



Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development in Afghanistan

Chapter 2: SECTORS ISSUES: Urban development, Water/irrigation, Agriculture, Nutrition, Health, Education

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Acronyms

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
AD	Agriculture Department (Provincial level)
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGCHO	Afghanistan Geodesy & Cartography Head Office
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANDS	Afghan National Development Strategy
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
BPHS	Basic Package for Health Facilities
CSANDS	Civil Society ANDS
CAWSS	Central Authority for Water Supply and Sewerage
CBS	Community Based Schools
CDC	Community Development council
CFW	Cash For Work
CHC	Comprehensive Health Centre
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DAI	Development Alternatives Inc.
DEO	District Education Office
DH	District Hospital
EC	European Commission
EIRP	Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Programme
EPHS	Essential Package for Hospital Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FFW	Food For Work
GAA	German Agro Action
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
GWT	Global war against terror
HMIS	Health Management Information System
HR	Human Resources
HSF	Human Security Trust Fund
I-ANDS	Interim Afghanistan National development Strategy
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ID	Irrigation Department
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non Governmental Organisation
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KRBP	Kunduz River Basin Programme
LRRD	Linking Relief Rehabilitation and Development
LTERA	Land Titling and Economic Restructuring in Afghanistan
MAAH	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry
MAAHF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food
MEW	Ministry of Energy and Water
MMI	Ministry of Mines and Industry
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoIC	Ministry of information and Culture
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees & Repatriation
MOT	Ministry of Transport

MoWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
MPW	Ministry of Public Works
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MUD	Ministry of Urban Development
MUDH	Ministry of Urban Development and Housing
NEPA	National Environmental Protection Agency
NDF	National Development Framework
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NPP	National Priority Programme
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PCB	Provincial Coordination Body
PED	Provincial Department of Education
PHCC	Provincial Health Coordination Committee
PND	Public Nutrition Department
PNO	Public Nutrition Officer
PPA	Partnership-based Agreement
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
PRR	Priority Reform and Restructuring
PPHD	Provincial Public Health Department
PTA	Parents and Teachers Association
RAMP	Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Programme
RBA	River Basin Authority
SCA	Swedish Committee for Afghanistan
SFC	Supplementary feeding centre
SMC	School Management Committee
TA	technical Assistance
TEP	Teacher Education Programme
TFC	Therapeutic Feeding Centre
TFU	Therapeutic Feeding Unit
TV	Television
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNEP	United Nations for Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations for Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNO	University of Nebraska at Omaha
UNOPS	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
USI	Universal Salt Iodization
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WM	Water Management
WSS	Water Supply & Sanitation
WUA	Water Users Association

1 BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Short 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

Lesson learning

*Working to improve programme design and implementation through evaluation
Bringing together expertise from different disciplines through cross-sector or topic-based research projects*

Sharing our findings

*Publishing and disseminating the results of our work
Providing a space for debate and sharing ideas*

Lobbying

Advising and influencing donors, decision makers, NGOs and UN agencies

Capacity building

Providing training for national and international aid workers



Proposing new working methods

Designing new tools and working methods for aid agencies

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

1.2.1 Research, Evaluation and Training

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) this report, which is based on a three-week multi sector field review.

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 are 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.

1.2.2 The team

The LRRD team consists of the following members

- Four specialists from Groupe URD in charge of the Agriculture, Nutrition, Urban Development and Education sectors
- Two independent consultants for the Health and Water sectors
- Three junior experts for the urban development sector and seven junior experts in the rural development sector
- A project coordinator permanently based in Kabul
- Two translators and one logistician
- Backstopping support and guidance from Groupe URD's headquarters in France

1.3 The multi sector review

During the three-week mission, the LRRD team travelled extensively in different provinces.

1.3.1 Objectives and methodology

Main objectives of this three-week field mission were to:

- Develop a thorough understanding of the evolution of aid interventions and strategies; (see report on cross cutting issues)
- Identify common trends and relevant issues and analyse them from a cross sector perspective; (see report on cross cutting issues)
- Identify the current opportunities and challenges pertaining to each sector; (presented in this report)
- Stimulate debate with agencies and key stakeholders through a workshop organised at Groupe URD's office in Kabul on 24 April 2006.

