



Linking relief, rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan to improve aid effectiveness: Main successes and challenges ahead



January 2007

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Acknowledgments

The LRRD study is a result of a joint effort by the Groupe URD and many international partners (Solidarités, Afghan Aid, Geres, AMI, AKDN), and Afghan ones (COAR, CAF, CFA). The LRRD program would not have been possible without the strong involvement of our partners in Kabul and on the field level.

We are also extremely grateful to all the ministries' employees working both at the field level and in Kabul. A special thanks to the staff from the MAIL, MoUD, MOH, MoE, MEW, MOWA for the time they have spent with us to share ideas.

Thank you very much to all the NGOs staff in Kabul and in the provinces for their hospitality and for sharing their knowledge.

The LRRD team would like to express its gratitude to the European Commission for the financial support for this study. The additional resources made available by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs were extremely welcome as well.

In addition many thanks must go to the translation/editing team (Farhad Antezar and Anna Lear) for their hard work and commitment.

Finally a very special thanks to all the afghan we have talked with. Thank you for their hospitality and trust. We hope that this research will in some way benefit of them.

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Acronyms

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACF	Action Contre la Faim
AGCHO	Afghanistan Geodesy & Cartography Head Office
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKTC	Aga Khan Trust for Culture
BPHS	Basic Package for Health Services
CHW	Community Health Worker
CAWSS	Central Authority for Water Supply and Sewerage
DFID	Department For International Development
ECHO	European Commission for Humanitarian assistance
EC	European Commission
EMG	Emerging Market Group
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FAAHM	Food, Agriculture, Animal and Husbandry Information Management
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEWS	Famine Early Warning System
Groupe URD	Groupe Urgence - Réhabilitation - Développement
GCMU	Grant and Contracts Management Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HMIS	Health Management Information System
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFI	International Financial Institutions
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IRBM	Integrated River Basin Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
KM	Kabul Municipality
KRBP	Kunduz River Basin Programme
KURP	Kabul Urban Rehabilitation Program
LRRD	Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development
LTERA	Land Titling and Economic Restructuring of Afghanistan
MAAHF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MICS	Multi Indicator Cluster Survey
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
MOWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
MOUD	Ministry of Urban Development

MOUDH	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NEEP	National Emergency Employment Programme
NFSP	National Food Security Program
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerabilities Assessment
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
NSS	National Surveillance System
PIU	Program Implementing Unit
PND	Public Nutrition Department
PNO	Provincial Nutrition Officer
PNP	Public Nutrition Policy
PPA	Performance-based Partnership Agreement
PRR	Priority Reform and Restructuring
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
SC	Save the Children
SDP	Strategic Development Program
SFC	Supplementary Feeding Centre
TEP	Teacher Education Program
TFC	Therapeutic Feeding Centre
TFU	Therapeutic Feeding Unit
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Unit
WFP	World Food Programme
WM	Water Management
WUA	Water Users' association

Executive summary

Linking emergency relief, rehabilitation and development is one of the most complex challenges confronting the international community in most of its commitment to bring about sustainable peace as well as equitable and viable development in war torn societies and countries. Afghanistan is since 2001 one of the striking situation where all international efforts are put into question. Linking relief, rehabilitation and development in Afghanistan implies both an appropriate strategy based in a refined analysis of the situation and a capacity to draw lessons, improve practices and avoid duplicating the same mistakes made in other similar contexts. A thorough lesson learning effort is also necessary to ensure that the mistakes made in Afghanistan would not be repeated in the next contexts where a complex international operation will try to help sustaining a fragile peace and to get out of a crisis and to heal the scars of a conflict

Dealing with the “contiguuum” in a diversified environment

Reducing vulnerability, responding to food insecurity and supporting the Afghan population as a whole with a view to strengthening livelihoods should be at the core of the agenda for the coming years. Strategies and approaches should be fine-tuned or even redesigned for the more vulnerable areas and vulnerable groups of people. In order to ensure a sustainable and inclusive development, stakeholders taking part to the reconstruction process must base **programme design on a comprehensive understanding of specific local characteristics and constraints**.

Towards a shared and inclusive recovery process

The worsening situation in the south of the country calls into question the **relevance of the chosen strategies up to now**. How should aid operations be run today? Does the remote control strategy put in place by many stakeholders ensure quality service delivery? Is the militarised option (PRTs) the only alternative? **Development efforts and long-term strategies should be more fairly balanced across the country** and not skewed towards areas with high productive potentials, significant poppy production or insecurity problems.

Dealing with vulnerability and risks within a recovery and developmental process

An emergency preparedness plan should be included in the overall development framework, otherwise there is a risk that emergency situations will be treated on a case-by-case basis and this may hamper development strategies. Preventive measures should be taken to reduce risks and vulnerabilities (better management of water resources for flood control or drought mitigation etc...). Developing a dual capacity to work in crisis situations and support development efforts is the key for the future of Afghanistan's aid sector. It should be based on clear understanding of mandates and roles, and anchored in humanitarian principles.

Building partnerships for development and emergency response

Just as nobody can seriously challenge the legitimacy of the Afghan authorities in taking the prominent role, there remains a need for a multiple and diversified aid community, with different approaches and operating modalities. To foster a more effective development, which encompasses the need to preserve an emergency humanitarian response capacity, there is a **need for partnership** among the different stakeholders. Government, donors, UN agencies, NGOs, private sector and communities are all key stakeholders in the transition between relief and development.

Public sector, private sector and civil society: from antagonism to synergies:

While the development of the Afghan private sector is of great importance, care should be taken to ensure that remote and less competitive areas are not overlooked. Each actor has their own role and responsibilities, scope of activities and comparative advantage. In the Afghan LRRD period, huge amount of funds available for the reconstruction and overall need for aid and development led to a non-separation, overlapping and also undermining of roles and duties of the stakeholders. With the overlapping of agendas (rebuilding the state, addressing vulnerability, democracy and peace building, development of the private sector), the key is ensuring that actors are not pitted against each other but that their different mandates and scope of activities are clearly defined and understood and that the different levels and type of activities are well coordinated.

Structure of the present document:

This report contains 5 papers on the main findings in the following sector: urban, water/irrigation, agriculture, nutrition, health and education. The last part of the report is dedicated to a multi-sector paper with the main issues at stake.

1 BACKGROUND

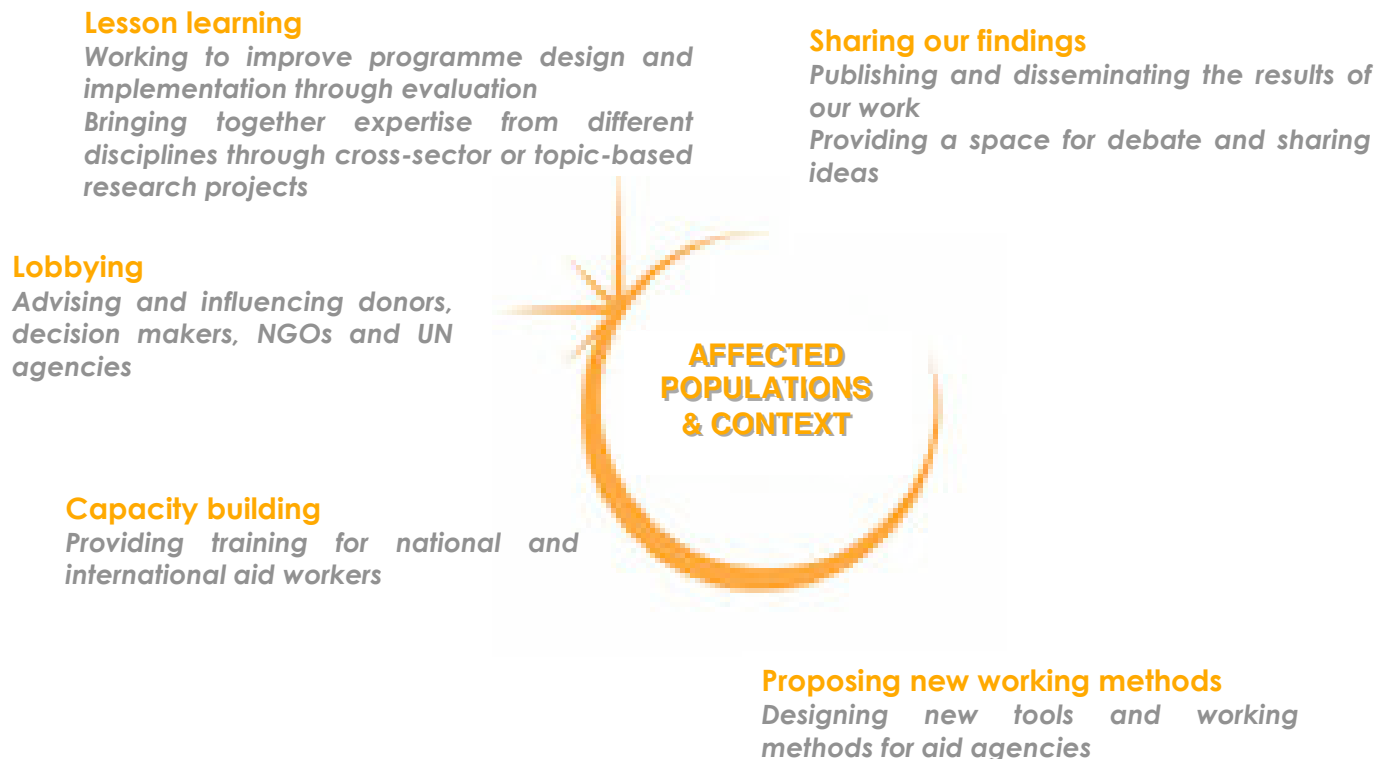
1.1 A brief presentation of Groupe URD

Groupe URD is a French research institute whose main goal is to: **Improve quality of humanitarian practices through debate, research, evaluation, capacity building, training and lobbying.** Groupe URD's members include numerous development and emergency relief actors, academics and training institutions.

Groupe URD's main activities are evaluation, research and training, in line with the collective learning cycle (see below).

International solidarity organisations are now fully aware of the dual responsibility they have to affected populations and donors in ensuring quality in their interventions. Groupe URD operates a collective learning cycle, which provides support for aid agencies engaged in this quality assurance exercise. The overall objective of these activities is to ensure continuous improvement of the aid delivered to affected populations.

Figure 1: The learning cycle – Groupe URD



1.2 A brief presentation of the LRRD programme

One of Groupe URD's main programmes in Afghanistan is the two-year EC funded "Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development" programme.

The objective of this programme is to draw lessons from current experience to inform policies and programmes for NGOs, donors, international agencies and governmental institutions.

The LRRD programme focuses on six sectors:

- Urban Development
- Water / Irrigation
- Agriculture
- Nutrition
- Health
- Education

The programme has three main components:

1-Learning and sharing lessons through iterative multi-sector reviews. This component includes (i) an in-depth review for each sector, which are currently under completion, and (ii) a multi sector report, based on a three-week multi sector field review in April 2006 (iii) this multi sector report is the conclusion of the sector based and cross sector reviews conducted during the last 2 years.

The process of "learning and sharing lessons" started with the Quality Project missions (supported by ECHO, the French Government and Swiss Development Committee). In July-August 2002, January-February 2003 and August 2003, a group of experts from Groupe URD came to Afghanistan to conduct multi-sector reviews in the aforementioned sectors, except for the water sector which was introduced in 2005 and the education sector which was introduced in 2006. These field missions enabled Groupe URD to closely monitor the evolution of the aid sector in Afghanistan and improve its understanding of current trends taking place within the humanitarian aid system.

2- Increasing knowledge and experience by carrying out applied research in urban and rural settings in specific fields (including food and economic security).

Applied research usually focuses on key issues identified during the learning and sharing lessons process.

Junior experts from Groupe URD conducted five-month research in Afghanistan on:

- Five different agrarian systems throughout Afghanistan;
- One small city, Bamiyan; one middle-sized city, Jalalabad; and one large city, Kabul.

These studies provided Groupe URD with a good picture of Afghanistan's urban and rural sectors. They were carried out in partnership with NGOs who had shown interest in incorporating applied research into their programmes from the outset.

3- Contributing to the capacity building efforts of relevant ministries and national NGOs through training on farming diagnosis methods and quality assurance.

The main findings of these components have been regularly presented in workshops and conferences. In this way, Groupe URD hopes to share and discuss the information collected with the widest range of stakeholders possible. Trainings on M&E and quality approaches have been delivered to Afghan NGO

2 LIST OF THE LRRD REPORTS

The following reports can be downloaded on Groupe URD's web site:
http://www.urd.org/index.php?page=publications_lrrd

2.1 Multi sector Reviews

☞ **Linking relief and development in Afghanistan to improve aid effectiveness: Main successes and challenges ahead;** Banzet, Boyer, De Geoffroy, Kauffmann, Pascal, Riviere, Jan 2007, Groupe URD

☞ **Impact of the LRRD transition on the INGO's in Afghanistan,** Chatagnon, Jan 2007, Groupe URD

☞ **A Review based on a Multi and Cross Sector Approach, Chapter 1: Cross Cutting Issues,** By Amélie Banzet, Christine Bousquet, Béatrice Boyer, Agnès De Geoffroy, François Grünewald, Domitille Kauffmann, Peggy Pascal and Nicolas Rivière, April 2006, Groupe URD

☞ **A review based on a Multi and Cross Sector Approach, Chapter 2 : SECTOR ISSUES : Urban Development, Water & Irrigation, Agriculture, Nutrition, Health, Education,** By Amélie Banzet, Christine Bousquet, Béatrice Boyer, Agnès De Geoffroy, François Grünewald, Domitille Kauffmann, Peggy Pascal and Nicolas Rivière, April 2006, Groupe URD

☞ **Sector reviews are available for the following sector:** (see research list)

- Agriculture, Pascal(coming soon)
- Health, Bousquet (oct 2005)
- Education, De Geoffroy and Banzet (June 2006)
- Nutrition, Kauffmann (coming soon)
- Urban development, Boyer (Dec 2006)
- Water/ irrigation, Riviere (oct 2005)

2.2 Research

☞ Rural development

Articles

The afghan agricultural sector in the LRRD transition, Pascal, Jan. 2007, Groupe URD

Lessons learnt from the evolution of the needs and the relations between all stakeholders in a transitional state from relief to development. The case of a project in the Shaman Valley (central highland), Lety and Pascal, Dec 2005, Groupe URD

Understand needs diversity to design sustainable programs, the case of wheat seeds distribution programs, Duchier and Pascal, Dec 2005, Groupe URD

Why and how to improve programs for women: Enhance income generation activities and improve food quality, Duchet and Pascal, Dec 2005, Groupe URD

Reports:

Case study of shaman plain flood control project, agrarian system and impact assessment, by Lety, 2006, Groupe URD and Solidarités.

