responsibility has now been handed to the ministries, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Exit Strategy in achieving its goals.



Reintegration and Alternative Livelihoods Project (RAL)

The Project for Reintegration and Alternative Livelihoods (RAL) is designed to play a significant role in helping both ex-combatants and the poor in poppy-growing areas begin the difficult process of reintegration into civilian life and a return to their rightful places in society.

Specifically the purpose of the RAL is:

- The generation of employment and work-based apprenticeship training opportunities through the rehabilitation of rural roads.
- The provision of appropriate and marketable skills to improve access to employment and increase the likelihood of sustained employment.
- The rehabilitation of at least 450 km of tertiary roads. These sub-projects, designed as work-based training modules, will be used for craft training, and the training of supervisors and technical overseers.

The intended beneficiaries of the RAL project are:

- Demobilized Ex-Officers (employment & apprenticeship training as construction supervisors and technicians)
- Demobilized Ex-soldiers (employment & apprenticeship in construction craft training)
- Rural poor in poppy-growing areas and other vulnerable persons (employment + apprenticeship training in rural building crafts)

The JSDF-funded Reintegration and Alternative Livelihoods (RAL) project (budget US\$ 19.6 million) includes a substantial training component of US\$ 4.6 million (excluding consultancy services, goods and incremental operating costs). Ex-combatants, ex-officers and the rural poor in poppy growing areas constituted the main target groups for RAL's training activities. ANBP/DDR provided RAL with the names of candidate trainees. In addition, 54 Engineering interns from a number of universities across Afghanistan have received practical training through RAL projects.



Also 3,195 trainees completed their training (19 in road construction management, 372 as road construction technicians, 1,037 as road construction supervisors, 1,767 in different craft skills). In total, the efforts of the participants resulted in nearly 350 KM of road rehabilitation and a promising future in contracting work for many graduates of the RAL project. These construction managers, supervisors, technicians and craft-skilled personnel add to the supply of skills required by NRAP and other road construction providers in Afghanistan.

By the end of 1386, RAL substantially completed its mandate and the project is being utilized to prepare training material and courses, and provide technical support, for a renewed focus on labour based approaches and methodologies in both NERAP and CNTF-LBRDP roads.

A recently completed tracer study showed that over 90% of graduates from the various training courses had obtained employment. A number had been hired to work in Dubai, with employers commenting that this was as a result of the quality of the RAL training which is able to meet international requirements.



Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (CNTF)

The Counter Narcotics Trust Fund funded 5 sub-projects for road and bridge rehabilitation, with a budget of \$5.29 million. The Bangi Bridge project is at over 90% completion, while the Andarab Road sub-project is ongoing. The Qades road sub-projects were cancelled due to a technical error and delay performance of the contractor.

In addition to these works, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics has committed \$6 million for NRAP in cash-for-work projects for Labour Based Rural Development Program (LBRDP) in the most severely drought affected areas of Sari-Pul, Baghlan, Takhar, Badakhshan and Kunar Provinces.



The National Emergency Rural access Project (NERAP)

The National Emergency Rural access Project (NERAP) aims to enhance human security and promote equitable economic growth by ensuring year round access to basic services and facilities in rural Afghanistan by promoting local productive capacity, through a private sector led development of physical rural access infrastructure and employment creation for the poor. In doing so NERAP seeks to rehabilitate, reconstruct and maintain essential rural access infrastructure using appropriate labour based approaches thereby creating short term employment opportunities for the rural poor, nation-wide.

The proposed project components are:

Component A

Improvement of secondary roads (US \$78.2 million including contingencies and taxes of which IDA will finance US\$53.2 million equivalent). This component implementing by MPW and, including rehabilitation and reconstruction of 1,075 km of secondary rural roads, emergency repair works to roads and bridges following natural disasters such as heavy snow, rocks falls, landslide and rocks blockage, heavy rains and flooding; activities to implement and monitor the updated Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF); and the services of an implementation consultant and financial contribution to incremental operating expenses required to run the project implementation unit of MPW.

Component B

Improvement of tertiary roads (US\$52.1 million equivalent including contingencies and taxes). This component implementing by MRRD and rehabilitation and reconstruction of 925 km of tertiary rural roads rural roads; emergency repair works to roads and bridges following natural disasters such as heavy snow, rocks falls, landslide and rocks blockage, heavy rains and flooding; routine maintenance of the previously rehabilitated rural roads; activities to implement and monitor the updated Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Social Inclusion activities; and the services of an implementation consultant and financial contribution to incremental operating expenses required to run the project implementation unit of MRRD.

Component C. Institutional strengthening, capacity building and project implementation assistance (US\$6.7 million equivalent including contingencies and taxes) including the setting up of a rural roads management system (mostly consisting in the formulation of a rural access strategy and its implementation and the setting up and implementation of maintenance mechanism, maintenance programming for the short and medium term). In addition and in conformity with the road management strategy, this includes also capacity building activities for staff who will be tasked to manage the rural road sector and project management, monitoring and evaluation activities.

The Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)

The Environmental and Social Management Framework has been designed to ensure the protection of the environment and communities where rehabilitation or reconstruction works are taking place. The process starts during the planning and design of the sub-projects in order to identify areas of risk prior to the start of the sub-project. Consultations are held with impacted communities through meetings led by Social Inclusion Officers. In addition to looking at possible environmental degradation, the ESMF addresses issues relating to land acquisition, asset loss and resettlement. Finally, the practice also ensures compliance with National Environmental Protection Agency rules and regulations as well as World Bank environmental safeguards.

During 1386, two World Bank funded training workshops were held for key NRAP staff on the implementation of ESMF practices in our sub-project design.



Maintenance

In 2006, a review of the National Rural Access Program (NRAP) was conducted by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and relevant programme managers. Up to the point of the review, NRAP had rehabilitated 642.26 KM of rural roads and constructed and/or rehabilitated 28,071.2 RM of cross-drainage structures, which covered 4318 villages throughout Afghanistan. The infrastructure investments totalled \$34,156,031.81 and served to improve the quality of life, economic possibilities and connectivity of many isolated rural areas of the country.

Following this program assessment, a pilot maintenance project was developed and deployed in order to conserve this expansive and costly investment. The pilot project was divided into eight contracts which covered three types of maintenance – periodic, routine and emergency. The specific goals of the pilot project were:

1. To find the optimal economic approaches to conserve and maintain the newly rehabilitated/constructed rural infrastructure investments;
2. To identify and assess options for a Rural Road Maintenance Strategy.

In total, 60.35 KM of roads were targeted in four regions of the country (Badakshan, Kunduz, Kabul, Kapisa and Laghman), with each area selected representing a different type of implementation challenge in order to more accurately gauge the results under 'real world' conditions. The works carried out were done using Labour Based Appropriate Technology (LBAT), which emphasizes manual, rather than mechanized labour and provides direct financial benefits to the members of the communities participating in the projects.

This pilot project ended in the first quarter of 1386 and the assessment of the project, both from the participating communities and from reports by Social Inclusion Officer, was positive. Communities specifically mentioned that the maintenance allowed them greater access to markets and services, particularly in winter, as well as the sense of pride and accomplishment in maintaining such a vital link in their lives to the outside world.



