

PROVINCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT LAUNCHED IN AFGHANISTAN

In early 2006, the U.S. Department of State's Justice Sector Support Program and Corrections System Support Program teams contributed to the launch of a pilot provincial justice program in Wardak Province, located southwest of Kabul. Under the leadership of Wardak's governor, Abdul Jabar Naeemi, the Wardak Justice Project has out in place advisory working groups on law enforcement, criminal prosecution, and corrections services. Because Wardak is a relatively small province both in size and population (size 3452 square miles and population 413,000), under the leadership of a committed governor, it provides a good environment to apply an integrated and holistic approach to reform and capacity building of the criminal justice system.

Participants in the Wardak Justice Project convene once a month to discuss the challenges facing the provincial justice system, and to propose integrated solutions to these challenges, bringing together provincial government officials, the police, the prosecutor's office, corrections officials, representatives of the U.S. government, and international donor agencies and implementing partners. Among the U.S. and international participants are the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. Department of State's Justice and Corrections Sector Support Programs (JSSP and CSSP), the Combined Forces Command for Afghanistan (CFC-A), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the International Legal Foundation. Once a month, this diverse group meets together and then breaks into subcommittees on Police-Prosecution Coordination, Courts, Corrections, Defense Services, and Public Education and Information.

Through the support to the Wardak Justice Project, the JSSP and CSSP have facilitated the introduction of defense counsel services in Wardak, through two legal aid organizations. As a result of a series of meetings held by JSSP-CSSP with government officials and defense attorneys, the provincial police, prosecution and corrections officials have all pledged their support and cooperation. JSSP has also worked with the Police-Prosecution Subcommittee to create a list of equipment needs, and is seeking to identify donors to prioritize funding for equipment needs. An integrated communications system for the justice sector has been proposed, which would connect all emergency services, law enforcement and corrections personnel by radio. The early success of the Wardak Justice Project will serve as a model for reform in other provinces, and will undoubtedly contribute to increased capacity of the formal justice sector throughout Afghanistan.



The Justice Sector Support Program (JSSP) is implemented in partnership between PAE-HSC, Inc. and NCSC, under the direction and funding of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics & Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Based in Kabul since July 2005, the JSSP program seeks to develop and strengthen the institutional and operational capacity of the Afghan criminal justice sector institutions to perform their respective roles in delivering fair and effective justice services to citizens.