Capacity Building for Stable Government:
Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Afghanistan

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Abstract

Present Afghanistan is the result of more than two decades of war and a few years of relative peace brought about after the terrorist attacks of 11th of September 2001. The protracted war has resulted in more than a million casualties, an even greater number of internally and externally displaced people, the destruction of physical infrastructure, and, most importantly, the destruction of institutions of governance. Effective public administration is discussed as a prerequisite for post-conflict recovery and development. Through the evolution of investment choices the importance of capacity building for a long-term stability is shown. This paper focuses on Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks and its efforts to establish a stable government, mostly through capacity building. It gives a brief introduction to the country and describes public administration before and after the conflict. Considering the challenges of a post-conflict country, this paper emphasizes the importance of establishing an effective and stable government that can generate a path of reconstruction and long-term development. Through introduction of the national strategy for capacity building and the Public Administration Reform (PAR) programme, Afghanistan's efforts in establishing effective and stable government are shown. Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) is the core element of the PAR programme. Effectively, it serves as a step-by-step tool for implementing the PAR programme and it aims to reform the most critical function of government. Through the evaluation of the PRR process, the author underlines the challenges facing the implementation of the PAR programme and also draws some recommendations to overcome those challenges.

1. Introduction

Post-conflict situations are a reality of the 21st century and will remain so as long as conflicts are taking place in different parts of the world. Since the end of World War II, 228 armed conflicts have taken place[1]. As of the end of 2003, there were fifteen undergoing "major wars", which according to the United Nations (UN) resulted in one thousand battlefield deaths. Forty-one out of 55 peace operations of the UN undertaken since the end of World War II took place after 1989[2].

Different from the past, present conflicts have a high rate of civilian casualties, consequently a post-conflict country can be characterized not only by severely damaged public infrastructure and private property, along with shattered state institutions, but also by thousands or even millions of killed and wounded people, and an even bigger displaced population. Conflict changes the values of society and diminishes people's ideas for, and faith in, planning ahead.

Consequently, post-conflict reconstruction does not simply mean re-creation of physical and social infrastructure. It implies lengthier and much harder efforts in order to expand the idea of peace and enable people to believe in the positive outcomes that the reconstruction process can bring. Of vital importance to long-term development, post-conflict reconstruction needs to establish a new system of public administration and then governance[1].

In order to establish efficient public administration, it is necessary at first to create a professional and accountable bureaucracy, which will be able to manage the country's scarce economic and social resources. As governmental apparatus in a developing and post-conflict country is a body which formulates the country's strategy for development, it is important for the country's sake to have apparatus which will serve the interests of the whole population, not just its elite.

Afghanistan has a long history of war which was brought to an end by the Bonn Agreement[2] in December 2001. Since then, it has been a big challenge for both national and international communities to rebuild the country's economic and social capital in a way that it would not revert to conflict again. One of the central challenges has been to establish an effective governmental administration, which is capable of leading Afghanistan's reconstruction and development.

The main objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of public administration capacity building in a post-conflict environment with particular focus on Afghanistan's efforts in this area. To this effect, it will look at the Public Administration Reform (PAR) programme, as a tool to develop efficient public service delivery, and its main element, the Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) process, in order to see whether reconstruction efforts are moving in the right direction. The author will also draw some recommendations on how the PRR process can be improved and what should be strongly emphasized to enable the PRR process, and subsequently the PAR programme, to produce positive outcomes for the overall reconstruction efforts.

2. Capacity building as an important element of post-conflict reconstruction

Before going to the capacity building concept, there is a need to clarify what the term "capacity" means. Two definitions of capacity – one, as an ability to hold or grasp a matter, and another refers to human attributes or mental power - are relevant to the subject of present study (Webster's Dictionary, 1986).

The term capacity building has been discussed over several decades. However, even a brief a review of these writings gives the impression of constantly shifting and unclear definitions of this key term. After the

inclusion of "governance" as the current means of describing the institutional development and capacity building, the definition became even more confusing.

This paper uses the definition of capacity building as a key actions plan necessary to achieve core principles of governance that has three components: institutional building, organizational restructuring, and human resource development (Ahrens, 2002). Capacity building within public administration institutions is the main focus of this paper.

Why did capacity building become an important element in the county's developmental process? The experience of the World Bank (WB) in capacity-building will help to understand the shift in the priorities for development towards capacity-building[3].

Starting with India and Pakistan's independence in 1948, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) moved its priorities towards newly emerging developing countries in the late 1950s. For a long time, the IBRD's priority was infrastructure development, particularly that of European countries. The newly independent states were completely void of any infrastructure and hence the challenge facing the IBRD in these contexts was on of *building*, not *re-building*. In addition, the concept of infrastructure expanded from constructing roads and bridges towards industry and agriculture (Gavin and Rodrik, 1995).

The main question that arose pertained to whether a beneficiary had an adequate amount of human and other resources to properly maintain the infrastructure it had acquired from foreign assistance. As foreign aid had to be re-paid, it was not efficient to spend a big amount of it on international consultants whereas a national cadre can be developed (Heyneman, 2003). Therefore, the WB[4] realized the importance of investment in capacity building through education and since 1962 has been active in this field. In the 1990s, the WB shifted its policy from human resource development to a broader concept of good governance. Capacity building became one of the means towards the establishment of good governance[5] in developing countries.

However, capacity building efforts in post-conflict societies differ from those in developing countries since in the aftermath of a conflict countries acquire special characteristics such as physical destruction, human losses, increased wounded and displaced population. In addition, in countries like Afghanistan, people have historically adjusted their behavior and attitude to a conflict. Rodriques (2003, 26) notes that "the resistance was rooted in the hearts and minds of the East Timorese people". In many post-conflict countries, resistance, fear, desire to fight, or simply desire to survive still occupy people's minds. Thus, people have to build their behavior and attitude based on the newly emerged situation without a conflict. One of the ways of achieving it is through capacity building. Needless to say, capacity building in a post-conflict environment is a longer and more complicated process compared to that of a developing country.

