

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



Independent Administration Reform and Civil Service Commission

General Directorate of Program Design and Management

Implementation Completion Report

Afghan Expatriate Program (AEP)

and

Lateral Entry Program (LEP)

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Compiled and prepared by: Program Department

Background and Context

Ravaged by more than two decades of successive wars, civil, ethnic and political conflicts and the concomitant collapse of the public sector, the Afghan government and international community were faced with the fundamental challenge of the reconstruction and redevelopment of the country's infrastructure. The restoration of a central administrative apparatus was deemed crucial in order both to prevent Afghanistan from sliding back to renewed strife and to provide basic social and political stability for long term development.

In 2002, a proposal was approved by leading international organizations and donor countries for the establishment of an Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF). Managed by the World Bank, ARTF is a multi-donor trust fund supporting the reconstruction needs and efforts of the GoA. A major focus of the ARTF was to secure and support the salaries of non-uniformed civil servants and to ensure that those salaries were paid in a timely fashion.

To address the non-functional public administration and the inadequate public sector salary levels, a wide-ranging Public Administration Reform (PAR) program was initiated with donor support. One of major feature of this program was the setting up of an Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC). The IARCSC was established with the mandate of defining overarching civil service policies and also with development of a meritocratic civil service staffed through a transparent, objective and equitable recruitment and selection system. In addition, the IARCSC was mandated with the complex and ambitious task of leading and coordinating the PAR from within its limited resources.

A key element of the PAR process was the setting up of Priority Reform and Reconstruction (PRR) program. The PRR's major role was, as a matter of urgency, to link a much needed pay scale reform process with a comprehensive restructuring of key ministries and institutions. The latter was to be underpinned by an open, fair, and transparent recruitment and selection process for vital staff in the management and technical areas which was competency based and which aimed to attract well qualified, competent and experienced individuals.

In order to meet these requirements, the government developed a capacity development framework which would enable the Afghan Civil Service to:

- compete fairly for skilled professional staff;
- strengthen critical departments;
- reduce the needs for external technical assistance; and
- limit the need for donor staffing top-ups which have the inevitable potential for undermining loyalty to government institutions.

At the core of the government capacity development framework was the development of mechanisms to attract competent, skilled and experienced Afghan professionals from both the private sector in the region and the wider international community, including the staff of NGOs and UN agencies. This aim was supported by enhanced salaries available under the PRR superscale.

Project Development Objectives and Design

Thus, two specific initiatives, the Afghan Expatriates Program (AEP) and the Lateral Entry Program (LEP), were instigated as part of a capacity building framework instituted by the IARCSC to make the Afghan Civil Service (ACS) more attractive as an employer to high quality individuals. The ultimate aim was to significantly improve the strategic and operational outputs of the ACS.

Afghan Expatriate Program (AEP)

Both the government and the international community were cognizant of the considerable challenges to be faced when trying to restore the institutional and human capacity for planning and managing the country reconstruction efforts. Recognizing these immense gaps in capacity development needs, ARTF provided \$10 million in two instalments (in 2003 and 2006) for the AEP.

The AEP's main aim was to recruit 60 exceptionally well-qualified Afghan expatriates to serve for a limited period (six months to two years) as senior advisors in certain essential line ministries. The salaries for the advisor posts attracted ranged from \$500 to \$7,000, which presented a rate significantly higher than normal civil service rates which averaged up to \$300. In essence the AEP was a temporary solution to kick-start priority development programmes. The advisors' main duties would be three-fold:

- to enhance strategic capacity within the line ministries.
- to promote institutional reform to enhance organizational efficiency and managerial transparency and rigor.
- to act as drivers for the implementation of public investment programs.

The placement of advisors was focused on those ministries identified through consultation with key ministries, government departments and donors.