At a time when negative news about Afghanistan is bombarding the public opinion, NRAP feels it is important to share this success story with enlightened seekers of positive information about this war-ravaged country, Afghanistan, where bridges and roads are connecting people and helping realize their dreams.

Building of this road will open the gate of our courtyard!

Safid Ghow Ulya is one of the remote areas in Waras district of Bamyan with around 10,000 populations. Most villagers of this area especially women and children didn't see and even never used the vehicle due to no road there. To reach district centre the community has to walk around seven hours (its 37km far from district centre).

Mola Hayatullah from Safid Ghow Ulya is a shopkeeper in Waras center. He told once: *"our locality is as a courtyard without gat. So we are deprived from access to facilities of NGO's. Also we have many problems inside our valley. Building of a road to Safid Ghow will open the gate of our courtyard for interested aid organization and NGO's and we will be able to access district center."*

Project specification

Name: Safid Gowl Ulya road (4 km)

Location: Dahane Chakagak to Bozmordah village, Waras district, Bamyan province

Beneficiaries: 10,000 persons



Minorities benefiting from road

Sabz Dasht-Khwahan a 9.2 km long road, which crosses Dashti Eish, where a huge number of Koochis are taking animals for their pastures. Tordi Bai one of the senior Kochis was saying to the NRAP team: *"I had pasture at Dashti Eish for the last 40 years, but it was the first year that the district authorities have visited us for our security and pastures situation. Before the road construction -whenever there was a problem- although the authorities were informed but no one was ready to walk. Luckily now every one can come to secure us. More over due to lack of road we were unable to bring our families up here or take back our animal liquidation income walking 15 days. I hope that from now on we will be able to do this and even transport our animals."*

Project specification

Name: Sabz Dasht road (9.2 km)

Location: Khwahan district, Badakhshan province

Beneficiaries: 750 families & thousands of Kochies who travel for pasture purposes



New business selling stones for construction materials

One of the immediate advantages of Kadula road project was that through working on the project, participants identified a new economic activity in the area. The local terrain revealed that the rocks and stone in the area were of good quality and a potential source for construction materials. Participating in the NRAP project effectively provided them with the knowledge of how to remove the soil surrounding these resources with little additional disruption of the area.

Since the completion of this road project many community members have begun excavating rocks and stone near to the road for sale in the market and source of non-farm income for local residents. To do so community members who have taken up these activities have identified small sections for themselves so as to avoid conflict over competing over access to these resources. Meanwhile others in the area, particularly those with trucks and tractors have been able to create further employment opportunities through the provision of transport services of these excavated materials to the market.

The community members highlighted that now access and travel time to health services is significantly reduced. They said that it was easier to travel to the clinic by vehicle making it easier to seek medical assistance outside the village.

Grapes are one of the main agricultural products grown in the area. Since the completion of the road project local farmers have had improved access to the market which made it easier to sell more grapes at a very good price. In addition to the economic benefits the local residents pointed out that the road has contributed to increasing interaction between communities in the area and generally improving community relations.

Name: Kadula road (4.2 km)

Location: Kadula to Guldara Bazar, Guldara district, Kabul province

Beneficiaries: 6,400 persons



Mission Possible

Engineer Mashooq Patyar is a PTA (Provincial Technical Advisor) in Nangahar and Engineer Abdul Ghafar is a PTA in Kunar, Eastern region. The engineers stated that the main problems related to the work were tribal problems and land related issues.



In the case of tribal issues, the engineers said that they organized gatherings in the local mosques to discuss the importance of the roads being built for the well being of the community and their future. In the road construction problems related to land issues, they involved the people or communities who offer their land for the road construction in order to discuss the issues and to convince the non-supporters of the importance of the road. They were very happy to convey that they even had cases where people compensated the affected persons or sold them another piece of land in order to use their land for the road.

Having to deal with serious security conditions the engineers have to be extremely tactful in solving major issues. In one incident while they were busy surveying the Do-ab to Mandool road a couple of gunmen came and ordered them to survey another road. They spent hours convincing these gunmen why they were

constructing the road that had been chosen by the program. In spite of the fact that two people were killed, they somehow were able to successfully complete the project.

Engineer Ghafar confides that while he was working on the project site in Waigal, Nuristan, the war started between the coalition forces and the opposition. The project's car was burned and totally destroyed. Due to horrible security circumstances and related concerns, his parents prohibited him to visit the site; however, believing that his work was a noble mission, he went ahead and worked on the site without telling his parents.

Engineer Patyar says that they both felt very satisfied to see people and communities who are happy with the constructed roads which contributed to their economic and social benefits. Their final comment was that their work gives them a lot of satisfaction and happiness and they felt that it was very important to give people acknowledgment for their contribution to the success of the program.

They said they definitely see their work as a mission which was made possible by their belief in the future of Afghanistan and its people.

Reconstruction under insecure circumstances requires courage!

When we talk about the insecurity and slow progress of reconstruction in Afghanistan, we immediately think of the southern provinces. The reconstruction progress is not fully stopped in these provinces; however, we need to recognize the efforts of the inhabitants of this area who believe that although reconstruction and security are related to each other, it is not necessary to wait for the one to achieve the other. Engineer Nazar Mohammed works as a Senior Regional Engineer for NRAP in the southern provinces including Uruzgan, Kandahar, Zabul, Helmand and Nimroz. He is in charge of the RAL (Reintegration and Alternative Livelihood) Project in these provinces. The main purpose of RAL is to provide training and job opportunities on rural roads for the ex-combatants and poor people in the poppy growing areas. When Engineer Nazar Mohammed was asked to talk about his work and to discuss job related problems, he replied with a broad smile on his face in a kind manner "No jobs are without any problems, but our main problem besides insecurity is the presence of armed groups and thieves in the area. We have established a triangle of cooperation consisting of local people, contractors and authorities of the NRAP program. In this way, if a problem arises, we take joint action." In answer to the question if he goes every day without fear to his work, he replied "Fear is a human feeling; sometimes it dominates our spirit, but, as a Moslem, I believe that I have to trust in God and don't feel any fear. If we, as Afghans, don't work today, who will construct this country? Under the current situation, work requires courage." While he is talking about the projects in very insecure districts like Choorā, Nad Ali, Punjwahi and other areas, he says the people want roads and jobs. With job creation, there is hope for the future and with access they can easily transport their agricultural and husbandry products to commercial and local markets. Also, medical facilities are easily accessible for sick family members and friends. "I remember very clearly that during the construction of the Gorgan Road in the district of Dand, Kandahar Province, the people sacrificed their own land for the sake of this road to be public domain", Engineer Nazar commented. When asked if he had happy memories of his work, he smiled and said "it is very enjoyable for me when I see that the ex-combatants who joined the process of disarmament have learned a lot with keen interest in the road building process and have built up their capacity and skills. Even after the training sessions and the completion of the road project, they continue to visit me with a very friendly and appreciative attitude." Engineer Nazar optimistically refers to the future of the RAL project, stating "It is unbelievable that the people who had once carried a weapon on their shoulders and were in a position to decide about their destiny as well as the destiny of other people had suddenly embraced this opportunity very seriously with a lot of interest in the RAL project. I want to ask the authorities of NRAP and other governmental and NGO organizations to offer all possible efforts to make alternative livelihoods possible for the ex-combatants and the poor people in the poppy growing areas. I am sure that these efforts and investments will not be lost and will have a lot of success for the future of Afghanistan."