Blé ou pavot, les paysans ont choisi, impacts des programmes de distributions de semences de blé dans une vallée du nord est de l'Afghanistan, Duchier, 2006, Groupe URD and Afghan Aid.

Les femmes afghanes, au cœur de l'économie rurale, exemple d'une vallée dans le nord de l'Afghanistan, Duchet, 2006, Groupe URD and Afghan Aid.

Rethinking womens' and farmers' programmes to improve household's economy in rural Afghanistan, The case of Baharak Valley in Badakshan province, Duchet and Duchier, 2006, Groupe URD and Afghan Aid.

Farming systems in crisis, The case of the agro-pastoral systems in Roy-e-Doab (Samangan), Sene, Dec 2006, Groupe URD and Solidarités (coming soon)

What place for the agriculture within Kabul city? Laillet, Nov 2006, Groupe URD and GERES (coming soon)

☞ Urban development sector

Articles

The afghan urban sector in the LRRD transition, Boyer, Jan 2007, 4p

Jallalabad: A resort town of change, Mahmoudi and Boyer, July 2006

Is the building of a city the adequate answer to Bamyan's low development?, Mariani, Dec 2005

Reports

Jallalabad: A resort town of change, By Rafika Mahmoudi et Beatrice Boyer, Dec 2006

From the spreading of the Pakistani architecture to the growing urban encroachment of Kabul surrounding hills, what will Kabul look like in the next future? Claire Mariani, Dec 2005, 3p

☞ Health sector

The afghan health sector in the LRRD transition, Bousquet and Grunewald, jan 2007, 4p

Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development in Afghanistan: Health Sector Review in Afghanistan (2001–2005) Bousquet, Groupe URD, November 2005, 42p

PPA: is there still a case for debate?, Bousquet, Groupe URD, Oct 2005, 25p

Different quality approaches in the Afghan health system, Dr Maury, Groupe URD, August 2005, 11p.

☞ **Nutrition sector**

Nutrition related issues in the LRRD transition , Kauffmann, January 2007, 4p

Nutrition update, Charlotte Dufour, Groupe URD, May 2005,

☞ **Water / Irrigation sector**

The Afghan water/irrigation sector in the LRRD transition, Rivière, January 2007; 4p

Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development in Afghanistan: Water Sector Review in Afghanistan (2001–2005) Rivière, Groupe URD, September 2005, 48p

☞ **Education**

The Afghan education sector in the LRRD transition, De Geoffroy and Banzet, Jan 2007, 3p

Linking relief, rehabilitation and development programme (LRRD) in Afghanistan : Education Sector Review in Afghanistan (2001-2006),_De Geoffroy and Banzet, June 2006, 33p

2.3 Training

Training material

Training on M&E held in October 2006 for Afghan NGO's: The CD with the training material and the Quality Compas Method is available.

3 LINKING RELIEF, REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN (LRRD)

François Grünewald, Chairman of Groupe URD, Associate Professor at the University Paris XII, Director of Studies, Masters Degree in Humanitarian Management

When the Cold War finally came to an end, hopes were raised that most of the conflicts of the previous decades would also terminate. This proved true to a certain extent with the advancement of negotiations in Afghanistan, the peace agreement in Cambodia and the end of the war in Mozambique. In this euphoric context, relief organisations and development agencies saw that the antagonisms that had previously existed between them were no longer justified. This ideological divide separating emergency relief workers (on the side of freedom fighters) and development agencies (who worked with post-colonial governments, some of whom were set up by colonial powers, others supported by the communist bloc) lost its sense. It is in this context that Groupe URD was created in 1993 in order to respond to the growing need for reflection and debate within the relief and development sectors.

But the tough reality of real politic unfortunately did not support this rosy scenario. Very quickly, new conflicts emerged and old wars were re-ignited by new means and new actors. Afghanistan is one of the well-known cases of this evolution. Staff currently working with Groupe URD were involved in these earlier phases and witnessed the bombardments in Kabul, and the hunger and suffering that were brought about by a bloody blockade, while in other parts of the country, fruit trees were blooming again.

Since 1993, Groupe URD has continued to explore various issues at stake within the framework of the LRRD theme, as well as examining numerous areas of application. Research and evaluation has been carried out in a number of countries (from South

Asia to Latin America, southern Africa to the North Caucasian mountains, the Middle East to the Balkans), covering a variety of aid contexts. A specific multidisciplinary and multicultural approach has been developed for each situation.

1998-2006: Frequent field missions in Rwanda, Burundi and DR of Congo to evaluate various kinds of humanitarian and reconstruction programmes.

1997-2005: Various missions in North and South Caucasus to assess humanitarian aid and to explore different facets the LRRD processes.

1998-2000: Various missions in Kosovo before and after the war to assess needs and to appraise relief and rehabilitation programmes.

1999-2001: First test of the EIMS evaluative process in Central America after Mitch and after the San Salvador Earthquakes.

2000-2006: Series of evaluations and research programmes in Afghanistan, including case studies for the “Global study on participation” programme, the “War in cities, cities at war” programme, the revision of WFP needs assessment manual, for the EU, EURONAIID and the FAO, and for the LRRD programme (fifteen field missions).

2004-2006: Various evaluations in the Horn of Africa, especially in Somalia, to assess needs and evaluate humanitarian and post disaster recovery programmes.

2005-2006: Series of evaluations in the Tsunami affected areas (India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia) to look at the relief and reconstruction programmes.

In Afghanistan, the political and aid processes that have been set up since the withdrawal of the Taliban have brought together all the actors engaged in the various

facets of LRRD, as well as highlighting the challenges related to the LRRD dynamic.

This short conceptual introduction presents our main thoughts about the issues related to linking relief, rehabilitation and development in general and how this issue has been broached in Afghanistan.

Moving from a continuum to a contiguuum

The concept of linking relief, rehabilitation and development was developed on the basis of the humanitarian response to natural disasters, in which each phase follows on from the other in a chronological progression.

Thus, in the aftermath of natural disasters, such as hurricanes (Hurricane Mitch in Central America, Hurricane Jeanne in the Caribbean) and earthquakes (Mexico, Narhin in Afghanistan and Bam in Iran), communities learn to cope with the situation, not without trauma and mourning, but irrespective of whether they receive international assistance or not.

The relief-development continuum theory, based on temporal dynamics

The continuum theory was then applied to post-Cold War conflicts and their aftermath, such as in Namibia, Cambodia and Mozambique. Years, sometimes decades, of conflict had left deep wounds and this meant that the process of reconstruction, reunification and reconciliation was much more complex. Healing souls is often much more difficult than curing physical wounds or rebuilding infrastructure. In order to build a new future, one is obliged to deal with the past. The tension between justice and impunity has plunged many post-crisis contexts into turbulence.

As mentioned earlier, the hopes that were raised by the fall of the Berlin Wall have not yet materialised. Instead new conflict dynamics have emerged, including:

Many peace processes have failed after an initial period of optimism: reconstruction has not necessarily brought about justice and equity. Demilitarization and disarmament exercises have not succeeded in providing a new future to young men who were accustomed to living from the power of the gun. Too many people, both external and internal interests, had too much to lose from the end of the war and the return to a situation where the rule of law would prevent them from conducting shady business deals. Entrepreneurs of war have nothing to gain from supporting peace. In addition, many 'Cold War conflicts' were just a new form for existing social, political or ethnical tensions, most of the time inherited from the colonial time and the decolonisation period. Once the cover was removed, old conflicts were reactivated.

Protracted crises slowly but surely erode the benefits of development programmes and negatively impact population resilience. Beyond Cold War issues and political agendas, old lines of confrontation have re-emerged. New battlefields have also come to the fore, especially where war entrepreneurs have understood that the lawless nature of war zones presents endless possibilities for exploiting natural resources. Henceforth, wars no longer need political godfathers: diamonds in Sierra Leone or Angola, forest resources in DR of Congo or Burma provide sufficient fuel for the ignition, amplification and regeneration of conflict.

In repetitive crises, emergency aid and reconstruction efforts alternate on a cyclical basis: All too quickly, the conflict takes on an ethnic dimension leading to situations whereby the winner takes all without the least regard for the loser, who then retaliates to seek revenge. Amongst other examples, the conflict in the Great Lakes region in Africa illustrates this situation all too clearly.

In these crises, conflict dynamics are characterized by a spatial dimension – a leopard skin pattern emerges. Certain areas of the country are calm for long periods of time, others remain in constant conflict.

The emergence of “contiguuum theory”, based on the spatial dynamics

This type of scenario where some parts of the country are at peace and can therefore benefit from development work, yet other regions are marked by significant instability obviously poses a certain number of problems for international actors, especially donors. The barriers that exist between different budget lines, financial instruments and expertise make the management of the relief-development contiguuum extremely complex and sometimes even dangerous. This is the case for Somalia, large areas of Burundi and obviously DR of Congo. Afghanistan can also be classified in this category.

Key questions: Linking relief and development in Afghanistan

The inadequacies of strategic approaches that are based on temporal or spatial dynamics swiftly became apparent when confronted with the tough and abrasive realities of the field.

In a fragile peace process, what is the best strategy to adopt when working with, and often through, national authorities whilst ensuring that humanitarian principles are upheld? How can we avoid the typical ‘cut and paste’ scenario, where the aid community takes a ready-made response that has been tested in another country and applies to a new context without paying proper attention to inherent specific characteristics and domains of validity? Can the aid sector be more inductive and less prescriptive?

How should operations be run during crisis inception or in post-conflict situations when insecurity is still high? Is the militarized option (PRT system) the only possible approach or can we be more imaginative?

How can we avoid the growing distrust between authorities, the population and the aid sector? This is especially true in situations where frustrations can be easily exploited and the risk of severe repercussions on national security and politics is high.

How can we restore trust between the different stakeholders in the humanitarian, recovery and development community? NGOs are not the enemy of the Afghan Government and donors are not the enemy of NGOs!

How can we support the emergence or strengthening of national capacity at the national and local levels, within the state apparatus and within civil society?

In the rehabilitation phase is it possible to avoid reproducing the original infrastructure if the original was itself a crisis-inducing factor? President Clinton’s Build Back Better policy for Tsunami-affected areas is in part based on the idea that emergencies provide an opportunity to improve upon the original. Can we think of something similar for Afghanistan? If not, why not? And if so, how?

One of the current debates relates to the socio-economic model that has been chosen for Afghanistan: moving from State interventionism to the full power to market forces. How will this work for fragile and less productive areas and socio-economically marginalized populations? As we said in 2002, if money is only invested in sectors where there is ‘value for money’, there is a risk that Afghanistan will develop at different speeds in different areas. If this way is chosen, what are the foreseeable political repercussions?

Is it possible to react quickly in an emergency context without creating long-term negative effects (e.g. food aid dependency, disruption of local markets, changing health and hygiene habits, etc.)?

Is it possible to react quickly in an emergency situation and yet still involve the population in the project, from the design phase through implementation, right up until the final evaluation? What kind of investment does this entail prior to the crisis?

Is it possible to save lives but also strengthen the resilience of individuals, families, communities and society as a whole?

Relief workers tend to have sector-based expertise: they are engineers and doctors, logisticians and nutritionists, nurses and administrators. Broadening their outlook to include input from the social sciences is often foreign to them and may even carry negative connotations. Their contracts are often only for short periods and high staff turnover can be a serious constraint. Who then has the necessary time and or has the right working methods to look at social interactions or power relations? And yet, so many evaluations highlight the importance of these socio-cultural, ethno-anthropological and politico-economic issues, even at a micro level.

Experience seems to indicate that in the end, the true link between relief, rehabilitation and development is a methodological one. How can we bring together expertise from both the development sector (population participation, thorough socio-cultural analysis, capacity building) and the humanitarian sector (vulnerability analysis, danger awareness, logistics capacity and expertise, rapid intervention, etc.)?

This is without doubt the most interesting link, the one that holds the most promise for the future but which requires high levels of investment. In this turbulent world, it is essential to place the capacity for crisis management (from relief to development and vice versa) and for building national, local, community, family and individual resilience at the very heart of development agendas.

Learning from Afghanistan

Ongoing experience in Afghanistan, with input from other examples, reveals a number of strengths and weaknesses in the aid system, and underlines missed opportunities, as well as possible options.

- Will we be able to make up for these failures in order to improve the situation in Afghanistan and the living conditions of the Afghan population?
- Will we learn from our mistakes and ensure that they are not repeated in other countries?
- From the outset of wide-sweeping changes that began to take place in Afghanistan in 2001, Groupe URD mobilised all its resources to ensure that the sector is capable of learning from these strengths and weaknesses, from missed opportunities and well-managed risks.
- The object of this conference is to present to all stakeholders a summary of what we have learned during these years of research and evaluation since 2001, in the hope that it will prove useful for Afghanistan and other similar situations.

4 DRAWING CONCLUSIONS BY SECTOR

4.1 *The urban sector development sector in the LRRD context*

By Beatrice Boyer, Urban Development Sector Expert, January 2007

The Urban sector over the past few decades: a historical overview

Urban phenomena, which are observable in many countries in a post-crisis situation or undergoing a development process, have reached a critical level in Afghanistan. This is all too apparent according to direct observations, and indeed it is the general consensus of all urban actors, Afghan institutions, international organisations and city dwellers alike. Afghan authorities do not have a thorough understanding of urban issues and mechanisms, because traditionally and culturally they are more acquainted with rural issues. These authorities failed to assess the following broad urban evolution and consequences: i) a rapidly increasing urban population, which would require basic infrastructure and services, ii) the swift horizontal expansion of cities with the establishment of urban settlements in rural areas which then need to be integrated into the city's administration and management, or iii) an urgent need to rehabilitate existing damaged urban neighbourhoods. Besides the need for physical improvement, the urban sector in general requires updating and modernising in terms of skills, policies and frameworks. Since 2001, the reconstruction process with the support of international aid has had to cope with many difficulties, blockages or incapacity to absorb financial aid. From 2005-2006 however, it was possible to observe positive acceleration in the process at different levels.

