

## PRISPEVEK SLOVENIJE K PROGRAMU ZA REINTEGRACIJO IN SPRAVO V AFGANISTANU – POGLED SVETOVALCA ZA ANALIZE POLITIK

### SLOVENIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO AFGHANISTAN PEACE AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME – POLICY ADVISOR'S PERSPECTIVE

**Povzetek** Članek izhaja iz teoretičnega okvira spreminjajoče se narave vojne, gradnje miru in protiuporniškega delovanja in je uporabljen kot temelj za razlago enotnega programa za razorožitev, demobilizacijo in reintegracijo (DDR) Programa za reintegracijo in spravo v Afganistanu. Razloženi so temeljni koncepti, strukture in procesi tega programa, predstavljena pa je tudi vloga slovenskega političnega svetovalca v Celici za reintegracijo pri poveljstvu Mednarodnih varnostnih sil za pomoč (Isaf). V prispevku so pojasnjeni glavni izzivi in dinamika enotnega in kompleksnega programa ter delovanja političnega svetovalca. Program za reintegracijo in spravo v Afganistanu je pomemben mednarodno financiran projekt, ki je pripomogel k vrnitvi tisočev nekdanjih borcev s terena ter k podpori lokalnim skupnostim in reintegraciji. Članek obravnava pomanjkanje ustrezne preglednosti in merljivosti dosežkov programa, ki še ni odpravljeno. Pri prizadevanjih za nadaljnje oblikovanje učinkovitega in smotrnega programa ima Isaf zelo pozitivno podporno, strokovno in izvršilno vlogo. Končna analiza razkriva, da je uspešnost programa tesno povezana z verodostojnostjo afganistanskih oblasti in potrebo po boljšem upravljanju.

**Ključne besede** *Protiuporniško delovanje, Afganistan, Isaf, DDR, APRP, politični svetovalec, Slovenija, poslovni primer.*

**Abstract** This article uses theoretical framework of the changing nature of war, peace-building and counterinsurgency as a foundation for explaining a unique disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme – Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. It explains basic concepts, structures and processes of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme. Additionally, it presents the role of the Slovenian policy advisor in the International Security and Assistance Force Headquarters' Force Reintegration Cell. Main challenges and the dynamics of the unique and complex programme and of the policy advisor's work are laid

out. Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme is an important internationally funded project which has removed thousands of former fighters from the field and has helped to provide support to local communities and reintegrees. The lack of adequate transparency and measurability of the Programme's achievements has been addressed but not yet resolved. ISAF has been playing a very positive supporting, expert and facilitating role in an effort to help further develop a more effective and efficient programme. In the final analysis the overall success of the programme is significantly correlated to the Afghan authorities' credibility and the need for improved governance.

**Key words** *Counterinsurgency, Afghanistan, ISAF, DDR, APRP, policy advisor, Slovenia, business case.*

**Introduction** The report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations (2000, p. 7), the so-called "Brahimi Report" considers disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants as key to immediate post-conflict stability and reduced likelihood of conflict recurrence. Banholzer (2014) cites Casas-Casas and Guzman-Gomez: "DDR contributes to achieving a lasting peace process where those involved directly in the conflict can break with the past". Thus, DDR is often actually embedded in broader peace operations. Additionally, it contributes to state building because it involves a shift from formal and informal rules of militant groups to the laws defined by the state.

Over the past several decades of warfare in Afghanistan, low- to senior-level fighters have regularly changed sides. Reintegration is an integral part of the Afghan culture. The concept of truce is encompassed in the Pashto word "tiga", which means "placing the stone". The word symbolizes the process of utilizing a respected elder or peacemaker to mediate a dispute among disagreeing parties (Jones, 2011). Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP)<sup>1</sup> is a five-year (2010-2015) internationally funded programme aimed at honourably removing insurgents from the battlefield and peacefully returning them to their local communities, thus transitioning communities from conflict to peace. APRP is part of a long term political process to bring peace to Afghanistan and is part of a wider strategy to improve justice, governance and development. The programme is led and implemented by the Afghan Government. The funding for the programme is at about 175 million USD<sup>2</sup>. The political guidance for the APRP comes from the 70-member High Peace Council (HPC) appointed by the President. Programme policies are planned, executed and supervised by the Joint Secretariat (JS) in Kabul and the practical implementation is

<sup>1</sup> *Since 2001, various programmatic approaches to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate anti-government fighters and local militia members in Afghanistan have had mixed results, plagued by poor design, weak oversight and limited implementation support from the Government and International Community (ICG, 2011: 18).*

<sup>2</sup> *The international donors have pledged 220 million USD to APRP, of which 176 mio USD has been granted by mid-2013. As of June 2013, around 84 mio USD has been spent. The 12 donor countries are: Japan (the largest contributor at 52.1 mio USD), United States, Australia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Denmark, the Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Spain, United Kingdom and Estonia.*

led by 25-30 member Provincial Peace Councils (PPC), consisting of civil society members, tribal leaders, local elders and the religious community, and the Provincial Joint Secretariat Teams (PJST) in Afghan provinces. PJSTs provide technical and administrative support to the Governors and the PPCs, and help manage reintegration activity in the province by linking with district and community structures, which exist throughout Afghanistan. Linking provincial peace efforts with civil society is essential for APRP success. JS is responsible for providing programme support to these sub-national level structures. ISAF<sup>3</sup>, through its Force Reintegration Cell (F-RIC), has been a supporting partner in the “Afghan Led – Afghan Owned” APRP process. In the period of April to October 2013, the Republic of Slovenia had a policy advisor in the small community of nations participating in the F-RIC, thus contributing tangibly to the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme.