Yes, there is life after 24 years in the military

"I have no intention of going back to the military, even as my friends call me. I have a new life now." So say former Lt. Col. Abdul Rahman, now one of five full time construction supervisor of the International Rescue Committee in Logar province. In the four months with IRC, he has supervised the construction of 20 culverts, 12.50 km of village roads and 292 m of retaining wall. He has supervised 100 workers during the construction.

"I learned these skills during the ten months in the RAL package. I chose this package even though I have no experience in road construction. The training was difficult but I always like construction even as a small boy. I was so happy when I was hired by IRC." The recruitment process of IRC has two steps, the examination and the interview. There were twenty (20) candidates who applied for only five positions. According to IRC Eng. Jawed, the IRC Project Manager, Abdul Rahman landed second place given the results of the written test and the interview. Also, his performance for the last four months had been exemplary that IRC hired Abdul Rahman on a full time basis.

"The Afghan people in the village are very happy about the construction we are doing. I am glad that I am able to make them happy. I am happy too. This is the life I wish to have. I am not going back to the military."

The former officer like Abdul Rahman is not alone. There are several former officers who have made the transition to civilian life after spending sometime in the NRAP RAL package as road construction supervisors.



Firefighters reaching areas that could not be reached before

While going to Faryab province for a mission the regional office staff observed that a harvest was being born for any unknown reasons along the road from Karamqul to Yusuf-Meerzaie village, Faryab province. It's a SBST road constructed by NRAP. The fire fighters including ISAF forces were there to fight the fire. Abdul Wodod, a local farmer told the following story: *"The construction of this road has cost us a lot of benefits as we can reach to health clinics for curing our sicknesses soon, we can carry our harvests and products on time to the markets, our children can easily go to school using bicycles, in case of any unexpected occurrence of any events the governmental and nongovernmental organizations can reach here in short time and of all important we are witness of one of the benefits this road brought us. The fire fighters arrived on time and fought the fire. These were all the things that we were not able to reach before the road was constructed."*

Project specification

Name: Qaramqul Road (4 km)

Location: Qaramqul to Yusufmeerzaie village, Qaramqul district, Faryab province

Beneficiaries: 7,000 persons



Bridge over trouble water

Dehrawat Bridge is one of the big RCC Bridges in the Southern Region. This bridge consists of 10 spans each span having the length of 15.60m and approach slabs. The total length of the bridge is 156m. It is located over Tirinkot-Urozgan River.

This bridge was one of the top priorities of the local people which was started in year 2000 and progressed up to its pier cap top level during the period of the Taliban government. After collapse of Taliban's government NRAP took over the project and awarded the contract.

This bridge connects Urozgan province with Daikondi province through Charchinoo and Kejran districts. One third of the total population of the Dehrawood district and half of residents of the Chaarchino district and one third of the residents of the Kijran district are the direct beneficiaries of the project. The residents of Dehrawat were NRAP grateful because regardless of the assumed risks this essential bridge was constructed.

Project specification

Name: Dehrawat Bridge (156 m)

Location: Dehrawat district, Uruzgan province

Beneficiaries: Several districts population



"We maintain our road!"

Prior to the completion of the Naween road project, a delegation from the World Bank visited the project and conducted interviews with the community emphasizing the community's responsibility for the project and highlighting the benefits of the road for everyone in the area. The community members enthusiastically expressed their gratitude to program for building the new road stating "travel time has been reduced from one hour to 15 minutes and travel costs from Afs 18 to Afs 10". Also the community members expressed their own initiative for the maintenance of the road through the local Shura. They decided to appoint 2 local villagers, whose salaries would come from the revenue received by charging tolls for the vehicles using the road.

Twenty villages are directly connected to the road. There were 30 ex-combatants trained and involved as supervisor and skill craft workers in the project. Through this project there were 8190 labour days generated.

Project specification

Name: Naween road (12.8 km)

Location: Enjil district, Herat province

Beneficiaries: 7,800 persons



Vulnerable rural women in construction of rural roads

I am very happy to get wage of my work. Please give my wages directly to me and not my masculine family members, folk elder or the local commander, states Gulnar a widow women residing in one of remote villages of Samangan province employed to work in gabion cage fabrication used in retaining wall of road of their village.

Gulnar, a widow woman is very happy to have been made income provider for the first time and self-sufficient from economical point of view through road reconstruction, renovation and maintenance based on labour use which creates employment opportunities for poor class of people in community especially rural areas are from among objectives of National Rural Access Program. This it self is a step towards poverty eradication and creation of job opportunities for rural vulnerable peoples.

Regarding the matter, Eng. Mary Kamal who functions in National Rural Access Program to include women, states as follow: "In the past years six gabion fabrication projects were initiated through NRAP in districts of Feroznakhshir, Khuram and Sarbagh of Samangan province in which 170 poor and widow women were granted employments."

Concerning women's problems in road projects, Eng. Mary Kamal comments: Work in Rural Access projects is simple for women if their men do not abandon them and expressed to correctly. Likewise it is important to describe the objective of the project clearly so that everyone will understand. She pointed out as well that obstacle created by men on the way of women's working, is that women should not work outside of their houses and that female engineer or female worker (not male) should be with them. Under this condition, men and families are consent that women participate in road building projects and we are trying to materialize this condition. According to Eng. Mary Kamal possibility of women's participation in such projects mainly includes gabion fabrication, pipe production used in culverts and crushing of stone used in gravel wearing course of roads.



Also in the Western region a gabion project for widows, women with disabled husbands and other vulnerable rural women was conducted. During a two year period, 6 projects were conducted in Herat and Badghis Provinces producing 5,400 gabion baskets. On average the women produced one gabion basket in two days for which they earned \$5/day, stated the NRAP Engineer in charge of the Herat projects, Engineer Alia Shams.

For each contract 40 women were needed to produce the number of gabions planned. However, due to severe poverty in the area, the NRAP field team decided to recruit three times the number of women needed to create employment prospects for as many women as possible.

Eng. Alia Shams says: Because of the income and the women being allowed to work in their own environment, this project was very successful in meeting the basic needs of the families.

Laila a trainer gabion waver, who was the Head of the Women's Council said: I personally trained 100 women in my village, Jaghartan, and 120 women in the Shama'an village. When the wires arrived in the village, it was a big event and the women were shouting with cries of happiness as they knew it would improve the lives of their families."

Gol Seeb, said she was living in one room in a friend's house and was supporting her family of 7 people. Another lady, Zainab, said she was supporting her family of 8 because her husband was very old and she had a disabled son. She said that they all do the entire job from start to finish by themselves and the wages are given directly to them.

In general the women said that they were very happy and grateful to the NRAP Program as when they worked with the projects they were always given the proper working tools that included pliers and work gloves to protect their hands from the extremely rough work they were doing.

Project specification

Name: Gabion weaving project

Location: Samangan, Herat & Badghis provinces

Beneficiaries: Rural poor women and widows



NRAP sub-project leads to peace

Waigal and Aranch are two communities in a remote part of Nuristan province. There are family ties between the two communities and at one time relations were good. However, about ten years ago a conflict broke out over access to water resources; a rivalry that continued until last year when NRAP successfully constructed a road linking the two communities to the district centre of Want.