Afghan Lateral Entry Program (LEP)

Whilst the AEP was designed to attract exceptionally well-qualified expatriate Afghans to serve as senior advisors to various ministries, the widespread shortage of competent and experienced civil servants for upper and middle management positions in key ministries had been identified. This capability shortage posed a significant constraint adversely affecting the delivery of the country's

reconstruction agenda. To address this major challenge, and in advance of the civil service grade/pay scale reform initiative, the IARCSC launched the LEP. The proposal submitted to ARTF requesting a funding of \$64.7 million assuming average contract duration of two years. From this total, a minimum of \$14.2 million was required to secure the funding of 500 entrants who were to be recruited in the first year. Of this request, an immediate advance/commitment \$3 million was called for to enable the CSC to meet its plan of recruiting 100 lateral entrants in the first six months.

The LEP was a unique program which recruited Afghan professionals to senior and middle management line positions within ministries and government departments to meet urgent needs at the national, provincial and district levels. The LEP's target was to tap into the reservoir of well-qualified, experienced and competent Afghans from the NGO, UN Agencies and donor-funded program communities. It was anticipated that an initial 100 individuals would be recruited during the project's 6 month pilot phase with an additional 1,400 staff engaged over the life of the project.

The selected individuals were to be recruited at Afghan Civil Service Grades 2 to 4 on two year contracts attracting an enhanced salary of up to \$2,000 per month. The key duties of these posts included:

- Providing short to medium term enhanced professional capacity to ministries - primarily where the PRR process has been slow to take off.
- Laying the foundation for the reform process in ministries and government agencies which were not currently under the PRR process.
- Training, mentoring and motivating regular post holders to work more effectively and more efficiently for the government, thus providing an alternative to the continued extensive use of technical assistance and consultants.

An additional benefit of the LEP was that it would normalize the terms and conditions of employment for a large number of Afghan professionals who were on the payrolls of bilateral donors or who were donor-funded consultants and contractors but who were, in fact, working as *de facto* civil servants in various line ministries.

Along with the submission of LEP initiative the IARCSC proposed that AEP and LEP be combined into a single project given the complimentary nature of the respective roles. The rationale behind the proposed merger was that both interventions were designed to bring critically needed public administration capacity to manage the country reconstruction efforts for better results on the ground. Both AEP and LEP were initiated and implemented by IARCSC and engaged Afghan professionals to be a part of integral and important part of overall capacity building. It was also envisaged that lateral entrants would be absorbed by the civil service following the completion of pay and grade reform.

Implementation and Operational Experience for AEP and LEP

Under the supervision of ARTF Executive Committee, after considerable delay, the first phase of AEP commenced in July 2004 as an urgent response to low capacity of the ministries. The delay in project initiation stemmed from debate over the sensitivity surrounding the appropriateness of the program's approach in that Afghan experts recruited through the program would be paid salaries considerably higher than those paid to their routinely-recruited colleagues.

As IARSCS was a newly-established institution with limited staff and capacity to manage this new initiative, International Organization for Migration (IOM) was contracted as the Implementation Support Consultant. With a budget of \$ 500,000, IOM was expected for provision of logistical support in the recruitment process including advertising vacancies, preparation of individual contracts and managing salary payments. The IOM services did not continue with the same quality during implementation process and the IOM contract was discontinued with establishment of a special department called Capacity Development Secretariat (CDS) under IARCSC, with the mandate for coordinating and implementing AEP, LEP and government-initiated capacity development programs.

Once the AEP was initiated, the qualified experts were contracted for a period of two years with terms of reference specifically written to emphasise their advisory functions (including a training component for counterpart capacity building and with emphasis on the importance of not undertaking line position core functions).

One particular strength of the AEP was the emphasis on transparent and objective recruitment and selection procedures which required the involvement of, and input from, numerous ACS bodies. A project implementation manual was developed to provide guideline and detailed procedure in recruitment and selection process. This approach went a good way to countering the potential for allegations of corruption and nepotism in the recruitment and selection of advisors.

Additionally, the process allowed for the establishment of a database of suitable candidates who were screened against objective experiential and educational eligibility criteria. This is considered a significant step forward as it is a wealth of data which could be utilized for future programming. Paradoxically, however, ultimately the multi-agency approach led on occasion to significant delays in the recruitment process and the loss of high quality candidates.

