

January 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 23RD TO JANUARY 29TH 2017

USAID CELEBRATES ACHIEVEMENTS OF 5-YEAR DAIRY PROJECT

Business Recorder, January 25, 2017

LAHORE: The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) five-year dairy project implemented by the agency in collaboration with the government of the Punjab and Nestle Pakistan for improvement of dairy sector of the Punjab province resulted in 17 percent increase in the average milk yield and over 10 percent boost in income of farmers attached with it.

USAID Mission Director in Pakistan John Groarke revealed this at a ceremony arranged here on Tuesday to mark the completion of this project and to recount its achievements and benefits it transferred to the rural economy, especially dairy sector of the province.

This five-year, \$21 million project, promoted sustainable dairy development in Punjab. Through a partnership with the government of Punjab and Nestlé Pakistan, the project improved the lives of over 50,000 small dairy farmers through its skills-based training programs, he added.

The project, also upgraded 118 farms now serving as training hubs for small dairy farmers, installed a pilot 50 cubic meter biogas plant for dairy cooperative milk chillier in Vehari, and constructed a 375 cubic meter biogas plant at the government-owned Bahadurnagar Farm in Okara.

Speaking on this occasion, Punjab Minister for Livestock Asif Saeed Manais appreciated the project for its share in promoting the livestock sector, especially training and teaching the people attached with this profession about latest farm techniques. He said the project helped in upgrading the existing dairy farms and their conversion into training hubs for fellow farmers.

He was happy to note that the role of women, which was very vital for dairy sector, was also given important training on rearing the livestock. He hoped that this would result in women empowerment through dairy development.

The Minister said that the duration of this project should have been enhanced making it accessible to everyone taking it to grass root level. In order to ensure sustainability and to further share knowledge acquired through the project, all training modules, print material and videos have been placed in the libraries of five universities in Punjab. The project's website will continue to be maintained by the DRDF, implementing partner of this project, as will the helpline offering guidance and advice to dairy farmers.

The event featured a theatre performance and a talk-show for the audience. Over 200 representatives from the Punjab Livestock Department, dairy industry, academia, NGOs, beneficiaries, and project staff were in attendance.

Dairy and Rural Development Foundation (DRDF) Chairman Dr Salman Shah, USAID Chief of Party Jakob Moser and others also addressed the event.

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/01/25/13-page/842757-news.html>

USAID STRESSES HELP FOR DAIRY SECTOR

The Express Tribune, January 28th, 2017.

Lahore: Unites States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission director John Groarke has said that Pakistan's dairy sector is underperforming due to inadequate management practices, thereby limiting the production and income of one of the country's most viable avenues of poverty alleviation.

Groarke was talking at the concluding ceremony of USAID's smallholder dairy project programme.

"Pakistan is one of the world's largest milk producers, and with involvement of an estimated 35 million people, most of whom are living in Punjab, it offers tremendous potential to generate investment," said Groaker.

He further said that USAID Pakistan has successfully concluded a five-year \$21 million project in Pakistan to assist USAID dairy and agriculture programme reforms.

"The three year smallholder dairy project, started on January 2011 with \$14 million findings had proved immensely successful, the project was further extended for two years adding another \$7 million."

The programme focused on investment mobilisation, market linkages, productivity enhancement, and sector reforms. "Both the public and private sector play a critical role in all of these areas and we strive to cultivate enduring partnerships."

He further stated that the project fostered a sustainable increase in dairy and livestock productivity through the adoption of best dairy farming practices, breed improvement, availability of timely extension services and promotion of livestock business.

Another notable accomplishment was the establishment of Pakistan's first commercial-size biogas plant. "Although biogas might not seem the most glamorous of topics, the impact of this environmentally friendly, healthy and holistic plant most certainly will be, biogas is an energy source like no other," Groarke said.

<http://tribune.com.pk/story/1309071/usaids-stresses-help-dairy-sector/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 2ND TO JANUARY 8TH 2017

NO MORE DEVELOPMENT AID?

Dawn, January 4th, 2017

Rafia Zakaria

A FEW weeks before 2016 took its leave, David Hale, the US ambassador to Pakistan, announced that the United States government, via the United States Agency for International Development, would be investing \$7.3 billion toward increasing the number of female teachers in Pakistan.

The announcement came as part of the 16 days of activism initiative by USAID's Gender Equity Programme, which the Aurat Foundation is implementing. Around the same time, USAID also signed

an agreement with Wapda to provide \$81 million for the construction of the Kurram-Tangi Dam that will help generate 18 MW of activity for the Waziristan region.

As the numbers show (and these are not cumulative figures; USAID's total investment in Pakistan is much larger) USAID invests many millions of dollars in Pakistan, funding a variety of projects and fueling a good portion of Pakistan's NGO sector. In about 20 days, when President-elect Donald Trump takes office, the future and continuity of these expenditures is in peril.

According to an article published in Foreign Policy, officials at USAID had not (until the end of November) been contacted by the new administration. The situation is unexpected; the same official noted that incoming US presidents generally have detailed plans and policy briefs regarding how they want US aid commitments to be disbursed. This means there is little clarity regarding the \$34bn dollars that the US Congress has approved as expenditures for USAID in the upcoming fiscal year.