Data collection was based on a qualitative approach:

- Before the mission, each expert reviewed relevant available documents;
- A common analysis framework was elaborated prior to the field trip
- Regular meetings gathering all team members took place during the field trip to crosscheck information and share preliminary findings, and to analyse cross-cutting issues and multi-sector comparisons
- Interviews with national and local authorities, donors, aid workers from local and international NGOs, representatives from the UN, ICRC and the private sector were conducted in Kabul and the different provinces visited; ensuring a balanced representation of the different stakeholders;
- Visits to a number of projects took place enabling the team to make their observations.

1.3.2 The itinerary

It is important to take into account the limitations the team had to cope with during the mission. It was clear from the beginning that it would be difficult to take into account many specificities of Afghanistan due to:

- Time constraints: The three-week time frame was too short for such a large scale mission. This meant that the team had, in some instances, to adjust field visits.
- Access constraints: The mission took place in April, with persisting difficulties to access certain areas due to snow and unopened roads.
- Security constraints: Given the instability prevailing in a number of provinces, the review did not capture the reality of the southern part of the country.

The selection for the provinces took into account the following criteria: Diversity in terms of culture, geographical situation, landscape and economy. Most of these provinces were visited during previous field missions in 2002 and 2003 which allowed the team to get a comprehensive understanding of the evolutions.

The provinces visited were the following (see map 1)

- Kabul
- Bamian
- Samangan
- Balkh
- Baghlan
- Kunduz
- Takhar
- Nangahar
- Wardak
- Ghazni

Figure 2: Itinerary of the field mission



1.4 Afghanistan 2006: hopes and fears

In April 2006 when the multi-sector mission was underway, the political situation was full of contrasts. Many processes that are being implemented simultaneously are indeed driving the country in opposite directions.

1.4.1 Achievements and positive processes

There are very positive processes:

- Successful presidential and parliamentary elections showed the rest of the world that commitment to building democracy is not in vain. The Afghan people, men and women alike, walked for hours in harsh terrain to cast their ballot papers, despite Taliban threats. The numerous assassinations and damage inflicted on voting stations did not succeed in breaking the will of the population to express their views on the future.
- The end of the Bonn Process and start of the London process mark the end of a 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 sector 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. It is a phenomenon that remains largely restricted to Kabul as a result of the presence of many expatriate consultants with advisory roles at high levels in ministries. It has only recently begun to percolate down to the lower levels of central administration and to the provinces. In rural areas, especially at the district level, capacity in general and related absorption capacity are often very limited.

1.4.2 Negatives trends and concerns

However, there are a certain number of negative trends which are a cause for great concern:

- While large parts of the South and East remain grey zones largely uncontrolled by the Kabul government, growing insecurity is progressively encroaching on areas that were previously calm: The North is becoming increasingly affected by this worrying phenomenon and areas between Baghlan and Jawzjan are now regularly plunged into the high insecurity syndrome, with roadside bombs, attacks on UN Convoys, physical eliminations of visible political figures and assassinations of NGO staff. Kabul itself is becoming more unstable and the risk of suicide bombers is on the rise. Are these time-bound distinctive processes or metastases from the GWT (Global War against Terror)? Only history will tell, but agencies have already raised their levels of vigilance.
- The “poppy issue” remains a difficult problem. Is Afghanistan on the road to becoming a “Narco-state”, as certain observers have declared? Or do opportunities exist to control poppy production and eliminate the traders and the transformers, who appear to so deeply-rooted in Taliban circles and the Central Asian mafia? The fact is that draconian measures, such as airborne spraying of herbicide or violent

repressive interventions at the field level, run the inherent risk of sending the population straight into the net of military opponents.