## 1 CHALLENGING PREPAREDNESS FOR COMPLEX OPERATIONS THROUGH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the words of Clausewitz, war is a chameleon, continuously changing and adapting. It is thus natural for war to change in style<sup>4</sup>. The most striking phenomenon in the twenty-first century is the asymmetry between extremely high-tech warfare and new forms of organized violence, which indirectly eradicate the impact of the most sophisticated weaponry. The phenomenon referred to as “new wars” also involves the erosion of all the traditional parameters of war that distinguish between lawful and unlawful actors, states and private protagonists, soldiers and civilians, intra- and inter-state wars, and political and lucrative objectives. In her definition of new wars, Mary Kaldor uses the term “war” to “emphasize the political nature of this type of violence, even though the new wars involve a blurring of the distinction between war, organized crime and large-scale violations of human rights” (Blin, 2011, pp. 289 – 290). Taking this into consideration, there is empirical evidence, though the analytical literature is still scant, of the emergence of a fifth generation of peace operations<sup>5</sup>. What makes this type of missions specific is their hybrid character – these missions deploy troops and police personnel under mixed command, with both the United Nations and regional organizations deploying troops to the same missions under a separate chain of command and distinct forms of mandate. These missions reflect a growing shift in the division of labour in the global system of peace operations (Kenkel, 2013). Re-emergence of counterinsurgency presents an important contribution to the convergence of different forms of intervention currently referred to in policy circles as the “integrated mission”. First proposed in the UN-commissioned “Brahimi report” (2000), the integrated mission is an “overall

<sup>3</sup> *The APRP programme document defines the role of ISAF, stating that »the UN and ISAF will coordinate international community support behind the Afghan lead. ISAF and UNAMA will be participating in the Joint Secretariat to provide assistance with information, security operations, strategic communications and to assist the Government delivery down to the local level« (APRP, 2010).*

<sup>4</sup> *Blin predicts that guerrilla warfare, in new forms, is very likely to become the most common type of armed conflict in the coming decades.*

<sup>5</sup> *Firstly, being traditional peacekeeping, secondly, civilian tasks, thirdly, peace enforcement, fourthly, peace-building, and fifthly, hybrid missions.*

political-strategic crisis management framework” whose task is to bring “resources and activities closer together and ensure that they are applied in a coherent way across the political, military, developmental and humanitarian sectors” (Eide et al, 2005, p. 5). Counterinsurgency is part of a deepening nexus between security and development, which merges the social reconstruction and reform of societies and peoples to the strategies of war and interventions. It is articulated as a military doctrine, yet the forms of engagement that it calls forth are mostly non-military. It relies heavily on civilian practices. The forms of engagement prized in counterinsurgency are traditionally civilian and quasi-civilian roles and activities, overseen and performed by military personnel. Arguably, the civilian interventions integral to counterinsurgency render *policy as a war by other means*. It deepens partnerships with non-military actors on the battlefield and relies on the use (and misuse) of civilian expertise. Modern counterinsurgency represents a civilianisation of warfare that is rooted in liberal peace interventionism (Bell, 2011, pp. 310 – 316). Since the end of the Cold War, the rationale that security requires development, and vice versa, has spread exponentially. It has become axiomatic, forming the basis of international development policy for many Western states. The aim of counterinsurgency doctrine is not battling an opposing force, but “conflict transformation”, that is, the process of “reducing the means and motivations for violent conflict while developing more viable, peaceful alternatives for the competitive pursuit of political and socioeconomic aspirations” (Bell, 2011, p. 324). Local leadership, coupled with citizen engagement, has proven the only way to ensure that international investment in stability and reconstruction helps to catalyse sustainable change. Security provision alone is insufficient for rebuilding – the private sector, religious networks, women’s groups, and the international community must all be engaged in creating the foundations for long-term stability (Forman and Danan, 2013, pp. 42 – 43).

Thus, considering the many complexities and challenges of counterinsurgency, in his COMISAF’s Counterinsurgency Guidance (2010), General David Petraeus as Commander of ISAF emphasized the need to learn and adapt. His basic statement in the guidance was that the decisive terrain is the human terrain and that people are the centre of gravity. He explained that only by providing them security and earning their trust and confidence can the Afghan government and ISAF prevail. He urged for close working relationship of ISAF personnel with international and Afghan partners, civilians as well as the military, and called for promotion of local reintegration, also by supporting partners’ addressed grievances.

However, in examining lessons learned from counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, Greentree explains that the problem is not so much in recognizing what must be done, but rather in actually changing organizations and the way they do business (2013, p. 96). The main question is whether long-term transitional and developmental perspectives are given the necessary attention when planning for and implementing integrated missions, including post-mission commitment and involvement of national governments, the civil society and regional organizations (Eide et al, 2005, p. 14).

Outcomes in contemporary operations are not about absolutes. The aims of contemporary military operations are changing from pursuing concrete military strategic objectives and “victory” to establishing certain conditions from which political outcomes can be decided (Egnell, 2009, p. 11). The indicators of effectiveness of the conduct of contemporary operations at strategic level are (Egnell, 2009, p. 14): the importance of clear and achievable political aims; civil-military cooperation and coordination; the importance of strategic narrative. The tactical level indicators are: civil-military cooperation in terms of unity of command and effort; the hearts and minds approach – force protection and minimum use of force; cultural understanding of the local context; adaptability and learning.

It is crucial to note that the nature of civil-military relations within a particular state has an important impact on the effectiveness of its armed forces within the contemporary strategic context of complex and irregular peace operations<sup>6</sup>. In short, complex peace operations take place among the people and involve both sub-state and supra-state actors in a struggle for legitimacy and far-reaching political changes. For the most part they involve low-intensity, counterinsurgency type operations between the regular armed forces of the west and loosely formed networks of insurgents employing asymmetric tactics. An integrated approach to civil-military relations that provides an extensive interagency system and integrated civil-military structures within the ministry of defence is more likely to produce armed forces that are “fit for purpose” and effective in operations. Integrated structures provide more accurate interpretations and adjustment to the functional imperative of the armed forces, where instruments of national power are better suited to deal with particular challenges of the contemporary strategic context. Also, integrated systems provide more inclusive command and control structures at the strategic level, causing all relevant actors in complex operations to be coordinated through integrated assessment, planning and execution of operations – providing what is often referred to as a comprehensive approach to operations. This requires well-functioning interagency structures and cooperative working culture of trust and mutual understanding. Multifunctional operations require integrated multifunctional bureaucracies. All this refutes the normative Huntingtonian argument regarding the benefits of objective civilian control through a divide between the military and civilian leadership (Egnell, 2009, pp. 4 – 10).