As was already mentioned, Afghanistan is a country with a long history of war. The physical destruction of infrastructure, housing, historical and cultural monuments, can be pointed out as ones of the most obvious signs of Afghanistan's post-conflict environment. Human losses, wounded population, and millions of displaced persons are the most harmful consequences of the conflict. During the conflict, technological, managerial, and other areas of Afghanistan's economy stopped developing and thus need to be improved dramatically to catch up with the rest of the world. A country with such characteristics neither has resources nor the ability to rebuild itself. Hence, in the aftermath of war, international community has turned its attention towards Afghanistan. In order to reconstruct the country, the international community, including the UN, the WB, bilateral donors, etc. together with Afghanistan's national actors, met in Bonn in December 2001 to agree upon the establishment of a transitional government and in order to identify a development prospective for the country. Since the Bonn initiative took place, more than 4 billion USD was pledged to Afghanistan for its recovery by many international or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donor-countries[6]. However, despite the need to move quickly with aid implementation, the process has

been slow. Limited implementation capacity, especially within the public sector, is still one of the main constraints for planning and implementing developmental programmes. Therefore, in order to be effective, donor assistance should support the development of governmental capacity in a long-term prospective (Kapila, 2003).

The building capacity of public administration is essential not only for effective implementation of aid programmes, but also to raise the legitimacy of government in the eyes of its people through the improvement of quality of provided services and policy for spending funds (McKechnie, 2003).

Building the capacity of organizations in the developing world is shared by many donor agencies. At the Symposium on Nation-Building in the Globalization Process on 11-12 December 2002 (Bonn, Germany) organized by the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF[7]), Lubkermeier (SEF News, February 2003) stated that although nation-building cannot be forced from outside it can be encouraged, because it can facilitate confidence building which is a prerequisite for stable peace, and one of the main elements in nation-building. Lubkermeier pointed out four guidelines to achieve stable peace, including a well-structured and well-functioning state apparatus. Without a good civil service system, all reconstruction efforts can be undermined. At the same time, Afghanistan's "administrative structure is, at best, that of 25 years ago" (Farhang, 2003, 201), consequently the majority of Afghanistan's civil servants are ill-paid and work in environments where administrative systems are absent or weak. This absence of functional administrative system can be a challenge for Afghanistan's reconstruction.

According to Agenda 21[8] adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in June 1992, a country's ability for sustainable development depends to a large extent on the capacity of its people and its institutions. It underlines that "capacity-building encompasses the country's human, scientific, technological, organizational, institutional and resource capabilities" (Chapter 37) and aims at strengthening the ability to assess and direct the questions on policy choices and implementation models. In other words, capacity building can be formulated as actions or activities, resources and support that enhance the skills and abilities of people, and therefore institutions, to take effective action and leading roles in a country's development. Hence, it is important for Afghanistan's reconstruction to (re)build public service in such a way that it will be able to implement developmental goals for a long-term stability.

3. The importance of establishment of effective civil service for post-conflict reconstruction

In this paper it is argued that being a post-conflict country Afghanistan needs to create an effective civil service which can lead the country towards further development. Why is it so?

In post-conflict countries, the establishment of effective civil service is vital because the success of the reconstruction efforts, to a large extent, depends on the domestic project implementation capacity. Without a good civil service system, all reconstruction efforts can be undermined. Ahrens points out Olson's observation that "the great differences in the wealth of nations are mainly due to differences in the quality of their institutions and economic policies" (2002, 3). Ahrens further argues that the quality of governmental intervention, not its level, is crucial for economic development and that the structure of governance is effective only if the policies and projects conducted by governments are properly implemented and enforced. To achieve qualitative institutions, the capacity and the capabilities of the policy makers as well as civil servants to enforce and implement reform programmes are very important.

Since the international assistance took place in a broader context in the last century, many scholars have devoted themselves to elaborating theories and methodologies on how a developing country should build its capacity in order to achieve economical and social development. However, the concept of capacity building[9] has

not been clearly defined yet.

Ahrens argues that in East Asian countries at early stages of their development policy makers sought to achieve gradual improvement of capabilities through the promotion of education and institutional building. As a result, "given a more competent bureaucracy and institutions facilitating cooperation between the government and private sector, policy making can increasingly rely on more sophisticated activities which require specialized skills and more information" (Ahrens, 2002, 345-346).

Owada also points out the institutional dimension as one of the main areas for reconstruction along physical, political and moral dimensions. He introduces institutional dimension as "rebuilding a system of governance to run society as a community of people" and argues that in a post-conflict society rebuilding the system of governance is only possible with outside not only financial but also technical assistance through a know-how introduction (Owada, 2003, 26).

The relative success of post-war reconstruction in South Korea, according to Moon and Park (2003, 79-83), can be seen as a product of domestic institutional reforms which took place along with massive external assistance, systematic planning, implementation and monitoring. Moon and Park further argue that post-war recovery does not automatically lead to economic modernization unless post-conflict countries pay attention to the effective linkage between the post-war efforts and medium- to long-term development strategies. The establishment of an effective government apparatus is essential for long-term development. The example of South Korea shows that in order to avoid rampant corruption and rent-seeking it is important to devise effective governmental mechanisms capable of reducing or removing negative externalities associated with the post-war reconstruction.

Yoshimura (2003) names a capable governmental bureaucracy that lead Japanese people towards economic and social growth supported by external assistance[10] as one of the reasons for Japan's economic and social success after World War II.

The above-mentioned experiences of post-conflict recovery clearly show that (re)establishment of an efficient public service is an important element during a country's reconstruction phase and the vital role of donor community in this process. An efficient, transparent and accountable public administration is the main tool through which the relationship between different actors[11] is based and, therefore, should be considered of high importance. What kind of public administration system does Afghanistan have and how is the international community involved in the process of public service improvement?