- With the growing insecurity, the humanitarian space in which aid agencies (humanitarian and reconstruction work) are able to work is shrinking dramatically. There are areas where agencies are simply not prepared to work, unless they accept to pay a high price in terms of human life, or to bunker down (armed convoys, armoured vehicles, high protection zones, etc.). For some stakeholders, a solution for the growing pressure on humanitarian space is the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), where armed forces carry out humanitarian and reconstruction work. In contrast to the PRT school of thought, there are those who claim that this solution is more dangerous than the problem itself because it increases the confusion between the different stakeholders and their mandates. These stakeholders believe that the increasingly blurred distinction between armed forces and humanitarian actors is indeed one of the sources of high insecurity currently facing NGOs.
- While the international community applauded the election process that led to the creation of the Afghan parliament, Afghan civil society is raising many questions about the net outcome of these parliamentary elections. Indeed, although the political process may have intended to install “pro-government” forces at the provincial level, it actually enabled many former warlords to be elected, resulting in widespread disappointment: those who were guilty of causing so much trouble are now back in power.

This picture of contrasts provides an important starting point for the final year of the LRRD programme in its current form.

The new security situation will oblige Groupe URD teams to review their working methods and the way in which field research will be conducted.

After the shift from emergency to rehabilitation and development, we may well see the reverse process occurring. Is Afghanistan entering into the Fragile States category with the risk that negative trends may overcome positive ones? How will the aid sector adjust to these changes, especially to the impact on operational procedures (security, etc.)? These elements will require careful studying.

2 URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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Five years after the massive deployment of international aid in Afghanistan, the challenges facing stakeholders involved in the reconstruction process are most keenly felt in urban contexts. Although people are still lacking basic necessities in rural contexts, the convergence of large numbers of people in towns and cities have resulted in worrying situations with the risk of social, economic and environmental imbalance. Urban centres have undergone several waves of destabilisation. Entire urban districts became important stakes in the war game and incurred considerable physical damage. Spatial disorganisation has now reached a critical point. This situation is partly the consequence of successive waves of people seeking refuge, settling spontaneously and spreading extensively in the proximity of urban centres. These new urban settlers include internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, refugees and landless families. Another key issue facing the urban sector is that because over time urban authorities gradually found their responsibilities being taken away from them, the administrative system is now completely overwhelmed as it does not have the necessary expertise to deal with these new spatial, social and economic contexts.

It is in this urban chaos that different stakeholders are trying to embark on reconstruction efforts: Afghan institutions, United Nations agencies, international donor agencies, non government organisations (NGOs), other international organisations and the emergence of the private sector.

Despite a relative stability, which was put to the test in Kabul in May 2006, the need for emergency relief is giving way to development issues. The institutional framework for urban issues is gradually being set up and is confronted with difficulties at numerous levels: organisational, economic, insufficient skills, legal or technical. Administrative frameworks are in the process of being designed but this is taking time.

This review presents the role of humanitarian agencies in urban areas during the transition period from emergency relief to the beginnings of urban reconstruction. In 2005, a law was passed regulating NGO activities with a view to clearing the aura of suspicion surrounding their interventions. The “NGO Law” has obliged organisations working in the construction industry to change their modes of operation. NGOs who were accustomed to managing all the processes within aid programmes now have to operate and reposition themselves within a complex system. During the field survey, different urban reconstruction programmes were examined and this helped (i) determine which phases and factors are responsible for inducing change, and (ii) identify new horizons.

Our interviews with institutional stakeholders and humanitarian actors highlighted the fact that there is a lack of overall vision and information on splintered and poorly understood urban sector. One of the issues that cropped up again and again was the uncertainty and conflict surrounding land tenure. This review examines the impact that these issues may have on rehabilitation, reconstruction and development efforts and on intervention modalities, looking in particular at the spatial dimension. An in-depth urban sector review carried out for the LRRD research programme completes the information provided in this multi- and cross-sector review.

Finally this review with its insight from different actors, including managers of urban programmes, looks at opportunities for developing alternative approaches for reconstruction aid within the urban sector.