The uncertainty regarding USAID's future (and consequently the future of its activities in Pakistan) is not limited to delays in communication between the president-elect and the agency. According to foreign policy experts, Trump's America First doctrine may spell far more drastic changes in US investments in development programmes in the rest of the world. In June 2015, Trump proclaimed that the US should cut off aid to "all the countries that hate us" and use the money to build its own infrastructure.

In true Trump style, he backtracked on the statement in April 2016, when he said that the US should continue giving aid to countries like Pakistan because "we don't want to see total instability".

Regardless of which of the two statements represents Trump's actual intentions, the prognosis in general is not a good one. Alex Thier, a development expert writing for DevEx, a development focused website, noted that scrapping USAID and having it absorbed into the State Department has been a recurrent proposal of conservatives in the US. One of the champions of this position was Newt Gingrich, who until a few weeks ago was a frontrunner as Trump's pick for secretary of state.

Even as that points to a less stringent view on foreign aid expenditures, it is unlikely that the large budgets for programmes such as gender equity, capacity building for democracy, etc will keep the same form that they have over the past eight years. Experts note that the positions of Vice President-elect Mike Pence on women's reproductive rights also mean that funding for family planning programmes around the world is likely to dry up.

The conservatives who are likely to have important roles in the Trump administration will probably recognise that development aid is a means to court and insure the support of other nations and maintain US influence. At the same time, it is possible that they will focus less on ideals and more on whether the countries whose coffers are being filled are delivering what the US demands of them. Focus is likely to be on getting the 'best deal' for the US, with little interest in the constraints facing the recipient countries.

As a recipient of USAID funds, Pakistan would be wise to stay warned and ready for the coming future. As money for women focused and gender equity programmes dries up, there is a grave risk for Pakistan's NGO sector.

Women's organisations that rely significantly on USAID funds to implement programmes should immediately look through their budgets and focus on diversifying their funding base via local donors.

Even more importantly, they should make an effort to use the money they have received to build up their cash reserves in the event there is no more money coming in the future.

Even if there are no significant changes in the USAID funding amounts that Pakistan receives, the delays in communication between USAID and the incoming Trump administration portend delays in funding disbursements, programme development and other bureaucratic measures that are essential to USAID projects around the world and in Pakistan.

Since thousands of jobs in Pakistan depend on this funding, it is crucial that the government of Pakistan also take note of the issue. NGOs represent a significant economic sector in this country and employ many thousands of people. A crash in Pakistan's NGO sector would have an impact on many livelihoods, not to mention on the communities that currently benefit from USAID-funded programmes.

Ultimately, of course, the best way forward is to reduce Pakistan's dependence on foreign aid money in general. As I have noted in many previous articles, while external funding provides crucial resources and is useful and impactful in the immediate term, it is not sustainable. Sustainability depends in a vital sense on a population that pays taxes and does not believe in getting something for nothing. This last premise, sadly, is one that few Pakistanis wish to embrace.

The consequence is a country that is dependent, extracting money from richer others, and refusing to invest in itself. The end of USAID disbursements may be the immediate problem, but the root of it all is a stubborn belief that any real national pride can exist along with international beggary.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1306196/no-more-development-aid>

February 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 20TH TO FEBRUARY 26TH 2017 PESCO UNABLE TO FINISH USAID-FUNDED PROJECTS

The Express Tribune, February 25th, 2017.

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) is struggling to carry on projects initiated with the help of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under its power distribution programme.

The USAID had started replacing conductor cables in Peshawar district. The donor agency also provided 100 auto-rickshaws and 70 vans, specifically built to meet the utility's requirements.

Moreover, the agency also worked on the utility's relations with its consumers, helping it reach its consumers.

"Most of the projects started by the USAID have been closed in 2015 when the agency stopped its funding," said an official of the utility requesting anonymity.

"We are now running the digital meter project which was initiated by the USAID because we can afford meters," said the official.

According to him, wires could not be replaced because of heavy cost.

“The new wire helps reducing the Kunda culture, but the wire is expensive because of which the government cannot continue the project.

According to official statistics, at least 70 percent areas of the Peshawar district had been replaced, but in other areas the rest are yet to be replaced.

Similarly, HESCO failed to maintain 100 rickshaws. Most of the rickshaws could be seen parked in front of an office of the utility.

The vans were now operational. “The rickshaws are too big to be moved in the city’s narrow streets,” said an employee of the utility.

Insiders maintained that all vans were operational “simply because the staff are using them for personal use while designs and colours of rickshaws were not suitable for doing personal duties of the staff.

A former USAID worker said that all of the programmes were meant for capacity-building and were time-specific.

Stressing the need for launching a public awareness campaign, he said that they would visit educational institutions for creating awareness on PESCO.

Pesco spokesperson Shaukat Afzal denied project closures, saying that the company had been working on wire replacement, adding that all vehicles were in running condition.

“Few rickshaws need repairs, but most of them are operational,” he said.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1338381/pesco-unable-finish-usaid-funded-projects/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 13TH TO FEBRUARY 19TH 2017

USAID OFFERS TECHNICAL HELP ON FATA-KP MERGER

Dawn, February 17th, 2017

Mohammad Ashfaq

PESHAWAR: As political parties are at loggerheads over the proposed merger of Fata with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the USAID has jumped in by offering technical assistance to the provincial government on the matter.

A team of the United States Agency for International Development offered its technical assistance in a recent meeting with a delegation of the provincial government at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Office, Islamabad, according to official documents and sources.

“The USAID team offered technical assistance to the KP government for Fata’s proposed merger with KP,” said the minutes of the meeting.