Governance and urban planning levels. During the Soviet period, 35 years ago, the sector was well organised with construction and urban development skills, and appropriate documents of reference were

established for the major Afghan cities: Kabul, Herat, Kandahar, Mazar-e Sharif, Kunduz and Jalalabad. But with the uncontrolled evolution of urban settlements due to the attraction of city for rural communities, returnees or internal displaced persons, urban authorities and urban mechanisms were overwhelmed. The evolution toward urban occupation has created a gap between urban territories and administrative responsibilities. Because there is no consensus on city's administrative boundaries, there is a lack of coherence on the responsibilities of the different administration accountable for urban issues. Administrative urban Master Plans, skills and tools drawn up in the 1970s are now outdated for conducting urban analysis and town planning. There is a general and crucial lack of up-to-date spatial urban data and urban plans. One of the most important issues is the lack of registration of land property, which sometimes leads to precariousness, abuse or disputes. Rehabilitation and development processes will come to a standstill and there is a risk of local conflict. The political aspects at stake in urban development and urban management strategies along with the need for considerable funds, and better technical and managerial skills meant that the main stakeholders at the national level spent much of the 2002-2004 period in negotiations, before setting priorities and effectively redefining urban policy.

Social and physical urban level. Basic needs are essentially related to infrastructure. Lack or insufficient provision of clean water supply systems, drainage networks, sewerage collects, power distributions or streets repair work pose problems on a daily basis for urban

population. These difficulties exist within the legal administrative boundaries, as well as outside them, where most of the population lives (as much as 70% in Kabul or Mazar-e Sharif). In these informal settlements, inhabitants build fairly good quality traditional houses themselves, although the land they occupy is often built upon illegally or the territory is not officially recognised by the authorities. Large parts of all Afghan cities which are settled and built upon under private initiative do not lie within the legal urban framework and therefore do not benefit from administrative regulation and appropriate infrastructure and services. These inhabitants are still waiting for their living conditions to improve in 2007. The implementation of water supply and sanitation network programmes by some international actors, such as the ICRC or NGOs, are important for improving the conditions in these neighbourhoods but are not sufficient to upgrade the overall urban situation.

Main achievements

Nevertheless, over the period 2001-06, achievements have been made at three levels in the urban sector. The first aspect concerns general structural and institutional governance and planning. The second level consists in the set up of appropriate transitional mechanisms and structures in order to support institutional authorities decision through specific programs. The third level consists of small projects implementations. In fact, during these last two years, a slow urban institutional restructuring has been carried out, when over the same period, there was a notable acceleration due to urban surveys designed by the mentioned transitional structures. However, improvements on the field have been slight, apart from the unparalleled construction of new private buildings.

At the institutional level

- **Understanding urban issues as belonging both to a global and to a multidimensional system.** Afghan urban institutions have been slow to recognise the holistic nature of urban issues. This process has taken two to three years with considerable input from Working Consulting Groups with international partners such as donors (World Bank, ECHO or bilateral aid as JICA, GTZ, etc.), advisors from UN agencies and other partners such as AKTC. The permanence of Mr. Pashtun's position as Minister of MoUD(H) has probably contributed in a positive way to the urban prioritisation process. But the entire sector still has a significant amount of work to do.

- **Within the MoUD the focus is more on institutional restructuring than on capacity building for policy making.** Most employees involved in urban development would benefit from capacity building. They lack the necessary knowledge in technical, managerial and financial aspects and many of their skills are not up-to-date in order to cope with the current urban issues. This is true for all institutions, including the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), the Central Authorities for Water Supply and Sanitation (CAWSS), the Afghanistan Geodesic and Cartographic Head Office (AGCHO) or the municipalities (Provincial Municipalities such as Kabul Municipality (KM)). The reform process (PRR) is underway since 2005 in the MUD and KM under MoF budget, but introducing such radical change is taking time. More than 80% of the employers do not have the right skills. The problem has to be addressed on a social level before urban issues can be properly tackled.

On a transitional level there is an evolution:

To accelerate and facilitate urban rehabilitation and development policies and programmes several organisations are working alongside the MoUD without being fully integrated within the ministry. The independent status of private consultant teams, who are bound by a protocol of

collaboration with the MoUD and operate under a development budget with differentiated salaries, have significantly contributed to the development of urban analysis, expertise and production of documents on the basis of appropriate skills and urban tools. To prepare urban policies, these organisations support different aspects of urban reconstruction programme such as:

- **Modernisation of the MoUD and monitoring of the reform.** The Program Implementing Unit (PIU) team, in charge of logistics support, monitoring staff capacity, providing training for staff and supplying computer equipment have enhanced considerable progress within central administration and is now looking to implement its strategy in provincial offices.

- **Spatial regional strategy for coherent regional development.** The Strategic Development Program (SDP) team is carrying out Regional Development analysis. The objective is to create a balance between urban and rural development in order to stop urban attraction by developing better economic opportunities within a radius of fifty kilometres around the city. This one-year survey will be presented these next days to all Afghan urban institutions and partners with the objective of developing a common spatial understanding as a base for coherent development.

- **A rehabilitation and development framework is being elaborated through the KURP.** The Kabul Urban Rehabilitation Program, supported by the WB, was validated in August 2006 after long and hard negotiations between the MUD and KM. It concerns only 19 *gozar*¹ rehabilitation projects and this rehabilitation programme will be implemented until 2008. Despite good urban skills within the team, the process is lengthy, firstly due to political considerations and secondly to the technical process of project management and

implementation. The long-term objectives of the KURP based on this experience is to extent the framework of rehabilitation and development policies by drawing up a Master Plan for each city. This second phase requires funds.

- **The complex land tenure issue is finally reaching a common agreement** for establishing mechanisms and clear responsibilities on the subject. These days, according to LTERA program implemented by Emerging Market Group (EMG) and supported by USAID, an official decision was made to create a committee under the Ministry of Agriculture for solving land tenure issues and establishing framework for land tenure laws. Many urban problems have arisen from confusion and disputes between rural property and urban settlements. This decision should give a clear base for solving any stalemate reached in urban development on rural areas and rehabilitation issues.

- **Strategies for developing the water sector in each city** are established by the CAWSS with strong technical and financial support. To deal with implementation, this department now has to learn how to work with private consulting process. However CAWSS based its surveys only on part of legal urban settlements. Therefore, illegal settlements had and will have to cope with water supply problems.

At the field level, global improvement is not obvious.

Local urban administrations are only in charge of the maintenance of the existing structures. The rehabilitation work is done by international organisations on the basis of two types of intervention: one, with a long-term view in the water sector and the other, carrying out sporadic upgrading works.

¹ Very small urban entity concerning around three hundred families

Sustained interventions were already carried out in the water supply sector before 2001 and continue today. ICRC is still implementing large-scale projects in almost all the main cities such as secondary water supply networks.. Other NGOs are working on smaller scale projects. These stakeholders are working in coordination with the CAWSS but they do not cover all needs. Questions remains with regard to whether Afghan institutions have the necessary technical capacity to ensure that equipment is maintained operational and to adapt this equipment to the future primary network connection. There is much uncertainty regarding the level of water resources in the country and how best to share out these resources between rural and urban needs.

- **Small-scale specific rehabilitation interventions have been implemented since 2001** as pilot programmes through a community-based approach. The creation of Community Development Council is complex because of heterogeneous newly settled urban communities. Nevertheless, small pilot projects appear to generate good results but should be implemented on a larger scale to fulfil all the needs.

- **The urban sector seems too complex for NGOs.** Hardly any emergency NGOs are involved in structural work in urban areas in this transitional period (except in the water sector). Furthermore the 2005 NGO Law restricted their rights for implementing programmes. Some vulnerability surveys being carried out to identify how and where support can be provided to urban affected populations.

Issues at stake in Afghanistan

- How these **parallel processes**, the slow institutional reform process and the efficient urban planning surveys, can create **a global synergy in urban development.** This requires an urgent need for coordination and communication within the urban sector multidimensional context. Which format should this transitional structure have?

- There is an urgent need to place urban issues within an **improved collective spatial understanding** of the existing situation, with more solid expertise (in geographical, social, transport, economic fields, etc.).

- The reconstruction process needs to **integrate different rates of intervention** and funds. Thought needs to be given to different transitional structures and responsibilities to deal the different phases for establishing adapted policies, speeding up the improvement of living conditions or controlling private investment without hampering future development options.

- It is hoped that the **process of regularisation of land tenure helps improve security and provides a response to housing needs** with a clear policy for integrating a large part of informal settlements and providing opportunities for new locations.

- **Different steps to fulfil housing and infrastructure needs.** The World Bank recommends to follow three steps: i) rehabilitate existing areas, ii) build on available areas within cities iii) anticipate the development phase, by ensuring that proper conditions are in place for the expansion of the city (available legal land, water resources, and infrastructures).

- There is a **need for developing urban specific tools at two levels.** First, a document synthesising all the existing data and surveys that has to be validated by all institutions in charge of urban issues. This document will have to establish a clear hierarchy of recommendations in terms of quality and needs. The objective is to have clear references for all policy makers and urban stakeholders. Secondly, a General Directory Document has to be established at the policy level as a primary planning reference for strategies and programmes. This document has to be a framework including flexibility adaptability and different scales.

This should facilitate coordination between actors and programmes, identification of needs with more rigorous analysis and should open up further contexts for implementation.

- **Need for a clear framework for the private sector** to allow government authorities to control urban management.

Key lessons learned to be used in other similar situations

Reconstruction of the urban sector requires different approaches at different timescales. The particular situation of the reconstruction process in a post-crisis situation, which is often supported by artificial funds with specific time limits, requires a classic urban approach adapted to the financial support conditions.

- **Emergency short-term interventions.** After the emergency period, needs tend to

vary enormously in urban areas, such as the question of illegal settlements, or sanitation issues related to rubbish disposal or vulnerability due to lack of work opportunities. Activities that focus on social or economic aspects are a means of preventing the situation from deteriorating further.

- **Strengthening urban planning capacities in the medium term.** This transitional phase requires an acceleration of the process at two levels. Firstly, a boost is required in physical rehabilitation and providing information about the process in order to deliver a relevant response to people's needs and maintain people's trust in the process and actors. Acceleration is required at a second level in creating transitional structures, with top-level expertise in urban issues in order to draw up a thorough urban document to inform policy and decision making.

- **Long-term vision and the development process** require economic stability.

4.2 The water and irrigation sector in the LRRD context

by Nicolas Rivière, Water Expert, January 2007

Throughout the history of agriculture in Afghanistan, strategies aimed at increasing the amount of farm land have been based on an increased control of all types of water resources. In Afghanistan, 85% of crops are grown on irrigated fields and agriculture is by far the most important economic activity. Half a century ago, international aid began to support the water sector mainly through large-scale schemes and big dams. During the Soviet war, irrigation networks suffered major damage since controlling water resources was a major issue at stake, while many others fell into disrepair due to lack of maintenance. In the early 1980s, NGOs worked on rehabilitating irrigation systems, as well as cleaning canals and karezes. These activities have since become an integral part of humanitarian assistance.

Beside the water infrastructures' collapse, the water sector has also to face issues related to social management of water and more global issues like the effects of the climatic changes.

The *vision of a peaceful and prosperous future* outlined in the 2002 National Development Framework relies predominantly on fair and efficient water management between domestic users and neighbouring countries. Improved mobilisation and use of available water resources together with long-term environmental and social considerations are some of the important challenges facing all stakeholders involved in Afghan recovery and development. This goes hand in hand with both policy and programme development.

This paper deals essentially with water resources management in general, and the situation regarding irrigation and water supply in rural settings.

Main features challenging the rebuilding of the water sector

Rapid impact and long-term sustainable development: how to reconcile both short and long-term objectives?

On one hand, it has been necessary to take into account the important and immediate expectations and needs of farmers and water users in terms of a rapid and efficient response to food security problems and overall livelihoods recovery. On the other hand, steps and action need to be taken simultaneously with a long-term and development outlook for a sustainable, efficient and equitable management of water resources. For both irrigation and water supply sectors, it is difficult to ally quick and easy solutions with a certain level of quality and sustainability. In fact, appropriate technical responses require time and expertise, as well as significant investment to cover all the costly infrastructure works. Mobilising the necessary human and financial resources for proper irrigation rehabilitation works was, and is, a tremendous challenge. This is an indispensable condition to ensure the effectiveness of the programs implemented in the reconstruction phase.

An entirely new and challenging policy framework

In parallel to the rehabilitation process, the policy framework based on the Integrated Water Resources Management concept following an Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) approach has been progressively set up since 2002. This approach is highly demanding, especially in the disorganised and disrupted context of Afghanistan. In fact it implies profound changes at all levels: constitutional, organisational and operational. Most significantly the IWRM/IRBM approach requires: (i) a comprehensive evaluation of resources; (ii) an assessment of current and

future demand; (iii) the definition of the roles and functions of the new state and concerned ministries, and the creation of WUA and other management bodies, as representatives of all water users; and (iv) the drawing up and enforcement of equitable water-use rules. For example, carrying out a comprehensive and reliable analysis and building knowledge has been a priority in order to fill in the 24-year gap in data and information and thus support central functions of policy making, planning and programming. Flexibility and progressiveness was and is necessary for the development of the new institutional framework in order to ensure that field learning and a better understanding of the context are fully integrated into policy.

Main achievements since 2001

Rehabilitation of irrigation canals and schemes: poor quality and disappointing impact: Via the wave of humanitarian operations that were carried out in the post-2001 context, a large number of irrigation canals and systems was rehabilitated through various programmes or mechanisms (NGOs, NSP, FAO, WFP and other UN agencies). The quality is generally pretty poor as a result of the implementing agency's lack of adequate resources, relevant methodology and time. This observation is made on the basis of field visits and discussions with officers but the absence of real data collection or monitoring and evaluation systems means that we cannot draw any real conclusions with respect to impact and sustainability. The rehabilitation works were minimal, targeting only some perceived critical points instead of using a more comprehensive approach. Lack of time and expertise did not allow for in-depth analysis of the scheme, related WM problems and underlying causes. This prevented actors from delivering the proper response to rehabilitation needs. The quality of the construction work carried out by NGOs, and then private contractors (after 2004), is generally low. Some rehabilitation projects that were badly designed and poorly

implemented have even increased disparities in water distribution among water users and created resentment towards humanitarian agencies.