4. Afghanistan's public service administration

According to Thier and Chopra (2004), Afghanistan's experience with national government varied between two models. The first model can be described as concentration of power in the hands of minority groups as was the case during the period of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (Afghan Communist Party) from 1979 to 1992 and later during the Taliban time. This model can be called the *centralization model*. The second model is the *modernization model* which is characterized by modernization efforts in cooperation with autonomous local authorities and which was identified during the rule of Amanullah (1919-29) and Zahir Shah (1933-73). There was an attempt to introduce other model when the 1964 Constitution was enacted. However, the idea of free elections was not supported by Afghan society. As a result, Afghanistan now is in the difficult position of trying to centralize governmental functions whilst keeping local authorities satisfied with their roles and positions at the regional and national levels. The process is even harder than one can imagine taking into account Afghanistan's history of dependency on the external resources and historical sense of nationhood which is much stronger than the structure of the Afghan state (Barakat, 2004).

Before the Taliban era, state institutions in Afghanistan were barely functioning. The Taliban had made the restoration of a strong national administration one of its key objectives (Suhrke et al, 2004). Under Taliban rule, there were 24 governmental ministries. However, due to the Taliban's radical policies, the regime was not legitimate. The preceding 23 years of conflict had made regional authorities strong through their military and, to some extent, political structures.

Hence, after the September 11 attacks, Afghanistan's civil service, although existed, was weak or non functional[12], and mostly decentralized. Consequently, there is a need to create national institutions through a simultaneous process of centralization and regionalization so that the regions do not seek alternative political arrangements. This process is difficult one and is still one of the major challenges for reconstruction.

In order to transform institutions, there is a need to identify existing problems. The major problems of the Afghan public service can, broadly speaking, be divided into institutional and human resources problems. After the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan was left mostly with an aging public servants whose skills and abilities have depreciated over time. While human resource problems are related to unskilled personnel who have a low capacity to develop and implement policies and deliver services, institutional problems are much broader and can be identified as follows:

1. Fragmented government structure with overlapping functions;
2. Absence of up-to-date proper work procedures;
3. Highly decentralized state and concentration of governmental administration at the center;
4. Weak provincial public administration[13];
5. Inadequate pay (or salary net) system.

Following the June 2002 Emergency Loya Jirgah[14], the size of the Cabinet expanded significantly to accommodate different political interests that were developed through the conflict years. Currently, 30 ministries, 11 independent bodies and several other central government agencies constitute the administrative structure of the state. At the sub-national level, the office of the provincial governor, there are ministerial departments for finance, health, education, agriculture, rural development and so on, depending on the administrative division of the parent ministry in Kabul (UNDP, 2004). In spite of the overly large ministerial structure, the basic organizational and administrative structures, functions and political accountabilities appear broadly to be intact (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Afghanistan's Structure of the Government*
Source: UNDP, 2004

Cabinet

Central Administration		
2 constitutional agencies	**30 Ministries**	**Central agencies and independent bodies**

34 provincial municipalities	Ministries Provincial Departments (34)	Elected Provincial Councils

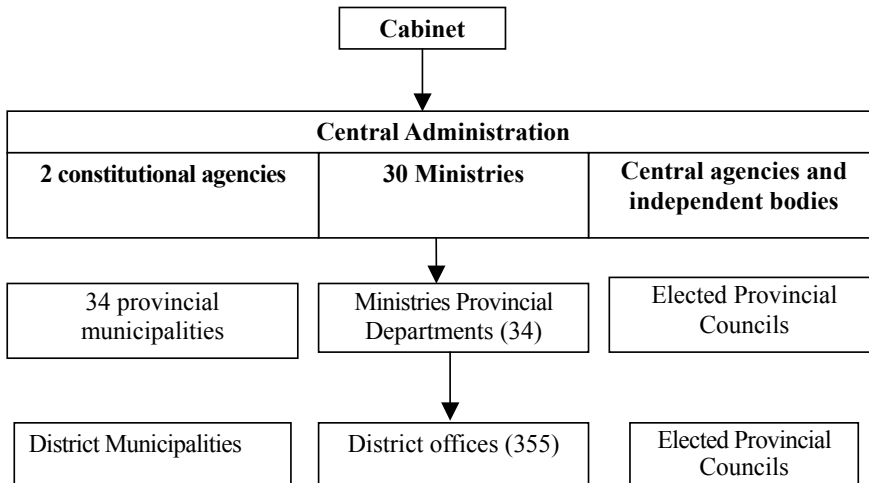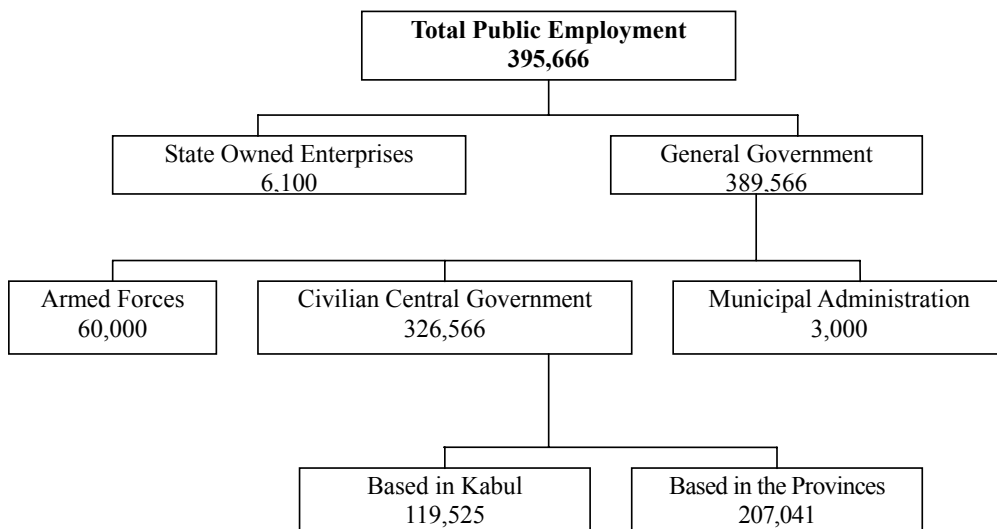| District Municipalities	District offices (355)	Elected Provincial Councils

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the public employees within the public administration system. As of 2004, there were 395,666 public employees in Afghanistan and most of them were employed by the civilian central governments in Kabul and the provinces. Thus, any attempt to reconstruct Afghanistan's public administration should take into account the existing structure. Therefore, capacity building should address and cover not only establishment of governmental institutions with effective functions, but also involve filling these institutions with qualified personnel. At this point, a question inevitably comes to the fore: how can capacity building be addressed in a post-conflict environment?