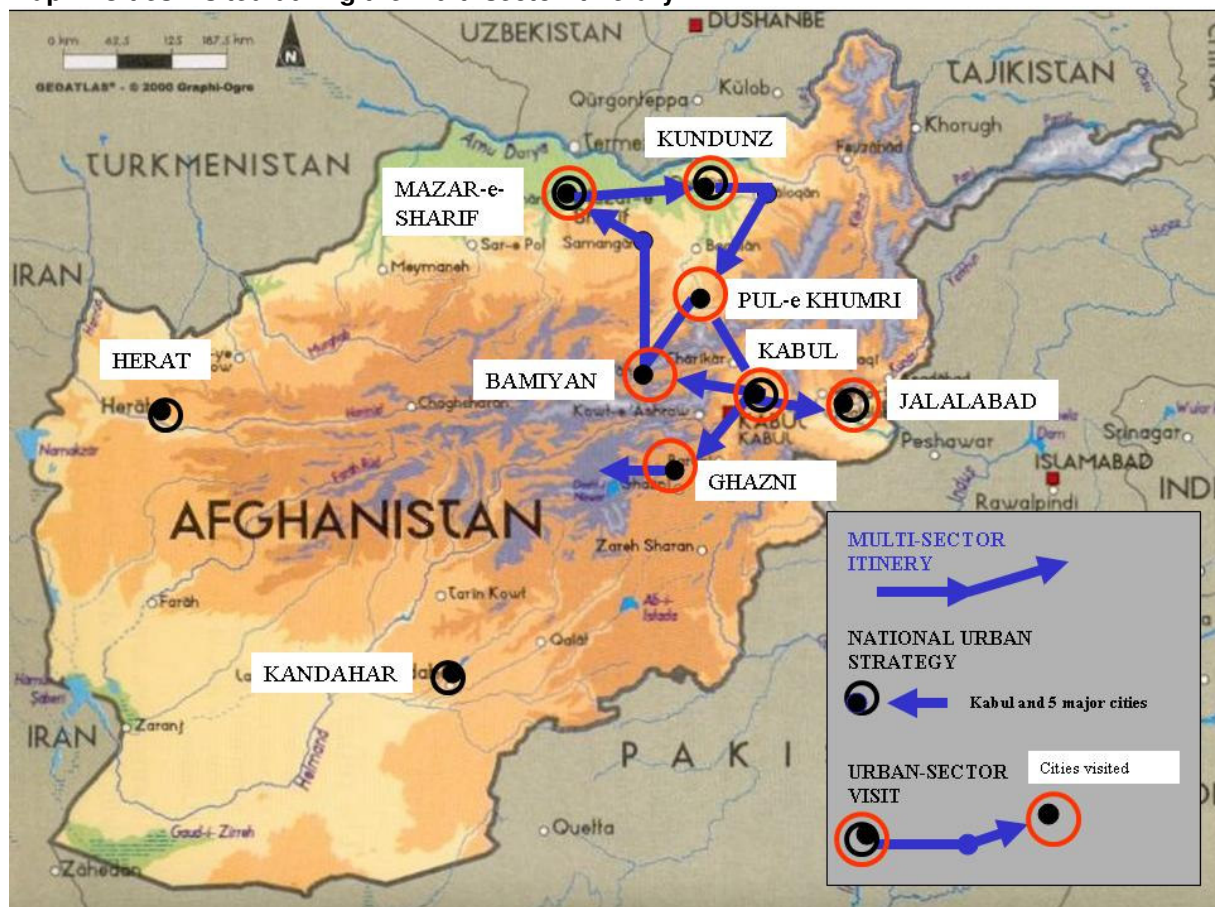
Itinerary of the field mission

The multi-sector research carried out for this review covered seven towns with diverse urban characteristics, in terms of strategic importance, demography, history, physical constraints, local stakes and national urban development strategies. The research team visited four towns, out of a total of six selected by the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) for the national priority programme (NPP): Kabul, the capital and international metropolis, Mazar-e Sharif and Kunduz in the north and Jalalabad in the east. Time constraints meant that it was not possible to visit the other towns included in the national urban development strategy: Herat in the west and Kandahar in the south where insecurity is still high due to Taliban incursions. Bamiyan, which is predominantly a rural administrative territory rather than a town as such, has become the focus of international interest following the demolition of Buddhas by the Taliban. Finally two middle-sized towns three hours drive to the north and south of Kabul, Pul-e Khumri and Ghazni, were chosen for their diversity in terms of physical and historical characteristics

Conditions meant that it was particularly difficult to access Bamiyan from Kabul and depart for Pul-e Khumri, and the mountain diversion between Kabul and Jalalabad increased travelling time. Since our visit, rehabilitation work on the direct route between Kabul and Jalalabad should have been completed with European Commission (EC) funding. Similarly, road networks between the other more easily accessible cities and Kabul have recently been restored with the help of international aid.

