



Highlights of [GAO-08-689](#), a report to congressional committees

### Why GAO Did This Study

The Afghan government, the United States, and other donors consider road reconstruction a top development priority for Afghanistan. Almost 20 percent of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) \$5.9 billion in assistance to Afghanistan has been for roads. The Department of Defense (Defense) has committed about \$560 million for roads, of which Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds account for over half. GAO examined (1) the status of road reconstruction and challenges affecting project implementation, (2) U.S. agencies' efforts to evaluate the impact of road projects, and (3) efforts to develop a sustainable road maintenance program. GAO reviewed U.S. and Afghan governments' planning, evaluation, and funding documents and interviewed relevant stakeholders in Afghanistan.

### What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the USAID Administrator (1) take steps to improve its framework for assessing results, (2) conduct impact evaluations in coordination with other donors, and (3) work with the Afghan government to address and fund maintenance of roads. GAO also recommends that the Secretary of Defense (1) require impact evaluations of its CERP-funded road projects where applicable, and (2) ensure that information on CERP-funded roads is reported to a USAID database, as required by CERP guidance. USAID and Defense agreed with our recommendations and have begun taking steps to implement them.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-689](#). For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr. at (202) 512-7331 or [johnsoncm@gao.gov](mailto:johnsoncm@gao.gov).

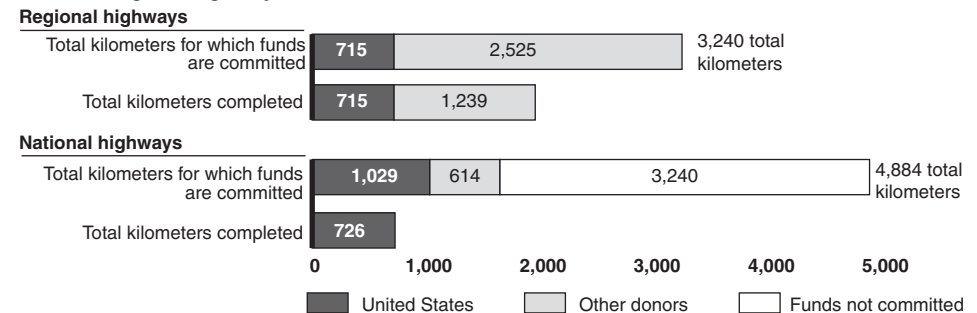
## AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

### Progress Made in Constructing Roads, but Assessments for Determining Impact and a Sustainable Maintenance Program Are Needed

#### What GAO Found

The United States and other donors have completed construction of several regional and national highways since 2002, but the status of other roads is uncertain and various challenges have delayed construction. The Afghan government and international donors planned to complete the high-priority regional highways by the end of 2008, and as of February 2008, about 60 percent of these roads were built. USAID has completed its portion, but completion of other portions is not expected until late 2009. Donors have committed to construct over 30 percent of national highways, which connect provincial capitals to the regional highways, and only USAID has completed portions of these highways. Detailed information on the status of provincial and rural roads is lacking. Although Defense reported committing CERP funds for 1,600 kilometers of roads, data on the roads were incomplete and Defense has not reported information on these roads to USAID, as required. Poor security, project implementer limitations, and starting construction with limited planning have contributed to project delays and cost increases.

**Status of Afghan Highways for Which Donors Have Committed Funds Since 2002**



Source: GAO analysis of data from USAID, the Consultative Group for the Transport Sector, and the Road Sector Master Plan.

U.S. agencies have not conducted sound impact evaluations to determine the degree to which projects achieved the objective of economic development. Limitations of USAID's funding, data collection, and frameworks to assess results have impeded its ability to evaluate project impact. Defense has not conducted any impact evaluations and lacks clear guidance on project evaluation. However, agency officials have noted some anecdotal examples of road construction impact, such as reduced travel times and increased commerce. Moreover, no other donor has performed impact evaluations.

A sustainable road maintenance program has not been established, although it is a goal of the Afghan government and international donors. The Afghan government's support of this goal has been limited due to factors such as a lack of resources and a fragmented institutional organization. As a result, international donors have agreed to temporarily fund road maintenance to protect their investments. While USAID plans to maintain about 1,500 kilometers of roads it built, it did not meet its 2007 target to maintain 100 kilometers of reconstructed roads.