The USAID's team was led by deputy mission director Kevin Brownawell and KP's by the additional chief secretary.

The meeting took place on Jan 25 this year.

However, the additional chief secretary responded that a broad-based high-level committee had been formed on the matter and that the need for USAID assistance will be determined by the committee, revealed the minutes of the meeting.

The US government has been spending billions of funds in social sector of Fata particularly health, education and capacity building of departments for the last 14 years.

The federal government has delayed the execution of the Fata-KP merger plan due to opposition by its two coalition partners, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl and Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party.

The report of the Fata reforms committee is likely to be put up to the federal cabinet in the next meeting after the addressing of reservations of its coalition partners.

Mr. Fazl had told media in Peshawar on Thursday that an understanding had reached between his party and the federal government over the future of Fata and that there would be no Fata-KP merger for the next five years.

Other parties, including PPP, PTI, JI and ANP, are pressuring the federal government to merge Fata with the KP before the next general elections.

The report about the political mainstreaming of Fata was launched last year and was laid before the National Assembly.

Sources said a burns center for Peshawar, municipal services delivery project, Provincial Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Settlement Authority and Provincial Disaster Management Authority were on the agenda of the meeting.

They said significantly, the Fata's merger with KP was not on the agenda of the meeting and that the USAID made the offer of technical assistance on the Fata-KP merger in general discussion.

"The USAID may be approached if any assistance is required," reveals the minutes of the meeting.

When approached, the US Embassy's spokesperson, Fleur Cowan, claimed her country hadn't offered technical assistance related to the Fata-KP merger.

"Fata reform is a matter for the people of that region to determine," she said in written reply to Dawn email.

The spokesperson said the US had provided assistance to Fata and KP for many years and was ready to offer additional assistance if requested.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak had issued directives to provincial home and tribal affairs department to expedite the process of Fata reforms.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1315310>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM FEBRUARY 6TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH 2017
MURAD ASKS USAID TEAM TO REPLICATE JACOBABAD PROJECT IN FIVE TOWNS
Dawn, 7 February 2017

KARACHI: A total of \$536 million has been committed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for various programmes in Sindh, including a project meant to improve municipal services.

This was stated by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while talking to a delegation of USAID led by its mission director John Groarke, who met him at CM House on Monday.

The USAID has launched a \$66m Sindh Municipal Services Programme (MSP) aimed at improving public infrastructure and municipal services in northern Sindh. The MSP's centrepiece is the Jacobabad Municipal Project, which is working to improve water, sanitation and solid waste infrastructure. The MSP is expected to deliver clean drinking water to more than 250,000 people. Since 2014 USAID has also partnered with the United Nations Children's Fund to support the MSP through social mobilisation and capacity development initiatives.

The chief minister said that over 80 per cent work on the Jacobabad project had been completed. He urged the USAID mission director to replicate the same programme in Johi, Mehra, K.N. Shah, Shahdadkot and Qambar Ali Khan as the original project included those five towns for improving municipal services with Jacobabad.

The mission director said he would go through the project again.

However, the Sindh government would be extended technical support.

Mr Shah also discussed the economic growth and agriculture project which supports the development of livestock, vegetable and horticulture sectors in Sindh. The project is designed to increase exports by \$265 million, raise income by 20pc for 16,000 producers and create 30,000 jobs. He said this was an important project and his government was paying special attention to its implementation.

The other project which came under discussion was the wind energy project for which USAID has committed \$43m for the construction of transmission lines to connect wind projects to the national grid.

Once completed, these transmission lines will benefit up to 2.6 million people.

They also discussed some other projects, including education, health, scholarship programme, the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and the Jacobabad Institute of Medical Sciences (JIMS).

Under the Sindh Basic Education Programme (SBEP), partnering with the Sindh government USAID is providing up to \$155m to increase and sustain student enrolment in schools across seven northern districts and five districts of Karachi. Under the SBEP about 100 new schools would be built and reading skills of over 200,000 children improved.

The programme would also address malnutrition. Under it the Maternal and Child Health programme was launched for \$400m in 2012, supporting reproductive health and family planning as well as an innovative approach to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality and morbidity.

Under the programme 21,596 people would benefit.

The JIMS is a USAID-funded 133bed hospital which annually provides high-quality medical services to more than a million people.

The United States has supported the JPMC since 1950. The USAID completed the construction of a 60-bed fistula and OB-GYN ward in 2012 which is capable of providing care for 140,000 women and training to over 1,300 healthcare professionals every year.

http://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=07_02_2017_119_005

March 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM MARCH 20TH TO MARCH 26TH 2017

\$ 4M USDA PROGRAMME BOOSTS PAKISTAN'S PHYTOSANITARY CAPACITY

Dawn, March 23rd, 2017

Amin Ahmed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ability to comply with international trade rules for increasing agricultural exports has been boosted by a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) supported project for increasing the sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) capacity of plant and animal health regulatory officials of the federal and provincial governments.

USDA has spent over \$4 million in a six-year 'distance learning programme' which will strengthen the country's efforts to increase agricultural trade.

"Proper regulations of exports and imports are key to meeting the demands of foreign buyers as well as protecting Pakistan's domestic agriculture and consumers. We are hopeful that these courses will serve as a resource for the country's phytosanitary regulations," said Agriculture Counselor David Williams.