State building and policy making: Progressive capacity building and empowerment of the Ministry of Energy and Water, assigned as the leading institution within the water sector, is effective. However, the capacity of its provincial offices (irrigation departments) has remained weak, except in some provinces that have benefited from sector programmes. In the water supply and sanitation sector, the transition from Relief, Rehabilitation to Development on an institutional level before and after 2001 can be described as smooth. The Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD) has kept its prerogative on this sub sector and has responded to the challenge well, thanks to the strong support it received from the international community immediately after 2001. Some of the traditional humanitarian stakeholders, such as NGOs and UN agencies (UNICEF), have played a significant role in ensuring this continuum. Some of them have participated in the institutional work alongside their field activities. The involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture in the irrigation sector, especially with respect to its responsibility in on-farm water management, was almost nil. The main reasons for this are (i) its decision to prioritise other objectives, such as the seed sector, (ii) weak capacity, and (iii) recurring institutional disputes with the Ministry of Water.

Important progress has been made within the policy development process, in particular the drafting of policies, the revised 1981 water law and related regulations, as well as other strategic and planning documents.

First steps and experience in the operational application of new policy frameworks

The first operational experience based on the new policy framework began in 2005 through the launching of large sector-based government led programmes. They tend to mix both irrigation rehabilitation works and “pure” development activities (capacity building, setting up of a hydro meteorological national network, research and feasibility studies, setting up of WUA and other WM bodies, etc.). They have progressively replaced isolated, small-scale projects. The first series of these programmes has not yet been completed. Operators have incurred delays due to the government’s and other partners’ insufficient capacity, as well as too ambitious objectives. Despite this, the first lessons are being recorded in order to integrate them into current planning and programming processes.

Main issues at stake

1-Coordination between all the main aid stakeholders according to their mandate and competences

Donor commitment to government-led dynamics in the water sector: The capacity of donors to adapt their agendas and strategies to national policies and government planning and programming is the primary condition for the success of development in the water sector. Significant progress has been observed. For instance a multi-donor programme is under review at the MEW. This condition goes hand in hand with the following issue.

Full empowerment of government bodies and efficient coordination amongst them

Although the roles and responsibilities of the government institutions have been clarified, tensions and disputes remain. This is hampering the integrated approach, which requires cross-sector coordination or even integration. Collaboration between the MEW, MRRD and MAIL - the three main government institutions involved in rural

areas for socioeconomic sectors - is crucial for a proper management and development of water and other natural resources, and a sustainable economic development. A supreme council of water currently is being set up. This political apex body gathers all the concerned government institutions as well as other stakeholders (water users, NGOs, etc.). Other interesting and more concrete initiatives are being launched by donors, such as combining irrigation and agriculture programmes in the same geographical area. This has the advantage of encouraging or obliging these ministries to work together.

Learning from the field to adapt policies

The policy making process is becoming nowadays more specific and concrete. For instance the MEW is drafting the regulations from the revised water law and foresees to prepare river basin based development and management plan. The involvement of field stakeholders like NGOs in this policy making stage appears even more crucial. Relevant inputs and feedbacks from specific research and pilot actions are available. Efficient dialogue mechanisms between the policy and the operational levels should be put in place. In the meantime NGOs and other field stakeholders have to strengthen their capitalisation and communication capacities.

2-Applying policies at the field level

Amendment and enforcement of the water law: This slow but essential process relies on a strong political determination within the ministries and parliament. The successful application of the new principles and rules based on an efficient, equitable and sustainable water management will depend on rebuilding trust, raising awareness and build capacity of water users. These efforts should also include the state sub-national officers and other local development agents (NGOs) who play an important role in mobilisation, regulation and facilitation within the communities. Efficient coordination between all these field stakeholders depends on mutual trust,

on a clear definition on their roles and responsibilities, and on more formal collaboration/partnership mechanisms. Planning and programming by donors and ministries should fully integrate these raising awareness, capacity building and coordination dimensions and needs.

The “operationalization” of the concepts and the replication of the experiences

Pilot and research-action programmes have been developed in order to test and adapt the imported concepts i.e. Integrated Water Resources Management, Participatory Irrigation Management and Water Users Associations. “Operationalizing” and adapting them to the afghan context and to the current WM mechanisms is complex. In the years to come, there will two main successive challenges (i) learning lessons from the pilot experiences in order to define relevant methodologies and (ii) applying while adapting these methodologies to all the afghan numerous and various irrigation schemes, watersheds and sub-basins.

3-Adaptability of planning and programming to the fragile afghan context

Water is certainly a powerful lever for addressing food insecurity and social and political instability and, for this reason, represents a serious challenge for the future of Afghanistan. The amount, type and (geographical) distribution of aid from the international community towards the water and irrigation sector should reflect this overall reality. This is a very challenging task for the relevant ministries and the donors. In this sense, it is essential for the planners and donors to establish a good balance between rehabilitation and development (with both short and long-term objectives), as well as between the more advantaged and the vulnerable areas. The current planning and programming process gives greater priority to promising areas and does not take vulnerability and livelihoods aspects sufficiently into account. Some ongoing irrigation rehabilitation programmes select schemes on the basis of criteria such as a minimum size or internal

rate of return. A choice based on this type of criteria might overlook needy areas and populations. A parallel approach to the large-scale programming that focuses more on medium and large irrigation schemes and promising areas is proposed for vulnerable areas. It would encompass site-basis and food security related strategies and programmes. It is related also to the fact that livelihoods, agro ecological conditions and accessibility in these food insecure or unstable areas are specific and require ad hoc responses and implementation modus operandi.

The NGO: a new role within the River Basin Management approach:

The pilot Kunduz River Basin Program (KRBP) gives some indications about a possible role or position of NGOs within the water sector at the operational level. As a member of the civil society close to the population and as general national policy seems to be giving less power to the ministries at the local level, NGOs are in a suitable position to work with water users for all the mobilisation, capacity building and facilitation tasks. Developing Water Users Associations and Water Management mechanisms at the irrigation canal or watershed levels requires the support of an external and competent agent. Looking to the future, this role could be given to local Afghan NGOs that receive advice and guidance from specialized institutions. Their role may cover not only water management issues but other interrelated domains, such as agriculture and Natural Resources Management. However there are still a number of constraints to overcome before reaching this type of scenario. The Afghan civil society is still weak. International NGOs are encountering difficulties in implementing this development approach, despite their commitment to evolve within this LRRD period. Proactive by policy makers and donors, with respect to the future role of NGOs in the water sector, is necessary. Ad hoc strategies and capacity development plans in favour of the civil society should be developed accordingly.

4.3 The agricultural sector in the LRRD context

by Peggy PASCAL, Agricultural expert, January 2007

Around 85% of the Afghan population lives in rural areas. Agriculture and livestock raising are of great importance to the Afghan economy and to Afghan livelihoods in general. In the 1970s, Afghanistan was practically self sufficient in food and at the same time exported agricultural produce. During the 25 years of war, much of the rural infrastructure and means of production collapsed. Opium production has tripled since 2003 and the country currently accounts for 87% of the global opium production. For decades, the development of the agricultural sector in Afghanistan has been mainly associated with emergency relief and rural rehabilitation programmes. Roads, bridges and canals have been rehabilitated or built from scratch. Projects have focused on providing emergency aid, such as free distributions (seeds, fertilisers, tools, etc.) or free services. Since 2005, the main goal was to move away from relief and rehabilitation approaches to launch the development of the private sector. The drought in 2006 has shown once again that part of the Afghan farming systems have not yet reach an appropriate level of resilience and that chronic food insecurity remains a very important issue. Whereas some stakeholders have decided to move on from food security programs to invest their efforts and resources into the development of the private sector (agro-business), relief interventions are still needed in many parts of the country with the risk, that this may in some way hamper development process.

Main achievements

The issues related to agriculture in Afghanistan are complex as they involved technical, economic, risk management, social, power relations, land and water issues and diversified political agendas. Constraints, needs and opportunities vary significantly throughout the country, making

the design of quick and simple policies more complicated. In 2002, the capacity of the Ministry responsible for agricultural affairs was extremely low and its ability to deliver viable and reliable services to farmers dramatically reduced². The numerous names of what is now the MAIL (Ministry of agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock)³ are symbolic of difficulties encountered by the ministry in defining its mandate, objectives, role and responsibilities. From 2002 onwards, organisation within the ministry has improved. Thanks to the PRR process⁴, capacity building efforts are now underway, a Master Plan⁵ has been designed in order to define the strategic priorities for the coming years and the situation has improved at the provincial level. Duties and responsibilities are better defined. Moreover coordination between the different aid stakeholders and the Department of Agriculture has improved considerably.

From 1979 to 2001, stakeholders targeted food security issues in a limited manner

² During the years of war, access to training for the ministry's staff were very limited and even if it was accessible, approaches, systems and methodologies were long been out dated.

³ MAL (Ministry of agriculture and Livestock from 2002-2004) MAAH (Ministry of Agriculture and Animal husbandry from 2004-2005), MAAHF (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and food from 2004-2006), MAI (Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in 2006) and finally MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (2006-?))

⁴ The PRR process aims at reducing the number of MAIL's employees from 12,000 to 6,000 and raising staff salaries.

⁵ Master Plan for Agriculture, prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry and Food (MAAHF) and numerous consultants, was launched in November 2005 and is composed of two sectors: livestock and the development of high-value horticulture for export. It also highlights the importance of addressing food security issues and prioritises environmental issues such as reforestation, rangeland management and watershed management.

through emergency, rehabilitation and quasi-development projects. The considerable efforts undertaken by NGOs and UN agencies during the conflict period have had a positive impact on a certain number of households. Improved seed programmes, extension programmes, animal health programmes and so forth have strengthened farmers' coping mechanisms. Looking beyond economic factors, it is important to underline the socio-political impact that these programmes have had. The activities carried out by NGOs during the conflict period and, even to this day, have provided invaluable support for the population. They have won the trust of local communities, giving them a significant advantage over other stakeholders.

Since 2001, the new role of the state apparatus and the influence of donors have changed the rules of the game. Seed control procedures have been established and a seed law has been designed by the MAIL (assisted by FAO). The research network with its pilot farmer network has also developed considerably. Today, NGOs and the FAO are working actively towards setting up or strengthening the private seed market.

Main findings and recommendations

Rebuilding a ministry: a long-term challenge

Even though its concrete strategy requires clarification, the overall role of the MAIL and its responsibilities have been completely reviewed and are now relatively well defined. In the 1970s and 80s, the MAIL played a service delivery role (distribution, extension and popularisation). Nowadays, its role is mainly shaped around monitoring activities and policy-making in order to provide a stable environment for private sector development. However, this new direction in MAIL policy has yet to be communicated at the provincial and district levels. Our research showed that at the provincial level, the understanding of the role of the MAIL remains unchanged (agricultural inputs delivery, research, extension and popularisation.) This lack of

knowledge of the new MAIL role that has been defined in Kabul is detrimental since community expectations are being raised.

Roles and responsibilities have been clarified

One of the key challenges ahead will be to maintain the momentum between key stakeholders at a time when donor funding is likely to start diminishing and a large number of NGOs have phased out their activities or are seeing their scope of action restricted by donor and government policies. While this shift from NGO- to government-lead initiatives is healthy and essential for the political transition in Afghanistan, the difficulty lies in ensuring that it is managed at the right pace. Both the MAIL and NGOs definitely need to change their attitude towards each other. The latter have in most cases realised that they should improve their links with the MAIL and share information. The prevailing negative discourse on NGOs has placed NGOs in a difficult position and has probably fuelled the government's reluctance to engage with non-governmental partners. This discourse is also partly responsible for a growing wave of violence against NGOs.

Now that the role and responsibilities of the MAIL, the private sector and the NGOs have been clarified, the different stakeholders should work together and learn from each other on a regular basis. Yet, NGOs still have a major role to play in Afghanistan as the only stakeholder whose commitment focuses on the most vulnerable populations. Advocacy and lobbying should definitely be one of their prerogatives.

NGOs and the private sector

The emergence of the private sector, which has the backing of the international community, is an important step towards the development of a modern and competitive agricultural sector. Nevertheless, there are still many vulnerable groups in Afghanistan and Afghan farmers continue to face considerable risks (agro-climatic, political and economic). There are links to be made

between the development of the private sector and the progressive inclusion of vulnerable people. The MAIL and the IC should put all their efforts in ensuring that some areas or groups of people are not being forgotten by the “development processes”. Current development trends in Afghanistan imply that NGOs and the humanitarian sector as a whole need to find their place, review their role and limit the scope of their interventions. The growth of the private sector means that NGOs must now concentrate on specific roles and clarify their scope of interventions. NGOs should concentrate on services that cannot currently be delivered by the private sector. They should focus on the most vulnerable people because until the private sector is established

diversified, farmers’ strategies and coping mechanisms differ from one part of the country to another. The fact that that climatic risks⁶, as well as other kinds of hazards, weigh significantly on farming systems, farmers often orient their farming strategies towards risk reduction whilst maintaining sufficient flexibility to develop coping mechanisms. These strategies need to be taken into account in programme design. In this area, some NGOs have key expertise and capacity which government institutions are lacking, so links need to be improved. Policies and strategies developed at the national level need to be reviewed at the provincial level and adapted to the local context. We can underline the efforts made by some stakeholders to get a better



throughout the country, the poorest do not stand to gain any benefits.

Learning from the field to define policies

The last two years of research have clearly shown that there is a widespread lack of understanding of Afghan agro-systems. As the agro systems in Afghanistan are highly

understanding of the Afghan farming systems (Groupe URD and AREU studies) and to take into account this diversity in

⁶ In Afghanistan, crop yields and livestock production fluctuate each year in relation to the severity and duration of droughts which range from mild to severe.

designing the programmes at the field level (the NFSP: national food security program planned by MAIL/FAO). New tools and methods need to be introduced and staff need to be trained in how to use them. The farming system method (used in Groupe URD farming system's studies), which is used to analyse the main dynamics and opportunities in an agrarian system, presents some interesting advantages compared to the livelihood framework. Historical trends are carefully studied thanks to interviews with the elders and this is particularly useful for assessing (i) the conditions that are required for these systems to reproduce themselves, and (ii) the sustainability of the agriculture they are linked to. Just as in the livelihood framework, the farming system analysis method looks at assets and constraints but also includes a careful examination of technical aspects (e.g. cropping calendar, cropping system, tools used, etc.).