In common with the AEP, the LEP was implemented in two phases. In the pilot phase the aim was to recruit 100 lateral entrants. Subsequently, a further 1,400 individuals were to be recruited to produce a grand total of 1,500 seasoned mid to senior manager level entrants.

The LEP's Recruitment and Selection process mirrored that of the AEP and therefore shared its strengths and weaknesses outlined above.

It was agreed at the onset of LEP that Phase I was to serve as a pilot to lay the groundwork for possible extension and expansion into Phase II. At the end of the pilot phase, there was a plan of an assessment and in-depth discussion to review the key achievements of LEP prior to the commencement of Phase II.

The internal assessment among stakeholders in 2007 resulted in a decision to continue the injection of experts utilizing the lessons learned into a new program intervention called Management Capacity Program (MCP) with the ARTF funding for the purpose of change and management capacity development. At that point, there were 138 LEPs and 98 AEPs on board and their contracts remained valid until their expiration.

Assessment of Project Outcomes and Effectiveness

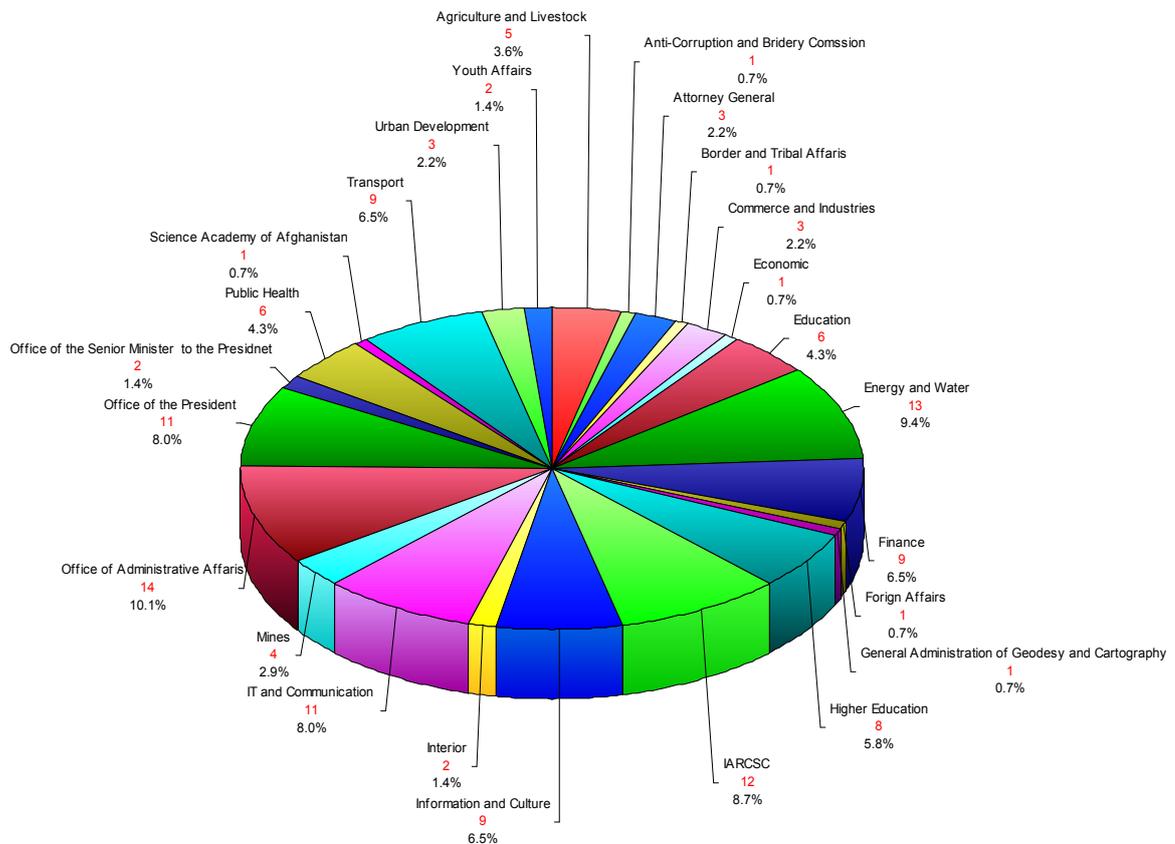
The first Afghan advisor contracted under the AEP entered service on 1 September 2004. From the target of 60 technical experts, a total of 98 advisors were placed within key ministries, including 13 experts (13.3%) in the President's Office. By the end of the AEP, a total of 19 ministries had benefited from the presence of AEP-funded advisors.

