

**AFGHANISTAN COUNTRY PROGRAM REPORT
JOINT REVIEW OF ADVISER POSITIONS - THE AUSTRALIAN AID PROGRAM**

Overview

[A Joint Adviser Review Report](#) was released on 15 February 2011, which provided a synthesis of the findings and key recommendations from individual country reviews, including country specific adviser figures and narrative.

Australia worked bilaterally with a large number of partner country governments to review each adviser position. While the underlying Review methodology and the core content of country-specific reports is consistent across programs, in each case the final country-specific Review Report reflects decisions made by the joint Review teams as appropriate for the specific cultural and language context. As a result there are some presentational differences between reports.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the joint Review process undertaken between the Governments of Afghanistan and Australia. This Report has been amended to ensure AusAID does not breach its privacy obligations related to individuals and/or relative to information considered sensitive to bilateral relationships.

It is important to note that the Review process involved an assessment of the value and effectiveness of each adviser position – not the performance of individuals in those positions. The Review focused on the role of each position in meeting agreed country program objectives and development outcomes. On the basis of this assessment, the continued funding of adviser positions by AusAID was jointly considered and agreed with partner governments.

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AFGHANISTAN PROGRAM REPORT: JOINT REVIEW OF ADVISER POSITIONS

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Review Objectives

A review of the use of technical advisers across the Australian aid program was announced in the 2010–2011 Budget Statement. The review was to be undertaken by Australia jointly with partner governments to ensure each long term adviser position is the most effective, value for money response to meeting agreed needs and priorities. The review was to develop an agreed process for regularly reviewing the use of advisers and new requests for adviser positions.

A Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the Development Assistance Facility for Afghanistan (DAFA) was conducted in September 2010. The DAFA is Australia's main bilateral program in Afghanistan and, at present, the only mechanism through which Australia deploys technical assistance. As such, it was agreed with AusAID's Operations Policy and Support section that the DAFA MTR would be used as the basis for reviewing the use of advisers in the Australian aid program in Afghanistan. The MTR, which was conducted in close consultation with the Afghan Government, assessed the relevance and effectiveness of the six advisers currently deployed through the DAFA in Afghanistan.

1.2. Adviser Role / Findings

Through the DAFA, Australia deploys six advisers to four central Afghan Government Ministries (Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL); Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD); Education (MoE); and Public Health (MoPH)). The process of defining adviser roles, developing terms of reference, recruiting suitable candidates, and agreeing work plans is done in a participatory manner with the relevant Afghan Ministries. Whilst each adviser meets a defined need, the nature of the role, the experience of the adviser, and the fit with the many other advisers in Ministries varies. Although advisers have specified outputs and elements of an exit strategy, the outcomes envisaged are ambitious and may not be achieved within the timeframe or by a single adviser. The Afghan Government is increasingly in favour of the deployment of future advisers through the Government's own Civilian Technical Assistance program (CTAP). CTAP is a relatively new, government run, capacity development program designed to mobilise local, regional and, in some cases, international technical advisers to build the capacity of civil servants in strategic parts of government.

The review team assessed the case for future provision of advisers through the Afghan Government's (GoRoA) preferred CTAP initiative. While CTAP is not the answer to the considerable challenges facing the Ministries – such as, the divide between core civil service and contracted staff, and a proliferation of international advisers with different reporting arrangements – it aims to address key aid effectiveness concerns and should be considered as the primary mechanism for deploying technical assistance in the future.

1.3. Recommendations Summary

The review recommends that advisers currently deployed by DAFA not be routinely extended. In exceptional cases, where a Ministry can make a compelling case for an extension, this should be considered.

In reviewing the case for the future provision of advisers, it is clear that there will be an ongoing need for capacity building advisers in Afghanistan. Future Australian support for advisers should be channelled predominantly through the CTAP and current adviser support should be registered with the CTAP in accordance with GoIRoA guidelines for 'off-budget' assistance. However, due to the swiftly changing strategic and operational context in Afghanistan, flexibility will be maintained to deploy responsive TA through bilateral mechanisms, with such deployments agreed with GoIRoA and reviewed annually through high-level consultations with the Afghan Government.

2. Strategic Context

2.1. Brief overview of AusAID's Afghanistan program and the role of advisers

Australia's development assistance to Afghanistan increased substantially in 2010-11, with the AusAID country program growing by over 50 per cent to \$106 million. AusAID staff numbers in-country have tripled and, along with a strengthened engagement at the national level, direct programming in Uruzgan province is increasing sharply, from around \$1.6 million in 2009-10 to approximately \$20 million in 2010-11.