Because of this conflict, reaching an agreement between the two communities to permit the construction of the road was no easy feat. Nevertheless the NRAP Eastern Region team worked diligently to first identify the root cause of the conflict and find a suitable solution.

The NRAP team discovered that Waigal was withholding access to water from Aranch in retaliation for the killing of several Waigal residents. Likewise, Aranch tried to stop construction of the road to prevent Waigal residents from passing through their village and accessing the district centre. On several trips to the project site, NRAP staff was threatened if they tried to proceed with construction.

Finally, with the help of the Governor the NRAP team was able to reach an agreement with the two communities and successfully constructed the road connecting the two villages to the main road and onward to the district centre.

Most significantly, the project was implemented by the communities themselves through four community-based contracts. Both communities now enjoy unimpeded access to the road and water for their homes and crops, and residents have expressed their gratitude to the NRAP Eastern Region team for helping to reconcile the conflict and bring the communities closer together, acknowledging the advantage of sharing resources in favor of isolation and conflict.

Project specification

Name: Want road (4.2 km)

Location: Waygal district, Nuristan province

Beneficiaries: 9,000 persons



2000 Year old Malan Bridge rehabilitated

One of the oldest and most historical bridges of Afghanistan located in Gozara District of Herat Province has been rehabilitated successfully by NRAP.

The Malan Bridge is just 5 km from the city of Herat. It was constructed over the Harirood River in an arc form around 2000 years ago. However, due to floods and war, the bridge had been damaged several times.

Two benevolent sisters, Bibi Noor and Bibi Hoor rehabilitated the bridge centuries ago with their own money and it was last rehabilitated in 1994 by DACAR.

In order to save this cultural heritage for future generations, NRAP commenced to rehabilitate the bridge in a sustainable manner and completed successfully this 240m long and 8m wide bridge. This serves a dual purpose; namely, facilitation of traffic and conservation of an historical national heritage.

Project specification

Name: Malan Bridge (240 m)

Location: Gozara district, Herat province

Beneficiaries: Population of Gozara district and neighbouring districts



“We are happy with this road”

The Koolak to Chatla road, which is located in the district Alingar of Laghman province, was built in April last year. During a social audit the people were happy with it and requested if possible to widen the road.

The community members were very positive about the road because it:

- Improved transport and access to the main market in Laghman (75km away)
- An observed increase in the demand/market for locally produced vegetable products (onion, potato, tomato)
- The travel time between Alingar (district center) and Chatla (end of road alignment) was significantly reduced, from approximately one day to 2 hours round trip
- Easier access to medical service facility in district/province center; at a lower cost (transport) and reduced transport time.

Since the road improvements women have been more free to travel by car to weddings or Mela (once a week bazaar/market day), which was not possible before for safety reasons and long travel time. Now, most young girls don't miss any Mela or weddings. Before the NRAP project some women had never even seen a car. Now it's fashionable for the women to know the names of different cars like *corolla*, *pick up*, *jeep* etc.

This is a significant improvement in the quality of life for the residents of this area. Now young men and women from the area can go to Mela to see their relatives, share the information (gossip), shop, sell their agriculture and handicraft products etc. Prior to the construction of the road, Mela was unattainable.

The implementation of this project has also contributed to improving inter and intra community relations in the area. In order to safeguard this new, peaceful environment, the elders of the related villages have expressed their commitment to maintaining good relations and the safety of the communities. Previously there had been some conflicts between the two communities which led to the displacement of families. Now however, they have committed to work together to resolve common problems such as constructing irrigation systems to avoid drought and to do their utmost to prevent future conflict.

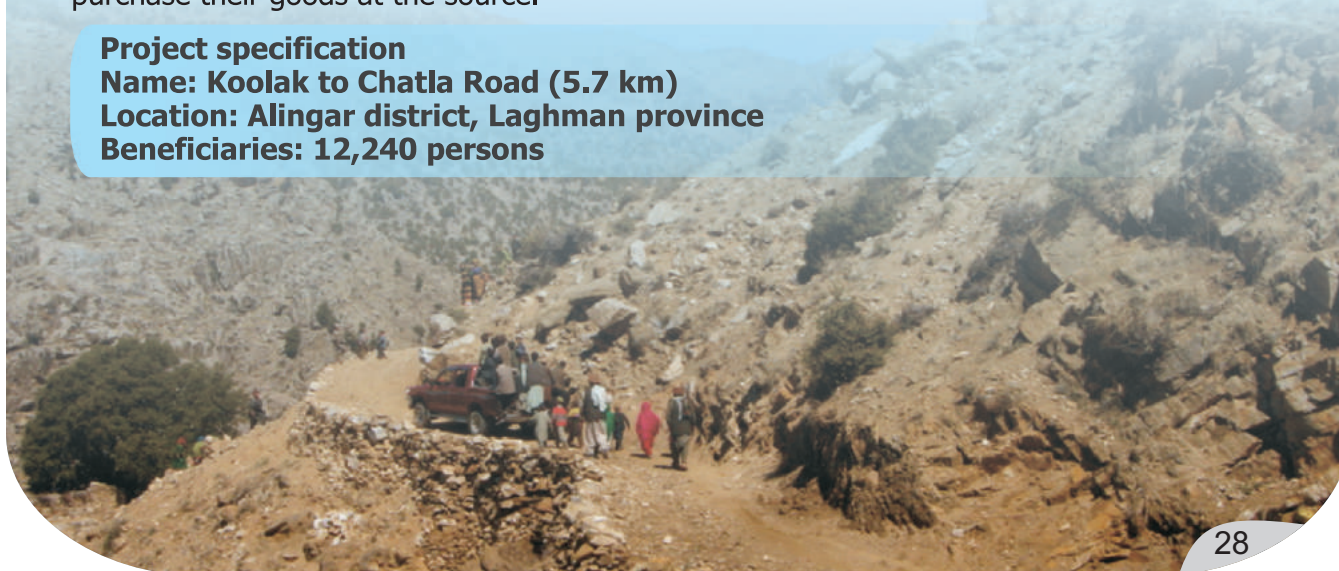
The increase in the market rates for local agricultural products has also led to an increase in the status of local farmers. Previously farmers would have to take their products to the Kala Bazaar (up 15km) and seek out vendors. Now businessmen travel to the farmers to purchase their goods at the source.

Project specification

Name: Koolak to Chatla Road (5.7 km)

Location: Alingar district, Laghman province

Beneficiaries: 12,240 persons



Bailey bridge benefits Badghis province

NRAP conducted the construction of a 40m bailey bridge over Murghab River and a 6 km approach road to the bridge in Tagab Alam to solve the transportation problems of the community. The priority of this project has been identified by the community and the provincial government.

Tagab Alam is one of the districts of Badghis Province, located 128 km away from the centre of the province of Qala-e Nau city with a population of 13,000 families. The Murghab River, which is one of the famous rivers of Afghanistan, crosses this district and has water year-round. The community has not had any access to cross the river and during winter and spring they traveled 100 km and passed by the river at Bala Murghab.

