



Road to Prosperity

Transformational Initiatives to Create
One Million Jobs

A Policy Book

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May 2017

For my Afghan brethren who have suffered
immensely for so many years

“Everyone has been made for some particular work, and the desire for that work has been put in every heart.”-- Rumi

“Determine never to be idle. No person will have occasion to complain of the want of time, who never loses any. It is wonderful how much may be done, if we are always doing.”-- Thomas Jefferson

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Abstract

Despite the steady stream of alarming news from Afghanistan concerning its stability and security, the biggest threat to the country is not the Taliban, al Qaeda, or Islamic fundamentalists. The greatest failure not only of the many nations that have been assisting Afghanistan in recent years but of the Afghan government itself is their failure to address the greatest problem in the country, and the greatest threat to its security: unemployment. One can argue that the single most important indicator of the success or failure of the National Unity Government of Afghanistan will be in its ability to reduce significantly the number of unemployed on the streets of major cities in that country.

This book presents a number of transformational initiatives that impact various aspects of Afghan society. This list is by no means an exhaustive list of all the opportunities available to the government, but all the initiatives discussed here can be turned into specific actions plans funded by international donors and private investors, and performed by private businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and even local volunteer groups. The intent of this book is to start a conversation about possible objectives and goals that can be accomplished in a reasonably short time, while avoiding the national, regional, and international political minefields that will require much more time to resolve.

Although the initiatives presented in this book are all discussed with reference to Afghanistan, they can easily be applied in or adapted to other third-world countries suffering from similar problems and conditions. Ideally, the discussion started by this study will grow into a global conversation about improving employment, prosperity, and the quality of life.

Introduction

Bernard Lewis, the great historian, once observed that typically there are two ways people and nations respond to adversities and hardships. The first and the most expedient response is to ask, "Who did this to us?" The second response is to ask, "What did we do wrong?"

The first question leads to self-pity and a "blame game," by placing responsibility on others and by disowning personal responsibility; while the second question goes to the heart of self-help. It is the second question that leads to success, prosperity, and peace.

In the modern managerial setting, these questions are closely correlated with the actions and decisions that can only be classified as unplanned and planned respectively. In Afghanistan, raising these two questions is more relevant today than at any time in the past, as they go to the heart of the worsening problems faced by the country. As reported by the myriad of news media on events, both within and without Afghanistan, one can clearly discern that these events are directly related to the above questions, and that the events themselves are the results of ill-advised and imprudent policies, strategies, and programs.

More specifically, despite the steady stream of alarming news from Afghanistan concerning its stability and security, the biggest threat to the country is not the Taliban, al Qaeda, Islamic fundamentalists, or even meddling from the many interested groups in the region. Similarly, the major cause of the failure of donor countries to achieve their developmental goals, despite massive investments over the past decade, continues to go unnoticed and unreported. The greatest failure, not only of the many nations that have been assisting

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The worsening situation in Afghanistan can be directly attributed to the reduction and even the drying up of much of the assistance that came from the NATO members and other donor countries over the past decade. The biggest impact of these reductions is seen in the ever increasing unemployment rate of the workforce. Given the present fertility rate in Afghanistan, unemployment will grow in the near future to unprecedented levels even by the Afghan standard. Estimates are that as much as 60 percent or more of the work force is currently unemployed. Reducing this number by creating new jobs will go a long way toward alleviating the malaise currently facing Afghanistan, including concerns about security or the lack thereof.

One of the key factors in the development of a nation is the inclusivity of its population in the daily working of social affairs as well as its governance.

In their 2012 book, Why Nations Fail, Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson point out that one of the key factors in the development of a nation is the inclusivity of its population in the daily working of social affairs as well as its governance. Applying this observation to the present situation in Afghanistan, it is incumbent on the Afghan government to reduce or eliminate any and all obstacles that prevent citizens from participating fully in the workforce and in public life in a planned and systematic fashion.

There are many examples of what the government can and should do that require little or no structural changes. Many of these initiatives do not require foreign assistance or greater security than currently exists in the country. Yet they will have quick impacts that will be visible to society at large. These initiatives are, for most part, service oriented and are independent of any foreign competition. These initiatives are unlike industry-driven job creation schemes that are subject to intense competition from nearby countries. Foreign competition is an issue that has not been lost on the many Afghan entrepreneurs, who have seen massive illegal dumping throughout Afghanistan by these foreign competitors. When these initiatives are implemented in a planned fashion they will go to the heart of Mr. Lewis' second question and become a recipe for success and prosperity.

This book presents a number of transformational initiatives that impact various aspects of Afghan society at large, but it is by no means an exhaustive list of all the opportunities available to the government and donor countries. The intent of this book is to start a conversation about possible objectives and goals that can be accomplished in a reasonably short time, while avoiding the national, regional, and international political minefields that will require much more time to resolve. Moreover, all the initiatives discussed here can be turned into specific actions plans funded by international donors and private investors, and performed by private businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and even local volunteer groups. The primary result of the initiatives would be to create hundreds of thousands of jobs. It is not inconceivable that they could create as many as one million jobs, which would have huge positive economic and social consequences for a country like Afghanistan.

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The following initiatives are some of the many reforms available to the Afghan government and are presented and discussed here.

Clean City Initiative

Fifty years ago, before chemical fertilizer was widely available, Afghan farmers used to come with their donkeys to clean outhouses in many urban neighborhoods, not only in Kabul but across the country. The lack of chemical fertilizer created a market for human waste and placed monetary value on it.

Today, most Afghan cities are drowning in trash, everything from scrap paper, plastic bags, and litter to ordinary household refuse. In many instances the entrepreneurship spirit of the Afghan people can be seen in Kabul by in many unorganized ways, such as in collecting plastic bottles from various part of the city. The below photos show Afghans collecting bottles in large bags and hauling them to a similarly unorganized recycling market.

The development of a planned and organized trash removal system will not only go a long way to alleviating many of today's major cities' trash





problems but would also create a privately owned and operated trash hauling industry, that will eventually lead to the full recycling of residential as well as commercial wastes. This can be accomplished by the municipalities placing a nominal value on city-generated waste (either by weight or volume), designating several landfills around the major cities to receive it and pay for the hauled waste on site. The existing transportation infrastructure which was created during the boom years of reconstruction (and that is currently idle) will be the first to become a major partner/middlemen in collection and removal of trash from city streets.

Many people would no longer simply throw trash away but would actually try to find ways to collect and sell it to the middlemen who deliver to landfills. This initiative would not only create jobs but would improve public health and remove eyesores in many city centers. Its positive impacts will be economic, psychological, and aesthetic. In addition, the private sector efficiency will go a long way to reduce costs to the municipalities that currently own and operate an inefficient municipal trash hauling fleet.

There are no limits to the growth of this industry, and it will be organically driven. As the city's needs grow, so does the industry. The jobs created by this initiative would be local, and the benefits would be local. Foreign competition in such urban trash collection would be minimal or nonexistent. The success of this initiative will come from the efficiency of its initial planning, the setting of precise goals and objectives, and proper implementation.

Improving Traffic Flow

The major cities in Afghanistan such as Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e-sharif, Jalalabad and others currently suffer from major traffic jams. Thousands of private and commercial drivers waste countless hours and significant amounts of money stuck in traffic, while fumes from their vehicles add to the air pollution that covers many cities. One of the primary reasons for these traffic jams is the lack of adequate parking throughout the cities. Many cars are parked and even doubled parked along key roads, creating bottlenecks and logjams. At the same time, most of these cities were designed with many wide roads that, if used properly, could not only alleviate many present ills but also become a source of job creation and a force for economic growth.

The municipalities should use these wider roads to create diagonal parking spaces that can be leased to private entities that would administer them as parking lots. In exchange for a nominal fee, drivers would get safe, clean, and legal parking spaces in formerly congested areas. This simple initiative would not only reduce or eliminate traffic jams but would create permanent jobs, provide needed revenue to cities, reduce air pollution, and improve the quality of urban life.



This reform has already been considered and implemented in Kandahar and where utilized, it has produced its intended results. According to the most recent accounting, the Kandahar municipality earns as much as 6 million Afghanis per year from this initiative. A well planned parking system will be a major part of any solution that eliminates existing and future traffic issues in cities throughout the country. It is important to point out that creating a parking lot that is cleaned daily and has well-marked parking spaces must become part of the cities' contracts with the private sector and any permit to create or expand businesses.