Australia's aid program focuses on improving the Afghan Government's capacity to deliver core services such as health and education, and supporting agriculture – a key driver for income generation. A particular focus is on capacity building and stabilisation in Uruzgan Province, where Australia leads the multinational Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). At the national level, Australia assists to build the capacity of core central government ministries through scholarships, skills training and technical assistance, and providing support to key Afghan national health, education and rural development programs.

Since December 2009, Australia has deployed targeted advisory support to the Afghan Government through the DAFA. Advisers are used to help rebuild core competencies in selected Afghan ministries where there are major needs and skills shortages. Six advisers are currently deployed to MAIL, MRRD, MoE and MoPH, each of which is procured and managed through the DAFA. Adviser positions are identified by the relevant Afghan Government Ministry and the process of defining adviser roles, developing terms of reference, recruiting suitable candidates, and agreeing work plans is done in a participatory manner by the DAFA and the relevant Afghan Ministry.

Since the DAFA commenced in March 2009, the strategic context in Afghanistan has changed significantly. At the Kabul Conference held on 20 July 2010, donors agreed that 50 per cent of their development assistance would be delivered 'on budget' and that 80 per cent of assistance would align with the National Priority Programs presented at the Conference. The Government also released guidance for programs that are delivered 'off-budget'. On 28 July 2010, the CTAP was officially launched.

2.2 Outline of methodology used to conduct review

The DAFA MTR was conducted in September 2010 by two independent consultants engaged by AusAID. Engagement with the Afghan Government (GoIRoA) was extensive, including in-depth interviews with four Ministers and two Deputy Ministers. The following questions were used during the interviews:

- a. How appropriate is the provision of TA in four Afghan Ministries through DAFA as a mechanism for supplying it?
- b. How is TA scoped, how long does it take, and what are the issues considered?
- c. To what extent are advisers integrated with Afghan National Priority Programs or other donor projects?
- d. Are there exit strategies for each adviser and if not why not?
- e. Can the adviser approach be justified in the post-Kabul Conference environment?
- f. What are the benefits and issues involved in supporting the CTAP?
- g. To what extent do advisers share learning?
- h. What is DAFA's capacity to adhere to 2010 guidance for development programs delivered off budget?

3. Review Findings

The review found that the advisers deployed through the DAFA to the four Ministries perform a range of roles and are used to help build the capacity of the Ministries. These advisers are provided at the request of GoIRoA. The need and position including the Terms of Reference (ToR) are identified by the relevant Ministry and candidates are selected through a transparent international recruitment process in consultation with the Afghan Government. Direct recruitment has been used in a limited number of cases, but only in exceptional circumstances when this is the most effective means to deliver a service to achieve quality and value for money objectives. For example, when the services can only be supplied by a particular individual or there are reasons of extreme urgency.

3.1. Current use of advisers in the Afghanistan program

The six advisers currently deployed to Afghanistan through the Australian aid program perform the following roles:

- MAIL– Gender Adviser. The role aims to increase the participation of women in the agriculture sector and extension of services for women in the microcredit and enterprise development program.
- MAIL – Dry Land Farming Adviser. The role aims to provide strategic advice on modern dry-land- farming techniques that could be used by Afghan farmers.
- MoPH – Human Resource Development Adviser. The role enables easier access by the Ministry staff to information from the Human Resource Directorate. This will contribute to overcome deficiencies in the skills of health and nutrition sector staff.

- MoE – Monitoring and Evaluation adviser. The role aims to strengthen the Ministry's capacity to effectively monitor and improve education services to Afghan children. This will also enhance MoE staff skills in analysis and reporting to donors.
- MRRD – Community Led Development Adviser. The role provides community development training of MRRD provincial and district staff including to staff from Uruzgan to integrate and strengthen rural communities.
- MRRD – Policy Development Adviser for Afghanistan Institute of Rural Development (AIRD). The role provides research and policy development training to AIRD staff enabling them to sustain the research in the long term.

3.2. Reporting

All advisers report weekly on the progress against their work plan to the DAFA Manager. A progress report on each of the advisers is provided to AusAID monthly by the DAFA. A detailed six monthly report, including adviser performance, is also provided to AusAID by the DAFA.

AusAID's in-country staff regularly receive advice from both the Afghan ministries and the DAFA on the performance of the advisers.

3.3. Adviser rates

The costs of deploying advisers to Afghanistan are high. This is due to the challenging security situation and its associated costs. Australia's costs and terms for the advisers are comparable to the USAID, DFID, World Bank and other institutions and are considered reasonable in the Afghan context.

