Building Trust in Government: Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program

In 2002, as Afghanistan emerged from 30 years of conflict, interim national leaders sought quick ways to expand economic opportunities for people living in impoverished rural communities, promote a sense of shared national citizenship, and overcome widespread skepticism about the government's ability to deliver services. A team of Afghan decision makers and international partners developed the National Solidarity Program (NSP), which provided block grants directly to poor communities. With the help of an elected village council and a civil society partner, villagers used the NSP funds to select, plan, implement, and maintain reconstruction and development projects and strengthen local governance.

During a 10-year period, the NSP disbursed more than US$1 billion to communities and financed 65,000 projects that improved villagers' access to basic utilities and provided a short-term economic boost to communities. Project success rates, however, varied across districts and some of the planned benefits did not materialize. In addition, the NSP's reliance on donor funds and outside consultants raised doubts about the program's sustainability. A new [ISS case study](#) documents the implementation and results of this program.

Indonesia's Kecamatan Development Program (KDP) provided inspiration for the NSP, although the two programs differed in significant ways. A [recent ISS case study](#) highlights the development and implementation of KDP. Both Afghanistan's NSP and Indonesia's KDP offer examples short-route accountability.

Improving Government Accountability and Leading Reform

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