

Ban Development Contractors in Afghanistan, Experts Say

By Ma. Rizza Leonzon on 27 September 2010



An excavation of the road from Kishim to Fayzabad as part of a U.S. Agency for International Development project. Photo by: [USAID Afghanistan](#) / CC BY-SA

Development contracting in Afghanistan, mired in mismanagement and failure, is perpetuating dependence in the Asian nation, two experts write in a joint opinion piece.

Josef Storm, a former development contractor serving in Afghanistan and Sudan, and Malou Innocent, a foreign policy analyst at the Cato Institute, want “all US-government development contractors [to] be [removed](#) from Afghanistan as soon as reasonably possible.”

Development contracting, according to the two experts, is “government-sponsored stabilization and reconstruction efforts outsourced to private contractors.”

“But from dilapidated schools and unfurnished buildings to billions of dollars charged for projects abandoned before completion, the massive fraud and waste endemic to development contracting in Afghanistan does more than leave American taxpayers ripped off and battered Afghans disappointed. It undermines the efforts of those trying to make a difference: privately-funded humanitarian nongovernmental organisations (NGOs),” Storm and Innocent write in an opinion article for the Christian Science Monitor published by Gulf News.

The problem with development contracting in the Islamic nation deals with inflating costs or leaving projects unfinished, they say.

“Another troubling practice is contractor staff serving short tours, many rarely lasting more than a year. With subsequent staff rotations having little to no overlap, this inevitably results in the loss of lessons learned, know-how, and counterpart rapport,” the two experts add.

In a separate article in The Huffington Post, Innocent explained that [multiple development contracting](#) prevents intended recipients from fully benefiting from aid money.

“So you have contract after subcontract after subcontract, which just kills everything. Multiple contracts, then an Afghan guy digging the road—why not straight hire the Afghan,” a senior employee of a U.S. Agency for International Development contractor said as quoted by Innocent.



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As a staff writer, Rizza focuses mainly on business coverage, including key donors such as the Asian Development Bank and AusAID. She covers breaking business news particularly at the ADB and has conducted interviews with specialists from the Inter-American Development Bank, World Bank and other top players in international development. Rizza also contributes to the daily Development Newswire and other Devex publications.