Figure 2. *Estimated Totals of Public Employment*
Source: UNDP, 2004

Total Public Employment 395,666

State Owned Enterprises 6.100	General Government 389.566

Armed Forces 60,000	Civilian Central Government 326,566	Municipal Administration 3,000

Based in Kabul 119,525	Based in the Provinces 207,041

The assistance of international community is important for the process of capacity building. Not surprisingly, there are many donor institutions that have undertaken capacity building initiatives in Afghanistan. However, the outcomes of this assistance not always match the expectations. The research undertaken by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) highlights some problems observed in the donors' efforts toward capacity building (Roshan, 2004). UNAMA was formed to ensure the smooth transfer of ownership of the all reconstruction efforts in the country to the Afghans. One of the ways to achieve this goal is to build national capacity in such a way that the Afghans could be able to take full control over the country (Sedra and Middlebrook, March 2004). Since 2001, a significant amount of international assistance was directed to capacity building. In order to assess the situation of capacity building efforts within governmental institutions, UNAMA conducted research among 28 ministries and 17 major donors regarding the provided assistance in four areas of capacity building, namely: transportation, technical advisory support, number of staff trained, and IT and communication equipments[15] (Roshan, 2004). The objectives of the study were (i) to show assistance flow towards capacity building received by governmental institutions through creating a database and (ii) to bring to international actors' attention the level of disparity of the capacity building assistance among different institutions.

The main finding of the above-mentioned research is that assistance towards capacity building by the donor community is not equally distributed: some ministries receive assistance in all four areas and in a large amount, whereas other ministries barely receive any assistance. This inequality is not only due to the lack of donor's communication. This also can be an outcome of the different absorptive capacities amongst governmental institutions[16]. Donors' support was given in the form of emergency operations and was channeled mostly to those ministries which could absorb the provided assistance. Roshan also points out that the unequal distribution of assistance can be also a result of personal contacts, favoritism, as well as a lack of interest from the top leadership of the ministry in question. Although research does not cover provincial government administrations, it highlights that inequality between Kabul-based offices reflects the situation in provinces as well. The capacity of the provincial and district levels is much lower and this is one of the factors that conditioned the exclusion of provincial governments from the range of assistance provided to the central government.

Thus, there was a need for a national strategy for capacity building for the Afghan Civil Service which could allow systematization of the overall capacity building efforts. This strategy was developed[17] and announced on the Consultative Group Standing Committee on 20 March 2005 and included: 1) PRR; 2) Lateral Entry – recruitment of Afghans from NGOs or other institutions; 3) Afghan Expatriate Programme (AEP) - recruitment of qualified expatriate Afghans in advisory positions across the government; 4) Public Administration Institute (PAI) – creation of the institute for public servants; 5) IT enhancement; 6) Training courses; 7) Leadership Development Programme.

Although national strategy was announced only in 2005, the efforts towards effective public administration, though in a piecemeal manner, started since the Interim Afghan Authority (IAA) was announced.

In cooperation with the donor community, the government of Afghanistan has launched the PAR programme which aims to provide a framework for programmes and projects that will lead to a sound administrative and physical environment for effective and efficient civil service.

Public Administration refers to the aggregate machinery (policies, rules, systems, organizational structure, personnel, etc.) which is funded by the state budget and responsible for the affairs of the executive government and interaction with other stakeholders in the state, society, and external environment (UNDP, 2005). Hence, PAR is comprehensive and includes the process of introducing changes in the areas of organizational structure, personnel management, public finance and others. In this paper, the author would like to show whether the introduction of the PAR, with a specific focus on the PRR programme, can actually solve existing problems of

public service in Afghanistan and, consequently, lead to an effective public administration system in Afghanistan.

5. Public Administration Reform Objectives

In order to build an efficient public administration, in June 2003 the government of Afghanistan established the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCSC) as the major governmental institution responsible for public administration and with an overall responsibility to implement the PAR programme in the country. The main activities of the IARCSC are: a) to lead the public administration system; b) to coordinate activities of all governmental institutions to meet developmental need; c) to organize and improve overall administrative affairs; and d) to organize and improve civil service personnel management (GA, 20 March 2003). The IARCSC comprises of a Civil Service Management Department responsible for developing a new legal framework for civil service (including a Code of Ethics); the Independent Appointed Board (five members appointed) responsible to monitor merit based appointments; and an Independent Appeals Board responsible for dealing with complaints in the workplace. The IARCSC also undertakes a survey on ministries' functions, structures and senior staffing level.

Now let us describe what kind of activities are undertaken under the PAR in order to make the public service machinery effective.

The PAR programme provides a comprehensive framework for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service which should be small, but more focused, more diverse and decentralized, accountable and more representative of society in terms of gender and ethnicity. In other words, the PAR aims to contribute to economic and social development through improvement of the institutions of public service. Moreover, the PAR aims at building a smaller and more coherent bureaucracy which can lead the country into long-term development and sustainable peace through reforming central ministries and local administrations of government in order to create a clean and efficient public service with optimized functions and reduced cost.

The PAR provides an overall framework for projects and programmes under the national strategy for capacity building. But how does this reflect the problems of public administration in Afghanistan?

