

# FACT SHEET

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U.S. International Cooperation Administration.

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**A**FGHANISTAN is one of the many countries of the free world receiving economic development assistance under the U.S. mutual security program. Against the background of this Asian nation and its people, this fact sheet describes the nature and objectives of the U.S. economic assistance program in Afghanistan, why the program is necessary, and what it has accomplished thus far.

## *The Country*

Afghanistan—or “The Land of the Afghans”—is a strategically located country in the north-eastern portion of the Great Iranian Plateau in the heart of Asia.

A landlocked, mountainous country, Afghanistan is 251,000 square miles in area—about the size of Texas—with a population of approximately 13 million.

Since earliest times Afghanistan has been a crossroad for some of the great civilizations of the world. Afghanistan today is bounded on the north by some 1,000 miles of U.S.S.R. territory and on the west by Iran; its neighbor to the south and east is Pakistan.

Afghanistan is an agricultural country. Farming and sheepraising are the principal occupations. The main crops are wheat, corn, rice, cotton, fruits, and nuts. One breed of Afghan sheep produces karakul skins, a fur popular with American women. Karakul is normally Afghanistan's most valuable export, but cotton and fruits are increasing in importance.

Only about 12 percent of the country's area is cultivated. There is an urgent need to reclaim, irrigate, and develop new agricultural land. Afghanistan must increase food production sub-



*Tons of water are released through Kajakai Dam's irrigation tunnel to bring new life to the Helmand Valley beyond. ICA is furnishing technical advice for this development project.*

stantially to provide adequate supplies for her people.

Industry in Afghanistan is generally limited to small factories producing consumer goods and cottage industries. The principal products manufactured are cotton, textiles, sugar, boots and shoes, matches, and carpets.

Small quantities of coal, salt, talc, sulfur, and beryllium are produced. Mineral production is a government monopoly.

Transportation is one of Afghanistan's main problems. There are as yet no railroads, but aviation is being developed as a primary mode of transportation. The country has about 2,500 miles of motorable roads. An important contribution to the country's transportation development is a transit agreement with its neighbor, Pakistan, to give Afghanistan better access to Pakistani ports on the Arabian Sea.

Afghanistan's considerable hydroelectric potential, now under development by the government, is expected to contribute greatly to the country's economic progress.

Kābul, the capital city, has a population of more than 200,000. Other cities of importance are Kandahār, which is being developed as an air transport center; the model city of Lashkar Gah, headquarters of the Helmand Valley land reclamation project; Herāt; Farah; and Mazār-i-Sharīf.

## *The People*

There are many different ethnic types and tribes among the 13 million Afghans, of whom about 25 percent are nomadic tribesmen. In general, they are hardy mountain people, noted for their hospitality and friendliness. Afghans are mostly village dwellers. About 70 percent of the people are farmers, 25 percent raise livestock (principally sheep and goats), and 5 percent have various other occupations.

Since the literacy rate is low—about 10 percent—there is only a small nucleus of skilled and professional personnel.

The country is predominantly Muslim. The official languages are Pushtu and Persian. The Afghan Government also encourages the teaching of English in the schools.

## *The Government*

Afghanistan is a modified constitutional monarchy with government authority vested in a king and a parliament. The King is Mohammed Zahir Shah, who succeeded to the throne in 1933. Parliament consists of a 45-member senate named by the King and a national assembly of 170 elected members.

The King and the Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, exercise the executive power.

In its struggle to improve the economic conditions of the country, the Afghan Government requested the aid of the United States. This country

has consistently encouraged the Afghan Government in its desire to develop an economy which would improve the living conditions of the people.

Other Western nations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations are also at work in Afghanistan. In addition, the Afghans have received development loans from the Soviet bloc.

The Afghan Government has consistently reiterated its position of neutrality and has stated that it will accept aid, without strings, from any source.

### ***U.S. Interests***

The United States is attempting to bolster Afghanistan's own strong desire to remain free of foreign political and economic domination. The United States is trying to assure a maximum of internal and regional political stability and to promote friendly economic relationships between Afghanistan and the free world.

### ***U.S. Assistance***

U.S. economic assistance to Afghanistan under the mutual security program began in 1952, initially in the form of technical cooperation.

The main objective of our aid has been to train Afghans to work on selected projects in the fields of education, agriculture, engineering, transportation, public administration, public health, mining, and rural development.

### ***Helmand Valley Development Project***

Many of the U.S. economic assistance programs in Afghanistan have been directed toward helping the Helmand Valley Authority to achieve its objectives.

The Helmand River, with its valley and its numerous tributaries, occupies nearly half of the country. The area involved is centered in the southwestern section, and its development was started as an overall project by the Afghan Government in 1946. This is primarily an irrigation and land development scheme with incidental provisions for flood control and power development. It also embraces broad programs for improvements in agriculture, settlement of new farmers, and rural development, including health and education.