Based on the quotes of Eng. Faqir Mohammed, the regional Engineer the community will benefit physically and economically by having access to the centre of the province, local markets, clinic and school and light and heavy vehicles will have the capacity to use the road and the bridge. He added: *"Just 3 days before the completion of the bridge a 13 years old boy was taken by river water. During the inauguration of the bridge his mother was crying: 'If the bridge was inaugurated 3 days earlier the life of my son was saved. Now I hope that this bridge will save a lot of other lives.'"*

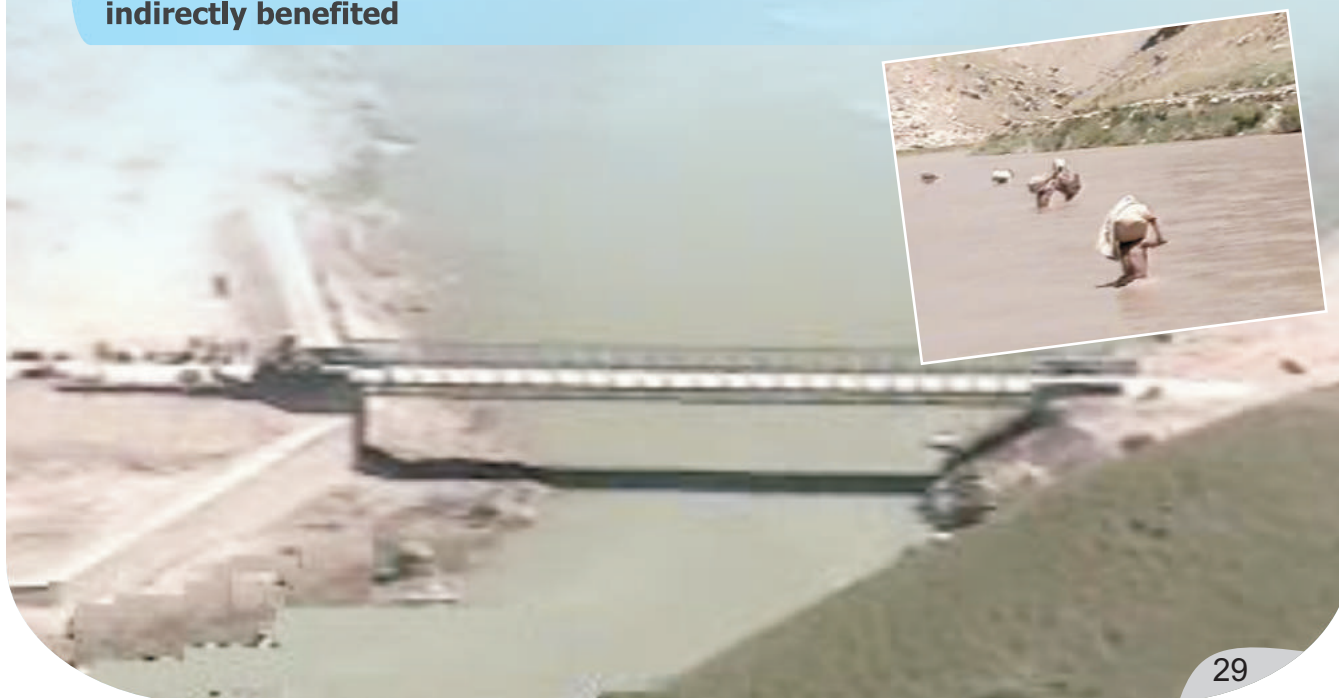
Eng. Faqir Mohammed stated: *"During the survey the local poppy farmers wanted to sabotage the work and were intended to kill the related Engineers, who survived in a magic way. But during the inauguration of the bridge the people were so happy that they danced 'atan', the traditional dance and decorated the Engineers with flowers."*

Project specification

Name: Bailey bridge (40 m)

Location: Tagabe Alam district, Badghis province

Beneficiaries: District population will directly and Provincial population will be indirectly benefited



Two Years & 4,000 Tests

The MoPW Laboratory is located in Qasaba area of Kabul city. This laboratory implemented by NRAP does technical testing for road projects, insures quality control and provides training. In two years, 4,000 tests have been successfully administered at this state-of-the-art laboratory implemented by UNOPS. These tests included soil, concrete, bitumen, asphalt, gravel and bricks. Testing samples come in from all the provinces.

The staff includes the Project Manager and 8 Afghan employees who have received training from international engineers.

The laboratory has conducted and provided services to NRAP, ministries and NGOs and the management hopes to extend the MoPW laboratory to the provinces and elaborate on capacity building for the future of the country.

Training of students of several Afghanistan's Universities is another important activity of this laboratory. In one of the rooms where eleven students were present from Al-Birooni University of Kapisa such training was ongoing. The majority of the students were Afghan, including 2 women, and one student who was from the University of Seljuki in Turkey. In the past years, training has been provided for hundreds of Engineers from MoPW, MRRD, USAID and the students of University of Kabul Engineering Faculty, Polytechnic University and Al-Birooni University in Kapisa. Also, the staff of MoPW Laboratory helped to install the equipment for the rehabilitation of the Engineering Faculty laboratory at Kabul University.



Zhisar-Meloy Kando road provides access to main public services

The agricultural population of Nazian District, numbering approximately 140,000 people has a new lease on life with the successful completion of the construction of Zhisar-Meloy Kando Road in Nangarhar Province.

Many of the young people of this community had resorted to cultivating poppy or moving to Pakistan due to the lack of employment available. Prior to the construction of this road the people had to commute by using the dry river bed which was dangerous and resulted in the death of some people and animals.

Construction of the road last for fifteen months employing vulnerable groups of the local community numbering 40 people on a daily basis. The economical significance of this road enabled access to the natural mines of precious stones and marble, as well as access to valleys suitable for honey harvest. These agricultural products and mining products are now easily transported to markets for selling and consumption.

Prior to the construction of this road, there were no schools or health centers available in these villages. After the road was constructed, the authorities of the Ministries of Education and Public Health made possible the foundation of a school and a clinic in this valley which has a significant change in the life of the people.

The construction of this road is of strategic importance because this is a border town with Pakistan that previously had sensitive tribal issues which created security problems for the people and the government. In addition to resolving transportation problems of the residents, this road has expanded government sovereignty and the assurance of security and order in the region.