Presentation of cities visited

Map 1: Cities visited during the multi-sector itinerary



Source: Groupe URD

Box 1: Towns visited during the multi-sector review

Kabul

Contact was made with numerous organisations working in the urban sector both at national, provincial and local levels: national authorities and national technical administration from the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH); Central Authority for Water Supply and Sanitation (CAWSS); Administration of Geodesy and Cartography Head Office (AGCHO); Cadastral Department; Heads of international donor agencies World Bank (WB), European Commission (EC); Heads of UN agencies (UN-HABITAT, UNDP, UNESCO, UNAMA and UNOPS); several NGOs and international aid organisations such as the ICRC; private companies including Emergency Market Group (EMG). Kabul has already been subject to in-depth research as part of the LRRD project.

Bamiyan

Bamiyan, situated in a valley in the central mountainous region of Afghanistan, is reached following ten hours of driving along potholed dirt tracks. Bamiyan includes highly dispersed and disparate villages, some of which are old, others are recent refugee settlements. What unites these villages and new settlements is a large bazaar at the foot of Buddha sculptures. This territory presents no urban characteristics as such but a pressing need for coherent development. Spurred on by international interest, there are several issues at stake in Bamiyan's development involving numerous actors at different levels, according to an international survey on the Bamiyan Valley Master Plan¹. A previous study carried out in 2005 as part of the LRRD research programme raised the following question about the urban development which is so sought after by local authorities in Bamiyan "*Is building a city an adequate response to Bamiyan's low level of development?*"². The field visit to Bamiyan focused on updating information on urban development issues that had already been identified in the 2005 study.

Mazar-e Sharif

The city of Mazar-e Sharif, centred around the Shrine, an imposing blue mosque, did not suffer any direct destruction. However its reputation as a highly respected religious centre attracted large numbers of refugees during the conflict period causing a demographic explosion. Spatial expansion within the administrative limits was encouraged by its location on a flat plain, and resulted in a situation of uncontrolled urban development. Almost 70% of the population does not have access to basic services: water electricity, etc. The ICRC, with its programme to provide drinking water networks and UN-HABITAT with national urban solidarity programmes are the main actors involved in urban rehabilitation besides projects for specific buildings.

Kunduz

Kunduz is a small provincial city situated at the centre of a fertile agricultural plain. Its position is strategic given its proximity to Tadjikistan. Possibilities for developing bilateral commercial relations are closely monitored by local authorities and the private sector, as well as certain development organisations such as ACTED. However, basic services (water supply) are a long time coming to new settlements in the south. German Agro Action (GAA) is working with medium-sized towns in the region, long since overlooked by national strategies.

Pul-e Khumri

The city was built sixty years ago in a narrow valley on industrial activities using water from the river which runs the length of the valley. The Salang pass (2,900m) separates the town from the north of Kabul, protecting it from direct hits during the conflict. However large numbers of people migrated to Pul-e Khumri seeking refuge from the insecurity, and the city has suffered from the indirect consequences of disorganisation of its urban infrastructure and major river pollution.

¹ UNESCO, *Bamiyan Valley Master Plan*, survey by RTWH University (Aachen in Germany).

² Groupe URD, *LRRD Project: survey, article and presentation* by Claire Mariani, Conference at the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal husbandry and Food on 13 December 2005.

The field visit focused on the development of a new town 15km north of Pul-e Khumri which is being built to house 7,000 refugee or IDP families.

Ghazni

Situated south of Kabul, Ghazni, once the capital of an empire, is now a small provincial city with its citadel in ruins. Urban development has stagnated due to insufficient resources and lack of skills in the public sector, and overzealous investment by the private sector in certain areas of the city's development strategy. Despite rehabilitation work and building of water networks by the NGO CARE International, the municipality believes that it has not truly benefited from the positive impact of international aid.