The plan includes two large storage reservoirs, one on the Helmand River and the other on its chief tributary, the Arghandāb River. Diversion dams are provided on each of these streams, and large irrigation canals carry water to project lands, some of which have been irrigated in the past through small locally built canals. The program also includes preparation of the land for farming and an extensive drainage system.

The U.S. Export-Import Bank has helped to finance the project through two loans totaling \$39.5 million, in addition to the nearly \$30 million already spent by the Afghan Government.

The International Cooperation Administration has been providing technical services to the Afghan Government in connection with the program during the past 6 years. In addition to the technical assistance, in 1957 and 1958 ICA made available to Afghanistan approximately \$6 million, largely on a grant basis, for the continuation of Helmand Valley development.

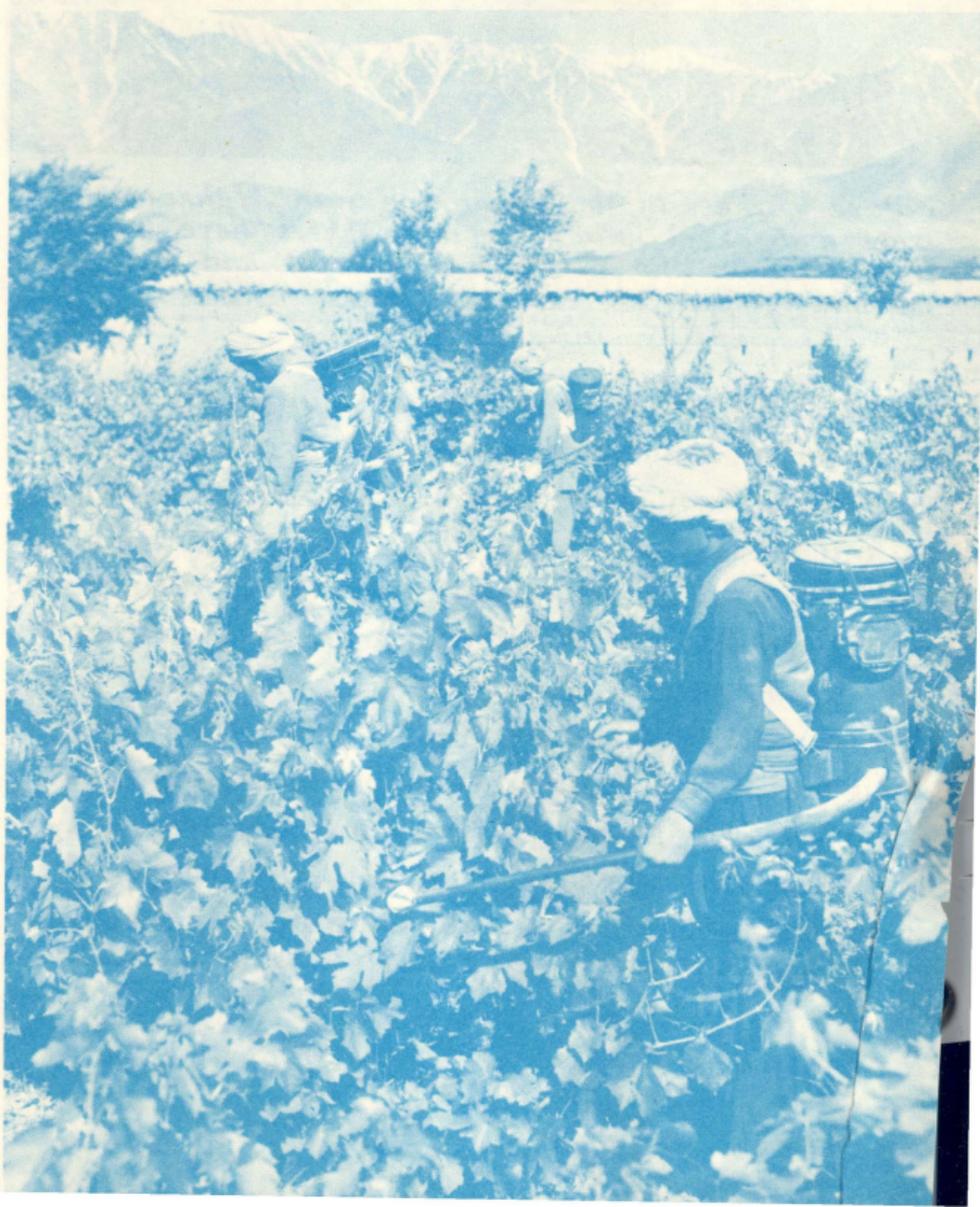
## *Agriculture*

Since increased agricultural production is one of the major objectives of the Government of Afghanistan, U.S. economic assistance has been requested and given in this field. The United

States is cooperating with the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture and the Helmand Valley Authority in establishing research stations, seed and plant improvement projects, an extension service, and programs to train Afghans to operate these facilities. U.S. aid is also making possible the training abroad of Afghan agricultural specialists.