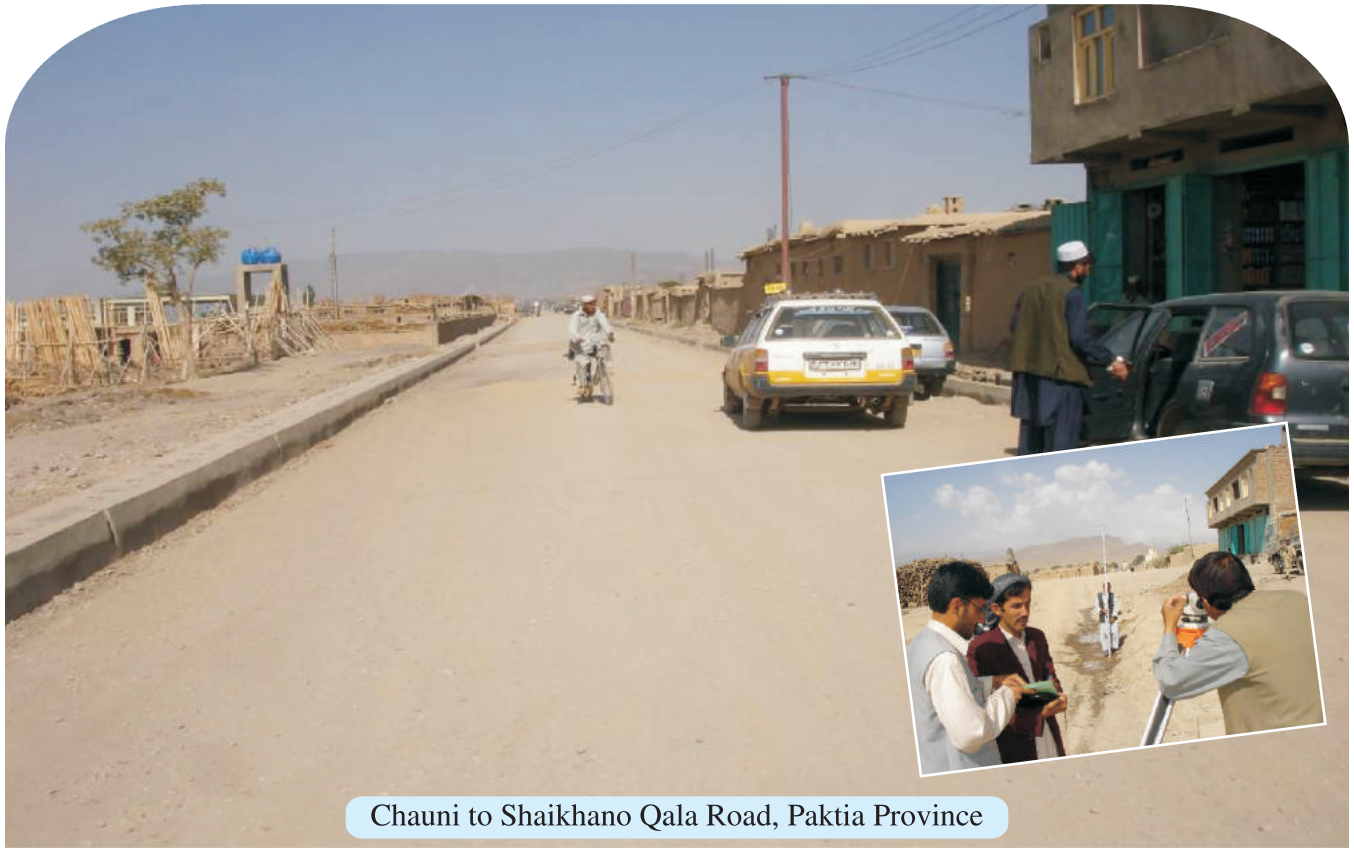
Project specification

Name: Zhisar-Meloy Kando road (12 km)

Location: Nazian district, Nangarhar province

Beneficiaries: 140,000 persons





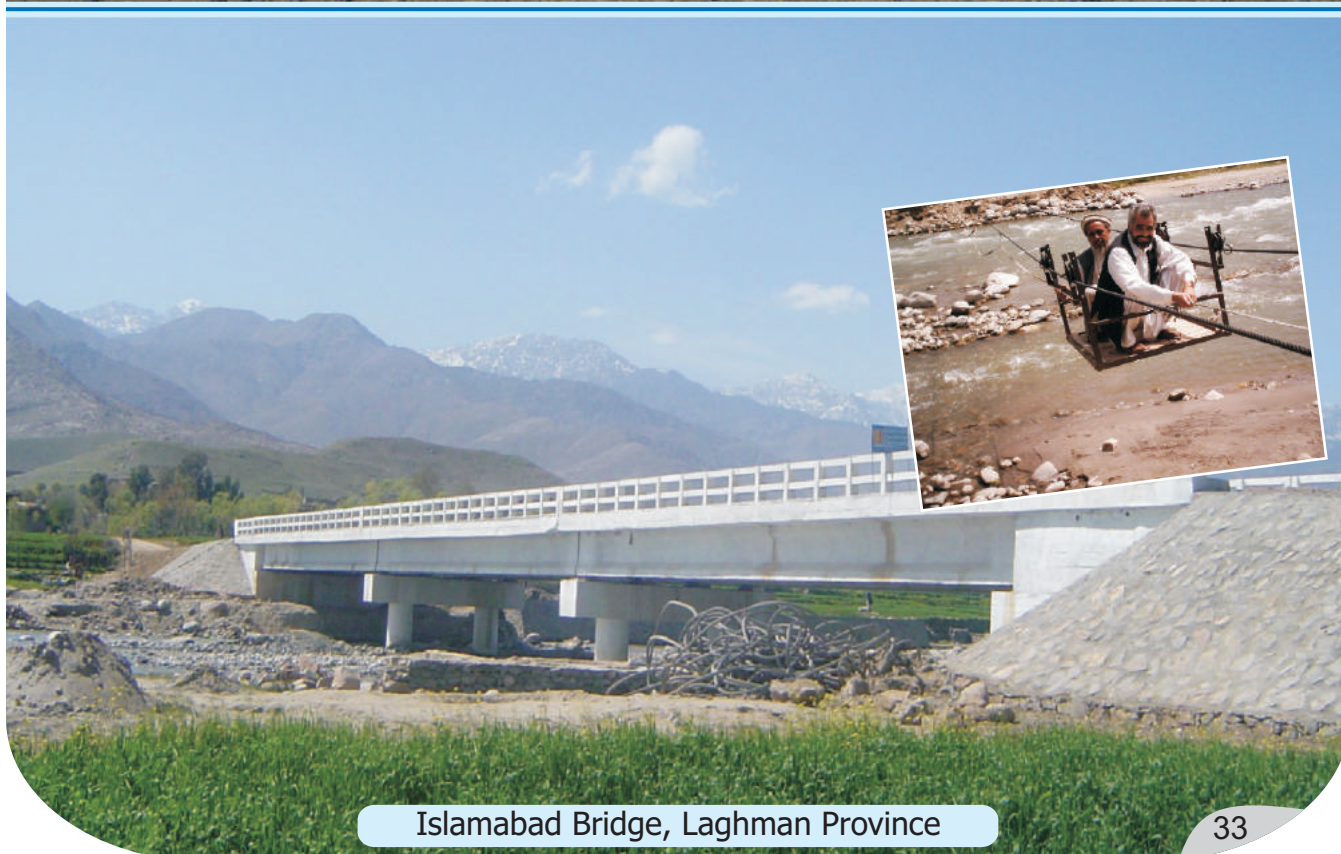
Chauni to Shaikhano Qala Road, Paktia Province