At the core essence, the experts worked along the key ministries to resolve bureaucratic system and speed up improvement of effective delivery of services. With concentrated efforts in organizational and capacity building, the AEP experts supported the establishment and promotion of coordination and communication frameworks, the development of ministries strategies, as well as national and regional program plans, and facilitated the acceleration of the PRR process. The experts also involved in providing advice in major significant decision making within the ministries. The Afghan-origin professionals' involvement in the country public restructuring process was a major attraction to the donor community and in turn it provides a significant pulling factor for more funding for similar initiative.

More generally, the advisors significant contribution in the following management areas has been widely recognised:

- Working with Ministries to reduce bureaucracy and speed up delivery and output.
- Developing capacity through the provision of professional seminars, workshops and on-the-job training.
- Active participation in the drafting and production of numerous ministerial policies, strategies, development plans and regional plans.
- Promoting increased liaison and consultation between ministries, departments and other governmental and non-governmental entities.

The distribution of AEP experts in various ministries is shown in the graphic below.



Viewing from perspective of complex context of Afghanistan reconstruction and development, which fell short in human capacity, both in terms of number and qualifications, the capacity building projects was put on higher risk platform, in comparison to normal long-term development programs. As a short-term measure, it was apparent that LEP brought positive impacts in bringing well-qualified experts in key line positions. Though there were areas of improvement, like any program of similar nature, the IARCSC and LEP management strived to go beyond achieving the strategic objectives set out in the proposal. The LEP provided a window to support PAR process by using an open and competence-based selection for vital staff in the management and technical positions within the government agencies and ministries

From a review of previous relevant reports and documentation, from interviews with several key senior individuals in the Afghan government and from internal assessment, it is undeniably apparent that there have been numerous key successes. The project has delivered significant benefits across a whole range of key ministries. Specific achievements, in which AEP advisors have been pivotal,

among others, include:

- The establishment of diagnostic centres in 8 regions including the provision of essential medical equipment and laboratories for the Ministry of Public Health.
- The production of a 5 year investment plan for the Irrigation Sector in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation.
- The capacity development of the technical staff of Agriculture Research Institute to be able to develop policies and strategies for research activities, and preparation of proposals and concept papers.
- The development of 5-year master plan, which includes national and regional plans, for the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The establishment of a computerized system of documentation management in the Ministry of Higher Education and the computerization of the entry examination for graduate and postgraduate programs.
- The training of 34 doctors and 102 inoculators across 31 provinces for the Ministry of Public Health.
- The establishment of a comprehensive Publication Strategy for the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology.
- The drafting of a new Education Law for the Ministry of Education.
- The contribution to the development of 10-year strategic plan for Community College.

On the LEP side, the initial pilot phase was extremely successful with a total of 138 new recruits engaged – an over-achievement of 38% against the initial target. An analysis of this total shows positions filled in 24 ministries and the Office of the President within the approved budget allocation. At the end of the phase there was a joint executive decision to concentrate on honouring the ongoing advisors' contracts but to discontinue new recruitments. From LEP experience, a ARTF funded new intervention named Management Capacity Program (MCP) emerged.

