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Administrator's Stabilization Guidance

USAID programs in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are critical enablers for the success of the President's strategy. In particular, USAID's stabilization programs play a vital role supporting counterinsurgency efforts. The points enumerated below provide broad direction for how USAID will conduct its stabilization work in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This guidance will inform, and be informed by, the forthcoming Agency-wide Policy for Development Assistance to Counter Violent Extremism and Insurgency. It anticipates forthcoming guidance on government-to-government assistance and will be revised periodically.

Stabilization is a different development assistance approach. While stability is a necessary precursor for our long-term development goals, stabilization programming often has different objectives, beneficiaries, modalities, and measurement tools than long-term development programming. Our training, planning, metrics, labeling, and communications efforts, among others, must reflect both the differences and the linkages.

Context matters. Plot community stabilization programs along a stabilization continuum, ranging from a less to more stable environment, recognizing that the continuum is often highly dynamic. A locality that is stable today may be unstable tomorrow. Flexibility is required when programming resources and identifying benchmarks. Clearly identify how a program supports the advancement of a community along the stability continuum to allow people to have a common understanding of their environment and appropriately focus, integrate, and adapt their programs.

Link stabilization and long-term development efforts. Consistent with USAID's broader development goals, and in order to guard against waste, diminishing returns, and the creation of unsustainable dependencies, identify ways to link deliberately short-term stabilization programs with subsequent

complementary medium- and long-term development programs. Establish clear, conditions-based sequencing criteria and coordination mechanisms, internally and with our implementing partners, between stabilization programs and those that are intended to follow afterwards. Enduring stability and our broader developmental goals depend on that effective transition.

Train staff for stabilization efforts. Given the necessary linkages between stabilization programming and long-term development programming, appropriate training to enable our staff to succeed is critical. The most recent field experiences and learning need to drive and shape training. Adapt policies and systems to account for these requirements and ensure that personnel receive the appropriate training, field mentorship, and technical resources to succeed.

Hone in on sources of instability. Not every developmental need is a source of instability. Customized, adaptive programming, grounded in research and experience, is required to identify and effectively respond to *specific* drivers of instability. The disciplined application of analysis is as critical in a stabilization context as in any other. Ascertain and prioritize sources of instability, establish a whole-of-government common operating picture, design a focused set of interventions accordingly, and systematically evaluate measures of progress and impact. One of USAID's analytical tools is the District Stabilization Framework (DSF). Employ DSF, with appropriate modifications for your mission, in areas where we have stabilization objectives. Demonstrate impact against targeted sources of instability.

Be selective, flexible, and agile. Establish well-defined engagement and sequencing criteria for establishing stability programs in a given locality. With limited resources, make choices about where stabilization investments will achieve the greatest impact against our broader objectives. Incorporate cost effectiveness in determining the smartest allocation of resources. More is not necessarily better. Robust and responsive monitoring and evaluation systems are critical for ascertaining whether the programs are achieving cost-effective impact and enable us to make mid-course corrections. Since the operating environment is extremely fluid, poise platforms and contingency resources to rapidly expand or shift programming as opportunities arise. For instance, a positive change in district political leadership might provide a window for stabilization programming that did not exist before.

Devolve authorities for maximum local impact. We can only be successful in a dynamic and dangerous environment if our trained field staff has appropriately

responsive and flexible contracting mechanisms and resources at their disposal. Devolve program design and management to the field to the maximum extent practicable, streamline procurement, and strengthen close coordination with implementing partners and communities. Program oversight should be a closely shared responsibility between the field and headquarters.

Reinforce success. Successful stabilization efforts should lead to new opportunities for tangible development investments that reinforce success and the faith of local communities in the durability of stability. Create enduring stability "ink spots" rather than prematurely shifting resources and attention before a foundation is set, confidence is built, and momentum is irreversible.

Work across borders. Since conflict dynamics in the region cross national political boundaries, work with the embassy border coordinators to examine opportunities for border region programming and cross-border coordination. Maximize opportunities to compare best practices.

Support country ownership. Country ownership is a hallmark of effective development. Unless trust in the host government is restored, no stabilization effort will be sustainable. With every action, ask whether it is strengthening the host nation's ability to respond to its own citizens' concerns. Enable host nation institutions, governmental and nongovernmental, to ultimately design and implement host nation-led stabilization programs. Build stabilization capacity to ensure a successful transition to greater host nation leadership.

Communicate country ownership. Communicating host nation leadership and partnership complements and amplifies our efforts to strengthen their legitimacy and effectiveness vis-à-vis the insurgency. Weave communication elements into programming. Branding is one component of this effort. By statute and policy, under most circumstances, aggressively brand or co-brand "USAID." Under certain circumstances, local context may make branding or co-branding counterproductive. In those instances, consider other nuanced methods to balance security, political, and communications goals and, where necessary, seek appropriate branding waivers. Work with other donors and partners to ensure this same commitment to strengthening citizen confidence in the host government through appropriate communications.

Take the pulse of the population. A key element in counterinsurgency is support of the population. A wide array of tools is needed to understand how that support shifts over time and how our actions drive changes in perception and behavior.

Incorporate perception surveys attuned to local context and objectives to inform your analysis of sources of instability, establish baselines, and measure impact. Seek out the perspectives of our Foreign Service Nationals, local national partner staff, and other experts. Combine survey data with other qualitative and quantitative metrics of attitudes and behavior to adapt and improve.

Innovate and learn. To succeed in these dynamic environments, USAID must be a learning organization. We have to learn and adapt faster than the forces we are trying to confront. Every activity is an opportunity to learn what works, what does not, and why. Finding innovative solutions that can be scaled for impact requires methodical experimentation. Create mechanisms to self-critique, continuously adapt, and share lessons learned, especially with our interagency, international, and cross-border colleagues. Build a culture that rewards adaptation, innovation, and problem solving.

Take calculated risks. USAID acknowledges the high degree of programmatic, fiduciary, and personal risk inherent in stabilization programs. USAID directs stabilization programs to operate in insecure, dynamic environments where success is uncertain, local conditions are highly variable, and USAID direct oversight may not be possible, making programmatic and fiduciary risks pressing issues. USAID also acknowledges the personal and physical risks that USAID and implementing partner staff take every day. In light of the above considerations, and due to the Administration's strategic priorities in these two countries, it is USAID policy that, so long as appropriate risk management issues are addressed and documented, no person shall be held responsible for adverse consequences, if any, arising solely out of a decision to implement stabilization assistance in difficult areas. This policy must not be construed to relieve USAID personnel involved in decisions to implement stabilization programs from employing reasonable risk mitigation measures. A companion USAID policy directive on government-to-government assistance will provide further guidance on fiduciary and programmatic risk mitigation and should be applied jointly with this stabilization guidance.

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