Adding to the organizational challenges is the complex issue of managing relationships. When examining peace-building, fundamental differences between societies – particularly behavioural and normative distinctions between liberal pluralist democracies and groups dominated by intolerant ideological, nationalist and religious frameworks – are often underestimated. The social-psychological approach to peace generally assumes the existence of a common foundation based

<sup>6</sup> *Complex peace operations are operations in the contemporary strategic context, describing situations in which the Western armed forces are likely to find themselves involved in the future, operations other than war, such as: complex irregular warfare, asymmetric warfare, stability and support operations, humanitarian interventions, small wars and low intensity conflicts as well as peacekeeping, peace enforcement and peace support operations.*

on shared human values. Harold Saunders, a former senior diplomat in the US State Department and a strong supporter of the social-psychological approach to peace, observed that “until relationships are changed, deep rooted human conflicts are not likely to be resolved”. (Steinberg, 2013, pp. 36 – 37). Providing security and building institutions is undoubtedly important to peace-building. But a stable order cannot be reached unless the psychological sources of conflict are addressed too. It should be stressed that therefore the task of politicians, diplomats and mediators is – or at least ought to be – to create a space where grievances can be freely expressed, and corresponding emotions can be collectively and emphatically worked through. At stake is not only the cessation of violence, but more importantly, that adversaries are encouraged to come together in the hope that their relations can be realized anew (Hutchinson and Bleiker, 2013, pp. 81 – 88).

Many of the challenges noted in this chapter are well illustrated through the frequently unpredictable and very complex dynamics and interface between Afghan political realities, ISAF’s counterinsurgency mission, the International Community’s versatile, and frequently dispersed endeavours and their role in the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme.

## 2 THE GRADUAL BEGINNING

The APRP story begins in President Karzai's 2009 Inauguration Speech, where he called for the need to “reach out to all of our countrymen, especially our disenchanting brothers”. At the national consultative peace Jirga held in Kabul in June 2010, attended by 1600 delegates from all elements of the Afghan society, the main topic was establishing a framework for national peace. The Jirga provided the president with a strong mandate to pursue peace. On 29 June 2010, the President signed a decree that detailed the APRP structure and directed its implementation. The representatives of the international community endorsed the APRP at the 20 July 2010 Kabul Conference. On 6 September, the Afghan Government issued a “joint order” providing detailed instructions to the ministries and provincial Governors on how to implement APRP, thus providing the actual starting point for a gradual implementation of the programme. The High Peace Council<sup>7</sup> was established in October 2010, and it provides advice to the President, as well as guides, oversees and ensures the APRP implementation (F-RIC, 2012).

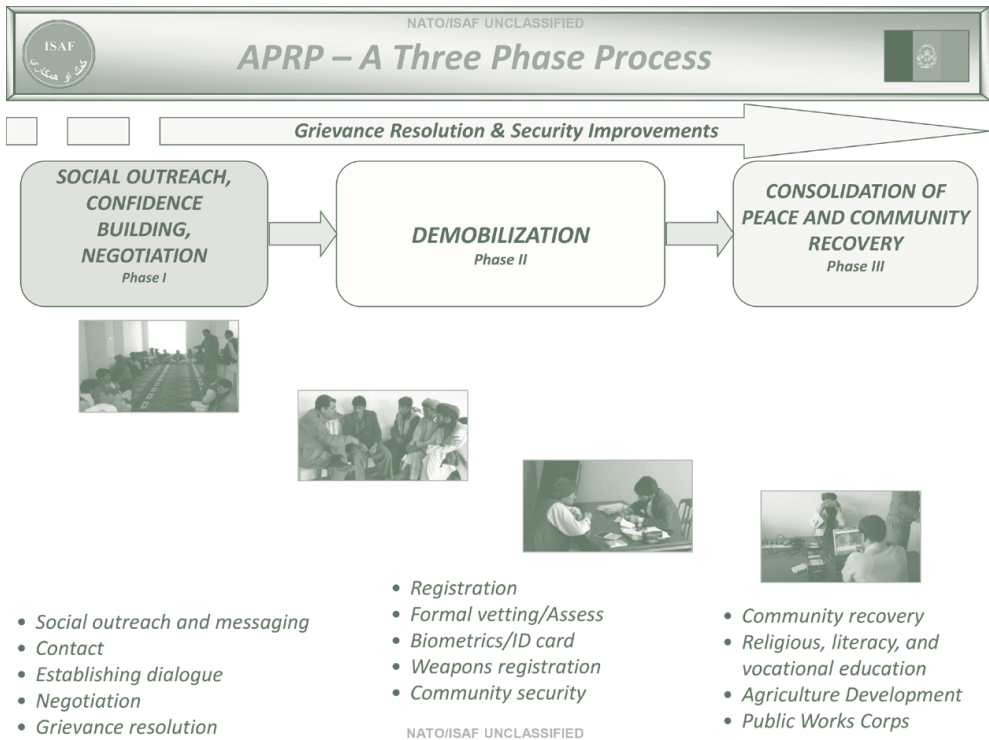
According to the programme document, the APRP aims to “promote peace through a political approach. It will encourage regional and international cooperation, create the political and judicial conditions for peace and reconciliation, and encourage combatant foot soldiers and commanders, who previously sided with armed

<sup>7</sup> While the HPC is the highest body within the peace and reintegration process, its primary focus has been on negotiations with the Taliban and perhaps less with the reintegration process (Zyck, 2012). On 20 September 2011, the former Afghan President and HPC Chair Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated by a suicide bomber while entering his home in Kabul. The attack also injured Minister Masoom Stanekzai, the chief executive officer of the APRP Joint Secretariat. Salahuddin Rabbani, the former HPC Chair's son became the new HPC chairman.



opposition and extremist groups to renounce violence and terrorism, to live within the laws of Afghanistan, and to join a constructive process of reintegration and peace” (APRP, 2010).

Table 1:  
APRP structure  
(F-RIC, 2012)



The first reintegree joined the programme in October 2010, and the first HPC annual budget was approved in January 2011, followed by a wider programme budget in June 2011. In September, the first APRP-funded Line Ministry<sup>8</sup> Community Recovery project was started in Badghis by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) – a vocational training programme in 23 centres for a total of 400 reintegrees and community members (F-RIC, 2012).

The APRP is frequently misunderstood in reporting by academia and the media, for it is a broad-based, ambitious and complex programme which was developed in the middle of the conflict. According to Jones (2011, p. 21), there are “tremendous difficulties involved” in the reintegration efforts in Afghanistan.

<sup>8</sup> Line ministries included in the APRP are: Ministry of Defence (MoD), Ministry of the Interior (MoI), which oversee the Afghan army and police, as well as ministries involved more fully in promoting social and economic development, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAIL), Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD), Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD) and the Ministry of Public Works (MoPW).