Small-Scale Mining

In its November 2013 brief, the World Bank reported that “small-scale mining occurs in approximately 80 countries worldwide. There are approximately 100 million artisanal miners globally. Artisanal and small-scale production supply accounts for 80% of global sapphire, 20% of gold mining and up to 20% of diamond mining. It is widespread

in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Central and South America.”

In Afghanistan, small-scale mining operations take place throughout the country. Most of these operations are not government sanctioned; many are conducted under unsafe or environmentally harmful conditions. Materials produced in these operations are mostly used within the country or sold abroad in their original forms without any added value. Although these mining operations are illegal, they do create jobs and contribute some value to the Afghan economy. They also have the potential to do much more good for the country. Giving these mines a legal status consistent with the law of the land but without disturbing their operations should be a priority for the National Unity Government. Instead of prohibiting small-scale mining or forcing miners to abandon their work through intimidation or excessive taxation, the government should view these operations as a means of job creation that will reduce Afghanistan’s reliance on foreign



assistance. The government should adopt policies that will improve mine safety and environmental protection, assist in better product marketing, provide low-interest loans, train miners to increase efficiency and productivity, and promote private ownership of mines. Such reforms are the best way to exploit the underground wealth of Afghanistan for the long-term betterment of its economy and its people.

The single most important action that the Afghan Government must undertake is to create a linkage between this sector and the global market. Currently, the Afghan miners' products are, for the most part, being smuggled out of the country and sold for a fraction of their global market prices. Connecting these miners to the global market by organizing and inviting potential customers through well-advertised events both inside and outside the country is a must. A quick, efficient and cost-effective way to create the linkage outside the country is for every embassy to hold events in the country of its residence. Each embassy can showcase the Afghan mining products and connect potential customers to various businesses who can work as middlemen between miners and the global customers. Developing supply chains or fair trade methods are fundamental and important steps to creating a long-term mining industry in Afghanistan.



Public Washrooms in City Centers

Cities in Afghanistan are not equipped with public toilets. The lack of such essential facilities is not only a major public inconvenience, but a significant sanitary and health problem for many urban centers. And yet, there is a simple solution that could eliminate the problem while also contributing to job creation and economic prosperity.

Under this initiative, municipal governments would identify economically strategic parts of each city in which public toilets are most needed. Private entities would bid for the opportunity to provide portable facilities that would be available to the public for a nominal fee. The fee would be set by the free market, not by government, and may vary from site to site depending on local conditions and usage. Municipal governments would charge the operators of these facilities a licensing fee for the right to operate on public property. The operators themselves would be responsible for facility maintenance and waste removal.

Such public facilities are common throughout the world and help eliminate odors and disease, not to mention the inconvenience now faced by citizens with no place to attend to their basic human needs. This initiative will create thousands of jobs not subject to foreign competition and will make an immediate and highly visible improvement in the quality of urban life in Afghanistan.



Neighborhood Substations



Waste and pilferage are some of the most common inefficiencies in the distribution of electrical power in most, if not all developing countries. With its old and dilapidated systems, and a reliance on electricity purchased abroad, Afghanistan suffers from massive waste and inefficiency in its electrical-power industry. One simple reform that would go a long way toward reducing these inefficiencies would be to allow private operators to run and maintain the many neighborhood substations in every town and city.

Under this initiative, each substation would be outfitted with a meter before the transformer that would allow Da Afghanistan Berishna Sherkat (DABS), the government-owned power entity, to measure precisely the amount of electrical power delivered to it. Operators of the substations would be required to pay for all the electricity that flowed through their substations, and would collect utility payments from all neighborhood users. Since their own income would be a percentage of these payments, private local operators would have a strong financial incentive to reduce waste, eliminate pilferage, and provide better customer service.

A good reason for the private operator to update and replace the dilapidated equipment in a substation is that by replacing such equipment, the operator will increase efficiency and thus increase its profitability. Through this course of action, the Government-owned entity not only will be increasing revenue but also will be modernizing the distribution system with a little, if any additional expenditure and in the shortest time.

Annual Vehicle Inspections

For more than a decade, there has been a flood of cars, trucks, and vans coming into Afghanistan from various parts of the world. The majority of these vehicles are old and poorly maintained. Their owners then drive them on dangerous roads damaged by war or weather that have not been repaired in years.

The result is that hundreds of people lose their lives every year in automobile accidents that could be prevented by common-sense safety reforms. Older cars and trucks are also a major source of air pollution in large cities. In Kabul, for example, there is a dramatic difference in the level of air pollution



between weekdays and weekends where there is less traffic.

One simple way to improve highway safety and reduce urban air pollution would be to



require annual motor vehicle safety inspections, a common practice throughout the world. For an annual fee, the government would license private auto-repair shops to perform these inspections, and would set safety and emissions standards for different classes of vehicles. This reform requires no major investment from the public sector, but would create a demand for skilled mechanics to perform inspections and any necessary repairs, reduce highway fatalities and pollution, and improve the quality of life throughout the country.

Work Visas

Sending workers abroad is a tried and true means of boosting employment and growing a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Of the many countries around the world that send workers abroad, two countries have virtually turned it into a science. In the Far East, the Philippines has more than 13 million expatriates (the single largest group of expatriates of any country) working in almost in every country around the world, while El Salvador in the Western Hemisphere earns more than 60 percent of its GDP from foreign remittances.

Over the past 30 years, many Afghans have traveled abroad looking for work in Iran, Pakistan, and various Middle Eastern countries. In almost all cases, these expatriates have traveled without any support from their government, or even without much knowledge about how and where to go. As a result, many workers have wasted time and money looking for jobs, have had to accept jobs and wages below their skill levels, have had to work illegally, and have even been cheated and defrauded by foreign employers and officials.

The exodus to Europe that occurred throughout 2015 and 2016 is estimated to include a quarter of a million migrating Afghans.

This number is much greater when added to those Afghans who have migrated to neighboring countries and even other countries as far away as Australia. Most, if not all, of these migrants are economic migrants that are looking for better lives elsewhere. An important fact to be noted here is that the significant majority of the migrants are young and in the prime of their productive lives.

As can be seen by the photos recently taken from the lines formed at the Pakistani Embassy and provided below, the economic migration has not slowed down but has actually increased. With so many people leaving, Afghanistan is losing a great deal of wealth. The management and control of this migration must be organized and planned not only to benefit the country but also those who are risking lives, resources and time during their trips. Such permanent losses of human resource will cost Afghanistan a great deal of wealth for generations to come.

The Afghan government should spearhead an initiative through the Foreign Ministry and its embassies to formalize a work visa program with selected countries that need labor. Each ambassador should be expected to garner an appropriate number of guest worker visas from his or her respective host country, and should be evaluated on meeting those benchmarks. The government should also license private employment agencies to recruit and certify suitable candidates for employment abroad, provide technical training, and prepare candidates



for the rules, customs, and basic facts about living and working in a foreign country. This simple initiative will produce well-paid jobs both inside and outside the country, lower unemployment, protect the health and safety of Afghans working abroad, and increase foreign remittances. Over time, we should also expect Afghan workers returning home to inject new ideas and innovations into the domestic economy, further improving prosperity and employment.

Small Business Loans

The best and the fastest way to grow an economy and to create jobs has always been to have a growing small business sector. This has been shown throughout the world and is no different in Afghanistan's case. Simply, to survive, small businesses must be efficient, productive, and attuned to their customers' needs and wants. One of the most common problems in starting any small business is the availability of the financing that is key to its success and growth.

Afghans are an entrepreneurial people by nature. The many small vendors around the large cities and villages are a testimony to their work ethic and desire for self-employment. These entrepreneurs are funded for most part through loans from relatives and family financial pools. This may be adequate for the smallest operations, but any business seeking to grow needs access to reliable, low-interest credit.

Unfortunately, obtaining a business loan in Afghanistan today is almost impossible, as both public and private banks make the process long and difficult. A shorter and less arduous underwriting process, based on the loan amount, would help unlock institutional credit to small businesses. A modern and simplified approach needs to be instituted with the lending institutions to give banks greater incentive to extend credit to small businesses, not just gather deposits.