Already, agricultural research stations have been established at Kābul, the capital, and at Marja in the Helmand Valley; a third one is under way at Darweshān. The Kābul station has obtained some excellent information on adaptable varieties of tomatoes, lettuce, onions, and wheat. The Marja station is working on adaptable varie-

*Afghan farmers dusting their grapes with a hand mechanical dusting apparatus. An ICA technician has organized demonstration dustings in the Kābul area.*





*Village workers in the Logar Valley in Afghanistan treat a diseased animal. The workers have been trained under the supervision of ICA and U. N. personnel.*

ties of watermelons, sugar beets, and wheat. At Darweshān, which will be a fruit and vegetable center, numerous orange and olive trees have been set out for testing.

A forestry improvement program is also in progress with some 3 million nursery-grown trees of various species having been transplanted to form windbreaks and woodlots.

In addition to cooperating in the agricultural programs of Afghanistan, the United States, as a gift from the American people to the people of Afghanistan, has supplied the country with wheat under title II of Public Law 480, which provides

for the use of U.S. surplus agricultural products abroad. This gift served to offset the effects of shortages in Afghan grain production which were threatening famine in certain areas of the country. The program served a dual purpose. Not only did Afghanistan receive needed food supplies, but the sale of the grain in Afghanistan generated local currency, a portion of which was used for the country's economic development.

## *Education*

In the field of education in Afghanistan, high priority is given to agricultural training. Through an ICA-financed contract with the University of Wyoming, the Government of Afghanistan is being helped to develop vocational-agricultural high schools, to expand agricultural education in academic schools, and to establish a faculty of agriculture in Kābul University. The Wyoming University contract also provides for assistance to Kābul University in organizing an engineering faculty.

The United States is also helping to develop a teacher training program. Assistance in this field is being given under a contract with Teachers College of Columbia University for a project which emphasizes the teaching of English and the training of teachers in this language.

U.S. assistance in education is also helping Kābul University to improve its administration and to expand its facilities. With U.S. help, a building program is under way to construct a one-campus Kābul University.

Finally, a mass communications program is assisting Afghans in the use of press, radio, movies, filmstrips, publications, teaching materials, posters, and other types of audiovisual materials in making educational projects more effective.

## ***Public Health***

In the field of public health the United States is helping to construct and equip a public health training center and hospital at Lashkar Gah in the Helmand Valley, and Afghan personnel are being trained to operate this facility. The United States is also providing training abroad of additional Afghan personnel to staff public health and medical facilities.

Apart from this assistance, the World Health Organization and other U. N. agencies have helped Afghanistan meet its needs for assistance in the public health field.

## ***Administration***

The United States is providing Afghanistan with a comprehensive program of advisory services to the Ministry of Finance in the fields of national budget, internal revenue, governmental accounting, central supply management, and related fiscal functions. Under a national public administration program on which the United States advises, young Afghans are being trained in the United States and Iran in public administration activities.

Assistance also is being given the Afghan Government in its efforts to improve the operational effectiveness of civil police agencies.

## ***Industry***

To help Afghanistan develop its industry, the United States is cooperating in surveys to determine the need for basic facilities such as power, water, and transportation for an industrial district in the Kandahār area.

Assistance is also being given the mining in-

dustry. A major project in this field involves assistance in solving special problems with respect to coal production and mineral exploitation, including petroleum, and in providing both in-service training and training abroad for the needed technical personnel.

The United States is providing technical service in mine layout, projections, and specifications, in addition to advice on ways of increasing the production of coal and other minerals. Many Afghans have been trained in first aid, mine rescue, and mine safety methods by U. S. technicians.

## ***Aviation***

One of the major U. S. development assistance projects in Afghanistan is in air transport. An international airport is under construction at Kandahār and civil airports are being established at five other cities. The United States is also helping to expand the facilities of the Aryana Afghan Airlines, the national system, through aid in procuring equipment, improving management, and training technicians.

## ***Highway Transport***

The United States is assisting Afghanistan in establishing an effective national highway department, in planning and constructing an adequate highway system, in developing and improving maintenance services, and in training personnel.

Assistance has been given in acquiring trucks for general transportation and in the construction and equipping of motor vehicle repair shops at Kābul and Kandahār, and a truck assembly unit at Kandahār.

## *Regional Transit Project*

The United States has cooperated with both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the regional transit agreement to facilitate the movement of trade between landlocked Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has excellent port facilities on the Arabian Sea. Under this agreement provision has been made for extending Pakistan's Northwestern Railway across the border into Afghanistan to serve the trade needs of the Afghans. Another link in this regional transit project will be a hard-surfaced road from Kābul to Spin Baldak on the southern Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

## *Summary of U.S. Aid*

Since its inception in 1952 and through fiscal year 1958, U.S. economic assistance to Afghanistan has totaled approximately \$119 million. This includes \$63.6 million under the U.S. mutual security program, of which \$50.6 million was for development or special assistance and \$13 million was for technical cooperation. The remainder of the \$119 million comprises \$39.5 million in Export-Import Bank loans for the Helmand Valley Authority, \$15.7 million as the value of the surplus grain shipments, and \$237,000 in educational grants.

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