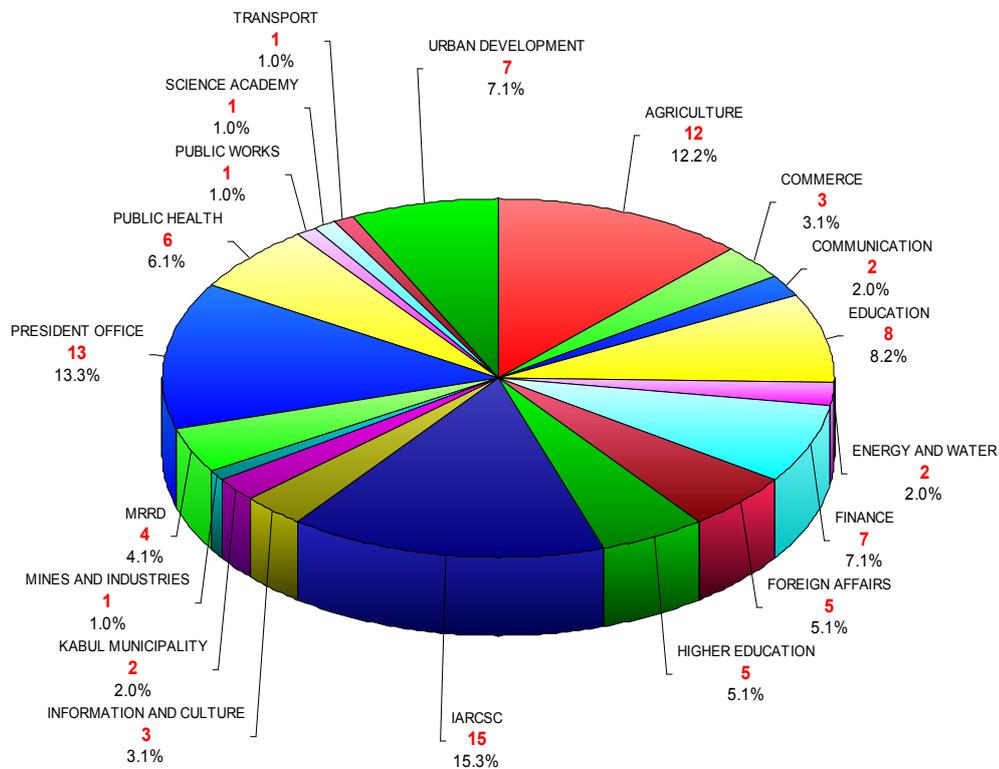
As with the AEP, professionals recruited under the LEP made a significant contribution to the output of the ministries and departments to which they were assigned. By virtue of their grade level and associated duties, their focus was, by necessity, more on operational issues. The significant achievements of LEP include:

- The support to the ministries/agencies in developing long-term and short-term strategies in accordance to the objectives of ANDS,

Afghanistan Compact and MDGs.

- The promotion of better management mechanism and systems by supporting the implementation of administrative reform and restructuring and PRR, and particularly in the human resources, financial management, administrative and project management functions.
- Finalization of plan for the second phase of PRR implementation in the Ministry of Commerce and Industries.
- The implementation of an anti-corruption program at the Ministry of Finance in which over 1400 ministry staff were trained.
- The establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation framework for the office of Administrative Affairs.
- The development of a new technology and information system within the Ministry of Transport.
- The identification of challenges concerning the implementation of PRR for IARCSC and the provision of associated recommendations.
- The provision of training regarding plant protection to research and technical staff of the Ministry of Agriculture.
- The implementation of credit system and change of curriculum in the Ministry of Higher Education.
- The signing of Mow with eleven international universities to facilitate capacity building and exchange programs for teachers and students.

The chart below reflects the wide-spread allocation of LEP experts.



Furthermore, it has been unanimous in agreed that the efforts of the LEP recruited staff have contributed greatly to the implementation of administrative reform, PRR and ongoing organisational re-structuring. In particular, their efforts in the fields of human resource, financial, administrative and project management have been instrumental in moving forward the work of their ministries.