This could be accomplished by the Government underwriting small loans for such businesses. The loans could require that the funds be used to add value to the products made or grown within the country. In the beginning, the Government must place emphasis on an extremely important, but often absent component of the Afghan commerce at a small scale, which is the middleman. The middleman can purchase, package, and market many of the mostly seasonal products. Connecting producers to the market even by creating a rudimentary mechanism is far more preferable than having no connection to the market place, as is the case today. These middlemen can be instrumental in the collection of mostly perishable and seasonal products that currently either do not reach the market or are ignored by the larger businesses. They can engage in packaging enterprises that increase the longevity of such products, thus extending the selling season for the product.

This could be accomplished by the Government underwriting small loans for such businesses.

Reforming Procurement Rules

Afghanistan is strewn with incomplete and subpar quality projects. These projects were primarily funded by the many donor countries that came to Afghanistan with a genuine desire to rebuild the country after three decades of war. For more than a decade, these donors have used a single strategy of awarding contracts to large foreign companies with the lowest costs rather than the best value. Many of these

companies have had little or no experience working in countries like Afghanistan or specifically in Afghanistan. This strategy may have made more sense in earlier years, but with the passage of time it has become counterproductive and has resulted in a great number of projects being left incomplete or completed with sub-standard quality.

This strategy has also been the major reason for cost overruns and an impetus for corruption throughout the life of the projects. Specifically, the strategy assumes that Afghan companies are incapable of completing large projects on their own, and that they need foreign companies to lead them in all aspect of construction, namely financial, technical, and managerial. Procurement rules that require offerors to demonstrate past performance, for the most part, undervalue quality Afghan companies' experience to a level that can be considered discriminatory, while favoring large foreign firms that, in many cases, do not have relevant experience in Afghanistan.

Current procurement rules also allow for a major share of the project costs to be spent on items that have very little relevance to the intended purposes of the respective projects. Many foreign companies allocate as much as 45 percent of total project costs to security, extended overhead, and general administrative costs, even before adding the profit or fee for the projects.

The biggest obstacles facing Afghan-owned companies are the unnecessarily stringent requirements placed in the Request for Proposal (RFP). These requirements are typically copied from similar projects in other countries but may have little or no relevance to local conditions in Afghanistan.

For future projects in Afghanistan to be successful, a new procurement strategy must be adopted that levels the playing field for local and

foreign firms alike and evaluates competing firms exclusively on their ability to work in the unique and challenging conditions of the country. Since much of the site/ground work is carried out by local firms, it is imperative to include the local companies and their experience as a part of the proposals. By naming these companies and their capabilities, it is highly probable to predict and even gauge the success and failure of the implementing partners in conducting the project within allotted time, budget, and quality. An important factor that should be considered under this new strategy is the past performance section. The past performance should focus on projects of similar size and complexity that have been successfully completed in Afghanistan using many small local companies.

An important factor that should be considered under this new strategy is in the past performance section.

Loan Insurance

Job creation is the single most important agenda for every policymaker in all economies around the world. This fact is even more important in developing countries such as Afghanistan, which is struggling to recover from a prolonged crisis. A recent study found that unlike developed economies, small business supported economies, continue to create jobs in their local markets and are less prone to the larger economic gyrations. The study also pointed out “that the challenge for policymakers is not only to create more jobs, but also to create better quality jobs to promote growth”.

There are many obstacles facing small businesses around the world, among the most critical of which are the lack of access to finance, business training, literacy/communication, and other structural constraints such as corruption, taxes, and regulations. The absence of a market-driven and government-sanctioned channel to adequately meet a timely loan has made borrowing more expensive if not impossible.

In Afghanistan, small businesses suffer greatly due to lack of access to financing. There is no government-sanctioned mechanism that provides loans at a reasonable interest rate.

The interest rate levied by the unsanctioned borrowing system is as much 20% or more, which

practically makes any small business entry into the market impossible. The high interest rates reduce profits substantially, while stunting any future growth. The greatest and the most unfortunate consequence of high interest rate in Afghanistan is the elimination of, or reduction, of job creation.

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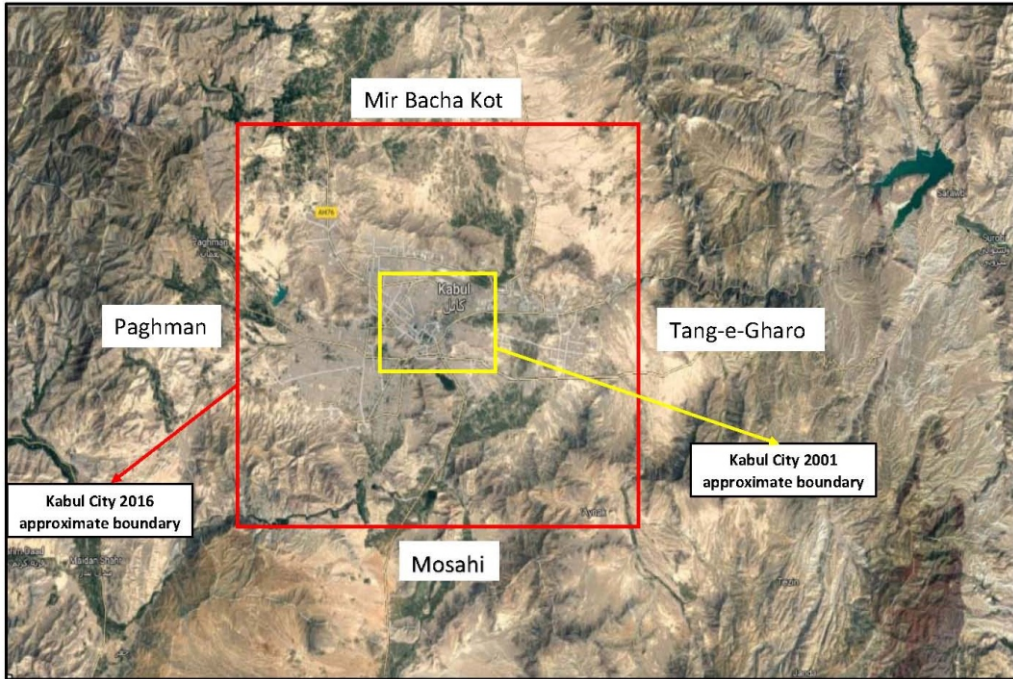


The availability of low interest rates, coupled with easy means of obtaining loans, is essential for Afghanistan's small businesses to flourish. The banking system in Afghanistan is no different from other businesses that seek the highest rates of return with the lowest risk. Consequently, the current system of incentives sets the interests of the banks directly counter to the financial needs of small businesses in Afghanistan

The Afghan government should initiate a plan that removes existing financial obstacles in the marketplace. One way the government can reduce risks for banks is by providing loan insurance. It should also reduce taxes on interest earned on loans and ensure that tax savings are used to bolster the banks' capital and increase liquidity. The implementation of these two simple ideas will go a long way toward lessening or eliminating financial obstacles for small businesses lending.

Formal Land Titles

There are no reliable figures on the percentage of existing real-estate properties in Afghanistan that have formal or government issued deeds. Considering the huge influx of refugees, economic growth, and unprecedented levels of construction in the past 15 years, some experts estimate that large cities such as Kabul, Herat, Kandahar and others have grown by as much as ten folds. Kabul City alone has grown tremendously; its population has risen from an estimated 500,000 during the last year of the Taliban (2001) to as many as 5 to 6 million residents in 2016. Similarly, the growth and expansion of cities has not been limited to the large cities, but also includes small cities. Even far-flung villages have seen the same unprecedented expansion. This expansion is the first of its kind in the history of



Afghanistan. The Photo shown above approximates Kabul City's expansion between of 2001 versus Kabul 2016.

As can be seen in the above photo, Kabul City's boundaries have expanded by more than 16 times their size in 2001. The unbridled growth has resulted in unprecedented legal challenges, among other issues. An informal and anecdotal survey of the residents estimates that close to 70 percent or more of the properties in the country do not have formal land titles. Whatever the amount, losses to both municipal and provincial governments in unpaid and underpaid taxes are huge.

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If collected, this sum would go a long way toward closing current annual budgetary shortfalls facing the Afghan government.