Changing roles...

For years, the EC was one of the main donors for food security programme whereas ECHO was in charge of emergency relief (food aid, shelter). Programmes related to food security often focused on increasing cereal yields. Thus, for many years, improved wheat seed programmes have been a central tenet of development programmes. A total of 10,000 tons of improved variety seed⁷ are currently being produced in the country each year. However although wheat⁸ is an important crop for the Afghan population, different stakeholders have underlined that attaining self sufficiency in wheat should not be a priority. Even if wheat is the core food in the Afghan diet, it is certainly not a crop that will provide Afghan farming systems with security in the long term. Today, the EC has decreased its funds allocated to food security programme and from 2007 ECHO might become the EU

agency in charge of food security related programmes. In order to support both the diversification of agricultural production and to launch the private sector development, the World Bank and the EC have oriented their strategies towards crop diversification (perennial horticulture) and livestock improvement programmes.

ECHO is currently putting significant efforts into building a food security strategy in order to improve the links between relief interventions, rehabilitation and development programmes.

How to tackle food security issues and deal with emergency needs without hampering the development process?

The preliminary results of the NRVA 2005 tend to confirm that many Afghan households still suffer from chronic food insecurity and will continue to rely on food aid until longer-term social security and safety nets are established. The main food security issue in Afghanistan remains the low diet diversity which led to chronic malnutrition. NRVA 2005 data (cf. map) indicate that 30% of households eat, on average, below their daily requirement, households in urban areas (31%) are slightly more food insecure than both the rural and Kuchi population. 24% of households suffer from very poor food consumption⁹. People living in mountainous areas where the winter season lasts for more than six months are partially food insecure. In Ghor, Samangan, in certain districts of Bamiyan province and in Nuristan, many families face food shortages (in terms of quality and quantity). Even though food security is no longer a nationwide problem, some Afghan families still have to cope with food shortages every year, and a great number of them will continue to do so in the case of severe droughts or flooding. The different types of food related issues in Afghanistan should be better analysed. Chronic malnutrition (mountainous areas) requires

⁷ Accounting for about 5% of total seed requirements

⁸ Wheat is the main cereal and staple food and accounts for 70% of the total cultivated field crops.

⁹ Households in this group have a poorly diversified diet, consisting of cereal and oil.

rehabilitation types of work and long-term development programmes where food security objectives remain of the utmost importance, temporary drought affected areas (such as northern Afghanistan in 2006) may benefit from well targeted food aid when needed whereas, the development of areas affected by long-term droughts (southern Afghanistan) may benefit from innovative programmes (water harvesting, diversification, etc.).

Food aid issues, including relevance and limitations in Afghanistan, are still subject to vast debate. In certain circumstances, when it may be relevant for the aid community to engage in free seed distribution, such as drought, flooding just after sowing, locusts or other pests, or in some parts of the country, such as remote and mountainous areas, it is important that these operations are well prepared and beneficiaries are targeted carefully. In all cases, free distributions should be based on a thorough assessment and followed by an in-depth evaluation and lesson learning exercise. In the case of an emergency such as the 2006 drought, free seeds distribution may occur, however one should make sure that irrigation water is available and the targeting should be done properly to ensure that the most vulnerable are being targeted.

Wide distribution programmes of seeds and agricultural tools should be discouraged since it seriously handicaps the prospects of effective demand-driven services, which is, in theory, the overall objective of the MAIL.

The unsolved problem of poppy production

The GoA has made drug eradication a priority in its global strategy. A US-led and DFID anti-drug efforts focus on eliminating poppy cultivation at the level of individual farmers. Some NGOs believe that this approach may be harmful for individual farmers. Poppy is a very high value crop and most stakeholders now agree that there is no single crop that can compete with poppy in terms of benefits. The eradication campaign which is being carried out in Afghanistan

impoverishes farmers and is turning millions of Afghans against their government. Poppy eradication will take time and should be based on a pro-poor long-term approach. NGOs have an important role to play since they have a good understanding of the factors affecting farmers' decision-making processes.

As many donors are phasing out emergency programmes, the main risk is that emergency needs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis without establishing a global strategy, and this may result in various negative effects. The present distribution of roles and responsibilities in the agricultural sector is moving increasingly in favour of private sector development. The success of MAIL policies will mainly depend on its capacity to launch the development of the private sector and attract investors and to tackle food insecurity issues on a long-term basis.

4.4 The Nutrition Sector in the LRRD context

by Domitille Kauffmann, Nutrition Expert, January 2007

The importance of nutrition issues first came to light in the early 1990s in Kabul. The city was effectively held under siege by various military factions during the civil war, causing levels of malnutrition to soar. This in turn prompted the ICRC and WFP to implement a series of nutrition-focused programmes.

During the Taliban period, the nutrition sector, and more specifically the treatment of malnourished children, was covered by the few international organisations (ICRC) and NGOs (ACF, MSF, SC) still active in the country. As the war drew to a close at end 2001, the situation changed with the massive influx of funds and NGOs.

After twenty years of war, the health and nutritional status of the Afghan population were seen as a priority. Indeed, rates of acute malnutrition were surprisingly low. More than twenty years of war have enabled the Afghan population to develop extraordinary resilience capacities. Some seasonal malnutrition was prevalent due to poor water access and the prevalence of diarrhoea in summer.

Numerous relief interventions (SFC and TFC, food and vitamins distributions) were

implemented until 2003. The relevance of these interventions was often questionable: indeed in 2003, an evaluation of SFC programmes highlighted the inadequacy and inefficiency of this type of intervention in the Afghan context.

Moreover, rates of chronic malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies are very high (cf. Table 1). Determining the causes behind these malnutrition rates is no easy task as the prevalence of malnutrition is often related to a combination of factors. In the case of Afghanistan, the following factors deserve a mention: low diet diversity and ill-founded beliefs on food, inappropriate hygiene practices, low birth weight as a result of poor maternal diet and micronutrient deficiency diseases.

Since 2001, the nutrition sector has passed through a number of phases. What has been learned and achieved, and what remains to be done, given that national nutrition data gathered since 2004 indicates that high prevalence of malnutrition persists amongst the Afghan population (cf. Table 1).

Table 1: National nutrition figures for Afghanistan

	Children (6-59 mos.)	Women (15-49y)	Men (18-60y)	Households
Acute malnutrition ¹⁰	7%	-	-	
Chronic malnutrition ¹⁰	54%	-	-	
Iodine deficiency ¹⁰	72%	75%	-	
Iron deficiency ¹⁰	72%	48% (non-pregnant)	18%	
Anemia ¹⁰	38%	25% (in non-pregnant)	7%	
Vitamin A deficiency ¹¹		20%	-	
Vitamin C deficiency ¹²				Up to 10% in some regions

¹⁰ MOPH et al. (2005). National Micronutrient Survey. Atlanta, GA: CDC.

¹¹ Dufour C, Borrel A, *Towards a Public Nutrition Response in Afghanistan: Evolutions in Nutritional Assessments and Response*, Kabul, FAO, UNICEF

¹² Cheung E, et al. "An Epidemic of Scurvy in Afghanistan: Assessment and response", *Food Nutr Bull*, 24(3), 2003

Main achievements

Moving away from a classic emergency nutrition response

Specialised health and nutrition INGOs - the main actors of the emergency period - have withdrawn and readapted their activities in the LRRD context. TFUs have gone through a handover process from INGOs to GOA or PPA-partners which is now almost complete. New programmes now rely on NGOs for their capacity building and advisory role. In addition, these NGOs have shown their rapid-reaction capacity when an emergency arises. Last summer, a new TFU was set up to respond to the emergency in the province of Ghor.

In parallel, the role of other NGOs, previously involved in food distribution, has evolved. Today they have been addressing nutrition mainly by tackling the underlying causes of malnutrition (cf. the conceptual framework of malnutrition proposed by UNICEF) through food security, agriculture, water & sanitation, income generation, literacy and gender issue programmes. However, the expected benefits in improving the population's nutrition status are not always observed. In the case of kitchen garden programmes, the vegetables produced are often sold rather than consumed and there is little positive effect on diet diversity.

Institutionalising nutrition within the state building process at national and provincial levels

Thanks to the early post-war focus on the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), from 2002 the young Afghan state was equipped with a Public Nutrition Department (PND) within this ministry. The PND has been in charge of implementing the Public Nutrition Policy (PNP). The first version of the Policy, including the objectives, strategies and activities, were designed for a three-year period (2003-2006). Benefiting early from the Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) process, the state building process was reinforced with the launch of a recruitment process for Provincial Nutrition Officers (PNO), responsible for implementing the PNP at the provincial level. However, this process is still young and remains fragile; the PND would have to demonstrate in the coming

years (i) its management ability at central level but above all at provincial level where it is lagging drastically behind at present, and (ii) to establish its legitimacy and autonomy within the MOPH.

Addressing nutrition in its multi-dimensional framework

The nutrition sector is multidimensional, comprising health and socio-cultural issues, economics, and lying at the crossroads of public and socio-economics sectors. In a development phase, tackling nutrition issues is linked to its crosscutting nature. A mistake that must be avoided is precisely confining nutrition to one sector. If the early set up of the PND within the MOPH tended to focus on the health dimension of the nutrition sector, programmes implemented from 2005 onwards have inverted the tendency, contributing to a better integration of nutrition in other dynamics. The MAIL (Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock) supported by the FAO has implemented activities replacing nutrition issues as part of agricultural, water & sanitation or education programmes. These preliminary steps need to be pursued and strengthened in the future, in particular through a wide **nutrition education policy** aiming to disseminate key messages and provide appropriate materials and support to each type of intervention (food receipts, food processing, curriculum).

Building up from coordination to collaboration processes

One other challenge linked to the crosscutting nature of nutrition issues is the thorny topic of collaboration. Coordination mechanisms were set up from 2002 with seven working groups focusing on each component of the nutrition sector. In 2006, four working groups are still active and two new task forces were created to tackle new components of development policies (nutrition education and flour fortification). Not only has the coordination process continued but more efforts have been made to improve communication between stakeholders. A very good illustration of this is the recent process focusing on participation that was used to define the objectives,

strategies and activities of the 2007-2010 Public Nutrition Policy for Afghanistan. A two-day long seminar bringing together six ministries, six UN agencies and key NGOs working on nutrition issues resulted in the definition of the main objectives for the next three years. This collective process forms the basis for a rich and constructive approach over the coming years.

From policy design to programme implementation and effective results: taking the plunge

Concrete achievements in each component of the PNP can be observed in 2007 as briefly presented in Box 1

Box 1: Examples of effective results in PNP implementation

- Micronutrient deficiencies: seventeen factories in Afghanistan produce iodized salt covering the population needs; more than 40% of the population consumes Iodized salt.
- Treatment of malnutrition: 25 TFUs are set up in 21 provinces; 230 people (PNO and others) attended training sessions.
- Surveillance and monitoring: National Risk & Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) was carried out in 2003 and 2005; National micronutrient survey in 2004; a monitoring system (HMIS) is becoming more effective.
- BPHS was implemented in all provinces.

However these preliminary results must be placed in perspective, given the disparity in results from one province to another, from one community to another, and the high rate of chronic malnutrition still prevalent in the whole country.

For instance, nutrition activities covered by the BPHS, such as growth monitoring, often seem to be overlooked by NGOs. This is partly due to staffing issues, such as work overload and insufficient training. In addition, GOA or BPHS implementers are not yet in a position to ensure the smooth running of TFUs. Problems in the supply of therapeutic products and insufficient numbers of staff are often reported.

Issues at stake in the Afghan context

Ensuring that nutrition remains a priority: recognising the human and economic costs of malnutrition

In a relief context, saving lives is the priority and nutrition plays a key role in this respect, through food distribution and the setting up of specific centres for the treatment of malnourished children. However, in a development context, should nutrition still be a priority in Afghanistan when acute malnutrition is relatively low? To oversimplify this question may have very negative consequences: the presence of malnourished children is not the only indicator for malnutrition problems. Today, the different stakeholders are pooling their efforts to ensure that nutrition remains a priority in the current Afghan context. "Hidden malnutrition" is an expression that is frequently used by these stakeholders in order to describe the current Afghan context and to highlight the fact that an insufficient and inappropriate diet can have consequences on different levels: weak physical or intellectual abilities reducing people's capacity to work, learn, fight disease; a high child mortality rate, and so on. In these cases, malnutrition is slowing down Afghanistan's development and needs to be considered as such by institutional decision makers and donors alike.

Role of the state as a regulator and monitor

Whereas nutrition policies - based to a certain extent on sub-contracting out to NGOs (for the implementation of the BPHS) and on the private sector (for salt and flour fortification campaigns) - are ongoing, the state now needs to play a regulation role. This role is essential in order to ensure the **quality of services and products delivered**, and moreover to build people's trust in the state.

The real challenge beyond the government's regulation responsibilities is to improve its monitoring and analysis skills (i.e. being able to interpret results and put forward recommendations from data gathered through the HMIS) and its implementing capacity (i.e. being really present physically at local level). This implies improving human and financial resources at the local level by (i) improving the quality and increasing

number of training sessions provided, and (ii) allocating a substantial budget for each province.

NGOs certainly have a comparative advantage in this domain and should be involved in capacity building, especially in the transfer of technical and monitoring knowledge.

Understanding and acting on chronic malnutrition: a challenge given the diversity in Afghanistan

Afghanistan cannot be reduced to a single typology. From large irrigated plains to mountainous and desert area, Afghanistan is full of contrasts and presents a broad diversity in terms of landscapes, farming systems and ethnic groups.

Understanding this diversity is important for the design of a flexible National Policy which is capable of addressing this complexity and implementing programmes that focus on specific livelihoods and community-based interventions.