One of the answers is that PAR addresses the shortage of professionally qualified staff which is related to net salary within governmental apparatus as one of the present problems of Afghanistan's public administration. In many developing countries, civil servants are ill-paid. As a result, many people, who are talented and capable, shun government offices. Consequently, there is a need to introduce a salary network that will create a meritocracy to attract high-qualified staff with good performance. A new pay scale system which can be introduced within a ministry or department under the PRR process, i.e. a core element of PAR, addresses salary network problems in Afghanistan.

The problem of low payment within governmental institutions also leads to the filling of these offices with mediocre staff. When the government is not able to solve its servants' problems, the servants try to find a way to satisfy their pecuniary interests. Thus, there is a high possibility that corruption[18] will take place. This problem is identified in most developing countries, and it is becoming a reality of the post-conflict reconstruction. The WB noted that in a country where public officials have "rewards and penalties at their disposal", or in other words, when a public servant has full control over some resources or information, corruption is likely to occur (WB, 1997, 103). Corruption corrodes social trust. In some cases, it can lead to situations where even honest civil servants will not see any use in following the rules. According to Bardhan (1997), a country should get rid of regulations and laws which provide bureaucracy with the special rights that breed corruption as a primary step to building

institutional capacity. In Afghanistan, there is a need to create a civil service legal framework that assures that "rewards and penalties" will not be at the hands of one person or institution.

However, a legal framework alone will not be effective unless there is an incentive-based payment system that would be sufficient enough for officials not to become involved in corruptive matters. Here the case of Singapore can be a good example. Singapore government has introduced an incentive wage policy for official servants with a high success (Tan, 2004). Good pubic offices need intelligent servants who need good salaries in return. In order to prevent the spread of corruption, the government should take appropriate policy for civil service that would prevent governmental officials from thinking of their pecuniary interests. As previously mentioned, the PRR process launched in July 2003 allows civil servants of selected departments or entire institutions to be placed on elevated pay scales (seven levels) for a fixed term which can take place along with the restructuring of the department/institution in question. An increased payment system within public administration also creates a favorable environment for the lateral entry programme as it can attract professional cadres from NGOs and other non-state organizations.

As governance is an act of steering, it needs good human resources and a well-organized structure. To achieve this, the government frequently introduces structural adjustments in the institutions of public administration. Due to such kinds of restructuring, feelings of uncertainty among public officials arise as it is not clear whether a public servant will be employed in a restructured institution and, if so, which position he/she will be given. Thus, the problem of labor fluidity occurs. The frequency of changes in governmental structure makes government credibility indicators decrease, which, in turn, has a negative effect on investment inflow and development projects return (Kakimova, 2003, 93). In a post-conflict environment, when governmental institutions are still shattered, it is important to take time for careful planning of the roles and responsibilities of different public institutions so as to avoid unnecessary restructuring that may lead into a labor fluidity not only within public governmental institutions, but also into a private or international sector. Along with introducing an elevated pay scale, the PRR process also aims at reforming the most critical functions of government. However, at this stage, it is not clear whether those reforms are effective and well planned, and will not lead to frequent structural adjustments.

Improvements in the pay scale system will not, however, solve the problems in Afghanistan's public service as there is a general lack of qualified personnel. Therefore, creating meritocracy within public service should be concurrent with human capacity building.

Education is the main tool for human capacity building. The cost-benefit analysis by Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) shows that the outcomes of investments in education in developed countries is lower than in developing countries. Thus, when a country's educational capacity expands, the return of educational investment weakens. Therefore, efforts in human capital development or human capacity building are crucial for developing countries, particularly in post-conflict countries, as conflict leads to substantial loss of skilled and unskilled labor, internal and external migration, and reduction of investments in education. International aid programmes emphasize training as an important element to (re)build a country's capacity through the rebuilding of social capital in order to enhance absorptive capacity to establish effective organizations for the reconstruction process (Basil van Hoven, 2002). Therefore, providing training to the present cadres of the governmental institutions is also important.

Training is a process of strategic capacity and relationship building. Capacity building is oriented toward expanding on what is already in place and available. "Capacity" is linked to the concept of empowerment. Capacity building, therefore, refers to the process of reinforcing the inherent capabilities and people's understandings, and to a new action for change in the new settings without a conflict. Relationship-building suggests that training is not solely concerned with increasing an individual's capacity and skills, but seeks also to develop, and build, relationships both in and across the lines of division in the context of protracted conflict. Thus,

the process of human capacity building is not an easy one.

As was mentioned previously, Afghanistan does not have enough qualitative personnel within the country[19]. The long history of war has forced people into migration, both internal and external. As a result, many Afghans who left the country have received good education abroad and create a big community of highly qualified professionals (UNDP, 2004). One of the first steps towards qualitative institution development is to bring in qualified professionals who can become pillars of the needed institutional reforms. Therefore, it can be argued that the recruitment of Afghan expatriates is crucial, especially at the beginning of the reconstruction process as human capacity building through training is a long-term process.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned problems, the PAR programme in Afghanistan consists of seven main components, namely: 1) civil service legal framework; 2) personnel management; 3) institutional and functional streamlining and development; 4) financial management and accountability; 5) policy management and machinery of government; 6) administrative efficiency, and 7) improvement of physical infrastructure. All components are closely interlinked and the lack of progress in one field would certainly affect the progress in other fields as well (IARCSC, 2004).