Unpaid taxes also mean that municipalities do not have money to provide for trash collection, road repairs, and many other essential services. Providing these services creates jobs and improves the quality of life. The impact of formalizing deeds for homeowners across the country will be huge. It is no exaggeration to say it will increase the wealth of the nation. At present, properties that do not have government-granted deeds and that are not registered in the municipalities' books have a much lower value than similar properties in the same area that do have formal deeds. Owners who receive formal deeds will see the value of properties increase substantially, contributing to their net worth and providing a source of collateral if ever they need to get bank loans.

Currently, the system is extremely cumbersome and bureaucratic; it is mired with inefficiencies. It uses a dilapidated system of books and archival organization that go back more than a century. The system is handled by an archaic judicial system that has yet to benefit from many of today's technological advancement. Given the enormity of the issue and its importance, similar to many other countries, the Government must look to the private sector for solutions. By allowing privately owned legal entities such as law firms, real estate

Government must look into the private sector for solutions. By allowing privately owned legal entities such as law firms, real estate companies and others to handle the initial stages of the official documentation.

companies and others to handle the initial stages of the official documentation, the introduction of formal land and property title systems might have a chance to succeed.

Formalizing Property Boundary Lines

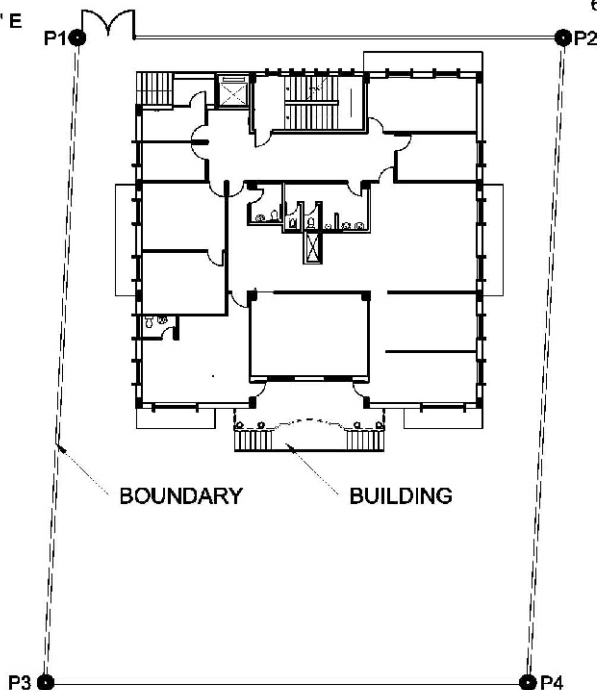
In Afghanistan, the customary method for defining property boundary lines is based on an antiquated system in which properties are located relative to adjacent properties such as public roadways, water and flood canals, and other features. The boundaries are measured with tapes or ropes whose dimensions vary with temperature. Over time, as properties change hands and different measuring tools are used, small errors become bigger so that determining precise boundary lines is all but impossible.

The impacts and the uses of accurate and verifiable boundary lines are many. For example, accuracy is an important factor in assessing property taxes, garnering loans from banks, and developing citywide infrastructures such water, sewer, electrical and other utilities. The introduction of modern technology such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) can make formalizing property lines easy and accurate. Using this system will go a long way in developing an accurate Graphic Information System (GIS) in every city, and eventually throughout Afghanistan.

The fact that there are many formal and informal property titles, and that additional titles are being added as the population grows, the need for the private sector participation to implement this system is a must. The inclusion of the private sector has been successfully used by a variety of countries throughout the world.

LATITUDE:
34° 31' 41.69" N
LONGITUDE:
69° 11' 37.91" E

LATITUDE:
34° 31' 41.40" N
LONGITUDE:
69° 11' 38.94" E



LATITUDE:
34° 31' 40.58" N
LONGITUDE:
69° 11' 37.35" E

LATITUDE:
34° 31' 40.33" N
LONGITUDE:
69° 11' 38.04" E

POINT TABLE		
POINT No.	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
P1	34° 31' 41.69" N	69° 11' 37.91" E
P2	34° 31' 41.40" N	69° 11' 38.94" E
P3	34° 31' 40.58" N	69° 11' 37.35" E
P4	34° 31' 40.33" N	69° 11' 38.04" E

A depiction of boundary lines using GPS and providing specific coordinate points

Under this initiative, municipal and provincial governments would license private land-survey companies to produce modern, accurate measurements of property boundary lines. Fortunately, Afghanistan already has a strong and available cadre of engineers and surveyors who are trained in the use of GIS/GPS technology, as a result of the construction boom of the past decade. This simple reform would thus not only provide needed employment to skilled professionals, but, by creating an accurate map of all private-property holdings in the entire country, it would also help reduce or eliminate local land disputes.

Single Tax Rate

Taxation is a contentious issue everywhere in the world, and it is no different in Afghanistan. The current tax processes and procedures in Afghanistan are unduly difficult and are subject to many irregularities. The difficulty is especially noticeable in payments by small and medium size entrepreneurs who have a little or no formal accounting structures, understanding or even the necessary literacy to keep a rudimentary accounting of their business activities. Consequently, taxes are not collected in a timely fashion, they are not collected to the full extent of the law, and even when they are collected they often are not even accounted properly by the government.

The complex requirements of the existing tax codes have created an accounting nightmare in which taxpayers are asked to keep accounts of every single transaction, no matter how large or small. This system developed at a time when the economy was still in its infancy and the climate was ripe for financial mischief. An unfortunate byproduct of the complex tax code has been the advent of corruption throughout the government and the public sector. The recently proposed value-added tax (VAT), if enacted, will exacerbate a bad situation to a point that

corruption will become a way of life. Should that come to pass, it may take generations for Afghanistan to restore public trust in government.

The Afghan government needs to adopt a new, simplified tax code that will increase compliance, produce more revenue, and reduce opportunities

for corruption. The new tax code should be based on a single rate for any given type of economic transaction. Imported materials, for example, should be taxed at one flat rate that includes all the value added from arrival in the country to final consumers. The same should apply to labor rates and real-estate rental rates that are already set at 20 percent and at two months of the prevailing charges, respectively. Small businesses should be charged a yearly license fee that is not excessive and burdensome. Developing a tax code that is simple, fair, and transparent will build support for the government and provide the revenue required to satisfy public expectations of their elected officials.

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Nurturing Cottage Industries

In the past, Afghanistan had many cottage industries mainly offering services and products that were used within the country. Examples of these industries include Istalef pottery making; silk cloth and handkerchiefs from Herat; Persian lambskin hats and coats from Kabul; calligraphy, shoes, and sandal making throughout the South and East; and many other trades. Currently these industries are a mere shadow of their former selves. There are no structures, formal or informal, to

many other trades. Currently these industries are a mere shadow of their former selves. There are no structures, formal or informal, to rekindle them, and only a few of the master craftsmen are still alive to pass their knowledge on to younger generations.

A comprehensive initiative is needed to revive these industries and create jobs throughout the country, everywhere from large cities to smaller towns and villages. A two-pronged approach would include both training the next generation of craftsmen and creating domestic and foreign markets for their products. To compete in global markets these resurrected industries must offer quality workmanship and products at an attractive price. Craftsmen must be trained in the latest design methods and must have access to top-quality raw materials.

The government can help by offering grants and microcredit, as well as by offering loan guarantees to banks that provide credit to these nascent industries. The most important action that the Afghan



Government can take is to help create a sustained demand for these products abroad. Specifically, the Government can direct its embassies to help promote these industries through direct marketing by holding various functions at the embassies and hosting various exhibits in the resident countries. Foreign and national businessmen should be encouraged to invest in these industries and bring foreign investment to the country.

Reviving the Jewelry Industry

Being a landlocked country, Afghanistan must pursue initiatives that promote industries that produce high-value, low-volume products such as jewelry. Afghanistan is blessed with abundant gemstones and all the other raw materials necessary to produce world-class jewelry. It is surely a great irony that a country that once produced so much beautiful jewelry is currently flooded with low-quality imports.

The Afghan government can revive the jewelry industry by implementing simple reforms that provide essential training and marketing support. Afghan jewelers will be competing with their counterparts in nearby countries that already have robust jewelry industries. For the Afghan jewelry industry to thrive, it must produce luxury goods that will appeal to the richest 1 percent of the world's population. Afghan jewelers must therefore be trained to meet or exceed industry standards for quality and workmanship. At the same time, they will need financing, tax exemptions for foreign investors, and marketing support to create a new global brand for quality jewelry from Afghanistan.

