

Rehabilitating Highways, Airport in Afghanistan



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CHALLENGE

More than two decades of conflict combined with a prolonged lack of maintenance resulted in damages to long sections of Afghanistan's roads, critical structures, and bridges—the road network was only partially usable and at a very high cost. Civil aviation infrastructure was also severely deteriorated. The transport sector was owned and managed by departments of centralized ministries, with service provision sometimes delegated to government enterprises.

APPROACH

In 2002, the Afghan Transitional Administration stated its intention to encourage private sector participation in service delivery, to use labor based approaches in road construction, and to strengthen overall management of the transport sector. In the short-term, however, fast-track projects to remove transport bottlenecks to recovery and growth were needed. Those needs were addressed by the Emergency Transport Rehabilitation Project.

RESULTS

More than one million people along the project roads in Parvan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar and Badakhshan Provinces have been connected to the country's main transport and infrastructure network, enjoying better distribution for agricultural products, humanitarian flows, access to social services and administrative centers.

Highlights:

- Rehabilitation of a main highway corridor from Kabul to the Tajikistan border - including the Salang Tunnel, one of the world's highest altitude tunnels severely damaged during the war - reduced average travel time between Kabul and Kunduz from more than 48 hours to about 6 hours.
- Average traffic volume on the rehabilitated 175 km Kabul-Doshi road increased from about 1,200 vehicles/day, to more than 12,000 vehicles/day and continues to increase.
- Average access time to markets, social services and administrative centers (for 10 communities along the rehabilitated roads) reduced from about 55-60 minutes to 22-25 minutes after rehabilitation of roads.
- In the northern area, where community schools were built by various donors but not functioning for lack of teachers, improved road conditions have helped teachers commute and begin teaching children.
- Rehabilitation of the Kabul International Airport (KAIA) runway (3,500 m) and provision of

associated safety facilities and equipment have allowed international airlines to begin operations. In addition to UN Humanitarian Air Service flights, Ariana, Kam Air, PIA, Indian Airlines and Azerbaijan Airlines currently operate there.

- Civil aviation operations are improving with technical transfer from International Civil Aviation Organization experts.

IDA CONTRIBUTION

- Total project cost is US\$162 million, US\$117 million from IDA credit and US\$45 million from an IDA supplemental grant.

- IDA was one of the initial donors for the rehabilitation of the transport sector infrastructure in Afghanistan.

- Timely completion of projects within a reasonable budget in a very uncertain project environment. The Salang Tunnel and snow gallery works begun in October 2002 were completed by September 2004, eliminating the largest bottleneck on the corridor. The entire project for Kabul-Tajikistan border was completed by April 2006. The KAIA runway rehabilitation was completed by November 2005.

- Technical assistance and project management helping build capacity of implementing ministries.

- Dialogue with the government and coordination with other donors on transport sector policy issues.

NEXT STEPS

The sector has received a large amount of coordinated international assistance for reconstruction. Gaps in the main network have been progressively filled, and the investment program for the Ring Road and key connections to neighboring countries, including the roads covered by this Emergency Transport Rehabilitation Project, has been fully funded, with most project components completed or underway.

However, post-rehabilitation maintenance is becoming an issue. Challenges include high construction costs in a difficult security situation, lack of capacity in both public and private sectors and insufficient financing for maintenance.

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Emergency Transport Rehabilitation Project (2003-07)

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