- An AusAID-commissioned Ernst & Young assessment of adviser pay rates in Afghanistan was conducted in September 2010. It concluded that the DAFA advisers are within or below the benchmark range of pay for advisers in Afghanistan.
- Rates are determined on skills and the extent of available expert personnel and include dangerous location and hardship allowance. They are also based on the Afghanistan working week of 6 days.

3.4. Key effectiveness issues

The review team interviewed the advisers and the relevant Ministers and their staff to assess adviser performance. The Ministries provided good feedback on their level of involvement in designing the adviser positions and their participation in the recruitment of suitable candidates. The Ministries also acknowledged that it was very useful for them to develop the ToRs in consultation with the DAFA. The review found that all advisers have specified outputs and the elements of an exit strategy.

The review also found that, whilst each adviser meets a defined need, the nature of the role, the experience of the adviser, and the fit with the many other advisers in each Ministry varies. The work-plans developed by the Ministries are generally overly-ambitious and may not be achieved within the timeframe or by a single adviser. AusAID provides a total of six advisers across four ministries in a context where the ministries have a large number of national and international advisers (in the Ministry of Education alone there are some 1200 advisers and AusAID supplies only one of those). In this context, even if Australian technical advisers are demand driven and fulfilling an agreed role, the visibility and perceived effectiveness of Australia's contribution is limited. The intensive use of advisers – both international and national – by the international community in Afghanistan is a structural problem which the Government is trying to address, including through the launch of CTAP. Australia's approach should evolve to reflect this.

The review team assessed the case for future provision of advisers through the GoIRoA's preferred CTAP initiative, including through a meeting with the CTAP Secretariat. While CTAP is not the sole answer to the considerable challenges facing the Ministries – such as, the divide between core civil service and contracted staff, and a proliferation of international advisers with different reporting arrangements – it aims to address key aid effectiveness concerns and should be considered as the primary mechanism for deploying technical assistance in the future.

4. Recommendations

On the basis of the review findings, the key recommendations of the review are that:

- (i) existing DAFA advisers should not be routinely extended. In exceptional cases, and where the Ministry can make a compelling case for extension, this could be considered for a maximum of six months, but not beyond 31 December 2011.
- (ii) no more advisers be recruited under current DAFA arrangements. Any positions currently in the pipeline should not be pursued if recruitment is not successful in the first round.
- (iii) future provision for advisers should be channelled predominantly through the CTAP and current adviser positions should be registered with CTAP in accordance with GoIRoA guidelines for 'off budget' finance.

5. Next steps

The AusAID Afghanistan program welcomes and accepts the findings of the review. The current six DAFA adviser positions will not be routinely extended and will be completed as per the recommendations of the review. No further advisers will be recruited under the current DAFA arrangements (that is, based on the identification and recruitment of positions by consultation between Afghan Government Ministries and the DAFA). Current adviser positions will be registered with the Afghan Government through GoIRoA guidelines for 'off-budget' finance.

In accordance with the strategic directions of the Australian aid program to Afghanistan, CTAP will be the preferred mechanism for future deployments of advisers to Afghanistan. Due to the shifting strategic context in Afghanistan, AusAID will retain some limited flexibility to bilaterally deploy short to medium term technical assistance to Afghanistan, either through the DAFA or a subsequent mechanism. This course will be taken only when the need for bilateral assistance is agreed between GoIRoA and AusAID's Minister Counsellor in Kabul. Any such advisory support will be specifically reviewed under annual consultations between the Australian and Afghan Governments on the priorities and performance of the Australian aid program.

Annex 1: List of current six advisers engaged through DAFA

Position	Status	Objectives for the TA	Afghan Ministry endorsement
Dry Land Farming Technical Expert	Commenced 18 July 2010 - Sept 2011.	Increased Ministry support in the application of new skills in modern dry land farming techniques by Afghanistan farmers.	Approved by Dr Emadi on 28th Nov 09. Australia having a comparative advantage in dryland agriculture and water resource management, Ms Alison Rhind requested the TA.
Human Resource Development Adviser	Comenced 01 May 2010 - July 2011.	Easier access by Ministry staff to Human Resource information and better trained staff at Human Resource Directorate.	Endorsed by Dr. Sarwar Homayee, Head of Reform and Capacity Building Department and Dr Sadruddin Saher the Deputy Minister (Administration).
Planning and Reporting Adviser	Commenced 17 July 2010 - Sept 2011.	Ministry staff skills enhanced in the area of proposal preparation, planning, analysis and reporting to donors.	Deputy Minister (Finance and Administration) Suleman Kakar has endorsed the TA proposal.
Community Lead Development Technical Expert	Commenced 21 May 2010 - April 2011.	Increased training of Community Lead Development and MRRD provincial and district staff including in Oruzgan to integrate and strengthen rural communities.	Terms of Reference developed collaboratively with the Senior Adviser to the Deputy Minister (Programs), Ms Hermione Youngs, and the National Programs Co-ordinator, Mr Najob Amiri and have been approved by the Deputy Minister (Programs).
Afghanistan Institute of Rural development (AIRD) Research and Policy Development Adviser	Commenced 01 Aug 2010 - June 2011.	Research and policy development capacity /skills of Afghanistan Institute of Rural Development staff improved.	Mr Ajmal Sirzai, AIRD Director has endorsed the proposal for assistance.