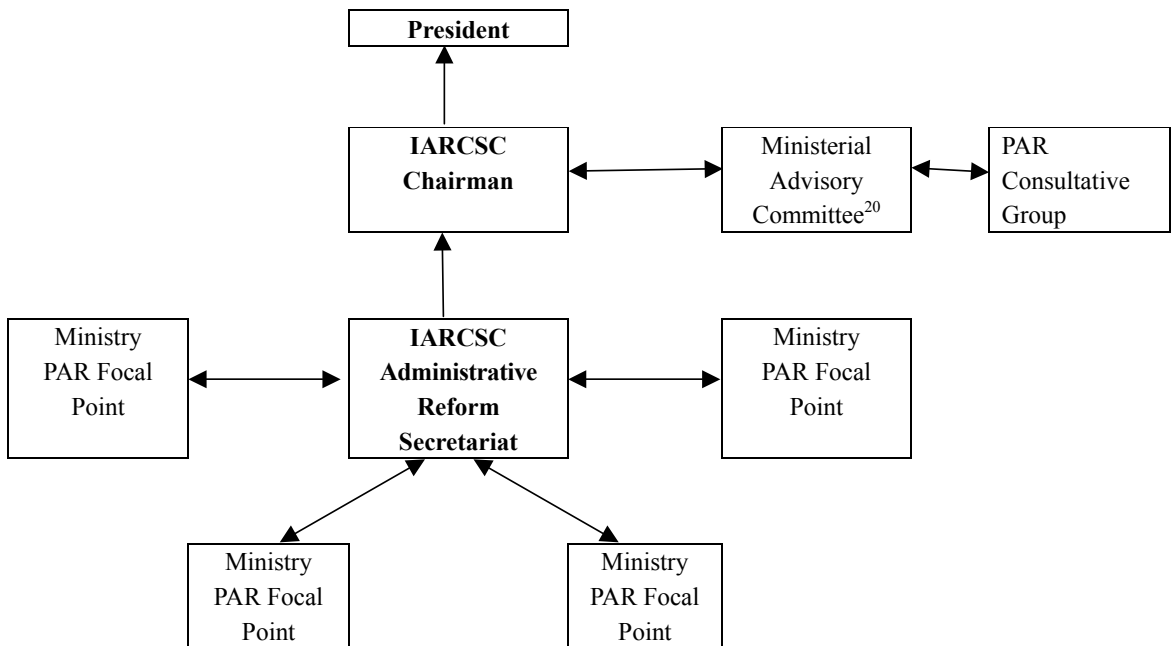**Figure 3.** *PAR Programme Management Arrangement*
Source: GA et al, 17 March 2004

Figure 3 shows the PAR programme's management arrangements which to a large extent depend on the quality of the Administrative Reform Secretariat[21]. The Administrative Reform Secretariat works closely with a Ministry's PAR focal point since its responsibilities are to coordinate and monitor implementation of the projects and programmes under the PAR and to provide support for other cross-cutting initiatives. The focal point at the ministry is responsible to facilitate the collection and dissemination of information necessary for identifying the

reform structure and content. The Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) supports the IARCSC Chairman in managing the PAR programme by providing advice on reform proposals and on obstacles and problems that may occur. The MAC works in cooperation with the PAR Consultative Group consists of major donor agencies' representatives. As the MAC consists of the members of all core central ministries and, on a rotating basis, line ministries, it provides a degree of political legitimacy for the whole PAR process.

As previously mentioned, the PAR programme provides a comprehensive framework for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the civil service which should be small, but more focused, more diverse and decentralized, accountable and more representative of society in terms of gender and ethnicity. To achieve this, there are following special goals and actions:

1. Policy Development and Machinery of Government
2. Institutional Streamlining and Development
3. Civil Service Law
4. Personnel Management: Payroll and Establishment of Control Systems
5. Personnel Management: Policies, Procedures and Practices
6. Personnel Management: Employment Contracts
7. Personnel management: Appointments Procedures
8. Personnel Management: Capacity Building, Training and Development
9. Personnel Management: Gender and Ethnicity
10. Personnel Management: Civil Service Pay and Grading
11. Personnel Management: Pensions and Other Post-Service Benefits
12. Personnel Management: Retraining, Re-skilling and Redeployment
13. Administration Efficiency
14. Physical Infrastructure

Since the start of the PAR programme, several projects have been planned to achieve the objectives of each component of the programme. As of April 2003, the amount of 143,781 millions US dollars was allocated for these projects (GA, 2004). However, it is important to know the process of implementation and the results it can bring. A review of the main component of the PAR programme, the PRR process, can shed light on it.

6. Priority Reform and Restructuring

Whereas the PAR provides a framework for overall capacity building efforts in public administration, the PRR is a step-by-step tool to implement the PAR programme. The PRR programme is a core element of the PAR as it aims to reform the most critical functions of the government. The PRR was established to enable substantial reforms to be undertaken throughout the public sector of Afghanistan by addressing issues related to payment and recruitment through organizational reforms in ministries and agencies. Below we should discuss how does the process of PRR work in order to achieve its objectives to introduce an elevated pay scale through encouraging an organization to restructure itself in the most efficient way.

The PRR process allows public institution or its sections to place its key staff on an elevated pay scale and also provides funds to obtain technical assistance for restructuring. In order to obtain PRR status, a ministry or an agency prepares special proposals. These proposals should pass through a two-stage process:

Stage 1 – call for the documents proving the need for reform and the establishment of the skilled task force to lead and manage the reform;

Stage 2 – provision of a more detailed proposal which specifies the expected efficiency and cost-effectiveness and also provides evidence that a certain function has been reviewed and that some tasks have to be abolished.

At each stage, the proposal is evaluated by the IARCSC with the advice of the MAC. For Stage 2, ministries have to justify posts recommended to be placed on the PRR scale and attach detailed budget for such change. This procedure should be discussed and approved by the Ministry of Finance before the submission of proposal for the obtaining of the PRR status Stage 2 as, once approved, the proposal should have funds to be implemented.

The PRR pay scale, which replaces base salary and other allowances, has seven levels and designed in such a way that exiting staff can be transferred onto a new grade without consideration of their responsibilities. Table 1 and Table 2 show the present pay and grading system and the PRR pay scale respectively.

As of 31 January 2004 it was reported that by the end of 2003 the number of the civil servants appointed through the PRR process should reach 5,000 (GA, 2004). However, as of September 2005, only 730 high ranking and 2,805 low ranking employees were appointed under the PRR process based on approved open competition strategy for recruitment (IAB, 2005). As a result, the PRR process did not meet its primary objectives.