Designing an emergency decision-making process

Last summer and the preliminary results of the NRVA 2005 highlight just how easily affected communities are by unexpected upheavals. The country has a harsh climate with regular natural disasters (drought, floods). The vulnerable groups are still numerous in many provinces leading to chronic food insecurity. In this context, there a high risk that relief situations may arise at any time and this must be taken into account. To be able to react rapidly and in a relevant manner, emergency responses need to be thought through and prepared in advance. An emergency group has been already set up. However the confusion resulting from the drought last summer indicates that progress still needs to be made in improving emergency responses, especially with respect to nutrition interventions. To do so, it is important to clarify the decision-making process and to provide a formal framework on how interventions are programmed. In this emergency process, the first step is to identify which information is necessary for decision making. Then, the relevance of existing data collection mechanisms for surveillance (NRVA, NSS,

FAAHM, FEWS, Nutritional survey) need to be rationalised: strengthening linkage between them, identifying which nutrition-related indicators are currently used and including others if necessary, and ensuring that information is disseminated.

Key lessons learned that can be used in similar situations

A set of key challenges has emerged from the work carried out in the framework of the LRRD project. Among these challenges, it is possible to identify lessons that have been learnt and that may be applied to similar contexts:

- Setting up nutrition programmes on the basis of a weak diagnosis of the causes of malnutrition can have only a temporary impact, if the root causes are not addressed simultaneously. Setting up a TFC or a SFC in a context where there is no other source of food in the system would have limited impact. If malnutrition is clearly linked to health and water issues, these issues also need to be targeted by specific programmes
- In order to limit the risk of confining nutrition to one sector or type of activities, it is fundamental to involve all stakeholders at the beginning of the rehabilitation phase and promote raising awareness campaigns in the various sector-based interventions.
- Experience shows that it is easy to start an independent nutrition programme, but it is less easy to terminate it. During the early years, many programmes were designed without a clear exit strategy. With the growing influence of the MoH, this problem has been reduced and nutrition programmes are increasingly linked to the ministry and health institutions.
- What remains to be seen is how well nutrition will be addressed by the different health structures and services under the PPA mechanism. As this PPA system is now widely promoted by the World Bank and the EC at a broader level for recovery and rehabilitation of health systems, the lessons learnt from the way they will address malnutrition in Afghanistan will be of great interest for stakeholders in similar situations.

4.5 The Health Sector in the LRRD context

by Christine Bousquet and François Grünewald; Janvier 2007

Historical events have had a significant impact on the emerging health sector in present-day Afghanistan. Prior to the Soviet invasion, the health system consisted of a large hospital sub-sector and health services that were oriented towards disease control programmes, such as malaria, leishmaniasis, tuberculosis and smallpox. Most of the rural areas were left uncovered (Rubin, 2002). Years of conflict from the Soviet invasion to the fall of the Taliban have defined the key actors and shaped their political culture. During the Soviet occupation, the Ministry of Health in Kabul incorporated some elements of the Soviet model of health care delivery, such as strengthening the urban hospital network and training clinical practitioners. At the same time, many cross-border operations, financed by external assistance and NGOs, were implemented, relying on a variety of community health workers (CHWs) and volunteers.

After the withdrawal of the Soviets, the ensuing civil war among hostile factions led to the destruction of physical and administrative infrastructure and to the worsening of health statistics. Health care activities became almost totally dependent on NGOs for the necessary resources. Under the Taliban regime, the delivery of health care was significantly reduced. Only a few international and national NGOs played a crucial role as the main providers of primary and secondary health facilities and represented for many Afghans their only access to health care.

Following the demise of the Taliban, the first priority had been to rehabilitate Afghanistan's devastated health system (Box 1).

Box 2: Key features of Afghan health sector (2002)

- Heavy reliance on external assistance, NGOs being the main actors in the sector especially in more rural areas
- Lack of direction and long history of ad-hoc decisions
- Fragmentation across country and along vertical lines
- Bias towards cities where doctors can carry out remunerative medical practices
- Health network in poor shape
- Distorted workforce and dispersion of power
- Poor quality of care
- Unregulated private providers

Afghanistan's basic health indicators lagged significantly behind global averages. Until recently, the available figures were to be treated with extreme caution. However, since 2002, a series of surveys have provided more reliable information on key health indicators (Table 1).

For key donors and the Ministry of Health, the urgency of addressing rural needs was thus underscored by the alarming rates of child and maternal mortality in a context of devastated infrastructures and limited human resources.

Table 1: Some key indicators (national, urban, rural)

Source: UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) (2003)

Indicators	National	Urban	Rural
Last Delivery of Mother Assisted by untrained Persons (last 2 years) (%)	86	65	93
Advice/Service not taken from Doctor/Trained TBA during Pregnancy (%)	84	62	92
% of children 12-23 months that have not received DPT 3 immunization	70	52	77
Diarrhoea Prevalence in last than 15 Days (<5 years children) (%)	30	30	30
ARI prevalence last 15 days (<5 years children) (%)	19	19	19
Advice or treatment not sought from hospital/HC during ARI (<5 years) (%)	72	68	73
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live birth)	115	97	121
Under five mortality rate (per 1,000 live birth)	172	142	183
Fertility rate among 15-49 yrs women	6	6	6

Main achievements

Following the relief phase, most health sector rehabilitation efforts centred around restoring the delivery of essential health services. Expanding rural health services, as the most cost-effective strategy to address the inequities between the rural and urban areas, was the main focus. As a key measure, the health system evolved towards the purchaser and provider model whereby the Ministry of Health assumes a stewardship role but does not provide services.

Given the importance of NGOs in first contact care, the limited public health sector capacity and the need for rapid expansion of services, Performance-based Partnership Agreement (PPA) has been the main strategy for the implementation of the basic package of health services. The three major donors, the World Bank, the European Commission and USAID, adopted a mix of province-wide and cluster approaches, with implementation sub-contracted to international and national NGOs. In addition three research institutes were involved with monitoring, on-going evaluation and operational research.

Has PPA been a successful strategy in the Afghan context?

Meaningful answers to this question are not easy as they require a solid evidence base established over time. Whereas doubts in the past have been raised as to the nationwide applicability of contracting, preliminary results showed that an estimated 77% of the population had access to basic health services, and that outpatient visits and antenatal services increased sharply. Contracting has forced the government to clearly specify outputs and to formalise aid coordination through the Grant and Contracts Management Unit (GCMU) of the Ministry of Health. This unit has been a driving force and a model for an institutional framework for project coordination and coherence among different donors.

Issues at stake in the Afghan context

Maintaining the momentum

To continue with these achievements, expanding coverage to the remaining parts of the country, improving quality of care and implementing different health financing alternatives are the next targets. Although the role of NGOs has been threatened, it is difficult to see how current developments can be maintained without their involvement. For the NGOs under PPA, the decision to continue the provision of services will be based on their effectiveness and efficiency from ongoing evaluation. The future for NGOs outside contracting is uncertain, unless they get involved in specific programmes.

Improving the quality of care

Many health workers have opened private pharmacies or clinics and are involved in some type of informal private activities. While the quality of care offered is a grey area, the unclear separation made between public and private interests is unlikely to be compatible with the development of a performing health system. Sooner or later, the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders will need to consider the relationships and interactions with private providers if quality of care is to be improved and catastrophic outcomes for patients decreased.

Broadening the focus to hospitals

The next challenge is to implement the essential package for provincial and regional hospitals. Nevertheless the question of hospital reform is a highly sensitive political issue with health bureaucracy and the medical profession opposed to change, especially with respect to downsizing hospital capacity. Large urban areas, such as Kabul, have a high concentration of inpatient facilities with duplicated functions. In general, hospitals are ineffectively distributed and organised which means that their potential positive impact on health is reduced. The average occupancy rate below 50% in provincial and regional hospitals suggests a lack of connectedness between services and communities; and evidence suggests that the poor have difficulties in accessing hospital services. Another concern is

uncontrolled growth, as building new infrastructure would imply a significant increase in recurrent expenditures for the future, far exceeding Afghanistan's financial capabilities and threatening sustainability.

Perspectives for financing health care: In the longer term, public funding for health will depend upon growth and expansion of a sound and sustainable fiscal policy. Afghan health policy makers are increasingly interested in finding out whether cost-sharing schemes can contribute in a sustainable way towards adding new sources of revenues in the health system. Even though Afghanistan introduces a cost recovery system, it will be by no means sufficient to pay for the level of basic and hospital services estimated, on an annual basis, at \$140 million. Clearly the international community has a critical role to play in supporting the Ministry of Health to effectively implement health policies over the long term and to build more expertise in understanding household ability and willingness to pay for health care and in health care financing

Access to health care for all: The impact of user fees for the poor, in a context of widespread poverty and ineffective exemption schemes, remains an issue of considerable concern, especially in relation to hospital services. Whereas the issue of exempting the poor is not dealt with explicitly as a central element of the policy programme, the forthcoming Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) will provide a stronger commitment so that equity is not ignored politically.

Key lessons learned to be used in other similar situations

Given the state of the health system inherited from decades of conflict, progress to rehabilitate the Afghan health sector has been impressive. Nevertheless implementation of policies remains highly context dependent and subject to continuing changes in an unstable environment. A set of key challenges has emerged from the work carried out in the framework of the LRRD project. Among these

challenges, it is possible to identify lessons that have been learnt and that may apply to other similar contexts:

1. Given the complex transition from a system of humanitarian assistance (based mainly on needs and guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, independence and neutrality) to the process of rebuilding a National Health System, continued commitment to the ambitious reform agenda and sustained international support to empower national and local authorities are critical.

2. The PPA approach through NGOs is currently seen by many donors as *the* solution to the delivery of health services. Nevertheless contracting can take various forms depending on the purpose of the contract. Therefore exposure to different contracting arrangements that suit the reality of provincial and district administrations should be encouraged to ensure that all levels become active actors and managers of the process.

3. Although services are becoming more available to the Afghan population, information on the responsiveness of the system, such as patient demands, reactions and requests, is limited. More in-depth understanding on factors affecting utilisation of public health facilities is needed to help decision-makers and other stakeholders to promote more appropriate health-seeking behaviour and health service utilization.

4. The need to maintain what has been achieved and to develop different health financing alternatives are significant challenges for the Ministry of Health. Given the widespread poverty, potential downside risks in increasing user contribution cannot be overlooked. In particular finding a balance between efficiency and equity, with careful attention paid to pro-poor policy and strategies, should guide the development of cost-sharing schemes.

5. Experience to date suggests that there are no universal solutions to health policy implementation in the volatile context of Afghanistan. Research in complex areas, like contracting for health services and health-care financing, is instrumental in obtaining further evidence on what are the most appropriate options in post-conflict settings.

4.6 The Education Sector in the LRRD context

by Agnès de Geoffroy and Amélie Banzet, January 2007

While traditional mechanisms for the transmission of knowledge and religious schools have been, and still are, very important components of the education system in Afghanistan, modern education expanded slowly until the mid-20th century. The state has traditionally been the sole provider of western style education and radical alterations have been introduced to the education sector with each political and regime change. The latest series of crises has effectively brought education development to a halt.

Historical overview

In the 1970's, around one third of all children attended primary school, of which only 15% were girls. Only 11% of Afghans aged 6 to 65+ were literate (18.7% for men, 2.8% for women¹³). When the Communists seized power in 1978, the old curriculum based on Islam was replaced by a curriculum inspired by the Soviet Union model. The aim was to train individuals to continue the class struggle. This caused the Afghan population to distrust the education system as schools were seen as vehicles for promoting communist ideology rather than Afghan values. This reaction was stronger in rural areas, and people started to withdraw first their girls and then boys from official schools. A parallel education system developed during the war in Mujahideen-dominated regions, relying on textbooks developed by Afghan representatives. During the 1990's, the situation deteriorated and the number of students dropped considerably. With the arrival of the Taliban in 1994, girls' education was banned, even though NGO support to education during this time allowed some girls to receive education in rural areas. The Taliban introduced *modern madrasas*, where at least 50% of the timetable was dedicated to religious subjects and the rest of the time was dedicated to ordinary primary school subjects. They tried

to impose a new curriculum with textbooks written in Arabic but these were not really successful except in their own schools.

At the end of 2001, the education sector was in a sorry state: education facilities had suffered widespread destruction; the Ministry of Education (MoE) had been deeply weakened by the war; the qualified teaching corps was severely reduced and was by far insufficient. On the top of the huge number of children to be enrolled in schools, the problem of over-aged children posed a challenge to the "back to school" campaign.

Main challenges facing the rebuilding of the education sector

It is important to highlight some general features to better understand the education sector in Afghanistan.

Today's enrolment rate is the highest enrolment rate in Afghan history as far as western style education is concerned (without taking Islamic education into account). It is estimated that at least half of the 7 to 13 year old children are enrolled (35% to 40% are girls).

Throughout Afghanistan, access to education varies considerably and the weak national urbanisation rate is not facilitating education delivery.

- In front line areas, education facilities were much destroyed to a greater extent than in other areas.
- In mountainous regions, such as Bamiyan province, topography is a major constraint and it is sometimes a real challenge to reach remote villages and provide education.
- High security constraints in certain provinces discourage the government or NGOs from providing education, especially for girls.
- Girls' enrolment varies significantly depending on the area, the security situation, cultural factors, and geographic and economic constraints.

¹³ *Demographic and Family Guidance Survey of the Settled Population of Afghanistan*, v., I., Kabul: 1975

- The school year varies in length according to the local climate.

High diversity among the population:

- **Population migrations.** Of the estimated four million refugees, 2.3 million have returned since October 2001. Both the reintegration of former teachers and students who migrated to other countries is an issue. In fact education authorities have not yet defined an official process for the recognition of diplomas awarded in other countries. Moreover some refugees had access to quality education abroad, in camps in Iran or Pakistan and have returned to Afghanistan with a good level of education, sometimes better than that of the teachers.

- Even though Dari and Pashtu are the official languages, there are more than seven **ethnic groups** in Afghanistan, which raises the question of which teaching language to use.

- **Nomadic people** are also a very specific population. An inventive and flexible approach is required in order to comply with their rights to education.

Since 2001 the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) are highly dependant on external funding and expertise, this puts the sustainability of the programmes at risk.

Main achievements since 2001

Before 2001, the NGOs working in the education sector were acting mostly as education providers, given weaknesses within the MoE and their lack of resources.