### 3 THE THREE-PHASED CONCEPT

The APRP concept is outlined in the 2010 APRP Programme document and explained in more detail in documents such as the 2012 F-RIC Guide to APRP.

**Social Outreach, Confidence Building and Negotiation** are about opening a dialogue through a variety of outreach sources in order to build confidence, and identify and negotiate grievances. This phase involves building capacity at the national, provincial, district and community levels, including within the ANSF, to understand the APRP and the reintegration process. Once an insurgent declares he wishes to leave the insurgency, the Afghan intelligence and security service (NDS) verifies the individual, and the elders acknowledge and confirm acceptance back into the local community. Under the political authority of the HPC, the APRP seeks to enable local initiatives to initiate reintegration. The PPC utilizes a network of Government and civil society leaders at the local levels to reach out to insurgents, address their grievances and encourage them to stop fighting. Reintegration includes overcoming distrust on all sides. It must be an all-Afghan process, involving many discussions and lots of time.

**Demobilization** is the most standardized of all phases and begins with the vetting of potential reintegrees. The key part of that is done by the national intelligence and security service, the NDS as well as the MoI, MoD and the JS. The information and background data is collected from the potential reintegree at the provincial level. Formal enrolment includes an intent-to-reintegrate form, individual survey conducted by reintegree candidate with the assistance of the PJST, biometric data collection, small arms registration and heavy weapons turn-in. The reintegration candidates are then provided basic Transition Assistance<sup>9</sup> (TA). Provinces and affected communities' leadership must consider security needs of reintegrees at this stage, including possible short-term relocation to safe houses. The TA lasts for three months during which time the goal is to enrol the reintegration candidates in Disengagement Training, which includes modules on dispute resolution, social responsibility and religion. Afterwards follows a formal reintegration, with political amnesty for insurgent offences provided, but criminal offenses may be subject to later prosecution. Enrolment in the APRP also results in the reintegrees being removed from targeting lists by the ANSF or international forces.

**Peace Consolidation and Community Recovery** includes the provision of assistance to those communities which are receiving reintegrated fighters. It is about the eligibility of a former insurgent and his community to receive small grants<sup>10</sup> of up to 25,000 USD, or for larger communities the sum of up to 200,000 USD. The focus is on what the Community experiencing reintegration wants or needs<sup>11</sup>. Depending on district

<sup>9</sup> This is 120 USD per month for three months.

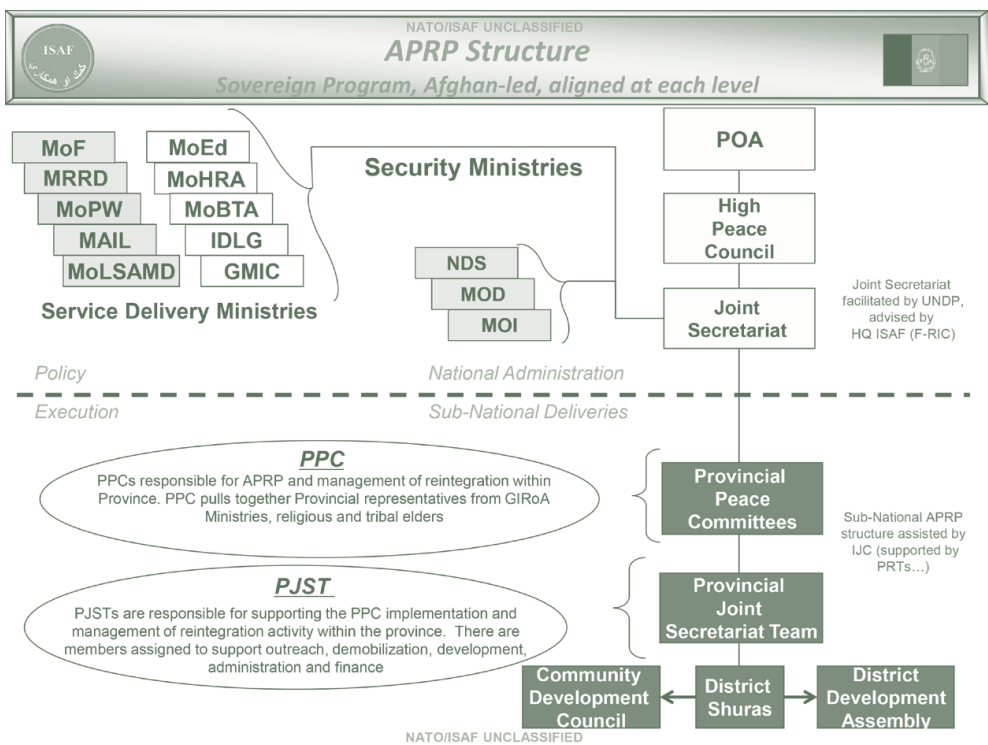
<sup>10</sup> Small Grants APRP projects are not to be mistaken with other, wider-Ministerial development projects.

<sup>11</sup> A community may desire vocational training so that its people can learn agricultural techniques, manufacturing, welding, demining or they may simply need schools for their children or adult literacy programmes. Communities and not reintegrees make decisions on what community projects they want or need. To a large extent it is about improving access to basic services, education, training and long-term employment.



location, long-term development projects are accessible through line ministry projects. Community recovery is designed to consolidate peace by demonstrating peace dividends and benefits to reintegree communities and is a supporting factor of grievance resolution. The activities include agricultural services, rehabilitating and maintaining agricultural and transport infrastructure, and community based development activities. The activities must be linked with overall long-term GIRoA development programmes. Planning and implementing community recovery projects (in which reintegrees and other community members can participate) demand close collaboration of all involved (civil society leaders, the communities, PJST, PPC, JS, district and provincial government bodies).