Since 2011, USDA, the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI), and Texas A&M University joined forces to create the distance learning project to bolster Pakistan's SPS skills and knowledge.

Sharing details of the project during her interaction with media here on Wednesday, Deborah Hamilton, International Programme Specialist of USDA said a core group of thirty officials from the Department of Plant Protection and provincial agricultural departments who have been trained and applying their increased knowledge of trade rules on-the-job.

The success of these training modules in Pakistan has made SPS Distance Learning Modules a key component of a new USAID initiative called the 'Food Safety Network' which will expand the curriculum to include animal health and food safety and deploy them globally in several languages.

Speaking on the occasion, Regional Director of CABI Dr Babar Bajwa described the agricultural trade as difficult. "It not only brings fruits and vegetables into the country and sends out, it also imports and exports lots of diseases and pest. This all is due to WTO era," he pointed out.

About the impact of the training of plant protection departments, Dr Bajwa said indicators of Pakistan's horticultural exports show in 2012 export of fresh fruits and vegetables totaled around \$350 million per year and currently, it has increased to around \$600m.

Referring to the banana disease in Pakistan, he said the farmers of Tando Jam and Tando Allahyar are battling it and need to be protected.

"This disease has come to Pakistan through trade. If we are not safeguarding ourselves, it means we are not giving level playing field to our farmers," he said.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1322202/4m-usda-programme-boosts-pakistans-phytosanitary-capacity>

April 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 24TH TO APRIL 30TH 2017

'USAID AIMS AT TO IMPROVE READING SKILLS OF 1.3 M CHILDREN'

Business Recorder, 25 April 2017

ISLAMABAD: In honour of World Book Day, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director John Groarke visited a school in Islamabad and read books with students, says a press release issued here on Monday.

Reading is a critical foundational skill, upon which all future learning – and earning – is built. According to the 2015 Pakistan Education Statistics, 60 percent of students age 10 and older are literate. Learning to read takes practice – both in school and out of school.

Communities across Pakistan often lack access to reading materials. Through the Pakistan Reading Project, USAID aims to improve the reading skills of 1.3 million children across Pakistan through working with teachers and involving communities to bolster a culture of reading and bring books and other reading materials directly to children.

"Reading is a life skill. To learn this skill, children need to practice their reading skills and parents must read to their children and with their children, said USAID Mission Director Groarke. "A reading culture develops when entire communities encourage, practice, and appreciate books and the habit of reading. Today is, indeed, a special day because it is World Book Day – and what could be a better way to celebrate this day than by reading with our children?"

Through the \$165 million Pakistan Reading Project, USAID supports provincial and regional Departments of Education to improve classroom learning environments for reading, improve policies and systems for reading, and build community-based support for reading in Pakistan.

For more information on the USAID's assistance for education in Pakistan, visit:

<https://www.usaid.gov/pakistan/education.—PR>

<http://epaper.brecorder.com/2017/04/25/12-page/869885-news.html>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM APRIL 3 RD TO APRIL 9 TH 2017
PAKISTANI OFFICIALS COMPLETE SIX-YEAR USDA PROGRAMME
The Express Tribune, April 5th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD: Nearly 30 Pakistani government officials and agricultural industry representatives completed a six-year US Department of Agriculture (USDA) sponsored training programme at a ceremony in Islamabad.

The graduation was presided over by US Embassy Islamabad Agriculture Counsellor David Williams, Department of Plant Protection Karachi Deputy Director Muhammad Tariq Khan and Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) Director Pakistan and West Asia Dr Babar Bajwa.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA), with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), has invested more than \$4 million in this six-year distance learning project initiative to support the government of Pakistan's efforts to increase agricultural trade.

The goal is to strengthen Pakistan's ability to comply with international trade rules to increase its commodity exports and help the country prevent the importation of harmful plant diseases and pests.

Since 2011, USDA and partners, CABI and Texas A&M University, have joined forces to create a distance learning project to bolster Pakistan's sanitary and phytosanitary (also known as SPS) skills and knowledge.

With interactive workshops supplemented by online training modules, the USDA SPS Distance Learning project is advancing Pakistan's adoption of international plant and animal health standards by training 30 Department of Plant Protection officials and other Pakistani agricultural professionals. The workshops and training modules focus on a range of topics, including pest-risk management, market access and inspections.

"Proper regulation of exports and imports is the key to meeting the demands of foreign buyers and protecting Pakistan's domestic agriculture and consumers," said Williams during the ceremony.

"We are hopeful that these courses will serve as a resource for Pakistan's regulators," he added.

The success of these training modules in Pakistan has made SPS Distance Learning Modules a key component of a new USAID initiative called the Food Safety Network, which will expand the curriculum to include animal health and food safety and deploy them globally in several languages.
<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1374435/pakistani-officials-complete-six-year-usda-programme/>

July 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 10TH TO JULY 16TH 2017
GOVT URGED TO ALLOW USAID TO COMPLETE BURNS CENTRE
Dawn, July 11th, 2017

Ashfaq Yusufzai

PESHAWAR: Senior plastic surgeons have urged the government to let the USAID complete construction of the first-ever trauma, burns and reconstructive centre on its own to avoid delay in the project.

“We have faced huge delay in completion of the burns centre for the construction of which USAID has signed an Memorandum of Understanding with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government,” a senior plastic surgeon told Dawn. He said that Peshawar High Court recently asked health department to inform it about the status of the centre.

The Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan Integration Foundation built three burns and plastic surgery units in the province within a period of one year. These facilities have started operations. “These centres were built on the proposal by plastic surgery department of Hayatabad Medical Complex to cater to the critically burn and trauma patients in Chitral, Bannu and Dir districts,” said the surgeon.

These centres were set up soon because the foundation did the construction itself and then bought the machines and equipments before handing these over to the government.

The plastic surgeon said that United States Agency for International Development (USAID) agreed to provide Rs1.6 billion for completion of the centre, which was originally started by the federal government through funds provided by Workers Welfare Board (WWB).

The construction began in 2010. The centre is still not completed owing to which the government approached USAID that agreed to provide funds. However, plastic surgeons fear that USAID will be doing work through government which might cause delay.

“Construction through government takes a lot of time because everything is done by several departments, which lack coordination.

Therefore, we have conveyed to the government to ask USAID to complete the remaining construction work on its own,” said another plastic surgeon.

Sources said that the federal government didn’t complete the centre at HMC despite lapse of seven years owing to bureaucratic obstacle as well as political considerations.

“We have requested the government that USAID should complete the centre on its own so it could be completed without delay,” they said. They said that scores of examples showed that governments failed to ensure timely completion of health and other projects owing to complicated process and rules but USAID was not bound to follow the government’s law and could complete the project in a smooth way.

Sources said that federal government had pledged funds for the centre but left it halfway and the same could happen to the USAID’s funding if it was utilised through government procedure.

They said that WWB had agreed to give about Rs1 billion to provincial government for the 120-bed centre but it gave only Rs250 million owing to which it couldn’t be completed. It was supposed to build basement, ground, first and second floor of the building besides purchasing equipment while the provincial government was required to appoint about 300 staffers and bear its running cost, they said.

The deadlines for completion were delayed from one year to another and later things came to a permanent halt when the WWB denied the amount it had pledged.

About three months ago, the provincial government requested USAID to complete the centre and the latter agreed to do so in one year. A PC-1 has also been approved by the government.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1344620>

CONGRESS TIGHTENING SCREWS ON US AID TO PAKISTAN

Dawn, July 14th, 2017

WASHINGTON: A key Congressional panel started hearing a proposal on Thursday to make US civil and military aid to Pakistan to the fight against the Afghan Taliban.

The tougher language on Pakistan forms part of the 2018 State and Foreign Operations Appropriations draft bill, which was distributed among the members of the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday.

The draft continues current requirements regarding assistance for Pakistan but prevents the Secretary of State from giving a full national-interest waiver. The secretary can now only issue a waiver for 85 per cent of the funds appropriated under the Foreign Military Financing (FMF).

The bill underlines the US concerns about Pakistan's commitment to combating terrorism in the Pak-Afghan region, saying: "The committee remains concerned with the commitment by Pakistan to US strategic objectives in the region, including combating terrorism".

In recent days, senior US officials and lawmakers have both sent clear messages to Pakistan, urging it to help the United States and the Afghan government defeat the Taliban militants. They also said that the failure to do so would force the United States to reconsider its relationship with Pakistan.

The bill also suggests withholding \$33,000,000 of funds until the Secretary of State reports to the Committee that Dr Shakil Afridi has been released from prison and cleared of all charges related to the assistance he provided to the United States in locating Osama bin Laden.

The committee recommends \$642.2 million as assistance for Pakistan. Carryover funds for assistance for Pakistan are projected to total about \$1.371 billion.

The committee also recommends \$115-542m for diplomatic operations in Pakistan.

The bill provides \$47.4bn in both regular discretionary and Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding. This is \$10bn below the fiscal year 2017 enacted level.

The Secretary of State is asked to certify that Pakistan is cooperating with the United States in counter-terrorism efforts against the Haqqani network, the Quetta Shura Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Al Qaeda, and other domestic and foreign terrorist organisations, including taking effective steps to end support for such groups and prevent them from basing and operating in Pakistan and carrying out cross-border attacks into neighbouring countries.

The secretary of state is also required to certify that Pakistan is not supporting terrorist activities against the United States or coalition forces in Afghanistan, and Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies are not intervening extra-judicially into political and judicial processes in Pakistan.

The certification needs to include that Pakistan is not financing or otherwise supporting schools supported by, affiliated with, or run by the Taliban or any designated foreign terrorist organisation and that Islamabad is preventing the proliferation of nuclear-related material and expertise.

The bill also says that the funds made available under the 'Foreign Military Financing Programme' can only be used to support counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency capabilities in Pakistan. This prevents Pakistan from using this fund to buy F-16 fighter jets, as it did in the past.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1345205>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM JULY 2ND TO JULY 9TH 2017

USAID-FUNDED CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES IN WATER INAUGURATED

Dawn, July 7th, 2017

HYDERABAD: United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission director Jerry Bisson and his deputy Denise Herbol, along with Sindh Minister for Education Jam Mehtab Dahar inaugurated the US-Pakistan Centre for Advanced Studies in Water at the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) on Thursday.

The inauguration was to be performed by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah but he could not make it.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Dahar thanked USAID for its full financial support in the establishment of the centre and the University of Utah for its technical and capacity-building support. Citing the multidimensional and multifaceted water-related challenges being faced by Pakistan, the minister called for taking necessary steps on a war-footing to manage water resources. He urged policymakers, researchers, advocacy groups, development professionals and civil society groups to join hands and evolve appropriate plans and policies to address the challenges.