A simple and effective way to market the jewelry products is for the Afghan embassies around the world to contact various marketing agencies in their host countries that to represent these products.



Also, the embassies can use their locations to showcase these products by inviting those whole sellers and retailers who deal in these products. Embassies can host special events or attend industry events where a wide range of crafts are displayed. The first step is ensuring the world knows that Afghanistan can, and does, produce high quality products, such as jewelry.

Power from Private Generators

For a number of years, the Afghan Government has been purchasing electricity from neighboring countries. These purchases are very expensive when analyzed against the losses resulting from transmission, distribution and a fixed purchase amount per twenty-four hour period. Also, importing power from abroad has proven to be extremely vulnerable to security conditions as the recent downing of

the transmission towers in Pul-e-khomri proved, leaving Kabul and other provinces without electricity for several weeks.

In many cases, purchasing the same amount of power could very well be cost-effective if it is purchased from the private sector. The development of proper regulations can go a long way towards the inception of a private utility industry in the country. The initial investment in the generation segment of the overall power supply chain has already been made by the many generators that are available in Afghanistan today. This fact makes for a compelling argument for developing a privately owned power utility sector.

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Operating an electric power plant and grid is extremely sensitive when faced with varying demands. Balancing power demand with power generation/supply is one of the single most important determining factors in the profitability of a power producing entity. Micro-producers can respond to the power needs in a timelier fashion with an eye on profitability and greater service.

Much of the world's power utility companies are privately owned and operated. The remaining countries who own their utilities are fast shedding ownership from government- owned and centralized bureaucracy to privately owned and operated. The main reason for such a change arises from the fact that government- owned utilities

managers are not beholden to their owners nor to the customers that they supposedly serve.

The rapid specialization of the power utility industry has been another reason for calls to privatization. The fast paced of change in the ways and means of power generation, transmission and distribution has made it a revolutionary process. For example, in the United States, between 1975 through 1995, the utility companies went through a major transformational period. During this period, the utilities saw the breakup of a significant number of utilities in the United States from an integrated industry to three distinct industries of generation, transmission, and distribution. As a result, today a customer can purchase power from a multitude of power generators offering discounted power rates and/or power generated from varying energy sources which have varying degrees of environmental impacts.



This transformation ushered in a new and more advanced approach known as Distributed Energy Resources (DER). The adoption of the DER strategy through the use of privately owned electric utilities utilizing Micro and Nano generation and distribution mechanisms will be vital to the growth of the Afghan economy. By creating private utility companies, the Government of Afghanistan can restructure the existing subsidies that allow for misuse and excessive power without increasing prices through more innovative approaches. The restructuring of the subsidies can assist Afghanistan to avoid the plight of those countries who were in a similar situation as Afghanistan and where the eventual removal of subsidies resulted in much larger disruption of the status quo than their perceived initial benefits.

The adoption of the DER strategy through the use of privately owned electric utilities utilizing Micro and Nano generation and distribution mechanisms will be vital to the growth of the Afghan economy.

Under this initiative, the Afghan Government would sanction the creation of micro utilities in the underserved parts of large cities and or in areas where the Afghan owned utility does not provide any services. Initially, these micro utilities would use the many thousands of small and large generators imported into Afghanistan over the past 12 years. Most of these generators were used by the coalition forces and were left behind as foreign troops left the country in recent years.

These generators, along with those owned by the private sector and the Afghan Security Forces, constitute a large and important source of

power-generating capacity in Afghanistan today and they are already in country, ready to go. Specifically, as an initial step toward the eventual privatization of the utility industry in Afghanistan, these private generators should be connected to the existing distribution network to provide backup or extra generating capacity during times of peak demand. Purchasing power from locally operated private generators will be, by far, more cost effective than buying imported electricity (despite the current tax on imported diesel fuel) and will keep hard-earned foreign currency from leaving the country.

In addition to creating numerous good jobs it will also help jump-start the development of an

independent power grid all across Afghanistan. Furthermore, one can readily envision the conversion of these generators to natural gas based power generators using Afghanistan's own natural gas resources. The use of the Afghan owned natural gas can prove to be the greatest boost to Afghanistan economy.

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Scholarships and a Culture of Learning

History is full of stories of the impact of new technologies on human progress throughout the ages. Keeping up with new technology is a must for any society to advance and prosper, and in many cases it is necessary even to survive. In this context, new technology means both

hardware (tools, equipment, materials) as well as software (theoretical advances and processes, new standards, rules, and regulations, conceptual research) that have potential for future applications.

Over the past decade, many advanced countries have assisted Afghanistan through capacity building in a variety of fields. With a few exceptions (Fulbright scholarships, for example), a great deal of this capacity building consisted of short seminars and trips abroad that had very small, if any, significant long-term impacts in Afghanistan. Far too many of the scholarships that were awarded did not take into account the country's needs, the attrition rate of participants in the programs, or their success upon their return home. At the same time, 30 years of war and social upheaval had all but devastated institutions of higher education and the learned professions in Afghanistan. Consequently, the need for scholarships and advanced training today is far greater than ever before.

In addition to learning specific academic and technical subjects, the next generation of Afghan scholars and professionals needs to learn not only how to use digital tools,

electronic communications, and online sources of information but also the culture and work habits of workers in more advanced countries.

The best way to promote such learning is through practical training, not just classroom teaching. Afghan students need greater exposure to the professional workplace to see how teamwork and collaboration solve problems and increase productivity. And after they return home they



need to remain connected to professional associations and to have access to life-long training and career-development opportunities.

Afghanistan's ambassadors should be tasked with obtaining as many foreign scholarships and study-abroad opportunities as possible for qualified Afghan students, similar to the expectation that they will obtain foreign work visas.

Leather Tanning and Shoemaking

As an agricultural country, Afghanistan produces a large number of cattle and sheep. Many of these animals are slaughtered and consumed within the country, while also producing a large numbers of animal skins. Today, these animal skins are exported to nearby countries as a source of raw materials for their local tanning industries. The tanning industry is not unknown in Afghanistan, but in the past, it existed mostly as a cottage industry. The revival and expansion of this industry is another opportunity for the new government to create good and permanent jobs.

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Ideally, this initiative would involve a public-private partnership in which the government provides free land, tax exemptions, and subsidized loan rates to investors in the tanning industry. The government can also create a demand for its products by revitalizing shoemaking and other leather-based manufactures through similar incentives. To create the initial and highly significant demand for the manufactured

products, the government should also purchase footwear for the Afghan security forces from these new manufacturers, instead of importing hundreds of thousands of boots from other countries in the region.

Since the Afghan Government is purchasing many thousands of boots each year, as a part of this its annual budget cycle, the government should consider placing a small order of 1,000 to 5,000 boots to a number of cobblers throughout the country. Specific requirements should be placed as to the size, quality, and use of the Afghan manufactured leather and other local production items. The cobbler's production rate and product quality can be evaluated at the end of each production cycle against the stated criteria of the contract. Those cobblers who prove to be capable of meeting the Government's requirements on time and within budget should be given additional orders in the next cycle. Regardless of its initial inefficiency or product quality, the government can be instrumental in the revival of the shoe manufacturing industry.

The revitalization of these two industries closes the loop on an otherwise inefficient use of these valuable products. Any investment in this area will have a quick, but long-term impact on the country's path to industrialization and greater employment.



A Roadmap to Future Afghanistan Mining Industry

As a landlocked country Afghanistan is at a severe disadvantage with respect to the mass exportation of its mining products. The country's infrastructure is not suited to shipping large amounts of raw materials to distant customers, or even to the seaports of neighboring countries. Afghanistan must therefore resort to a more innovative means of producing and delivering these products to their intended destinations. Since the development of a robust infrastructure capable of carrying raw materials is years away, the need for a more innovative approach to reduce the weight and volume and to increase the value of these raw materials becomes essential.