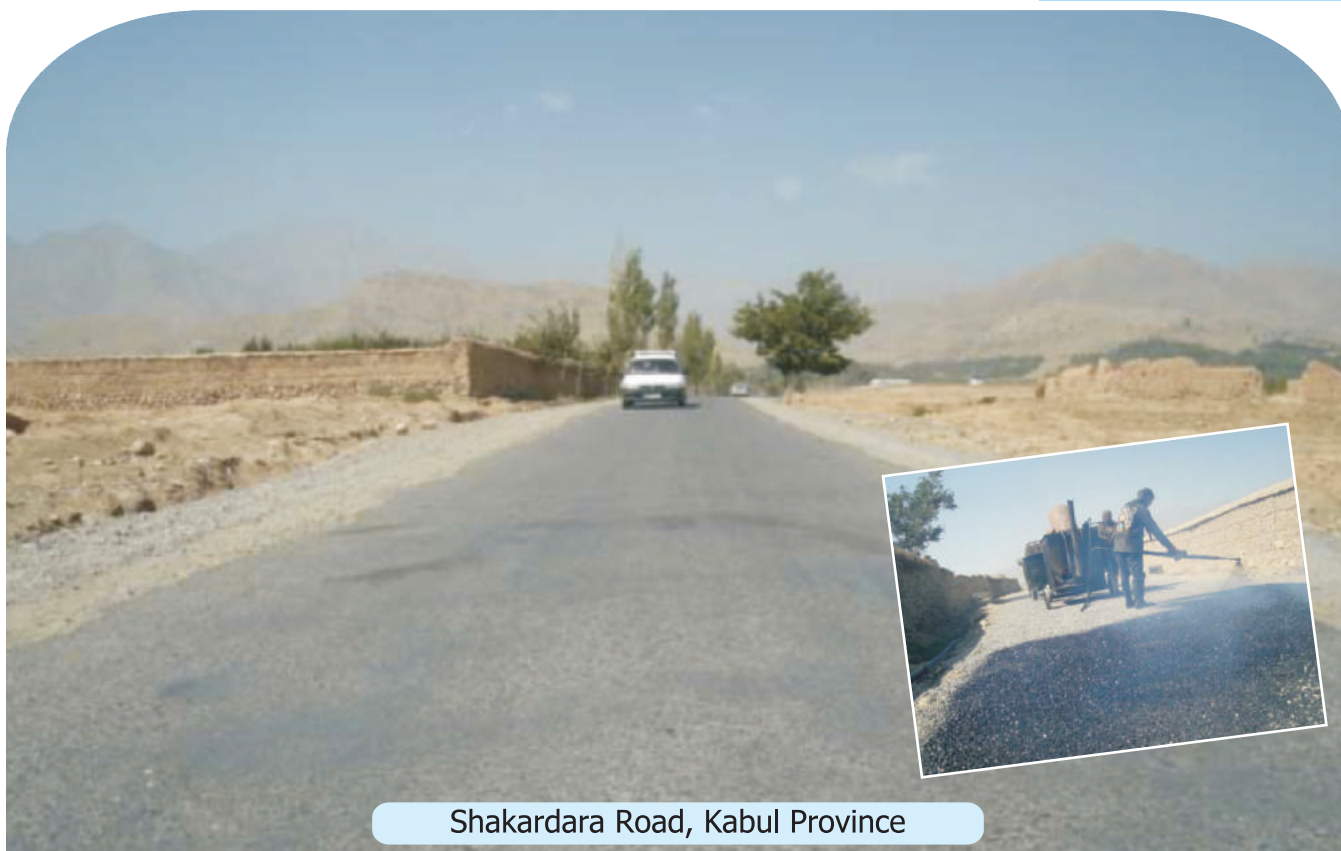
Dar-e Nau Bridge, Badakhshan Province

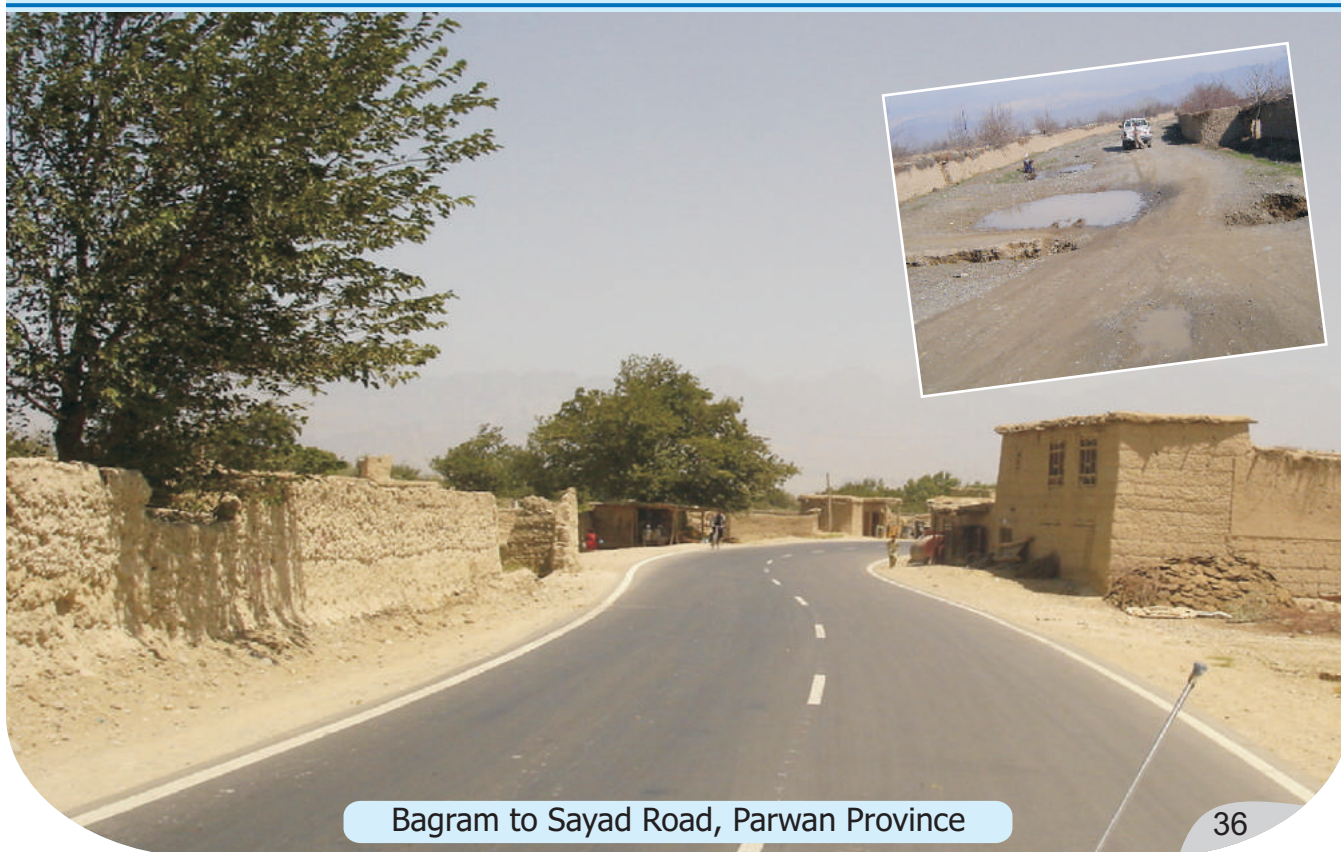


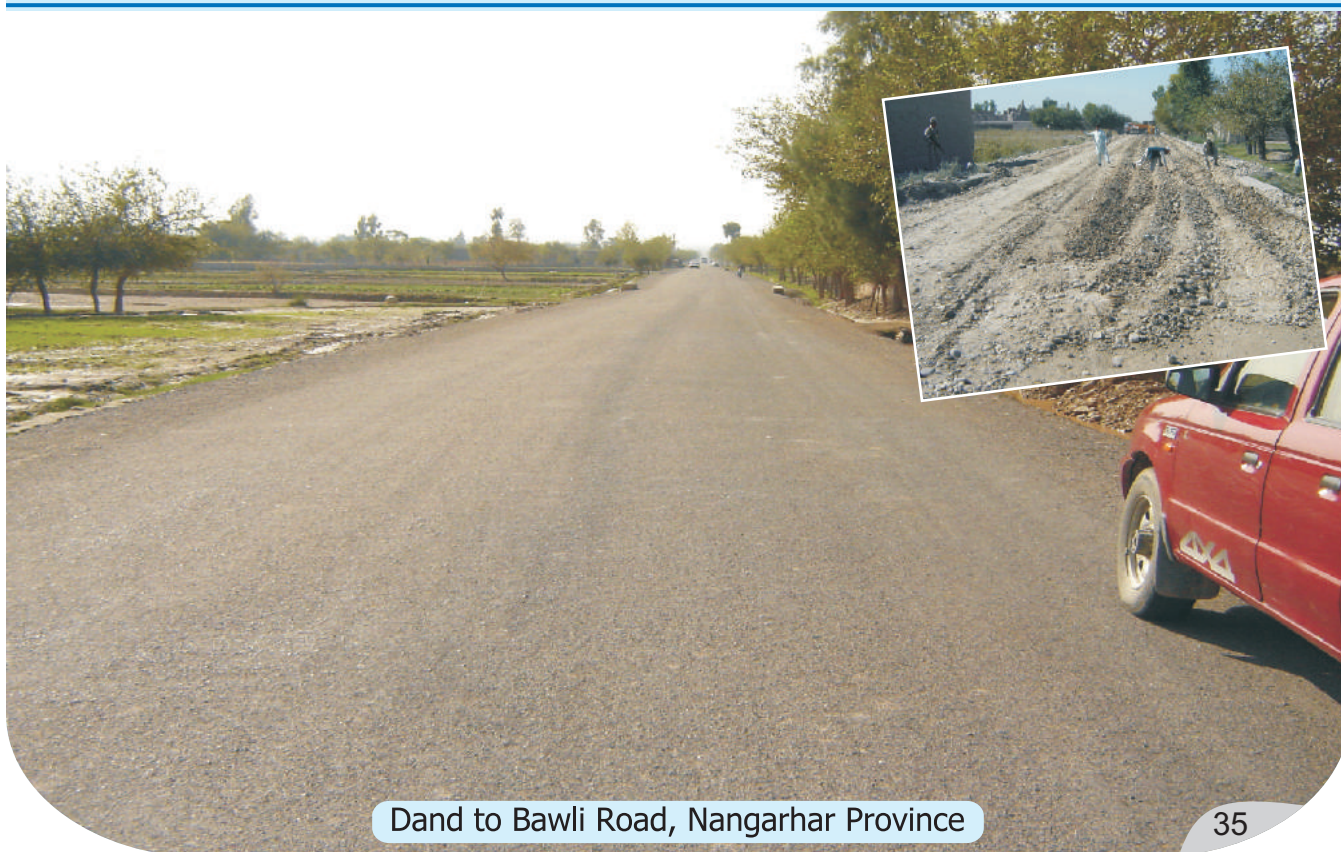
Charkh to Kharwar Road, Logar Province

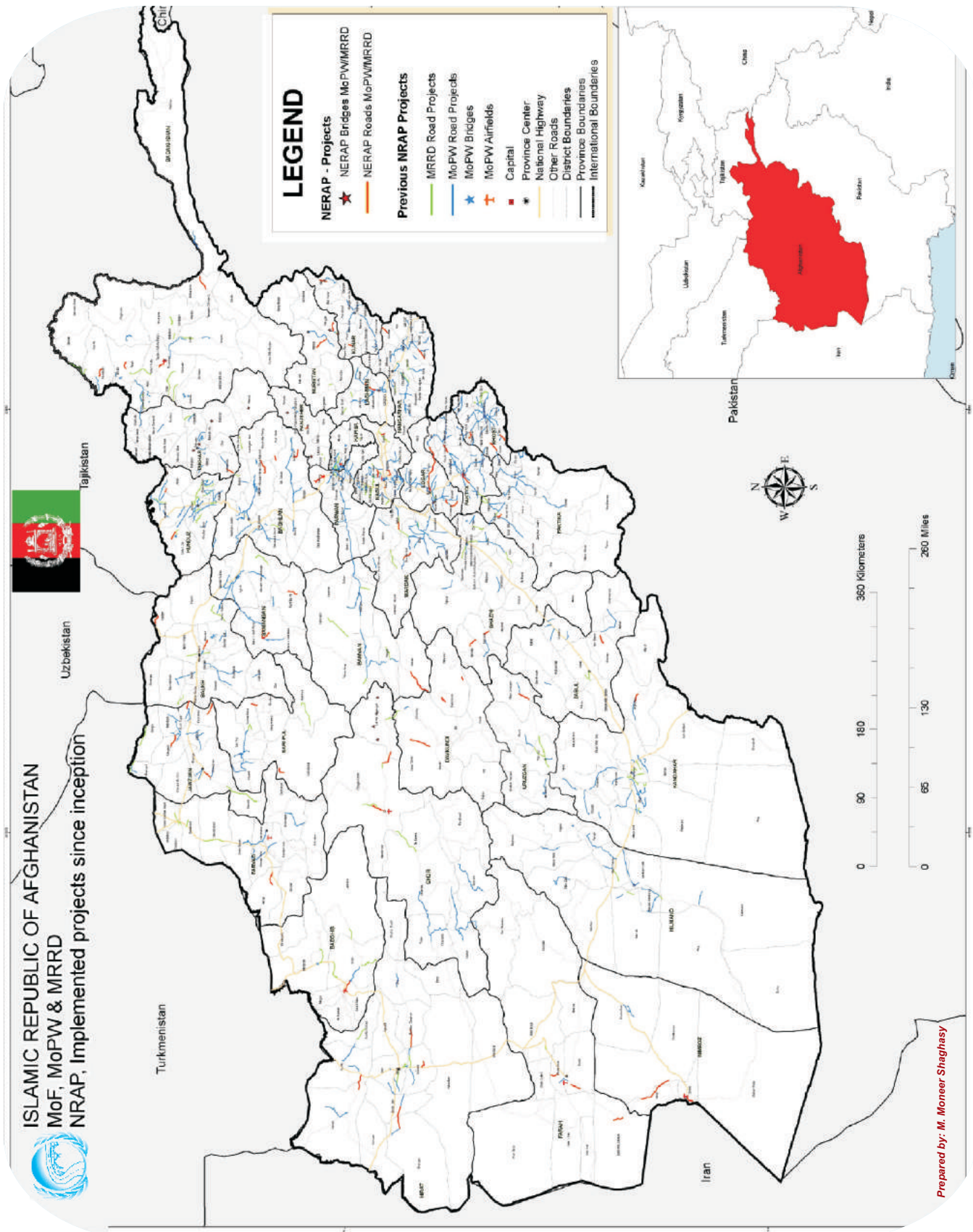


Islamabad Bridge, Laghman Province











This annual report is a publication of NRAP NCU

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Pictures: NRAP Photo Archive
Graphics: NRAP MIS
Print: Nebraska Education Press Kabul

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