Annex 2: Civilian Technical Assistance Programme (CTAP)

The purpose of this annex is to supply background information about CTAP and an appraisal to assist AusAID in deciding whether to invest funds in the future.

Description of CTAP

The *Civilian Technical Assistance Programme* (CTAP) is a relatively new, government run, capacity development program designed to focus on building capacity of civil servants in strategic parts of government. It originated at a time when the US Government had planned for a civilian ‘surge’ in a context in which a vast amount of expensive TA had been provided over an eight year period, largely supply led, outside government systems, and with a poor record of effectiveness. CTAP was therefore designed to be government owned, demand driven and on-budget.

A key element of CTAP is its focus on the tashkeel (civil service) level. Since 2002 several of the ministries have been staffed by Afghans who were brought in on contract either as expatriates or as returnees from Pakistan. They are on enhanced salaries, generally speak and write English, have good computer skills, and are familiar with donor systems and processes. The unanticipated effect has been that these ‘staff’ now exist in parallel to the tashkeel who are the permanent civil servants and who generally do not have any of the same advantages as those on contract. In addition to Afghans on contract there have been hundreds of international TA who have largely worked with those on contract and on the National Priority Programs (NPPs) which are managed outside the core civil service systems. As a result the tashkeel have benefited very little from years of ‘capacity building’. CTAP, in orienting towards the capacity building of tashkeel, aims to address that issue.

Another feature of CTAP is the preference to use Afghan or regional TA rather than international. Expense, lack of language skills and, increasingly, the isolation of advisers in secure compounds are all reasons to limit the number of international TA.

The objectives of CTAP are:

- (i) Increase resources and focus on capacity development
- (ii) Build institutional capacity for facilitation and implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy
- (iii) Enable public organisations to improve budget execution
- (iv) Create a single mechanism for providing TA which is lower cost, well coordinated, more responsive to government priorities and has better outcomes.

The Process

Government clients get support by completing a Request for Assistance Form which is a detailed form covering the profile of the department, its targets, the capacity development assistance needed, how the advisers will work with their counterparts, and the management arrangements. This is designed to ensure clarity of purpose. The next step is recruitment and deployment which aims to be transparent and accountable. The first set of advisers have already been recruited and deployed in two ministries and there are several advertisements

on international recruitment websites. There are then measures built in to prevent misuse of advisers for purposes other than capacity development.

Areas of Activity

The aim is to support five areas of activity: standardising operating procedures; developing new functions; streamlining existing functions; restructuring and reorganisation; and developing skills. All these must be in permanent parts of government, not in programs. The division of labour between adviser and counterpart is that the adviser leads on technical and design tasks and the counterpart leads on management and implementation.

Management and Governance

The higher tier of governance is a CTAP Advisory Board, comprising program donors, which will advise on management, performance, communications and fundraising. CTAP Leadership is provided by the Deputy Minister (Policy) who will approve specific requests from the ministries and provide high level strategic guidance. Day to day management is through a Project Director who is supported by a Secretariat, located in the MoF, which covers the five functions of capacity development, monitoring and evaluation, human resources, finance and administration, and strategic communications.

Within each Ministry there will be a Steering Committee to supervise overall performance of the CTAP packages, a Working Group comprising teams of government staff and advisors who provide day to day management of the projects, and the technical teams involved in actual capacity development processes.

Institutional Strategy

CTAP will pass through three stages: a pilot during the first year to launch programs and establish finance, HR and capacity development systems; an institutionalisation period during the second year to finalise systems; and, in the third year, transfer to a long term institutional home.

Partnership Strategy

CTAP intends to coordinate with other capacity development programs and initiatives of which the main ones are:

- Management Capacity Program (MCP) in the Civil Service Commission (CSC) – this should ensure that CTAP advisers have counterparts to work with
- CSC – responsible for Reform Implementation Management Units (including pay and grading) which CTAP advisors will support
- National Institution Building Program (NIBP) – alignment of core capacity development methodologies, M&E frameworks
- Afghanistan Civil Service Support (ACSS) Program – the five common functions of the USAID funded, Deloitte managed, ACSS, will be used as appropriate.