In the year 2010, the U.S Geological Survey Agency (USGS) released a report based on an aerial survey of Afghanistan. The report estimated the value of mineral deposits in the country to be

Other estimates place the actual value of these deposits at \$3 trillion or more.

about \$1 trillion. Other estimates place the actual value of these deposits at \$3 trillion or more. Afghanistan's rich repositories include such diverse minerals as barite, chromite, coal, copper, gold, iron ore, lead, natural gas, petroleum, precious and semi-precious stones, salt, sulfur, talc, and zinc among many other minerals. A good example of these deposits is the Khanneshin carbonite field which has an estimated value of close to \$100 billion. Also, the country is well known for its gemstone deposits which include high-quality emerald, lapis lazuli, red garnet and ruby.

The USGS report scientifically proved the existence of over 1400 mineral fields. Many of these mineral fields have been well known to

the country for millennia having been discovered as far back as 5,000 to 10,000 years ago. There are many archeological finds that show the extraction of some of these deposits through the ages, and the lapis lazuli mine in Badakhshan Province is believed to be the oldest semi-precious stone mine in the world.

The USGS report scientifically proved the existence of over 1400 mineral fields.

What has happened with all these known deposits and their potential for riches during the years since the USGS report has been published? Almost nothing has happened since this report was released. It has been reported that the Chinese company which has the mining rights to Mes Aynak copper field has run into problems with security and other issues related to starting a new mine. The many other awarded mining contracts may have also run into the same troubles; and as a result, the country is left with little, if anything, to show for its efforts to create income through mining operations. However, one important fact remains, the illegal mining industry is growing throughout the country.

Proper mining requires a well thought out plan and implementation of sensible policies in order for the extraction of mineral deposits to become a full-fledged mining operation. Given the existing state of the country and the challenges that are inherent to the exploitations of these riches, such plans and policies should be based on the experiences and lessons learned by so many other countries throughout the world over, and many centuries of experience. An even more important factor to be considered in developing these policies is the realization that the country's deposits are far more

numerous and inexhaustible for the ongoing of any illegal operations of today.

The world mining industry is dominated mostly by large operators/companies. These companies own and operate a complete marketing chain for their products. They have been highly successful not only in their efficient production, but also at the delivery of their products to their consumers in a timely manner and at competitive prices. These companies are

catering to a wide group of consumers throughout the world. Similarly, there are many medium companies and even a greater number of

The world mining industry is dominated mostly by large operators/companies.

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small prospectors that are

successfully operating regionally or even locally. The large deposits in Afghanistan are likely best suited for the large companies who have both the necessary capital, the technical know-how and the marketing

capability to be successful. Thus bringing a new and vital tax base to Afghanistan, in addition to the additional employment and new career fields that will be developed to accommodate this market.

For the smaller deposits, the concept of using small and medium size companies is the key to a short-term solution in creating an Afghan mining industry. One of the best example of successful small mining

A great example of successful small mining operations happened in the United States in the late 19th century. In 1872, the US Government passed a law known as The General Mining Act of 1872. This law authorizes and governs prospecting and mining for economic minerals, such as gold, platinum, and silver, on public lands. This law codified the informal system of acquiring and protecting mining claims on public land. The law granted that citizens of the United States of America, 18 years or older, have the right under the 1872 mining law to locate a lode (hard rock) or placer (gravel) mining claim on government owned lands that are open to mineral entry.

Similar to the United States law, the Afghan Government must begin to legalize current illegal mining. In pursuing this approach, new policies and procedures are needed to allow the current mining activities to proceed and be expanded. Since many of the current mining operations, both legal and illegal, are small, the Government's policy must not be limited to only allowing these operations to continue, but it should also be geared at helping these miners to flourish and become more efficient and profitable.

These policies should be founded on the following facts and assumptions:

- Any and all deposits are too large and cannot be depleted with the existing operations.
- All operations create jobs and help the economy, no matter how small.
- The number of proven deposits are too numerous (1,400) for the Government bureaucratic process to exploit either efficiently or expeditiously.

- The continuity and consistency approach that is inherent of the private sector goes a long way towards a successful operation.
- The Government has a role to create and maintain a marketing chain to final users that is necessary for these operations to grow and prosper.
- The Government has a role to train miners to utilize more efficient and safe operations.
- Government has a role in increasing miners' profitability through greater mechanization, better transportation, and greater efficiency in processes and procedures.

The extraction of large deposits requires a completely different approach that is arguably opposite to the small mining operation. In its pronouncement of its policies for the large deposits, it is paramount that the Afghan Government take a long-term view of the benefits to the Nation in selecting the appropriate mining companies.

Specifically, Government policy must identify and define long-term benefits that result from the selection of a company and must consider the following issues:

- Financial and technical ability and quantity of the resources,
- Access to the worldwide market and existing customers
- Ability to a closed loop chain from extraction to final customer and back
- Must be one of the top ten producers in the world, if not one of the top five
- Must have a footprint on the ground within one year
- Must have in-depth knowledge of political and security issues

- Ability to handle its own security issues for a discrete period of time;
- Share of the world market for the same or similar product;
- Ability to generate the most jobs in the Country at the least costs to the country;
- Propensity for capacity building;
- Experience in successfully operating in similar environment as in Afghanistan;

The mining industry is one of the largest industries in the world. In many countries mining is a significant part of their economies. With its large number of deposits, mining has the potential to become the largest contributor to the Afghan economy, even surpassing illegal drugs in a short time.

The Afghan Government must adhere to a two prong policy that is based on long-term and real-world circumstances.



Escondida copper mine in the Atacama Desert in Northern Chile is currently the world's largest copper mine by reserve and by copper production. In financial year ending June 2013 output stood at 1.1 million tonnes (Mt), accounting for about five percent of global copper production.

For the small mining operations, it should be based on legalization of illegal mining operations, and for large operations, it must be based on attracting mining companies with large share of market in their specific industries.

Furthermore, the Afghan Government must consider mining as a long-term proposition and award rights to those companies that have the greatest chance to successfully extract and operate in a very competitive market. It is important to mention that any large mining operation in Afghanistan will require a great amount of resources to develop the necessary infrastructures that include both physical and human capacity. It has been shown that mining of such deposits as copper, iron ore and semi-precious stones are very long-term effort lasting decades if not centuries; therefore, the Afghan Government must offer the mining companies very lucrative offers and refrain itself from any short-term direct share of the proceeds. The Afghan nation will greatly benefit from indirect impacts of mining such as employment, taxes, infrastructures (roads, power, water and others), and direct investment.

Natural Refrigeration for Food Warehousing

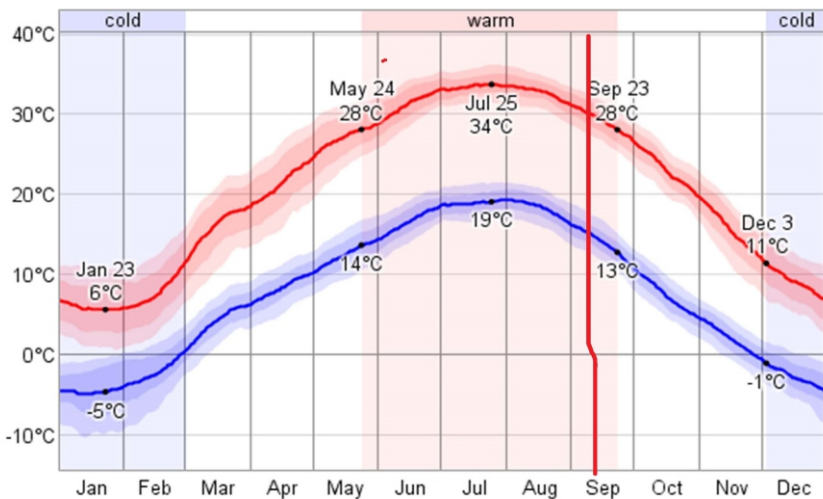
The geography and climate of Afghanistan lend themselves to a number potential economic opportunities. The tall mountains of Hindukush that bisect the country also provide naturally cooled air throughout the year. In most parts of Afghanistan, the temperature differences between higher and lower elevations are large enough to

The tall mountains of Hindukush that bisect the country also provide naturally cooled air throughout the year.

allow for properly constructed warehouses to keep food at refrigerated temperatures with little or no electrical power. These warehouses can be used to keep many farm products fresh for a longer period of time, moderate seasonal price fluctuations, and increase farmers' income during the harvest seasons.