One of the reasons for the failure to archive the primary objectives of the PRR process is the existence of a second public sector comprised of national staff of donor governments, international agencies, and NGOs, who are involved in traditional governmental work. This sector draws a large number of the most talented candidates from the civil service pool by offering higher wages and better working conditions. As can be seen in Table 2 the monthly salary of an employee under the highest rank of the PRR pay scale is five times higher than the present highest ranking official's pay scale (see Table 1). However, even the highest payment under the PRR status is still considerably below the UN pay levels.

Table 1. *Monthly Pay and Allowances by Grade (Afs) before the PRR process*
Source: GA, 2004[22]

Grade	Total Pay	Allowance as % of total pay
Outside	2,095	78.3
Beyond	2,019	89.6
Above	1,955	91.3
1	1,908	93.2
2	1,888	94.2
3	1,873	94.9
4	1,856	95.8
5	1,848	96.2
6	1,840	96.6
7	1,835	96.9
8	1,829	97.2
9	1,824	97.5
10	1,818	97.8

Table 2. *Monthly PRR Pay Scale (Afs) under the PRR process*
Source: GA, 2004

Post level	Minimum	Maximum
A	11,045	11,750
B	9,635	10,240
C	8,225	8,930
D	6,815	7,520
E	5,405	6,110
F	3,995	4,700
U	Unchanged (existing salary)	

Another reason of the PRR's breakdown is that pay and grading review under the PRR is mostly done by an ad hoc approach which needs to be more systematic. One example of how the mechanism of the PRR was not properly designed is that from the beginning of the PRR process in a ministry/department the lower grade positions were open to competition before the upper grade positions. This created a particular situation where the number of applicants eligible for upper position decreased as they had enrolled for the lower positions (IAB, 2005). Later on, it was decided that higher positions should be open for competition at first, allowing people who failed to be employed in the higher positions to apply for lower ones. These kinds of technical arrangements, though not substantially, can negatively affect the outcome of the PRR process in different ministries/organizations and at different levels.

Another example of an ad hoc approach within the PRR process is that different departments within a ministry can submit proposal for the PRR status at a different time. This alone can cause problems of inefficiency as reforming different departments of entire ministries simultaneously, could be more effective considering the number of overlapping functions that different departments can have. In addition, putting some personnel of the ministry/agency under the PRR pay scale whereas the rest of the personnel get much lower payments can create tension between personnel under different pay scale systems and, thus, decrease the positive outcomes of the PRR process. Ministries, where the process for the PRR status submission goes in parallel across different departments, can be more efficient and effective compared to those which submit their departments' proposals separately. This approach has to be re-designed and put into place as soon as possible. The distribution of functions (and, therefore, approved proposals) in each ministry can be seen in Table 3. As of January 31, 2004, 26 functions have been awarded PRR status[23].

Table 3. *List of functions under PRR status as of January 31, 2004*
Source: GA, 2004[24]

N	Name of the public institution	Number of functions awarded	Number of functions under consideration
1	IARCSC	1	
2	Ministry of Public Works	1	2
3	Ministry of Finance	4	1
4	Ministry of Public Health	2	
5	Ministry of Communication	4	1
6	Da Afghanistan Bank	1	
7	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development	8	
8	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	3	
9	Ministry of Education	2	
10	Ministry of Justice		1
11	Supreme Court		1
12	Ministry of Interior		3
13	Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment		3
14	The Control and Audit General Office		1
15	Ministry of Agriculture		1
16	Ministry of Women's Affairs		2
17	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing		3
18	Ministry of Civil Aviation		1
19	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs		1
20	Kabul Municipality		1
21	Central Statistics Office		1
22	Ministry of Commerce		1
	Total	**26**	**24**

As can be seen in Table 3, out of more than 30 governmental institutions (see Figure 1) only nine have been awarded PRR status and even amongst those nine obtained there is no equal distributions of the functions. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has almost one third of the all functions awarded. The gap between different ministries indicates that different ministries have different capacities to develop credible proposals for reforms and restructuring and, therefore, need assistance. Thus, it is suggested that the Government of Afghanistan should take immediate actions to fill this gap. The broadening of the gap may lead to a conflict between public institutions as the quality of public service delivery by different institutions will differ substantially. As of September 2005, the MRRD is the second largest public institution with 70 candidates for two highest grades who were appointed based on an open competition during a one year period. The first institution is the Control and Audit General Office with 97 appointed candidates. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is on the

third place with 49 candidates. The rest of the institutions have a much smaller number of appointed candidates (IAB, 2005). Consequently, the gap between institutions still exists.

Capacity of the institution is an important element for the PRR process. However, the reform cannot occur unless the head of an agency or minister approves it. As the position of Minister is politically important one, it was noted that in an institution where its head understands the necessity of change and is committed to it, the PRR process is moving smoothly. The commitment among ministries is variable and in some cases is even inimical. This different attitude has to be addressed (Stringer and Seddiq, 2005). At present, there is an attempt to make a clear distinction between political and civil service levels of a ministry so that despite changes on political arena there is always a properly functioning bureaucracy[25].

The implications of PRR for the provinces are even more complex, as questions of pay comparability are likely to be more sensitive at this level. As a result, the PRR process on provincial level is slow. The low level of provincial involvement in the PRR process can also be seen from the number of candidates appointed by public institutions on provincial levels. The data collected by the Independent Appointments Board of the IARCSC shows that the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the MRRD and the Ministry of Public Health are the only four public institutions that show a relatively high level of the PRR process implementation on their provincial branches as well (IAB, 2005).

The other challenge for the PRR process is the absence of physical infrastructure and sufficient expenditures to work properly within assigned responsibilities and to meet expected outcomes. Based on the PRR process, each ministry should establish a Programme Management Unit (PMU) responsible for infrastructure and building on existing departments where appropriate. However, at this phase, it is not clear whether PMUs were established and, if so, whether PMUs have influenced organizational performance of the institutions.