Table 2:  
APRP phases  
and processes



#### 4 PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY

Only the Afghans are eligible for APRP, which is based on the reality that most Afghan insurgents are fighting in or near their communities, and only a minority is ideologically motivated. Most insurgents fight because of grievances<sup>12</sup>, typically

<sup>12</sup> A 2011 RAND study examined 36 insurgent reintegree cases, prior to APRP establishment, when another programme was in place. Of these, 71% had reintegrated in order to pursue the resolution of grievances. 36% reintegrated because they believed the Taliban and other insurgent groups were losing the war. 33% reintegrated because they felt coerced into doing so (being specifically targeted by the Afghan or international forces). The insurgents could specify multiple reasons for reintegrating (Zyck, 2012).

of local origin<sup>13</sup>. The APRP seeks to enable sustainable support to local agreements where communities, supported by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), reach out to insurgents in order to address their grievances, encourage them to stop fighting, and re-join their communities with dignity and honour. Grievance resolution and alternatives to fighting, as well as justifiable confidence in survivability of the integration process are keys to successful implementation of the APRP. Reintegration removes fighters from the battlefield and possibly enhances conditions for high-level reconciliation or peace agreement. In general, the reintegration and reconciliation can be viewed as two sides of the same coin, one inevitably affecting the other. Jones (2011) believes that effective reintegration cannot be separated from reconciliation with insurgent leaders.

To deliver the programme, the HPC and JS are partnered with security and non-security ministries. For appropriate and structured execution of the Programme the Joint Secretariat is divided into Policy, Administration and Finance, Operations, Development and Communications Departments<sup>14</sup>. At the provincial level, Governors have the lead directing the PPCs and PJSTs, with support from the participating line ministry directorates.

The largest source of funding for the APRP is the internationally funded finance mechanism<sup>15</sup>. The APRP Reintegration Trust Fund Finance Mechanism disburses funds to the Joint Secretariat through the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme)<sup>16</sup>. The JS then distributes these funds at the provincial level to the PJSTs, managing four different accounts: Operational Expenditure (salaries, office rent, utilities, outreach...), Float and Outreach Account (rapid reaction accounts for governors to use for outreach, grievance resolution...), Transition Assistance Account and Small Grants Account (project funding). Other financial mechanisms are also in place (F-RIC, 2012).

According to JS reports, a cumulative total of 7,796 ex-combatants have renounced violence and joined the peace programme by the end of 2013<sup>17</sup>. In 2013, a key development within the APRP was engaging mid-level insurgent leadership, where 400 commanders enrolled in the Commanders Programme<sup>18</sup>. The UNDP annual

<sup>13</sup> These can be anger against the ANSF or ISAF for the death of a family member, lack of access to development resources due to discrimination by a Government official, conflicts with the neighbouring communities over land or water, complex and long standing tribal blood feuds. The fundamental premise of APRP is that addressing these would remove the motivation to fight. Therefore, the Governors and PPCs have broad latitude to conduct their activities, including mapping, resolving grievances, generating local peace deals, thus removing peripheral fighters from the battlefield, which allows the ANSF to focus their efforts on core Taliban insurgency (Zyck, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> This structure is reflected on the ISAF HQ Force Reintegration Cell side.

<sup>15</sup> Supplementing the APRP is the U.S. funded Afghanistan Reintegration Programme (ARP), designed to be used for gap filling, fast implementation and capacity building.

<sup>16</sup> The UNDP provides programmatic and operational assistance to the APRP Joint Secretariat and other APRP partners at the national and sub-national levels to enable them to effectively implement key components of the APRP. In addition, the UNDP manages Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund (the so-called "Window B").

<sup>17</sup> SIGAR report puts that number at 8,503 by March 2014 (SIGAR, II/2014).

<sup>18</sup> This programme is designed to mobilize and influence wider support for peace efforts within insurgent networks, with former commanders conducting peace campaigns in the communities to persuade others to join the APRP.

report also explains that “Line Ministries' projects provided 3,400 reintegrees and 34,000 community members with direct benefits such as access to improved services, work or livelihood opportunities and vocational training opportunities<sup>19</sup>. 1,200,000 community members will benefit from the 168 line ministry projects directly”. The UNDP APRP 2013 annual report states that although significant progress has been made, there remain implementation risks and issues, including the question of continued funding, loss of logistical support due to international community drawdown, increased political dynamics due to the elections, lack of qualified staff in a few key positions and inadequate information gathered to measure the true impact of the project (UNDP, 2013).

All in all, within the APRP, as the UNDP (2013) reports, 164 Small Grants Projects have been implemented and 82 projects have been completed. These projects are designed to provide livelihood assistance to former combatants and reach out to more than 170,000 beneficiaries in communities throughout the country. SIGAR (II/2014) July 2014 Quarterly Report refers to 53 Small Grants Projects and 1,162 Afghan government projects under way in 32 provinces and 190 districts.

## 5 ISAF PERSPECTIVE

The ISAF main effort in support of the APRP has been to weaken the insurgency, reduce violence, and improve security by supporting and building a self-sustaining, effective GIRoA implementation of the APRP in order to enable reintegration to take place on the greatest scale possible, and undermine the resilience and capability of the insurgency. ISAF's role is to team with the Afghans at every level, and coordinate security operations with the local political peace processes. ISAF helps Afghans in communicating the programme and its opportunities to the Afghan people, and supports its implementation. The desired end state of the APRP from the ISAF point of view was an enduring and fully enabled GIRoA programme that operates without ISAF assistance and continues to draw insurgents out of the fight permanently, thereby improving security and development, and acting as an accelerant to conflict resolution. The ISAF objectives<sup>20</sup> regarding the APRP have thus been (F-RIC, 2012):

- To assist in the establishment of an effective, self-sustaining and robust GIRoA programme that is enabled by structures at the national and sub-national levels that delivers reintegration efficiently and effectively;
- To educate and persuade target audiences to engage in and support the APRP and create conditions for grievance identification and resolution;

<sup>19</sup> For example, MoLSAMD's vocational education training (15 projects) was provided to 1,278 reintegrees and 2,562 (681 women) community members in skills demanded in local market (tailoring, carpentry, embroidery, carpet weaving, vehicle repair, plumbing, electronics repair...). 58 reforestation (planting pistachio and pine trees), 13 fruit orchard and 17 irrigation projects of MAIL provided short-term work opportunities to 13,000 community members and 1,200 former fighters. Former fighters and community members worked on routine maintenance of over 1,500 km of roads (MoPW provided 1,058 community members with full-time employment on routine road maintenance).

<sup>20</sup> F-RIC POLAD objectives and engagements clearly reflect these goals, mainly in helping build a sustainable Afghan capacity in the policy and strategic communications fields.

- To assist GIRoA, if required, in demobilization of insurgents;
- To sustain reintegration through supporting GIRoA community recovery efforts;
- To sustain the Afghan and International Community political will at all levels to ensure lasting commitment to reintegration.