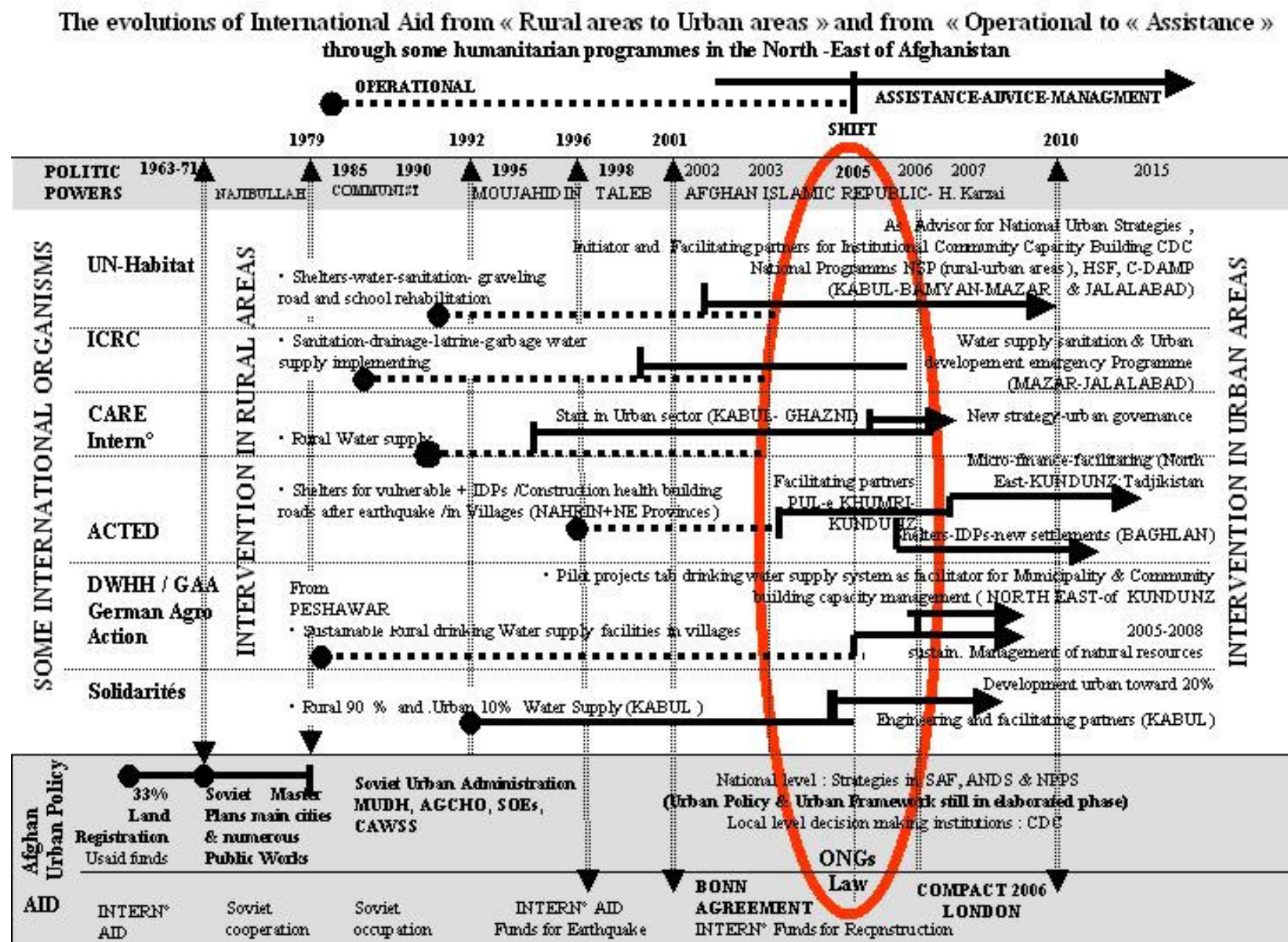
Jalalabad

The fact that all traffic travelling between Pakistan, Kabul and the north of Afghanistan has to pass through Jalalabad and this proximity to Pakistan gives the city strategic importance. A research project on urban development in Jalalabad is currently being carried out as part of the LRRD programme.