It has been well acknowledged that in comparing with the proposed targets, the achievements of AEP and LEP were well above the objectives as shown below:

	Proposed Target	Achievements	Percentage of Achievements
AEP	60 Expert Advisors	98 Expert Advisors	163% Achievement
LEP	100 Experts	138 Experts	138% Achievement

Lessons Learned

The major achievement of both LEP and AEP, which underlines the importance and success of the initiative was the kick-starting of the process of bringing Afghan professionals and associated expertise into the ACS to increase capacity, be it in advisory or line management positions. Several individuals remained in service with the ACS and are currently working in very senior positions including ministerial appointments such as Minister of Finance, Chief Justice of Afghanistan, Minister of Mines, current Chief of Security Counsel and ex Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Minister IDLG, Attorney General, Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs, Director General, High Office of Oversight on Anti-corruption.

The continued employment of these high quality individuals is a prime indicator of the significant contribution to sustainability that has been at the core of the AEP and LEP programs. Equally important is the impact the programs made in terms of laying down the groundwork in preparation for the Management Capacity Program (MCP) which represented the next evolutionary step in the AEP/LEP process and which encompassed a more clearly-defined administrative approach and enhanced managerial rigor; for example, in terms of performance metrics which were more relevant and more closely monitored.

Unsurprisingly, the elements of the LEP that could have been improved are identical to the structural and administrative issues outlined above with reference to the AEP. In neither case should these concerns detract from the overall success of the project.

Along with major achievements, there were areas where the projects lacked rigor in terms of design and implementation:

- **Needs Assessment.**
There is no evidence that an in-depth needs assessment took place prior to design of both projects. There was undeniably requirement for immense needs capacity building of the public administrative sector. However, it seems that the Terms of Reference developed for advisors were developed based on the perceived rather than actual needs.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation.**
Neither project design included Monitoring and Evaluation strategies and mechanisms, (including the detailing of expected results) to measure performance in achieving project objectives. A Project Implementing Manual (PIM) was developed, albeit in a very limited capacity with an apparent aim of primarily measuring process and procedure particularly in terms of recruitment and selection processes; it was inadequate in terms of monitoring the overall project performance and associated milestones. According to the PIM, the initial step in the AEP process is to identify critical gaps in a ministry's capacity needs. The implementation of this step seems, at best, patchy. Similarly, there is no

evidence of any independent performance audit being undertaken of either the AEP generally or individual advisors' activities and outputs specific.

- Gender Inclusion.
The projects did not specifically promote gender mainstreaming. Thus, there was no measure in place to monitor the achievement in this area as the number of female applicants and successful candidates remained low.
- Performance Management of Individual Advisors.
It is apparent that the performance of many of the individual advisors was not actively monitored or managed centrally. There was no mechanism in place to assess the performance of individual advisors. The advisors reported solely to their host ministry and there was no reporting relationship back to the project management team. As a result, there is much anecdotal evidence of advisors deviating from their original terms of reference and working on non-AEP related projects at the instruction of senior ministry staff.
- Conversely, it was reported that advisors found it difficult in that there was no system for central project management, feedback and support in place. When advisors encountered challenges in performing their tasks, or faced with communication problems with their supervisors, they could neither channel it upwards to project management nor receive support formally from the project as an operational reporting mechanism was non-existence.
- The Recruitment and Selection Policy.
The recruitment and selection policy, whilst praiseworthy in its commitment to transparency, objectivity and fairness, became overly complicated and bureaucratic. The prior review process by the World Bank added into delays which inevitably led to delays in recruitment and it possibly resulted in the loss of high quality potential recruits. The extant AEP recruitment' flowchart is shown in the PIM.
- Building partnerships, networking, sharing ideas and knowledge platform was lacking. There was limited synergy with other existing capacity building intervention.

Though AEP and LEP produced significant achievements the critical context of the Afganistan that period of time, considerable lesson learned from AEP and LEP laid the foundation to the birth of a more solid and well defined project of Management Capacity Program (MCP). Among other key features of MCP, the positions are categorized to fit into specific criteria, the functions of the appointee will support particular organizational common functions, the posts are not advisors, but in line position functions which reflect more weight in hierarchical authority for implementation, as supposed only give advice.