Ideally this initiative would focus first on those areas that already have infrastructure such as roads and airport access. The mountains of Paghman, for example, are only 12 kilometers from Kabul and would be an excellent candidate for this initiative. The temperature difference between Kabul city and the higher elevations of Paghman can be as much 12 – 15 degrees Celsius during the day and even greater at night. With the farmlands of Wardak, Logar, and Kabul provinces within striking distance, naturally cooled warehouses would be an ideal way to keep apples, onions, potatoes, and many other farm products in peak condition for an extended period of time.

Average Weather For Kabul, Afghanistan



In September and October, the farmlands of Kabul and adjacent provinces produce a large quantity of onion and apple. The lack of conditioned space suppresses the price to less than the breakeven point. Much of these products are sold to Pakistan where they are kept in conditioned warehouses and resold back to Afghanistan at much higher prices in the winter months. Installation of warehouses on higher ground, such as Paghman or other similar areas, will be instrumental in keeping these products fresh and alleviating the hardships that Afghan consumers face during the winter season.

In the initial stage, there is no need for the construction of an elaborate warehousing system. Simple containers that can be easily modified and delivered to a preselected sites will suffice. These containers can be outfitted with small ventilation systems that will operate with solar cells as the power source. A pilot project is needed to demonstrate and prove to the private sector and the farmers of the validity of the concept and its economic impacts.

In the case of onions, it is suggested that onions to be stored in a cool, dry, well-ventilated area. The temperature inside the storage area must be maintained between 8 and 13 degrees Celsius. The stored onions must be kept out of direct sunlight and should not be wrapped in plastic or stored in plastic bags, as lack of circulation will reduce shelf life. The life expectancy of onions in well ventilated storage is approximately 180 days, or 6 months. Such storage and shelf life will allow the produce from Kabul area farmers to remain fresh and market worthy.

Other than the pilot project, as with many of the other reform initiatives proposed in this book, the role of the government is to provide modest tax incentives, low interest rates, and land grants or leases.

Private businesses would build and maintain the warehouses and negotiate the terms and conditions of their services with the farmers who use them.

The Case for Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)

Recent geological studies have shown an abundance of natural gas deposits in northern Afghanistan and the likelihood of additional deposits elsewhere in the country. Natural gas is the cleanest form of all fossil fuels and has been used as fuel and feedstock for hundreds of years. These deposits can be and must become a cornerstone of the new Afghan economy in the upcoming years.

The use of natural gas in Afghanistan has the potential to replace a major share of gasoline as a transportation fuel, and to replace liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and wood as cooking and heating fuels.

It also can quickly become an economical and clean source for generating electricity throughout the country, which would help reduce air pollution in Afghan cities.

In the world today, natural gas is transported three ways: by pipeline, liquefied, and compressed. Pipelines are expensive and require long-term commitments. Transporting liquefied natural gas is also not cost-effective for landlocked countries like Afghanistan. The most practical and economical option for Afghanistan is to ship compressed natural gas by trucks. Traditionally, a significant majority of Afghan goods are transported by trucks. The trucking industry is well developed and efficient in carrying all types of loads all over Afghanistan in all kinds of weather, security conditions, or types of administrative powers in Kabul.

A recent USAID pilot project in Sheberghan successfully proved the use of CNG as a fuel for taxis. This experiment should be expanded to other uses such as the replacement of LPG, which Afghanistan currently must purchase with foreign currency. The Afghan government could partner with a number of LPG importers and small truck operators to transport Afghan-owned CNG to other areas near the sources, and later to deliver the product to more distant locations. There is a little difference in the transportation of LPG and CNG, with the exception that CNG requires stronger tanks. Transport of the fuel itself is still carried out by tanker trucks.

To make CNG use a reality, the National Unity Government must create an independent entity to manage CNG production, transportation, and marketing. This entity must be given all the necessary authority to make CNG a fuel of choice throughout Afghanistan in less than one year. Given such a tight schedule, the President needs to be involved personally and needs to monitor the implementation progress by granting the entity leadership unabated access to visit him to discuss any problems they might encounter during this period.



CNG technology is well proven and has been used by many countries, including Afghanistan's neighbors Iran and Pakistan. There is no better time than now for the Afghan government in collaboration with donor countries to launch a pilot project based on a public/private partnership to begin using this important source of energy to help resurrect the Afghanistan economy.

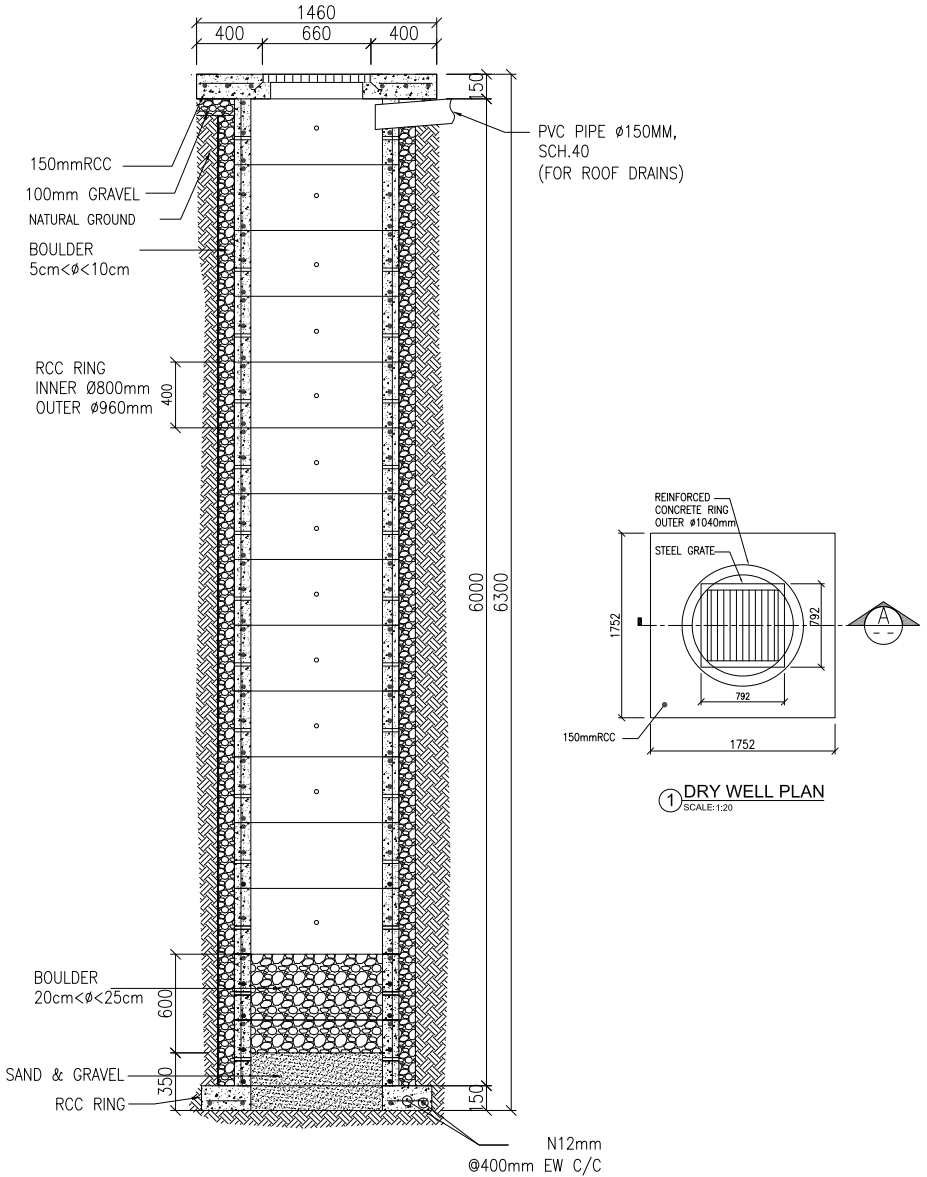


Reversing Kabul's Environmental Setbacks

The spring of 2016 has brought with it an unprecedented amount of rain throughout Afghanistan and especially in Kabul. The rain in Kabul has awoken the good old memories when Kabul was much greener than in recent years, and the groundwater levels were at an arm's reach in many parts of the city. Today, Kabul is as green, and the river runs full, as those of us who are sixty something remember. However, with the recent amount of rain Kabul has received, roads are full of standing water, making them impassable.