Among other things, ISAF has been partnering with the UNDP and JS in the context of focused APRP provincial training programmes. ISAF has also been providing expanded logistical support to PPCs and PJSTs so they can travel widely and implement the APRP in remote areas as well.

## 6 AFGHANISTAN PEACE AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME CHALLENGES

The APRP is considered to be a crucial element of the stabilization of Afghanistan and intends to integrate the political process of negotiation or reconciliation with armed groups and the reintegration of insurgent fighters. It integrates both civilian and military stakeholders and brings together governance, economic and security oriented processes within multi-layered institutional architecture. It absolutely requires courageous Afghan leaders to make bold decisions, to reject the cycle of violence, and work to build local and national peace processes. It requires huge energy to overcome the inertia of war and great persistence to build confidence and trust at a necessary level to achieve some form of momentum (Zyck, 2012).

In her analysis of the various disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes Banholzer has come up with several recommendations in order for these programmes to be successful. “A wider recovery strategy” that places DDR in a “multi-dimensional peace-building framework” is essential for success. Additionally, “functional government institutions” help to ensure that states can fulfil their commitments and provide security to former combatants. Also, the “presence of institutionalised conflict-solving mechanisms” helps prevent minor conflicts. Furthermore, “DDR works best in stabilising peace” and should as such best be “launched after the end of hostilities”. Finally, “training and economic reintegration programmes must match the needs of people on the ground and skills training should be relevant to local markets”. She also adds that DDR programmes need to be accompanied by thorough evaluation processes (Banholzer, 2014, pp. 1 – 2). Gonzalez Palau notes that often DDR process begins when economy is weak, which is why reintegrees become frustrated when vocational training or short-term financial support they receive do not ultimately lead to suitable, if any, jobs. DDR programmes must thus be viewed as long-term undertakings requiring continued support (Gonzalez Palau, 2012). On the basis of analysing open sources, Zyck (2012) assessed and raised a number of concerns regarding the functioning of the APRP, noting that “poorly designed, inadequate or unfulfilled promises of reintegration assistance could discourage its members from reintegrating and could deepen grievances”. Also, “unprotected, poorly prepared or poorly treated former

insurgents would become powerful information operations opportunities for the insurgents”<sup>21</sup>. Main challenges of the APRP have thus been (Zyck, 2012):

- Attacks against reintegrating fighters (lack of systematic solution for providing security to former fighters and their families);
- Amnesties for reintegrating insurgents (no clear policy in place to ensure that insurgents who join the APRP would not ultimately be prosecuted for past actions, since there is no distinction between insurgent and criminal offences);
- Limited Afghan Government commitment (strong role of provincial Governors - their influence on provincial structure enables them to obstruct the APRP progress, therefore their buy-in is vital for programme success);
- “Fake Insurgents” reintegrating (it is difficult to clearly identify hard-core insurgents entering the programme from those people who are not insurgents but claim so in order to gain APRP benefits);
- Lack of synergies with a political process (differences of opinion among international actors and within the GIROA whether the majority of reintegration should proceed or follow a wider peace or reconciliation agreement);
- Inability to address key grievances (many insurgent grievances, including the Afghan Government’s corruption or bad performance, cannot be readily addressed within the scale of the APRP “grievance resolution” process);
- Weak monitoring and evaluation (the M&E systems have not been put in place at the beginning of the APRP).

On the issue of insurgent intake Derksen notes that many reintegrees are not “genuine Taliban but criminals or members of self-defence groups”<sup>22</sup>, few of whom signed up from the south and southeast, the heartlands of the insurgency. In her view the main reason for the disarmament and reintegration initiatives failing are not flaws in the programmes but an extremely adverse political context without the peace agreement (Derksen, 2014, pp. 2 – 3). Some authors see preventive benefits to reintegrating non-insurgency groups or individuals, who have been otherwise disintegrated from social and political processes of Afghanistan (Checchia, 2012).

It is also interesting to note some observations on issues of relationship among Afghan central and local leadership. International Crisis Group report from the beginning of 2012 blames the central Government for the APRP ineffectiveness due to the failure to obtain sufficient local buy-in and the absence of vigorous support from the centre. It calls for substantial delegation of power to the local authorities (ICG, 2012, p. 22). Afghan Governors’ national conference report from June 2013 similarly criticizes the Afghan Government for lack of coordinated approach towards peace building and lack of consultation with provincial structures about project implementation. It further notes that employment opportunities provided to reintegrees are not

<sup>21</sup> SIGAR (II/2014) quotes a report published in June 2014 by Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and 11 Afghan civil society groups, in which interviewed reintegrees stated that the APRP failed to deliver on its promises and left them feeling used, unsupported in the long run, and vulnerable to attack for their cooperation with the Afghan government.

<sup>22</sup> SIGAR report (II/2014) quotes State Department and F-RIC saying that the APRP has a robust vetting process to confirm that individuals who want to join the programme are actually insurgents.

sustainable and that the reintegrees' activities are not being tracked. Finally, the Government is supposedly not adequately working on communicating the "pro-development ideology" to the general public (IDLG, 2013).

## 7 FORCE REINTEGRATION CELL POLICY ADVISOR DYNAMICS

It was into this unprecedented, complex, dynamic and challenging environment that the Slovenian Policy Advisor (POLAD) in Force Reintegration Cell (F-RIC) arrived in Kabul in April 2013. What followed were weeks of intensive familiarization process, studying the whole spectrum of APRP documentation, from the APRP programme documents, APRP bi-monthly reports and other policy documents, to the operational and classified material on the ISAF side, before starting to build key relationships with the JS counterparts. Thus began the forming of a comprehensive perception of a unique nature of the programme but also numerous contradictions, subtle layers and very difficult implementation challenges.

Gradually, the POLAD was increasingly being included in various policy discussions within the Force Reintegration Cell and could contribute advice regarding the daily activities within the F-RIC and with our Afghan and international partners. Continuous participation and engagement was expected when POLAD became one of the section heads<sup>23</sup>. At this point, the primary POLAD "job requirements" were complete English language interoperability (written and spoken proficiency) with the Staff and comprehension of policy issues, including the discrepancies between the normative versus the actual dynamics on the ground. Comparing or aligning the planning segment of the APRP with the nominal reporting and actual "output" metrics - such as ISAF reporting from the provinces, the JS bi-monthly reporting and the UNDP reporting - as well as discussions with the more experienced colleagues, provided for a good picture regarding the weak links of the APRP, such as the virtually non-existing monitoring and evaluation of the programme<sup>24</sup>.