Recommendations and Conclusion

In the event of a similar project being considered in the future, there are 5 recommendations that it is believed would increase significantly the effectiveness of the program. Unsurprisingly, these recommendations center on the weaknesses identified above in relation to the administration of the projects:

- A Monitoring and Evaluation Unit be established in the early stages of the project to advise and train counterparts on the methods used to assess expeditiously, objectively and effectively the comparative capacity gaps and requirements of individual ministries and other government organizations. Subsequently, the unit should review, monitor and audit the progress made by both ministries and individual advisors throughout the project cycle to ensure the capacity is transferred to team members as well as institution capacity is enhanced by establishing systems and developing sound procedures.
- Gender mainstreaming should be given a higher priority in relation to advisor recruitment.
- Capacity development is a long term process with required long-term intervention. In the future, consideration should be given to the extension of contract length, depending on the specific needs which could be defined from need assessment. The scope and scale of the challenges facing the advisors are such that a two year contract period is potentially too short a time frame to effect real, lasting strategic development and capacity transfer.
- With the support of technical assistance, it is necessary to establish systems and tools to conduct standardised, effective performance appraisals of appointees which include the setting of performance goals and objectives which should flow directly from the relevant, published job description.
- Consideration should be given to re-designing the recruitment and selection model with the aim of retaining those elements which ensure equity of treatment for all candidates and transparency of process whilst reducing the capacity for delays and the potential loss of high quality candidates. Specialist HR support should be sought in this regard.
- The level of Afghan ownership should be increased by delegating the process review to the implementing agency which also reduces the delays, and will help to meet the needs of Ministries in an efficient and on a timely manner.
- Consolidation of program in critical ministries with enhanced focus on with enhanced focus on creating permanent improvements within the organization, alignment with the development priorities and

synchronizing with public sector reforms

- The CB programs need an efficient, responsive support structure/procedures (like newly established GDPDM) that coordinate, communicate and cooperate with all stake-holders especially with the donors and visibly incorporate the best of their suggestions
- Any future program needs to initiate a continuing proactive talent search and create a segregated data base of skilled people
- There should consider the continuing-education aspects of capacity building through open website with short paragraph on training background, online learning, or fellowships or internships or graduate-study abroad programs etc. In other words, creating a knowledge platform more broadly available to civil servants

Overall, the AEP has proved to be a resounding success. The program was expected to recruit only 60 advisors under its auspices. The fact that some professionals were actually recruited (an increase of 163% on the initial target) is a significant achievement.

The LEP had proved to be similarly productive and it has produced many highly skilled and motivated individuals whose contribution to reconstruction and capacity building is praiseworthy.

Furthermore, there is no doubt that the output of this cadre of highly motivated, high quality AEP and LEP individuals has contributed greatly to the ongoing professional development - and allied capacity-building - of the ACS and to the reconstruction of the country's public infrastructure. Though AEP and LEP were completed, a number of those experts remain within the government structure and undertaking line functions to provide contribution to the greater development effort of GoA.

Within the timeframe of the start of AEP and LEP, the context of reconstruction and reform efforts consisted of many components ranging from institutional development, operational effectiveness, project planning and design, as well as filling in the gaps of the non-existence or limited functions capabilities. Like in any other institutional strengthening, capacity building and capacity transfer program and training, it requires detailed and long process of planning, and complex intervention with long term horizon. AEP and LEP were merely short interim measures to address capacity inadequacy in the reform process. As such, considering the urgency and temporary nature of the project initiatives, within the framework of government framework to provide a window to generate critical professional resource pool to fill the gap of functional capabilities within public administration, AEP and LEP significantly achieved beyond the scope of the project objectives.

Furthermore, the foundations laid by, and the lessons learnt from, the AEP and the LEP contributed directly and significantly to the inception and growth of the

General Directorate of Programs' Design and Management (GDPDM). The establishment of GDPDM is considered to be one element of sustainability, from which the future government-initiated capacity building program are designed, planned and implemented. In turn, the GDPDM has proved to be pivotal to the ongoing successes in the area of Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-managed developmental initiatives.

In summation, there is great value in continuing with a similar capacity building initiatives along the lines of the AEP and the LEP. The Afghan government, its ministries and its staff all benefited hugely both in terms of organisational productivity and individual effectiveness.