The lack of transparency or limited access to information can be another challenge for the PRR.   Some agencies announce vacancies only within limited boundaries. Hence, the information is not available to the public. In these cases, based on the assessment reports from the IARCSC Administrative Reform Secretariat, positions had to be re-announced again as the PRR process in a certain agency did not meet the necessity requirements. The lack of transparency also allows some institutions to treat candidates differently, e.g. some candidates are given less time or more difficult questions for the test than the others. A mechanism should be put in place which will make the PRR process within the ministries transparent and provide sufficient information access to the public.

Summing up the above discussion, it can be said that the implementation of PRR process by different public organizations is an important element for the establishment of an effective public service. Besides showing some positive effects, the PRR process still needs to be improved. More attention should be paid to how the implementation of the PRR process can affect Afghanistan's public service in general, so as it can be seen as legitimate in the eyes of the population. As all components of the PAR are closely interconnected, it is important to fill the gap between the number of functions and positions under PRR status in each institution as early as possible.

7. Conclusion

Capacity building is an important element for developing and post-conflict countries, and effective and efficient public administration is a necessary attribute of a long-term development. Accordingly, in the aftermath of war, it is important that a country and the international community align their efforts towards sound economic and social development and legitimate public administration.

Afghanistan as a post-conflict country is still facing many challenges in its attempt for establishing stable and peaceful environment for a long-term development. An effective, responsive, transparent, and accountable public administration is an important element for the state to function properly. In order to establish an effective system of public administration, Afghanistan has announced a capacity building framework for the Afghan Civil Service, which implementation can make the machinery of the government work effectively in order to achieve economic and social development goals. The PAR programme was designed as a framework to address immediate as well as long-term problems of Afghan civil service. The establishment of the civil service legal framework is a primary step for the system to function, and can be considered as one of the main components of institution building. However, considering the present situation of Afghanistan, developing of an institutional framework should proceed along with human capacity development. Therefore, training of civil servants at different levels is important and should accompany such programmes as Lateral Entry and AEP.

In this paper, the PRR process, as a tool for gradual implementation of the PAR programme, was examined in details. The conclusion is that the PRR process is on-going throughout the different institutions of public service and this alone can be considered as a positive output. However, it still has to address some additional issues, such as ad hoc approach, lack of physical infrastructure and others. In addition, it is clear that different governmental institutions have a different number of functions and appointed candidates under the PRR status. This inequality may lead to a situation when few sectors of public administration can function properly whereas the other sectors will not be able to deliver services as required. This situation may create a conflict within the system of public administration in general due to the interconnectedness of all sectors, and between specific institutions in particular. In addition, it can stir up hatred within an institution, in case there is a big gap in salary range between the different personnel. Thus, in order to avoid such outcomes from the PRR process, there is a need to address the capacity of institutions, making them more or less equal.

This paper highlighted the importance of capacity building in post-conflict countries in general and in Afghanistan in particular. It also showed that Afghanistan's strategy for establishing effective and transparent civil service is on the right track despite the fact that there are still many challenges it faces. However, to address these challenges in the future it is necessary to draw a more detailed mechanism of how to develop the capacity of different institutions equally, taking into account the present situation of Afghanistan and problems faced during the PAR implementation. As some of the problems are due to the lack of political support, the effect of the PRR implementation on a political level of a governmental institution should also be considered in the future.

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Notes

[1] The World Bank in its report *Governance and Development* (1992, 52) defines governance as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social recourses for development" (Center for the Study of Civil War, 2005)

[2] The official title of the Bonn Agreement is the "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions" (Global Security Organization, 2005)

[3] Before going into the shift of priorities it is worth to mention that the term "capacity-building" was not used before, so the term that encompasses the same meaning was "human resource development" that was mostly done through the education

[4] The "World Bank" is the name that has come to be used for the IBRD and the International Development Association (IDA) (retrieved on 15 December 2005 from www.worldbank.org)

[5] Good governance, according to the Canadian International Development Agency, is the exercise of power by various levels of government that is effective, honest, transparent and accountable (retrieved on 28 April 2003 from www.acdi-cida/cida_ind.nsf)

[6] For all donor assistance coming to Afghanistan please see Donor Assistance Database on http://aacadad.synisys.com

[7] Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden (German) is a non-profit-making organization that was established in 1986 and is currently funded by four German donor states - North Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin, Brandenburg and Saxony

[8] Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment (retrieved on 15 December 2005 from http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm)

[9] Nowadays, many scholars differentiate between capacity building and capacity development. However, most international organizations do not differ between the two. The author, likewise, does not differentiate between them (in this paper)

[10] External assistance came mostly from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

[11] State, civil society and private sector are three main groups of actors in a country.

[12] Health organizations, like the Afghan Red Crescent Society and the National Organization for Ophthalmic Rehabilitations, are examples of organizations which managed to operate during the Afghan conflict years with the external support

[13] Only some ministries, like the Ministry of Public Health, have a good provincial administration system

[14] The Loya Jirgah is a large congress called to discuss particularly important events, originally attended by Pashtun groups but later including other ethnic groups

[15] The report was obtained by the author during her Kabul visit in November 2004

[16] As data used in the research was not presented in a monetary equivalent, there is no clear picture of what amount of the whole assistance each donor spends on capacity building.

[17] The necessity of developing a national strategy for capacity building was also emphasized by the World Bank representatives in Kabul, Mr. Prasad and Ms. Tully, during the meeting attended by the author on 23 November 2004

[18] In this paper, corruption is identified as a use of public position for private purpose

[19] The problems of capacity within public administrations were discussed during meetings attended by the author the representative of the Civil Service Training and Development, IARCSC, in Kabul on 20 and 23 November 2004 and 5 July 2005

[20] Members of the Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) include all the core central ministries and, on a rotating basis, line ministries. The MAC supports the Chairman and provide advice on reform proposal

[21] The World Bank's Second Emergency Public Administrative Programme (SEPAP) has as one of its key objectives strengthening the capacity of the Administrative Reform Secretariat

[22] Compiled by the author

[23] The list of the 26 functions is available upon request

[24] Compiled by the author

[25] This idea was expressed by the IARCSC representative during the meeting in Kabul in May 2006