So what has happened over the last 30 to 40 years to Kabul and its citizens? One would suggest that the destruction caused by the many wars and ensuing regime changes are the reasons for today's problems. This could very well be true, but for the most part they are not the only reason or even the primary cause. Throughout history, Kabul was known as the city of many gardens, and this can still be observed by the names of various areas of the city with names such as Bagh Bala, Bagh Qazi and others. A reason for so much greenery and pristine air was the presence of a number of wetlands throughout the area. It was said that there were at least four to five wetlands working as the source for replenishing ground water and functioning as a filter for dust and unhealthy particles from the Kabul atmosphere.

The largest of these wetlands was known as Dand Wazirabad. This wetland covered a large portion of today's Kabul and included most of the present Kabul Airport. The impact of this wetland was enormous in the life of the city, especially, in the east. For example, the water level was never below four meters in the summer, also while keeping the dust storms that Kabul is known for today at bay. The decision to drain this wetland, and others, has been an environmental disaster to Kabul. Currently, the water levels of certain sections of eastern Kabul



A DRY WELL SECTION
SCALE:1:20

are well below 50 meters, even as much as 70 meters in the summer, forcing deep well drilling and costly pumping. The result has been a lack of the necessary water to grow and maintain any sizeable greenery throughout the city.

Another function of Kabul's wetlands is to contain and control seasonal runoffs. In comparison, presently, after each rain event, many of the city's roads are impassable; and, in some areas, the city is forced to drain excess water by pumping and hauling it to the Kabul River. Not only is this an expensive means of dealing with runoff, it is also a waste of good water, and not to mention the unsustainability of the action. The impact of standing water in reducing the life of paved roads are well documented, and worthy of mentioning here as another reason for resolving this multi-faceted problem.

Another function of Kabul's wetlands was to contain and control seasonal runoffs.

To address today's environmental issues, and to reverse the many years of environmental neglect, the Kabul Municipality and even the Afghan Government must embark on a fundamental change in its ways and means of treating them. Any new approach must take into account not only the water runoffs but also summer dust and means of making Kabul green once again.



The geology of Kabul lends itself to a potential solution for many of its environmental malaise. Over millennia, Kabul must have been a river bed of some type. This can be seen by the experience of every house that has a well to draw water and the many septic wells built throughout the city. Invariably, everyone's experience has been that after a short deposit of clay somewhere around two to three meters deep, the ground is mostly made of gravel and sand. This characteristic of the land is the genesis for a long-term solution in reversing many of today's environmental setbacks.

The sequestration of the runoffs through construction and placement of dry wells is one such

a solution. However, it is most important to point out that the placement of these wells in appropriate locations and using appropriate designs are essential in reversing the environmental setbacks. The construction of the dry wells will not only recharge Kabul's groundwater/aquifers but also assist in minimizing dust throughout the city. In addition, today's design of ditches that are constructed along the city roads are rendered obsolete; and their absence gives the city much wider roads and cost effective way to build. Furthermore, by removing the roadside ditches, the city also removes the scars and the eyesores that exist today in the nation's capital city.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that any future decisions to implement the dry well system must be based on solid foundation and by evaluating both technical and financial merits of the system in different parts of the city.

The construction of the dry wells will not only recharge K a b u l ' s groundwater/aquifers but also assist in minimizing dust throughout the city.

Promoting A Recreation Industry

The daily lives of humans primarily consists of spending time in work, sleep, social duties, and leisure. Humans' need for recreation and leisure come from the need to be free from commitments to social and physiological needs. The need for leisure has grown as a result greater longevity, affluence, population trends, and increased commercialization of recreational offerings. This has become a fact despite today's modern life where an individual conducts many tasks in a given period and has little if any free time for himself or herself.

In recent times, the recreation industry has grown exponentially as results of the following factors:

- The fact that modern men produces more, proportionally the need to have downtime and to recharge has also increased.
- The affluence which has come about from greater production is giving the modern population the means by which they can enjoy leisure.
- Longevity where many people live many years longer past their retirement is another factor.
- The most important factor in driving this industry is the availability of recreation facilities such as parks, cultural centers, cinemas, theatres, restaurants, travels and many others that are established and operating not too far from the population in many small and large cities throughout the world.

In most cases, the amount of money spent on recreation and leisure is directly correlated with the per capita income of a country. The greater the per capita income, the higher the percentage expenditure on

culture and recreation. In many advanced countries, recreation expenditures account for as much as 7% of the total country earnings also known as gross domestic product.

Leisure, downtime, or recreation has a long history in Afghanistan. In the past, there were many occasions which were celebrated throughout the year. To name a few, there was the week long independence celebration in August, Nowroze in Mazar-e-Sharif, Gul-e-Arghwan in Kohdaman and many other similar events. The seasonal trips of Kabul residence to Paghman and Kohdaman planes, and Salang valley; Herat residence to Takhta Safar, Kandahars residence Dahla Dam and many others are samples of a very unorganized and individual family decision which in many cases are made spontaneously and in a spur of the moment.

The number of major recreation facilities in Afghanistan are numerous and the majority are owned by the Government. These facilities are mostly unused and their contribution to the country's GDP and job creation is minimal and insignificant. In Kabul alone, facilities such as



Baghballa, Tapa Paghman, Bagh Baber are either unused or underused. Despite the existence of these facilities, Kabul residents are lacking places to go and to have any appreciable downtime. Leasing these facilities to the private sector not only adds to the overall economy but would also be beneficial to the wellbeing of the citizenry. The Afghan Government can easily turn these, and similar facilities, to the private sector for a quick and more efficient use. This is another area for creating employment and increasing revenue and wealth.

Epilogue

Afghanistan today is at a crossroads. The withdrawal of most foreign military forces, and the election and inauguration of a new government, has created many opportunities for the Afghan people to move beyond the violence and underdevelopment of recent decades toward a future of greater prosperity and self-reliance. This book discusses a number of transformational opportunities to create jobs and build a more open and inclusive society. These initiatives are not the only means available to the Afghan government and its foreign partners but they represent opportunities that could have the fastest and greatest impact on lowering unemployment in the country. These reforms also promote inclusivity and spread wealth throughout the society without regard to tribal, linguistic, or religious affiliations.

Fundamentally, the wealth of a nation is directly related to the resources it has at its disposal. These resources include not only to their physical manifestations such as population, natural resources, and geographic location, but also such nonphysical resources as its political institutions, rule of law, independent media, and others. Of all these factors, perhaps none is more important than the inclusion of the populace in the affairs of a nation.

That is why creating jobs and reducing unemployment is critically important, not only for the economic well-being of Afghanistan, but for its political and social well-being.

“Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

That is why having a job and participating in public life makes citizens immune to the dead-end appeals of violent extremists. As the American president Abraham Lincoln said of those who died in

the American Civil War, we too may

say of those who died in Afghanistan's struggle for freedom, We will dedicate ourselves to their unfinished work so that “Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the Earth.”

The nature of unemployment and under-employment is the same across the globe. Its impact is well documented in both developed and developing nations. Countries with high rates of employment invariably enjoy stability and prosperity. Economic growth, wealth creation, and health and longevity are just some of the desirable by-products of high employment rates. Conversely, high unemployment rates are the source of warfare, instability, and human misery. Although the initiatives presented in this book are all discussed with reference to Afghanistan, they can easily be applied in or adapted to other third-world countries suffering from similar problems. Ideally, the conversation started by this study will grow into a global conversation about improving employment, prosperity, and the quality of life.



About the Author

Sayed “Aziz” Azimi is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of Technologists, Inc. (Ti), an international engineering and management consulting firm headquartered in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. Ti works primarily in developing countries to build infrastructure, improve governance, and increase human capacity. Since 2004 Mr. Azimi has directed Ti's operations in all parts of the Afghanistan, where the company has completed more than 1,000 small and large projects for public- and private-sector clients. The initiatives presented in this book are based on Mr. Azimi's extensive travels, research, and work experiences in a career spanning almost 40 years of professional life , plus his conversations with foreign donors, public officials, NGO professionals, and business leaders involved in rebuilding Afghanistan.



The author invites readers to comment on or respond to this book by writing to

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