Since the fall of the Taliban, widespread restructuring was carried within the education sector, thanks to the joint efforts of the Afghan people and the international community. Both MoE and MoHE reinforced their capacities and their strategies. In fact the MoE is now in the second phase of the Priority Reform and Restructuring process, and despite the challenges, it appears to have the necessary determination to carry on. Yet weak absorption capacities within these ministries means that funds are not directly channelled through them.

With the definition of national strategies, coordination between Afghan institutions, donors and NGOs improved at the central level, through for example the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding. Still, relations and transfer of information between the field level and the central level needs to be improved.

A new curriculum and textbooks were drawn up for certain grades. Some of the textbooks still need to be completed, printed and distributed. Reportedly, more time should have been made available for testing, proof reading and teacher training before the new textbooks were distributed.

The “back to school” campaign has been very successful and since 2001, the number of students attending formal education boomed. However figures are not very reliable and are highly disparate. Nevertheless the table highlights a certain number of trends.

Table 1: School enrolment curve since 1978

Year	School age population (million)	Number of schools	Number of enrolled children	Number of teachers	Enrolment growth compared to 1978 (%)	Growth in no. of schools compared to 1978 (%)
1978	2.8	3,352	995,000	29,900		
1980	2.8	3,824	1,115,000	35,300	+12	+14
1985-90	4	586 ¹	622,000	15,100	-62	-83
1991-2001	4-4.5	2,200-3,000	5-700,000	15-20,000	? ²	?
In 2002	4.5	6,784	2,900,000	73,000	+291	+202
In 2003		> 8,000	3,700,000	80,600		+240

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003

¹ Schools supported by government, mainly in cities. Schools supported by communities, local commanders and NGOs are not included here, which were estimated at some 1,500 schools.

² In 1992-96, civil war was raging. There was complete anarchy and no data was available. During the Taliban regime, madrasas and schools were not differentiated and no data is known

It is estimated that today, over 50% of children are enrolled, i.e. about 7 million children, and the MoE employs 130,000 teachers. Current strategies are still focusing on improving access to education, in an attempt to reach remote and isolated places through community-based schools. The critical challenge is now to improve the quality of teaching and learning processes, and the Teacher Education Programme (TEP) has been trying to improve both teachers’ knowledge and pedagogy.

The TEP gives a good example of coordination between the MoE, donors and project implementers, despite some delays and difficulties.

Main issues at stake

There is an increasing focus on quality within the programmes and policies implemented. One of the main issues at stake in order to improve quality is to train teachers to reach minimum standards in knowledge and teaching methods. Stress has been placed on in-service and pre-service teacher training. Still, qualifications, knowledge and teaching methods among teachers are by far insufficient and inadequate to provide a modern and quality education throughout the country. Another trend within quality improvement is the setting up of “model schools”. Nevertheless, it seems that there is no real consensus between the different stakeholders on what quality means in Education in Afghanistan and how it should be achieved. Even though quality must not be sidelined because of the weak national delivery system, it is important to bear in mind that in some areas basic needs have not yet been fulfilled. Therefore it is necessary to find a good balance between quality focus and quantity focus.

The setting up of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) is a major challenge for the improvement of the whole education sector. Even if some stakeholders attempted to gather data within their own programmes, there is still no appropriate and efficient national data collection system. The number of teachers and students and their levels of qualification are uncertain. This lack of information related to the functioning and the needs of the sector poses a serious challenge for the design of accurate strategy and policies. For example it is known that there is a number of ghost employees in the education administration system. The EMIS will be a decisive tool to set a clear salary scale, taking into account that an increase in teachers' salary is a necessary condition to quality improvement.

Because of the profusion and the diversity of the stakeholders in this post-war period it is very difficult to have a clear idea of who is doing what and where. Given that long-term policies are currently being defined, should efforts have been made at an earlier stage to set up a national data collecting system?

The MoE is currently undergoing the Priority Reform and Restructuring process. This is a very positive evolution which should lead to the consolidation of a public administration and a civil servant pyramidal structure, which is more efficient and less influenced on cabinet changes.

Since 2001, policies and programmes have mostly focused on formal education (“back to school” campaign, accelerated learning), but formal education faces quality and capacity problems. Until now alternative education (literacy and vocational skills) received too little and fragmented attention for children and adolescents, when it might have been an appropriate solution to the urgent needs of the population, as well as a means of reviving economic activities.

Security remains a main obstacle to enrolment rates, especially for girls. Recently, there was an increase in security issues related to education (schools attacked, students killed, etc.). Southern provinces are more affected by threats to girls' schools.

Education is a major asset for the reconstruction and stabilisation of Afghanistan. It is also a major source of social changes. Is it possible to anticipate to a certain degree these changes (change in people's mentality, in their expectations and in urban development)?

Is the current education model well adapted for the integration of students into Afghanistan's economy? Does it prepare them for their future working life?

It becomes clear that the Millennium goals will hardly be met in most developing countries. Their objectives in the field of education are even less likely to be achieved in the very

specific context of Afghanistan. Yet drastic progresses have been made due to the courage of thousands of Afghan teachers and staff ministry and provincial administration, to the commitment of a handful of NGO and International Organizations. The fact that the Millennium Goals are probably not due to be at hand in the expected timeframe should not discourage the continuation of the efforts. The future of Afghanistan is at stake.

5 LINKING RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFGHANISTAN TO IMPROVE AID EFFECTIVENESS: MAIN SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

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Over the past few years, political strategy has focused on rebuilding the Afghan state, not only through the reconstruction of facilities but also through efforts to restore the authority of central government. The objective is to ensure that the system works despite security failings in several parts of the country which are seriously endangering the success of the September 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections.

Today, the Afghan state is still troubled by inter community rivalries, narco-terrorism, the power of local war lords or anti-governmental forces in some regions, permanent insecurity and a persisting lack of coherent strategy in some sectors. Insurgents have intensified their fighting in the south and bomb attacks throughout the country.

The London process marks the end of the first phase of International Community commitment. The scope of renewed pledges and the rapidity with which decisions were made at the London Afghanistan Compact meeting are indications that Afghanistan has not yet been relegated to budgetary history. The still resolute engagement of the International Community to support the security shows how important the stabilisation of Afghanistan is at the highest strategic level. In many sectors, there are clear indications of an increased capacity of the Afghan authorities. This is the result of both a sustained commitment to capacity building by many international actors, and a strong desire by Afghan authorities for ownership of institutions and policy making.

Yet, this improvement is not advancing at an equal pace in all sectors and at all levels. International aid still represents more than 50% of Afghan GDP, but the lack of self reliance of the Afghan state questions the effectiveness of aid delivery and the transition towards a sustainable state. The way in which aid has been channelled since 2001 has changed and NGOs have seen their roles and room for manoeuvre decreasing over the years. In 2005-06 they were allocated only 13% of the total donor assistance allocated to the country¹⁴.

This picture of contrasts provides an important starting point for the final report of the LRRD programme. After the shift from emergency to rehabilitation and development, we cannot rule out the reverse process occurring. In Afghanistan are the negative trends going to overcome positive ones? How will the aid sector adjust to these changes, especially the impact on operational procedures (security, etc.)?

Four agendas can be highlighted in the transition between relief, rehabilitation and development:

- Rebuilding the Afghan state
- Vulnerability
- Democracy and civil society
- Economy

¹⁴ Holly Ritchie, "Aid effectiveness in Afghanistan: At a Crossroads", in *ACBAR briefing paper*, November 2006

Rebuilding the Afghan state

Supporting the new Afghan state in fulfilling its main duties is at the core of the preoccupations of multilateral and bilateral agencies. The main objectives include: maintaining security and justice, providing essential social services, assuming vital normative and regulatory functions and ensuring an effective diplomacy and defence role. Massive amounts of money have been injected in state building efforts through different mechanisms. Several national programmes have been set up in order to support institution building (Public Administration Reform, PAR), local development (National Solidarity Programme, NSP; National Emergency Employment Programme, NEEP) and health delivery services. Moreover, military forces have been used to deliver aid assistance to the Afghan population through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Policy making and capacity building has been supported by a large number of international advisers in various ministries.

Vulnerability

The concept of vulnerability and the need to strengthen resilience are sometimes seen as a main link between relief and development. The rationale is that appropriate development aid may help reduce people's vulnerability to the effects of a crisis. In addressing vulnerability, aid may also help people to build up assets on which they can rely in the event of crisis. When delivered sensibly, relief aid should protect assets and provide the basis for future development work. Humanitarian aid is often mainly a palliative response, but the way it is implemented can also be a means of addressing vulnerability and as springboard to develop more resilient communities, livelihoods, and services.

In Afghanistan, the coexistence of high levels of urban and rural poverty, the regular occurrence of natural disasters (flooding and droughts), the issue of uncontrolled rural-

urban migration and the impact of military operations, regularly place vulnerability at the top of the agenda. Since Afghanistan has to face both development and humanitarian needs (the situation varies enormously according to time and geographic location), development programmes sometimes struggle to address emergency needs in a sustainable manner and humanitarian programmes do not always succeed in fostering development efforts.

Democracy and civil society

Supporting democratic processes in Afghanistan has been top of the international agenda for some time now. Large-scale programmes led by UNAMA have resulted in two relatively successful elections. President Karzai was elected following an uncontested process. A year later, the parliament election took place through a more complicated process. However, warlords and commanders have often succeeded in regaining power through their integration within the government which was seen as "means to achieve peace".

Strengthening Afghan civil society is another key issue to be addressed. A strong civil society is essential both for long-term development and for sustaining the fragile democratic system. However, Afghan civil society itself (community-level councils, shuras or associations) does not always understand the nature and roles of NGOs, despite the vital role they played supporting the Afghan people during the Soviet war, the ensuing civil war and the Taliban period.

However, Afghan NGOs now present a complex diversity going from quasi private enterprises to vibrant civil society organisations. The rapid growth of the NGO sector and the amount of funds that has been channelled through them has given rise to tensions between frustrated state employees and an increasingly dissatisfied population. From 2004 onwards, NGOs often became

the scapegoat for all the failures of the GoA and the International Community in general. Subsequently, they were marginalised in some sectors and confined to the role of implementing partner.

Economy

Afghanistan's economy has never been very promising. It is largely based on the export of a limited number of agricultural products (high quality fruit, cotton, wool and animal products) and is also characterised by a near total deficit in manufacturing capacity and a large dependency on external energy supplies, despite the presence of gas in the north. The socialist system at the end of the 1970s and the Soviet invasion curbed the emergence of a dynamic private sector. The post-Soviet period saw a boost in peripheral activities, especially in regions with international borders, where legal and illegal trading activities, albeit well taxed, have flourished. The post-2001 era marked the return of many Afghan entrepreneurs who saw opportunities in the reconstruction of the country. The privatisation agenda started to dominate most other sectors. Service delivery only marginally escaped this trend and the image of Afghanistan as an emerging economy, thanks to the concentration of capital in high return sectors, began to catch on, although social costs and equity issues were unfortunately overlooked.

Focusing on people's needs

In Afghanistan, the reconstruction process is relatively new and stability remains fragile. The situation, in terms of security, geographic constraints and needs, varies widely depending on the location.

Addressing vulnerabilities: a common link in the LRRD context

According to the NRVA and FEWS information systems, chronic food insecurity levels are still very high throughout the country. This prevents farmers from taking

risks and investing in any new types of activities. Focusing on vulnerability is a means of shifting from responding to urgent basic needs to projects based on strengthening coping mechanisms to prevent people from selling off their assets. Today, stakeholders are increasingly focusing on development, and many programmes prioritise the development of the richest areas, or legal urban areas, to the detriment of the most vulnerable ones (mountainous areas, informal urban settlements, insecure zones, remote areas). For example, in socio-economic sectors such as agriculture or water, the delivery of aid currently targets promising areas where irrigation is available and the intensification of production systems is possible (Kunduz, Baghlan, Takhar provinces have benefited for massive development programmes). Most development programmes are not well adapted to harsh zones (where constraints exceed opportunities) or to some vulnerable groups. This strategy merely runs the risk of accentuating existing inequalities in terms of development.

As many donors are phasing out food security programmes, the main risk is that vulnerability will be addressed on a case-by-case basis without establishing a global strategy aimed at understanding, monitoring and tackling the main causes. According to their mandate, NGOs have a very important role to play in addressing remaining vulnerabilities. While focusing on the most vulnerable people, they could also be more invested in advocacy activities.

Is there a space for humanitarian interventions in the Afghan reconstruction framework?

Humanitarian needs and development needs exist alongside each other in Afghanistan and this contiguity situation will certainly last for years. As seen in the south and east of the country and in the drought-affected central region, the fragile situation of Afghanistan with the continuation of military violence, the regular occurrence of natural disasters and the persisting high

levels of acute vulnerabilities require a special attention to humanitarian issues and quick response capacities. Yet, there is a need to place the emergency response within a more formal framework, to integrate emergency periods into a long-term strategy, such as the inclusion of emergency preparedness within the overall development framework. This requires the implementation of specific policies and strategies and the setting up of an efficient and formal information collecting system, as well as management, decision-making and intervention systems within the government framework¹⁵. Policies and mechanisms are being developed but the latest example of the anarchic and incoherent response to the 2006 drought has emphasised the need for improvements in design and implementation. In the urban sector, vulnerabilities need to be taken into account in terms of construction and location. Setting up preventive measures (physical protection works, information on risks per geographical location, etc.) should reduce the impact of disasters, as it should have been the case during the floods in Jalalabad. In the housing sector, earthquake-resistant norms should be included in building design to avoid massive losses in case of an earthquake. Long-term, economically sustainable technical recommendations (such as solar system or thermal insulation) could reduce some vulnerability factors.

While adopting this formal framework, the donors should maintain their commitment to prevent or reduce the occurrence of emergency situations. Special funding mechanisms and proper coordination are certainly required.

In the case of the education sector, the long-term development strategy and models were devised early on in the process. However, it remains to be seen whether enough space

has been set aside for alternative ways of coping with persisting gaps in the education system (such as non formal education, vocational skills, etc.). Indeed, the “Back to School” campaign and the accelerated learning programme aimed at ensuring that all children were reintegrated into the formal education system. Nevertheless, the system as a whole did not have the necessary capacity to meet this goal (insufficient trained teachers, facilities and learning materials). Therefore, this strategy placed an excessive pressure on schools and institutions when alternative solutions could have been found to cope with basic education issues within an emergency timeframe.