He hoped that the centre would come up with sustainable solutions to water-related problems of the country.

Jerry Bisson, Denise Herbol, MUET Vice Chancellor Dr Mohammad Aslam Uqaili and former VC Prof S.M. Qureshi also spoke.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1343691>

November 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 27 Th TO DECEMBER 3rd 2017

GOVT PUTS ADB'S \$990-MILLION SMART-METERS PROJECT ON HOLD

The Express Tribune, November 29th, 2017.

ISLAMABAD:

In a development that may affect relations with a Manila-based lending agency, Pakistan has decided to put on hold a \$990-million (Rs105 billion) smart metering project that was meant to introduce advanced infrastructure in power distribution companies.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) wanted Pakistan to implement the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project, but the Ministry of Power and the Planning Commission remained reluctant to take this loan due to different reasons. The ADB then pegged a budget support loan with the smart metering project, leaving no option for the then Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to agree to the ADB's terms, said sources in the finance ministry.

After about two years of hectic lobbying by the ADB, the board of the Manila-based lender approved the first tranche of \$400 million in November 2015. Another two years were wasted in resolving major issues, as Islamabad remained reluctant to take this loan.

In what appears to be a major setback, the Power Division of Ministry of Energy has now canceled the bidding process that had been initiated to install about 900,000 advanced meters in the jurisdiction of Islamabad Electricity Supply Company (IESCO) in the first phase.

The country is already paying 0.25% commitment charges on the \$380 million component of the first tranche of \$400 million. The \$380 million loan had been contracted on commercial terms.

“We have concerns on project design and have asked the ADB to address these concerns,” a spokesman of the Power Division said while confirming cancellation of the bidding process. The spokesman said that “if these concerns are not addressed, Pakistan would ask the ADB to divert these funds to other power sector projects”.

However, the government's decision may affect ADB-Pakistan relationship.

The spokesman of the ADB said that the lender was not aware of the government's decision to cancel the bidding process. But another official of the Power Division said that ADB's project officer Adnan Tareen was aware of the development and knew about Pakistan's concerns.

The sources said that poor financial conditions of Pakistan's power distribution companies means they are not in a position to pay a compound interest rate of 17% that includes paying interest to the federal government. The loan had been taken on the balance sheets of the power distribution companies and under the current federal re-lending policy, the government charges interest rates which is about three times more than what Pakistan actually pays to the global lenders.

Subsequently, principal loans and interest rates are recovered from the consumers through tariffs determined by National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepa).

From the beginning, Pakistan was not ready to contract the loan due to its differences over the use of imported technology and the plan to privatise all power distribution companies under the \$6.2 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.

The Planning Commission of Pakistan also opposed the loan, stating that the project was technically unfeasible. The commission wanted the ADB to instead fund transmission expansion projects.

But in May 2015, ADB's visiting vice president Wencai Zhang urged Pakistani authorities to obtain the loan for the installation of smart meters. Ishaq Dar responded positively to the request and pushed through the loan processing.

The Power Division's biggest concern was that the project design covers only one-third of the total electricity consumers and the gestation period for IESCO and Lahore Electricity Supply Company was "too long". It would take at least four years to complete the project from the commencement of work, said the Power Division.

The overall completion period for nine power distribution companies was ten years and that too will cover only 30% of the consumers.

"We cannot afford to keep the power distribution companies bleeding for another ten years," the spokesman said.

Half of the ADB-financed projects, valuing \$3.4 billion are already either problematic or put on a 'watch list' due to implementation delays. The smart meters project was not among these problematic schemes.

So far, the entire amount of \$400 million has remained undisbursed and not even a single contract has been awarded.

The project concept was that pre-paid electricity meters will be installed that will control the flow of electricity and ensure 100% collection of bills. The main goal of the \$400 million project was installation of 2 million smart meters and communication equipment in these two power distribution companies by 2019.

Due to dilapidated conditions of the power transmission and distribution networks coupled with theft of electricity, the country has high line losses and low recovery ratios.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1571191/2-govt-puts-adbs-990-million-smart-meters-project-hold/>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM NOVEMBER 6 Th TO NOVEMBER 12 Th 2017
US CONGRESS AUTHORISES \$700 MILLION FOR REIMBURSING PAKISTAN
Dawn, November 11th, 2017

Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: The American Congress has authorised up to \$700 million in Coalition Support Fund (CSF) to reimburse Pakistan for activities carried out in support of US operations in Afghanistan.

The authorisation is included in the reconciled text of the House and Senate versions of the 2018 National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA-2018), which was released on Thursday.

The reconciled version makes \$350m of \$700m available to Pakistan under the CSF contingent upon certification from the secretary of defence that Pakistan is taking demonstrable steps against the Haqqani network.

The NDAA urged the defence department to monitor Washington's security assistance to Pakistan and ensure that the country did not use it to support militant groups.

It said the US administration would release the restricted amount of \$350m if the secretary of defence certified to the congressional committees that Pakistan continued to conduct military operations that were contributing to disrupting safe havens, fundraising and recruiting efforts, and freedom of movement of the Haqqani network and Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan.

The secretary will also have to certify that Pakistan took steps to demonstrate its commitment to prevent the Haqqani network and LeT from using Pakistani territory as a safe haven and for fundraising or recruiting efforts.