Because of the programme delays, primarily of financial nature, a major issue was the need for financial improvements to enable a swifter and uninterrupted processing

<sup>23</sup> *Sitting at the F-RIC leadership desk during regular staff meetings several times a week were the F-RIC director, his deputy and the section chiefs, among them Programmes, Operations, Support and Policy, surrounded by other staff. All but the Slovenian Policy Head were US or UK senior experts.*

<sup>24</sup> *In February 2013, the UNDP published its long awaited independent MTE, the mid-term evaluation of the programme, with many recommendations. At the inaugural Project Board meeting on 2 June, the donors asked for a detailed description of the actions that had already been undertaken by the JS. The implementation was regularly postponed, but during the June - July timeframe the Afghan side presented the MTE recommendation action plan specific actions undertaken with a projection that the majority of the points be completed by the August - September timeframe. The UNDP 2013 annual report states that "the JS was able to successfully implement most of the 40+ recommendations of the plan and to incorporate some of the suggestions into the Business Case". The success of the business case is thus also in integrating various disconnected parts of the APRP into a whole. The crux of the problem was the weak Monitoring and Evaluation capacity of JS, which has gradually been improving, providing greater visibility and measurability of the programme's achievements. The M&E was also one of the weak areas depicted in the MTE and remained so at the end of 2013, others being (UNDP, 2013): inadequate social outreach, too few armed groups joining the programme, too few communities receiving recovery projects, gender issues.*



of the APRP funds being funnelled into the JS system and into the provinces. This was not easy due to the JS and PJST lack of capacity and skill as well as due to the very strict and somewhat rigid UNDP rules for finance reconciliation.<sup>25</sup> The intensive dynamics at F-RIC focused on the future improvements of the APRP which was showing a serious lack of capacity to smoothly implement all the processes envisaged by the APRP Programme document. April and May saw significant and far-reaching developments. In order to overcome the regular programme cash-flow bottlenecks and improve the ability to reconcile trust fund advances with expenses receipts, the Financial Improvements task force developed financial improvements recommendations that were solidified by the agreement of the senior leaders of the JS, UNDP and F-RIC. Within this process, the F-RIC experts played an important role in devising proposals and driving the dynamics and processes forward, also by influencing the strategic decision making.

Due to the fact that disturbances in the stable financing of the APRP and the lack of robust monitoring and evaluation were vital issues with possibly damaging policy implications, these were the two fields that the POLAD was initially focusing on with the F-RIC Programmes Department seasoned experts. Also, after thoroughly discussing the POLAD's previous experiences and expertise with the F-RIC director it was decided that the focus areas and regular engagements with the JS staff shall be on the Policy and Strategic Communications sides, primarily with the two department heads<sup>26</sup> and later on also with the second JS deputy CEO in charge of Policy. In May it became obvious from our interactions with the donor nation representatives that the APRP funding should become more dependent on specific, visible and measurable results. The element that significantly changed the future of the APRP was the end of May Donor letter to minister Masoom Stanekzai, the JS CEO, which for the first time put conditionality on the future APRP funding, calling for JS to present a clear Business Case and contingency planning for the future of the programme. In short, the APRP international partners were calling for more transparency and progress. It was agreed by the donor representatives and the JS leadership that the APRP Business Case should be developed in close cooperation and support of the F-RIC experts. The document was to be the basis for future funding and international support. It was agreed that the F-RIC POLAD will be the primary F-RIC advisor and point of contact supporting the development of Business Case under the lead of the JS CEO minister Stanekzai, with primary JS focal point being the Policy Department at JS.

What followed was a very intensive series of planning events initiated by the JS and dedicated in one way or another to regaining the programme's momentum and focusing on the future of APRP. The APRP Strategic Conference (28 May) identified successes and challenges of the programme, and saw commitment of the APRP CEO

<sup>25</sup> *Quarterly tranches of money were funnelled to JS, where the JS had to show 80% of the expensed receipts for the quarter before receiving the next tranche of money.*

<sup>26</sup> *Thus began a culturally specific gradual process of frequent interactions slowly increasing confidence building and gradually heading up to discussing and resolving the actual APRP issues at hand. The process of slowly gaining acceptance with the Afghan partners was in somewhat of a contrast with the relatively short-term rotational nature of ISAF personnel postings.*

that the Business Case will soon be presented to the Financial Oversight Committee. The APRP Inaugural Project Board Meeting (2 June) came up with a renewed donor pressure, discussion about the UNDP Mid-Term Evaluation implementation action plan and the devising of the Business Case methodology. The PPC/PJST Conference (5 – 6 June) manifested very transparent and critical consultations between the central and local APRP leadership structures, identifying challenges on the ground, providing more guidance to the provinces, and discussing strategic communication challenges, lack of coordination and the importance of the programme's credibility. The F-RIC POLAD participated in all these events in order to maintain continuity, an integrated overview of developments at all levels and in all formats, with a purpose of providing a coherent overall picture of developments, agreements, promises, criticisms and proposals, for use in all future interactions. The overarching aim was to be able to participate actively, fully and credibly in preparing the APRP Business Case.

The following four-month period saw a wide spectrum of activities dedicated to preparing the Business Case, with the F-RIC being heavily involved in advising the JS on the best approach to complete the document, including its methodology. Initially, the aim of the APRP CEO was to have a political document that will represent the consensus of the HPC on the future of the programme. The donors on the other hand expected a specific, project-oriented document. Initial drafts lacked realism and went beyond the APRP basic programme framework. The F-RIC was trying to manage expectations and steer towards progress and finding a common ground. A key challenge proved to be the lack of evidence on the workings of the programme and a plan or rationale on how different elements of the programme will be implemented. The JS avoided presenting several financially supported options (contingency planning was demanded by the Donor Letter) and was very selective and slow in accepting recommendations, but donors called for further revisions of the document. The second donor letter helped streamline and focus further JS/UNDP/F-RIC coordination on the Business Case. Eventually, the JS accepted the majority of the donor recommendations, although significant time was lost. Two programme options were presented along with financial projections, which were more realistic than with the first proposal. In subsequent interactions, donor representatives called for the JS to articulate the APRP to post-APRP transition plan and also asked for the Implementation Plan. Throughout this process, the F-RIC experts played an active and constructive supporting and facilitating role, discussing challenges, options and possible solutions with the JS on daily basis, as well as listening in on the Donor concerns. In mid-October, the Donors finally agreed to the Business Case narrative as the Afghan side was finishing the Appendixes to the document. The result was not only a stable financial framework for going forward, but also increased mutual understanding among different parties and increased capacity of the JS for strategic self-reflection.

