The Merged Areas Governance Project

The merger of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) with the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is a historic opportunity to stabilize the region and provide solace to a population weary of conflict and displacement. Yet the merger merely represents an early milestone in what will be a long and challenging transition towards stability and progress.

The introduction of constitutional rights to 5 million people, the institution of elected local governments, the initiation of land titling rights to citizens, the extension of formal rule of law institutions, and empowered legislatures, are fundamentally changing the relationship between the citizen and the state.

The merger has raised significant public expectations. Over the last decade, the former FATA has seen terrorism, military operations, and forced displacements. Many people have had their homes and livelihoods destroyed. As such, any delay or mismanagement of the integration may create space for the formation of counter-narratives against the integration process and contribute to instability.

QUICK FACTS

Duration: 2018–2022
Counterparts: Government of KP, Federal Government
Funding partners: USAID and FCDO
Location: Peshawar and Merged Areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
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The KP-FATA merger is a historic opportunity to stabilize the region

The Merged Areas Governance Project (MAGP) is a technical assistance project to transform the lives of the people of erstwhile FATA through peaceful integration with KP, the extension of civilian governance institutions, and socio-economic development. We aim to create opportunities for transformative development through innovative approaches that effectively respond to the complexity of the context.

We integrate global networks with local knowledge. We have found that the most amazing ideas come out of situations where local associates work directly with leading national and international specialists. To create these sparks, we have designed our footprint so that the majority of our staff are locally grounded but are networked with leading experts and institutions from across Pakistan and the world.

This project can’t afford to stop learning. The context in the Merged Areas is evolving rapidly, and the project seeks to continually learn and evolve in response.

We serve the people of the Merged Areas. We hold ourselves accountable to the people we serve by regularly tracking their perceptions and feedback.

What has the project already achieved?

We have been the primary provider of technical assistance to the Merged Areas since 2015. MAGP was approved by the Government of Pakistan as a dedicated project in 2018.

- To facilitate a sustainable solution for the Merged Areas, we provided advisory support to the Sartaj Aziz Committee on FATA Reforms, the Federal Cabinet, and the National Assembly. We provided technical assistance on the legislative options reflected in the extension of the judiciary, and the 25th Constitutional Amendment.

Result 1: Increased KP Government capacity for peaceful implementation of fundamental governance and rule of law reforms as part of the complex integration process.

Result 2: Inclusive governance and political integration at the district and local levels to promote stability;

Result 3: Accelerated and transformative socio-economic development in the Merged Areas through improved planning, implementation, and innovation;

Result 4: State-Citizen relationship strengthened through enhanced engagement of the population by leveraging communications of development work with the reforms and merger process.

An extraordinary situation requires a path-breaking approach

Systemic, government-led reforms. We provide system-wide technical assistance including resources, evidence, digital, and advisory services to help the government deliver on the commitments embodied in the 25th Constitutional Amendment and the FATA Reforms Process.

Evidence and data are at the core of the approach. To achieve transformative development results, we prioritize the generation and use of comparative and experimental evidence. We help the government to set up and use data streams and analytical capacities for effective planning, management, and evaluation.

Innovation is our normal. We believe that transformative development in the Merged Areas cannot be achieved through the simple replication of systems from outside. Instead, our approach includes re-thinking the status quo, experimentation, iteration, and learning.

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Democratic Governance
Merged Areas Governance Project

- To build consensus on the reform agenda, we organized extensive consultations with political leadership, civil society, experts, and youth activists. To ensure the people’s voice was heard in the deliberations, we established channels of public feedback from focus groups, a free hotline, and media monitoring directly to key decision-makers. To counter fake news, we worked with civil society and journalists to inform and educate stakeholders across Pakistan.

- To avoid parallel bureaucracies and support democratic accountability, we helped the provincial government to take control of the merger and integrate the FATA Secretariat into the provincial administration under the oversight of the provincial cabinet.

- To deliver on the national commitment of over Rs1 trillion in development spending over a decade, we supported the development of the 10-year Tribal Decade Strategy and the 3-year Accelerated Implementation Programme. We continue to assist the provincial government to design, implement, and evaluate these development frameworks.

- To put people at the center of the reform process, we helped train and deploy 130 Local Government Ambassadors who conducted a face-to-face civic education campaign reaching more than 46,000 people in 2020. The Ambassadors later became frontline workers in COVID-19 prevention efforts in the Merged Areas. Civic education activities have begun again in 2021 in anticipation of local government elections.

- To strengthen trust, MAGP’s Strategic Communications Unit has identified areas of trust deficit between citizens and the state in the Merged Areas and used both communications and engagement to support addressing them. The Strategic Communications Unit has completed successful campaigns on health, rehabilitation and jobs that have generated a very high awareness rate.

- To reduce disputes and enforce property rights, we implemented the first land settlement process in the Merged Areas in 76 years and are supporting the government in its preparations for further land settlement activities.

- To improve the availability of data to facilitate evidence-based planning and decision making, and to further understanding of citizens’ perceptions on the merger and development issues, we have supported large-scale surveys on economic, development, and other issues.

- To promote economic recovery in KP, we supported the provincial government in the development of its 3-year economic recovery plan, Azm-e-Nau, to manage development priorities and resource allocations in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak.

What’s next?

- To help the provincial government’s development spending go further, we are assisting the provincial government to transform the development project pipeline by improving the way it designs, approves, implements, and evaluates programmes and projects.

- To enhance the way that government works at the district level and in service delivery departments, we are working with the government to study and recommend institutional reforms.

- To support doing development in a new way, we are providing technical assistance on a portfolio of flagship Special Emphasis Programmes with robust impact evaluation and iterative design components.

- To put local people in charge of allocative decisions and use existing social capital for development, we are supporting the implementation of the Qabail Led Development Programme.

- To further evidence-based planning, we will continue to support the provincial government in the collection and use of data on development inputs and outcomes.

- To support economic development and increased employment opportunities in the Merged Areas, we will continue to work closely with the provincial government to research and develop feasible approaches and schemes.

- To contribute to effective urban planning, we will support the government in the development of master/spatial plans for selected urban centers in the Merged Areas.

- To support the government’s outreach, COVID-19 prevention communications, and the visibility of its development policies and projects for the Merged Areas, the Strategic Communications Unit is working with the provincial government in producing quality content for social and digital media promotion.

Where do we work:
- Merged Areas of KP, Peshawar

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