The certification would include a declaration that Pakistan was making an attempt to coordinate with Afghanistan to restrict the movement of militants along the border, and Pakistan had shown progress in arresting and prosecuting senior leaders and mid-level operatives of the Haqqani network and LeT.

In the last two years, two successive US defence secretaries — Ashton Carter and James Mattis — refused to give such a certification, thus preventing the administration to release the funds.

The reconciled version also expresses concern about the alleged persecution of various political or religious groups in Pakistan, including Christians, Hindus, Ahmadis, Baloch, Sindhi and Hazara.

The bill urges the secretary of defence to ensure that Pakistan will not use any assistance provided by the United States to persecute minority groups.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1369749/us-congress-authorises-700-million-for-reimbursing-pakistan>

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 30TH TO NOVEMBER 5 Th 2017

USAID CONTRIBUTES \$241M TO EDUCATION, HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN SINDH

Dawn, October 31st, 2017

KARACHI: The United States has given \$241 million to the Sindh government since 2011 under the USAID programme for improvement in education, health and municipal services sectors.

At present, Sindh Basic Education Programme (SBEP), Municipal Services Delivery Programme (MSDP) and Jacobabad Institute of Medical Sciences (JIMS) projects are in progress in the province.

This emerged during review of the schemes in a meeting between Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy Islamabad John Hoover and US Consul General in Karachi Grace Shelton at the CM House on Monday.

P&D chairman Mohammad Waseem and principal secretary to CM Sohail Rajput also attended the meeting.

The chief minister said he had already declared a state of emergency in education and health sectors while special attention was being given to municipal services.

“USAID has made some important contributions and I personally monitor all the work taking place under it,” he said.

USAID has provided a grant of \$165m for the SBEP whereas the Sindh government contributed \$10m.

“The SBEP aims at improving the quality of education and increasing the number of students enrolled in schools. The programme is being implemented in seven districts of northern Sindh and five towns of Karachi,” he said.

“For the implementation and management of the scheme, a Programme Management and Implementation Unit (PMIU) has been established in the school education department,” the chief minister further said.

The major components of SBEP include building of 106 new schools with 1,400 classrooms in flood-affected and other areas, improvement of reading and numeracy skills of 750,000 children over five years, engaging up to 400 communities in the construction, operation and maintenance of schools over five years and establish effective public-private partnerships to manage these schools and ensure enrolment of at least 100,000 girls.

The major targets of the SBEP, he said, included increasing knowledge and professional skills of 25,000 primary school teachers.

Mr Waseem said 875 schools had been assessed under the SBEP for construction.

“Right now 33 schools are under construction in Khairpur, Sukkur and Larkana districts. Private land owners donated their lands there to the school education department,” he added.

The P&D chairman said partnership had been established with Rotary International to equip science and computer labs in schools and to provide reading material to 1,100 school libraries.

The MSDP was launched with the USAID grant of \$66m in which provincial government’s share was Rs926.55m.

“The programme is aimed at improving municipal services and their infrastructure in six cities of northern Sindh — Jacobabad, Qambar, Shahdadkot, KN Shah, Mehar and Johi.

“The USAID has invested \$10m in establishing JIMS which is a 133-bed hospital offering outpatient treatment, emergency and diagnostic facilities, intensive care unit, surgical facilities and specialised care services for mother and child.”

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1367339>

RS1.6 BILLION FATA ECONOMIC REVIVAL PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

Dawn, November 1st, 2017

PESHAWAR: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with the Fata Secretariat inaugurated Rs1.6 billion Fata Economic Revitalisation Programme here on Tuesday, said an official statement.

The representatives of USAID and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed the award for building sustainable livelihoods in three tribal agencies — South Waziristan, North Waziristan and Khyber– affected by insecurity and displacement.

Speaking at the ceremony, Gregory F Huger, the USAID's assistant to administrator, office of Afghanistan and Pakistan affairs, said, that the programme would help to improve quality of life for residents of tribal areas.

"I am confident this new initiative will not only contribute to livelihood and resilience but will also lead to sustainable economic development in the region," the statement quoted Mr Huger as saying.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, US Consul General Stephen Fakan and USAID/Pakistan Mission Director Jerry Bisson also attended the event.

The statement said that the programme would benefit nearly 17,000 families over three years, improving access to non-farming livelihoods for people returning to Fata after being displaced.

The programme would also foster a partnership between the government and private sector for long-term employment creation and inclusive economic growth.

"This partnership builds on our successes over two years of working with communities under the Fata Transition and Recovery Programme to rebuild livelihoods after years of insecurity," said UNDP Country Director Ignacio Artaza.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Jhagra said that people of Fata had been facing severe suffering since long and their miseries were increased manifolds when they were displaced from their native places.

Welcoming the launch of the programme, he said that together with the donors and many other friends, the government managed the situation with great success.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1367653>

December 2017

NEWS COVERAGE PERIOD FROM DECEMBER 4th TO DECEMBER 10th 2017

AID AS A DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVE

Asad Ejaz Butt

Business Recorder Dec 4th, 2017

The US administration has threatened that aid to Pakistan will be scaled back further if their 'do more' instructions are met with a lacklustre response. Interestingly, the people of the country have expressed satisfaction over the development assuming this would allow Pakistan the opportunity to become a self-reliant economy and liberate itself from the clutches of the American economic imperialism. Ever since the controversial John Perkins' 'Confessions of an Economic Hitman' was published, foreign aid inflows from the developed world have been viewed with more scepticism.