## 8 AFGHANISTAN PEACE AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME POLICY TASKS AND CHALLENGES

The main continuous task of the F-RIC POLAD, apart from the internal ISAF policy dynamics and information sharing, was following the policy developments and related strategic communications efforts on the JS and HPC side by interacting with the heads of departments and other personnel. This also included providing suggestions on development of the Monitoring and Evaluation<sup>27</sup> system of the APRP to improve the capacity on the JS side to measure the effectiveness of various segments of the APRP by analyzing field visit findings, APRP processes and management practices and such. The POLAD attended a variety of meetings with the UNDP and JS and other entities, such as the EU, the Embassies and the NGOs. Financial Oversight Committee, Technical Committee, Project Board, the JS – UNDP – F-RIC tripartite and other meeting formats were regularly attended in order to provide for continuity, insight and a comprehensive and integrated understanding of the real time dynamics and challenges of the programme. Later on, these issues were considered in preparing the Business Case document.

The Joint Secretariat as a very hierarchical type of a structure to a large extent prevented bottom-up expert initiatives or decision making, which translated into substantial passivity and delays in the functioning and processing within the organization. The somewhat static nature of the JS was also manifested through lack of sufficient coordination among and within various JS departments and wider, among various Government departments. The flow of information was not as effective and the level of professionalism not as high as it should be. This called for more interaction with the JS CEO, which seemed to create positive dynamics and progress. Another challenge was a wide spectrum of varying interests on the Afghans side, sometimes preventing focusing on the logical and goal-related activities for ensuring the maximum effectiveness of the APRP. Throughout the majority of activities there was a clear manifestation of the lack of ownership of the processes, which made work slow and difficult, especially since any effective project implementation – which in the final analysis is the ultimate goal – ultimately depends on effective leadership and participant buy-in. These challenges were diverse, numerous and constant. With the F-RIC being just one of the supporting actors in the APRP, the scope of possibility for facilitating change was not too wide, although it was well used through constant interaction, support, presence and influencing.

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<sup>27</sup> *The UNDP 2013 annual report states that “the current JS report format does not clearly identify the outputs, baselines, targets and indicators that form the basis of the programme strategy, and as such it is difficult to measure progress against specific targets. However, the M&E unit of the JS is now in the process of formulating these measurable indicators in their M&E framework, which will be advanced in 2014” (UNDP, 2013). My personal observation is that this has been happening at a far too slow a pace, at a very late stage of the programme.*

## 9 AFGHANISTAN PEACE AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME SUCCESSES

Despite setbacks and complexities, there were significant successes with the APRP in 2013<sup>28</sup>. The UNDP Mid-Term Evaluation and Business Case provided a mutually enhancing framework for facilitating the progress of the APRP.

A number of tools were developed and implemented in 2013 to review and provide oversight of programme implementation and increase efficiency and effectiveness. These were, among others, revisions of various standard operating procedures, in vetting, small grant projects, prioritization of districts, increasing the length of TA assistance to 6 months, staff performance assessments, provincial banking and transfer protocols developed to ease the financial delays, guidelines for civil society groups to access the APRP funds, and monitoring and evaluation field visit checklists (UNDP, 2013).

The UNDP 2013 annual report touches upon the whole Business Case dynamics which lasted from spring to autumn, concluding that “intensive collaboration and coordination was required in the development of the Business Case. All of these changes led to a more involved partnership”. Under “lessons learned”, the report further articulates that “developing the Business Case, which sets out the strategic direction of the APRP for the last 2 years of the programme, was a huge collaborative effort on the part of the JS and resulted in an important and substantive document. It was also a process that allowed significant learning, and JS will be much better placed to develop the next key document – the transition plan – because of the experience of developing the Business Case. All the lessons learned from producing the Business Case can be applied to the task of developing the transition plan” (UNDP, 2013).

In my view this evaluation best describes the successful efforts of the F-RIC experts who put their safety at risk while consistently providing their substantial expertise, knowledge and experience, primarily through intensive and continuous support to the JS personnel through embedding and partnering for a greater success of the APRP.

**Conclusion** The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme has been an important internationally funded project which has removed thousands of former fighters from the field and has helped provide support to local communities and reintegrees. The original APRP concept was ambitious and the following implementation and successes ambiguous and in some areas slow. As Derksen (2011) notes, the APRP was initially hastily implemented to respond to donor imperatives. Many segments of the programme, such as security provision and grievance resolution infrastructure, were lagging behind the actual pace of the reintegration. There have also been many complaints about both the Joint Secretariat ineffectiveness and inefficiency and lack

<sup>28</sup> *The UN Security Council Resolution 2120 (2013) which extends authorization for ISAF until December 2014 “recognizes the increased number of reintegrees that have joined the APRP” and encourages “further efforts to address the remaining operational challenges” and further encourages “the international community to support this Afghan-led effort”.*

of capacity in the provinces, as well as lack of communication and distrust between different APRP implementing partners.

But many things have progressed visibly since then. The conditionality regarding further financial support of the international donors provided an important new stimulus to the programme. The serious issue of the lack of adequate transparency and measurability of the Programme's achievements has been addressed but not yet resolved. ISAF has been playing a positive facilitating and supportive role in an effort to help further develop a more effective and efficient programme. If properly executed, the APRP could influence or provide a notable stimulus to the high-level reconciliation process. On the other hand, it might also provide a very useful in-place and verified tool for a possible reintegration flow following a high-level reconciliation peace deal. In the final analysis, the overall success of the programme is also significantly correlated to the Afghan central and local authorities' credibility and improved governance.

The efforts for long-term stabilization of Afghanistan, within which reconciliation, reintegration, peace talks, capacity building, local ownership and local development play an integral part, are fully complementary with the foreign and defence policy principles and goals of the Republic of Slovenia. Therefore, very active and noticeable participation in the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme was not only a significant and unique personal and professional challenge but – more importantly – an opportunity for national strategic positioning and promotion of the policies and activities of the Republic of Slovenia and the Ministry of Defence in the bilateral and multilateral international fora and at home.

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