Context analysis and situation assessment

A good quality assessment and a precise understanding of practices, know-how, constraints and needs are of the utmost importance in programme design. Today, Afghanistan has entered into a reconstruction phase and the GoA is drawing up long term policies and strategies. To what extent these policies and strategies are rooted in evidence based analysis is sometimes questionable. Field-born strategic information, which is critical for good policy design, is often missing or overly simplified to give a satisfactory portrayal of the diversity of contexts in Afghanistan. At the early stage of the reconstruction process, stakeholders working in the same sector should agree on the missing data and information and define a proper plan for data collection. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly distributed between the different stakeholders. In addition, a relevant system for monitoring the evolutions of the context, needs and constraints must be put in place. For example, in the education sector, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) could have been set up earlier, as a support for the “Back to School” campaign. In fact, the lack of data and information related to the number of teachers and their qualifications is today affecting decision making and strategy design.

¹⁵ Early warning systems already exist (FEWS, FAAHM, VAM) but need to be more coordinated and the process of data to decision making process needs to be reviewed.

In general, a poor spatial understanding of the situation can be observed. For instance, the lack of spatial data is hampering development and coordination of stakeholders in the urban sector. In the emergency phase, the lack of updated urban maps and location-related data caused delays in the implementation of accurate and efficient aid. In some cases, this resulted in the duplication of programmes, or conversely, left some areas without aid. Satellite maps, used by default by most international urban actors do not provide accurate enough data for urban projects and management. Moreover, a relevant context analysis requires a holistic approach in order to address the complexity of a given system. For instance, irrigation schemes should be analysed taking into account all its hydraulic, economical and social dimensions.

Another critical point is outdated land tenure data. This gap means precariousness for many urban housing (informal settlements, illegal occupancy) and put a curb on economic investment. In the emergency phase, programme planners need to work with spatial tools right from the start, from the initial assessment phase, in order to fully understand the land property system.

Rebuilding the state

Gaps between policy making and field operations

The main stakeholders in policy making and institution rebuilding are the ministries, donors, consultants, and the UN agencies. On the operational side, the key players are government staff and in the near future the Afghan civil society and the private sector. Relationships between policy makers and key operational players should be encouraged in order to ensure that policy design is fully adapted to field realities. NGOs and policy makers are both responsible for this lack of collaboration. NGOs do not often have the necessary capacity or determination to participate in policy-making processes (lack of human and

financial resources, inappropriate skills, fragmentation, weak technical knowledge and skills, insufficient logistics). Moreover, some NGOs also argue that this is not part of their mandate. On the other hand, heads of ministries, donors and technical assistants could play a more proactive role in soliciting the views of NGOs and their participation in decision-making processes.

Information transfer and sharing between central and local levels remain insufficient and too informal. Processes for capitalising on lessons learning and sharing this information remain limited.

The situation varies from one sector to another and from one ministry to another. Progress has been made however. Working groups or conferences which include field stakeholders at central level have been set up in the nutrition and agricultural sectors in order to review or contribute to policy or strategy design. Many interesting initiatives have been taken by different stakeholders involved in food security issues (Food security and nutrition working group held by the MAIL and the FAO).

In the urban sector, the situation is very different. As far as water and sanitation is concerned, the link between technical institutions (CAWSS¹⁶) and aid agencies was established before 2001 and information sharing is effective, and has resulted in the official handover of equipment. The capacity of the Afghan people to maintain and modernise the networks remains a cause for concern. On the contrary, garbage collection and sewerage draining have not been tackled appropriately. At the central level, real progress is being made in order to draw up and design an urban framework and policies. Nevertheless, the daily living conditions for urban populations are very difficult. Apart from the Wat/san sector, NGOs are almost absent from the urban areas.

¹⁶ Central Authority for Water Supply and Sewerage

Rationalisation of the state

There is an attempt to rationalise the state through Public Administration Reform. Ministries are more or less advanced in the Priority Reform and Restructuring process. The ones that are currently undergoing the PRR process should significantly improve the efficiency of their civil servant administration, if the process is well respected.

Despite the important constitutional and organisational work undertaken since 2001, some of the roles and responsibilities of the different ministries and institutions are not well defined. "Institutional" demarcation for a resource such as water or land is no easy task. In rural settings, although the definition of roles and responsibilities has improved between the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW), misunderstandings and even tensions remain. In the transitional context post-2001, donors have given the priority to the MRRD at the sub national level. In the coming years, increased responsibilities need to be given to the MEW and the MAIL in order to enable them to implement programmes at the field level and to increase their legitimacy.

The roles and responsibilities between the urban, agriculture and water/irrigation sectors are not well distributed and defined between the ministries. For instance, the MEW, MRRD, MAIL and MoUD should increase their links and establish a common policy on some crosscutting issues (allocation of water resources, etc.). The fact that land tenure issues are now under the responsibility of the MAIL can be seen as a positive trend.

However, nutrition has been early confined in the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), and nowadays, efforts are made to share and implement nutrition programmes with the MAIL, and other ministries (Ministry of Women Affairs MoWA, MRRD, Ministry of Education MoE) in order to elevate nutrition within a broader framework.

Ownership and accountability in the reconstruction period

After the fall of the Taliban, there was a sudden substantial injection of funds and a mass influx of stakeholders: donors, technical assistants, consultants, private contractors, international financial institutions, development NGOs, etc. This injection of foreign technical assistance was a way of dealing with main constraints such as inadequate staff capacity and weaknesses at Afghan institutional level. It is also obvious that this choice was made in order to generate a quick impact at the field level (an important step for securing peace). Since 2004, there has been a clear effort to build ministerial capacity and this has proved successful at certain levels. However, there is still a lack of ownership at top management level among the ministries and civil servants in general, in terms of political decisions and strategic orientations of their country. This is partly due to a lack of accurate assessment and weak coordination within the myriad of stakeholders. It is also the result of the fact that many strategic orientations have been imposed from outside. This situation has, at times, led to partially inappropriate choices and hasty implementation. High turnover among technical advisors, consultants and foreign decision-makers jeopardises accountability and ownership.

In fact, the definition and implementation of a national strategy or of a whole programme sometimes rely on a few people and if they leave the country, the efficiency and sustainability of these policies are at stake.

LRRD: a new set of stakeholders, new trends

Linking relief, development ... and security

The events of 9/11 reinforced the links between aid and security policy. Since then, there has been a growing focus on the link between development and security concerns. Development operations are seen as a way of fighting insecurity. The policy statements of the EU in 2001, the increased pressure on

the World Bank to provide assistance in 'failed states' and USAID's White Paper on US foreign aid (2004) all highlight the way in which aid is expected to take part to counter-terrorism efforts.

Humanitarian space in Afghanistan has clearly been undermined by this new political strategy: NGOs have to work alongside armed forces and the boundaries between these two actors and their roles are sometimes blurred. It remains a challenge for the different stakeholders not to lose sight of their initial objective and mandate. In the past, PRTs working in relief operations received much criticism from NGOs and some donors questioned the appropriateness of this approach. Today, PRTs are increasingly viewed by the same stakeholders as legitimate actors in reconstruction efforts and receive more support.

Certain regions (southern and eastern provinces of Afghanistan), particularly those with high levels of insecurity and/or poppy production, receive larger amounts of donor resources than other regions¹⁷. In fact some areas are still not completely secure and might become increasingly insecure if overlooked and not included in major investment initiatives. Some of these areas bordering the rogue southern provinces need to be supported in terms of development in order to prevent the spread of frustration which leads to insecurity and prevents peace building. Indeed, by marginalising secure regions this may give the impression that violence or poppy production will automatically lead to an increased commitment in funding, triggering perverse incentives. Moreover, most of the aid committed to insecure areas cannot be put to use in an effective manner due to security constraints, or is being delivered in a questionable manner through military forces. Meanwhile, sustained development in other

¹⁷ This does not call into question the fact that donors give priority to the richest areas in the North.

areas is threatened because of a lower commitment from donors. Nearly US\$200 million have been injected into Helmand province and yet security incidents and poppy production soared in 2006 in this province. There are no 'quick fix solutions' in Afghanistan, particularly where vulnerability, opium and military operations are taking place.

Whilst most of the national and international community recognise the importance of achieving a firm and committed development presence in southern Afghanistan, it seems that the environment for long-term development is not yet in place. *"The trend of withdrawing from 'more' stable areas where development achievements are just beginning to bear fruit to focus on such instable target zones is at best a short term strategy that will only bring frustration and undermine confidence in both the Government of Afghanistan and the International Community. It may also more widely impact upon the enabling environment for both aid and private sector development. Instead, areas where rural development successes are being made should be linked strategically to more challenging provinces."*¹⁸

Strengthening local capacity and improving links among stakeholders

Swift changes to stakeholders' roles and responsibilities do not always leave enough time for the necessary restructuring and efficient implementation. These new roles are not always prepared fully in advance. For instance, in the construction sector the handover from NGOs to private companies (2005 law) took place too abruptly, and failed to take into consideration the capacities within the Afghan private sector, especially in responding to tenders, preparing work plan, ensuring quality control, etc. Playing a new role implies developing new skills. Even though many seminars, training sessions and coordination mechanisms were provided, the efficiency of

¹⁸ In "Aid effectiveness in Afghanistan at a crossroad", *ACBAR briefing paper*, Nov 2006

these initiatives is often questionable. Donors and ministries have to design and implement proper capacity development strategies and activities at the same pace as increasing the responsibilities of the new stakeholders. The overall dynamic of transfer of responsibilities and capacity building should also benefit the private sector ensuring a more self-reliant development process.

Pending the more long-term impact of capacity development efforts, there is an important need for regulation and monitoring in order to improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the collective work of the different stakeholders. The necessary rules and mechanisms for monitoring and regulation have not been always set up at the right time. When they are, they are often overlooked due to time pressure and insufficient relevant resources (qualifications, financial).

The move from quantitative to qualitative approaches in the services and products delivery is also one of the challenges that the state and its partners will have to face in the coming years.

NGOs, actors of reconstruction

The tainted image of or even resentment against NGOs that was frequently voiced two or three years ago is less apparent. The GoA and development stakeholders have a better understanding of the added value that NGOs can provide, and consider them as an indispensable actor in the reconstruction and development process. Indeed, NGOs are a valuable resource with technical and in-country expertise, and can be used to meet the gap in service provision whilst simultaneously providing support to the community and the private sector. Moreover, as mentioned above, they have a role to play in ensuring the quality of interventions by monitoring and advising the private sector. Similarly, advocating and counselling donors and government in favour of vulnerable populations and putting forward appropriate

responses today represents another major challenge for NGOs.

On a more long-term basis, INGOs should transfer progressively their active operational role to Afghan NGOs by providing proper back-stopping and advisory services. In this sense, INGOs are also partly responsible for the building of civil society.

In order to fulfil the above roles, NGOs should adapt their strategies and strengthen their capacities in accordance with the new context. This implies an improvement of their monitoring and evaluation systems. NGOs should invest urgently in improving their communication strategy, coordination mechanisms and focus on advocacy. There is also a need to develop technical skills, know-how, in order to improve the quality of the service delivered.

Issues at stake

Towards a shared and inclusive development
Development efforts and long-term strategies should be more fairly balanced across the country and not skewed towards areas with high productive potentials, significant poppy production or insecurity problems. Moreover, development aid outputs should be shared among the Afghan population.

The worsening situation in the south of the country calls into question the relevance of the chosen strategies up to now. How should aid operations be run today? Does the remote control strategy put in place by many stakeholders ensure quality service delivery? Is the militarised option (PRTs) the only alternative? The cost effectiveness, sustainability and approaches of the PRT remain questionable. However, the fact that PRTs are today asking for more technical support from the other stakeholders (NGOs, GoA, UN agencies) can be seen as a positive trend in order to improve their impact.

Reducing vulnerability, responding to food insecurity and supporting the Afghan population as a whole with a view to strengthening livelihoods should be at the core of the agenda for the coming years. Strategies and approaches should be fine-tuned or even redesigned for the more vulnerable areas and vulnerable groups of people. In order to ensure a sustainable and inclusive development, stakeholders taking part to the reconstruction process must base programme design on a comprehensive understanding of specific local characteristics and constraints.

The development of the Afghan private sector is of great importance, but care should be taken to ensure that remote and less competitive areas are not overlooked.

An emergency preparedness plan should be included in the overall development framework, otherwise there is a risk that emergency situations will be treated on a case-by-case basis and this may hamper development strategies. Preventive measures should be taken to reduce risks and vulnerabilities (better management of water resources for flood control, or drought mitigation).

Building partnerships for development and emergency response

To foster a more effective development, which encompasses the need to preserve an emergency humanitarian response capacity, there is a need for partnership among the different stakeholders. Government, donors, UN agencies, NGOs, private sector and communities are all key stakeholders in the transition between relief and development. Each party has a role and responsibilities, as well as a mandate and principles that must be respected.

In this sense, NGOs should not be perceived as a threat to the private sector. Each has its own role and responsibilities, scope of activities and comparative advantages. With the overlapping of agendas (rebuilding the state, addressing vulnerability, democracy

and peace building, development of the private sector), specific attention is required to ensure that mandates are respected and that a clear position and strategy is defined. In the Afghan LRRD period, huge amount of funds available for the reconstruction and overall need for aid and development led to a non-separation, overlapping and also undermining of roles and duties of the stakeholders. The fact that NGOs have been confined in the role of implementing partners restricts their independence and creativity. The relief operations implemented by PRTs led to a blurring of the line between military and humanitarian mandates in the eyes of the Afghan population.

Developing a dual capacity to work in crisis situations and support development efforts is the key for the future of Afghanistan's aid sector. Just as nobody can seriously challenge the legitimacy of the Afghan authorities in taking the prominent role, there remains a need for a multiple and diversified aid community, with different approaches and operating modalities. The key is ensuring that actors are not pitted against each other but that their different mandates and scope of activities are clearly defined and understood and that the different levels and type of activities are well coordinated.

Afghanistan should not be taken as a laboratory for the new strategies of the international community. Yet it is necessary to have a good analysis of former experiences in order to draw lessons, improve practices and avoid duplicating the same mistakes in different contexts or in the future of Afghanistan.