On the contrary however, international trade, despite also being quite politicized through institutions like the WTO and barriers to entry, pricing distortions in the international markets, etc. continues to be viewed as economically more beneficial compared to foreign aid. The transition from foreign aid to international trade as a development tool is clearly not a simple task. That means that even if

international trade actually presents a valuable systemic substitute to foreign aid, estranging from foreign aid isn't an overnight process.

And if Pakistan has to move away from foreign aid to get truly embedded into the international economy through foreign direct investments or international trade, it has to follow a gradual process of building human capital and also the capacity of its local industries. This obviously isn't a very straight-forward task. Industrialized economies in East Asia have achieved it and so can we but the question is: Does the country's leadership have the will, purpose and competency to accomplish.

To that end, it must be understood that governments in the developing world face challenges of corruption, overdependence on foreign aid that has strings attached to it and lack of transparency as they struggle to push the globalization and international trade and development agenda locally. While the challenges exist, governments that are channelizing aid to build human capital and technology, both of whom work towards a self-reliant economy, see the aid inflows and international trade as opportunities to progress that enable them to become more relevant in the local politics.

According to Saxby, "Development must be locally owned", and that development co-operation has to be shifted to a partnership model, where donors' programs and activities operate within locally-owned development strategies. It follows, then, that local ownership is high when intended beneficiaries substantially influence the conception, design, implementation, and review of development strategies".

The successes of foreign aid and international trade as development initiatives are not successes of either of them alone; conversely, the failures of foreign aid and international trade are not failures of either of them alone. National governments are equally responsible for whatever the outcomes of development initiatives are since they are the ones weighing the marginal benefits of globalization over the marginal costs of it.

The decision to enter the international markets comes after governments conduct their due-diligence on the opportunities and challenges that a particular development initiative carries with it. One of those challenges is the local ownership of development as there are instances of corruption in foreign aid transactions, mismanagement of public funds and miscarriage of the development agenda conveyed to people. This results in resentment amongst the poor classes who resist the development process that ends up in them disowning any international development initiatives.

Economists of the likes of Jagdish Bhagwati including classicists like David Ricardo and Adam Smith have reflected quite profusely on the effectiveness of international trade as an engine of economic growth and take it as a the stepping stone towards the elimination of relative poverty. In Bhagwati's opinion, the effect of trade on poverty is compelling and centered on a two-step argument: that trade enhances growth and that growth enhances poverty".

But with the onerous acceptance terms and conditions attached to foreign aid flows from the richer to poorer countries, the corrupt regimes and general belief amongst peoples of the developing world that foreign aid has covert political and social objectives apart from the purely economic ones, the poor classes cannot help but disengage with the western development agenda and programs to the extent of resisting their local implementation. The misfortune is that very often such programs are, albeit not as effective as international trade, aimed at liberating them from the clutches of poverty and social injustice.

One of the major challenges that governments face is corruption within the bureaucracy. “Good Governance” is an essential requirement of most donor parties before a country is shortlisted for particular levels of aid. The World Bank defines good governance as “low level of corruption by the bureaucracy and officials of the receiving countries”. Although the presence of high levels of corruption can reduce the levels of aid flowing into a country, but according to Weder and Alesina, ‘critics make an even stronger argument that not only are corrupt governments not discriminated against in the flow of international assistance, but in fact foreign aid fosters corruption by increasing the size of resources fought over by interest groups and factions’.

Most of the foreign aid transactions have conditions, often referred to as strings, attached to them that attack the financial liberty of the locals in the receiving countries. This engenders narratives that foreign aid inflows have political undertones and are aimed at controlling the local economy rather than making it self-reliant or progressive. This myth is fostered by the historical reality that most of the developed countries who expect the aid recipients to embed in the international free-markets were erstwhile protectionist economies. As Ha-Joan Chang points out, “For the last two decades or so, the developing countries have been under great pressure from the developed countries and the international institutions that they control – such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Trade Organization – to adopt a set of ‘good policies’, especially free trade, and ‘good institutions’, such as strong patent law, in order to foster their economic development”.

But initially “almost all of today’s rich countries used tariff protection and subsidies to develop their industries in the earlier stages of their development. It is particularly important to note that Britain and the US, the two countries that are supposed to have reached the summit of the world economy through free-market, free-trade policy, are actually the ones that most aggressively used protection and subsidies” (Chang, 2002). This raises suspicions amongst the locals in the developing region and adds to the challenges governments face in terms of justifying their entry into the international trading system.

Ineffective public management systems and complicated bureaucratic processes in the developing world hinder transparency in foreign aid transactions which reduces the aid to these countries while it also compels the locals to not take ownership of such development initiatives. National governments in the developing world need to channelize the foreign aid inflows in a way that it is both transparent and effective so that the locals start feeling the impacts and transformative capabilities of foreign aid and international trade.

The labour-intensive industries could be converted into capital-intensive ones to raise technical goods’ exports if the aid is invested towards advancing technology and “human capital”. Although economic observers like Bhagwati believe that labor intensive markets are better from a development perspective since the lesser educated, poor class are able to maintain their income generation sources but this incentivizes the countries from a macroeconomic point of view to lag behind the progressive states of the world and the effect of such a trail trickles down to the lower classes who even if employed become poorer compared to people with the same skill sets living in the first world countries.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2017/12/20171204323890/>