Risks

The risks identified by CTAP are:

- Donor management – pressure to be responsive to short term priorities of government and donors that lie outside defined scope may lead to loss of focus
- Fund flow for salaries and operations may be insufficient or unreliable
- Funding – automatic approval for NPPs may exhaust funds available
- Coordination, especially between CTAP and MCP may fail to deliver advisors and appointees at the same time
- Competition between MCP and CTAP may overwhelm the supply of Afghan expatriates
- Nepotism in the recruitment process may undermine credibility
- TA with appropriate skills may be difficult to recruit.

Appraisal

CTAP is likely to go a long way to addressing the core problem of the continuing low capacity of the tashkeel. It is only after years of ineffective TA that this problem has been exposed and it took the ‘threat’ of a US-led civilian surge to galvanise GoAf to insist on a program it could own itself. The aims and objectives are therefore important and worthy of support. Importantly, it has \$30m support from USAID which indicates a desire to make it succeed by perhaps the main ‘competitor’ in the sense of continuing deployment of large numbers of TA through parallel mechanisms of off-budget programs.

The presentation made to the Review Team, which included a Canberra-based AusAID official, was impressive. It was given by the Director of CTAP, who has many years experience in UNDP working on capacity development issues, and was delivered in a highly professional way with a range of supporting documents detailing processes. In the short time since the Kabul Conference CTAP has come a long way.

Although CTAP is addressing a crucial problem, and has a sound approach to capacity development which is consistent with AusAID’s best practice, it will not be the solution to the capacity ‘problem’. Whilst it will definitely be more efficient to recruit Afghan TA, and possibly more effective, the assumption that Afghans will be better capacity developers than internationals is unlikely to hold true. AusAID’s own extensive experience is that the capacity developers very often need capacity development themselves in order to develop it in others. Afghans may have advantages of language and culture but they too are ‘foreign’ and are likely to bring solutions from wherever they have been educated and worked without sufficient understanding of a country they may have left many years ago. Solutions from outside tend not to work regardless of the language and culture of those who bring them.

The other critical issue, identified as a risk by CTAP itself, is the difficulty of attracting TA of the right quality. Afghanistan is becoming increasingly unstable and insecure so the existing recruitment difficulties may only get worse. CTAP basically offers a salary and allowances but the TA have to make their own arrangements for accommodation and security outside the workplace. Other organisations, notably the UN, already do this so it is an acceptable approach but many candidates may be deterred. This is not to argue that parallel systems, such as DAFA, are preferable. They face the same recruitment challenge even though the

support system is extensive and the salaries more lucrative. The same amount of money for one adviser in DAFA would likely fund several TA through CTAP.

CTAP deserves support because it is Afghan owned and addresses a key problem. It also deserves substantial support because one of the main risks for failure is under-funding and the inability to show results. The more TA are placed through CTAP – its own surge – the more likely that it will be effective or that the failures will be less glaring.

Annex 3 – Definition of ‘advisers’ for the purposes of this review

The following definition should be used to identify advisory positions to be considered by the review.

Adviser: An adviser provides advice – to one or more interlocutors – on the strategic direction and/or implementation of Australian aid. This includes personnel that perform one or more the following functions:			
(1) <u>Based in-country</u> , provide technical expertise and advice to counterpart governments and/or other in-country development partners such as NGOs, churches	(2) <u>Based in-country</u> , provide technical expertise and advice to AusAID	(3) <u>Based in-country</u> , is engaged to provide leadership and oversight and/or technical inputs for the delivery of an AusAID activity	(4) <u>Based in Australia, a partner country or a third country</u> , provide short term technical inputs to counterpart governments, other development partners or AusAID
Methods of engagement: - Directly by AusAID - Through a managing contractor - Whole of Government (WofG) deployee - Contracted by WofG agency using ODA funds	Methods of engagement: - Directly by AusAID on a commercial contract or a non-ongoing employment contract - Through a managing contractor	Methods of engagement: - Through a managing contractor - Directly by AusAID	Methods of engagement: - Period offer/panels - Through a managing contractor - Directly by AusAID
Eg: Technical project/program staff based in a counterpart office	Eg: Thematic adviser based in a Post	Eg: Team Leaders	Eg: Members of design or evaluation teams; short term project personnel.
Advisers are not: permanent/ongoing employees of AusAID; volunteers; administrative and logistical staff engaged under an AusAID program; or company representatives/head office staff of managing contractors or other implementing agencies.			