2.1 The main Evolution in humanitarian reconstruction programmes

The interviews conducted over the course of the multi-sector field itinerary shed light on how reconstruction programmes have evolved over time (see Figure 3). The sector underwent a significant number of changes over the course of 2005 and programmes were subsequently diversified. Several factors contributed to these sector changes.

Figure 3: Evolution in international aid in the urban sector (Groupe URD)



2.1.1 Diminishing habitat funds

Two factors prompted the drying up of funds for shelter programmes: widespread development of traditional self build projects and dislocation of needs towards cities with population migration.

2.1.1.1 Decrease in need for emergency shelter programmes

In 1991, the majority of habitat programmes were carried out in rural areas (e.g. UN-HABITAT) where many villages were raised to the ground during the past 25 years of war. Aid programmes peaked again after the 1996 earthquake in northeastern Afghanistan as international relief funding flooded in. After 2003, once the need for emergency shelter and essential rehabilitation work was reduced, aid programmes changed their focus from construction towards helping people self build. The overall objective being to provide support rather than assistance, habitat programmes helped people to (re)build themselves by providing logistical support and materials rather than a turnkey solution.

If in general, habitat programmes have ceased their rehabilitation activities, the GoA has launched a series of new housing projects with a view to absorbing or redeploying refugee or vulnerable populations. Large building sites are underway in northeastern Afghanistan and GoA has solicited the help of the international community in creating these new towns. For example, ACTED played a significant role in post-earthquake reconstruction activities with funding from ECHO, USAID, Swiss Peace Development and Turkish Government. Since ACTED has focused its activities on these new towns and has developed building expertise with large-scale programmes (e.g. assistance for building 1,000 houses in Pul-e Khumi).

2.1.1.2 Emerging needs for self build in new areas

At the same time, many cities in Afghanistan underwent a population explosion. Rural populations migrated in significant numbers towards urban areas. Years of conflict prompted internal displacement from city to city but also from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. From 2002-2003, and still to this day, refugees have been settling in the outskirts of cities. These newcomers, some of whom amassed a certain wealth during exile, have self built their homes using traditional methods which are specifically adapted to rural environments. No public works, such as electricity, water pipes, or sewage systems have been planned for these new remote suburbs and problems have arisen as a result, including pollution, insalubrity, etc. **Urgent needs for shelter have been replaced by urgent needs for creation or rehabilitation of public service systems.**

In order to respond to these needs, donor agencies and NGOs **adapted their programmes from building and rehabilitating houses to building urban services.** For example, in Mazar-e Sharif, UN-HABITAT, closed down all of its housing programmes in order to focus wholly on improving neighbourhood services.

2.1.2 Progressive winding down of water and sanitation programmes in cities

Aid programmes implemented by NGOs in urban environments were principally concerned with improving or creating drinking water supply systems and sanitation networks. However, the organisations involved are in the process of closing down their operations if they have not already done so. For example, CARE International has withdrawn from Ghazni having provided these services to certain neighbourhoods until 2003. The ICRC has had offices in Mazar-e Sharif since 1998 and was responsible for putting in place secondary water supply networks in several neighbourhoods with its *Urban Water Project*. However, ICRC HQ (Geneva) has decided to close down these operations. In Kabul, the NGO Solidarités has been involved in digging wells and building water systems for community drinking fountains since 1995. It is continuing its efforts in water supply networks but intends to pay attention to changes in government and donor agency strategy before deciding whether to continue implementing these programmes.

These decisions are prompted by several factors:

- **Legal factors:** The application of the “NGO Law” 2005³ has reduced NGO capacity as operations have been handed over to Afghan counterparts in accordance with the call for proposals procedure. NGOs have instead concentrated their activities upstream of project implementation and on monitoring activities, such as surveying, management and supervision. Despite this law, the lack of confidence in the capacity of Afghan businesses to successfully complete projects on time, some international organisations obtain special dispensation and continue to run their operations.
- **Economic factors:** Running or maintenance costs no longer fall with the domain of emergency relief funding.
- **Development factors:** The emergence of the private sector has introduced a risk of inappropriate competition with the humanitarian sector.
- **Institutional factors:** NGOs have had to make their position clear on government-run programmes. Now that the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) has initiated programmes dealing with rural issues under the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), some similar programmes are also being adapted and carried out in urban areas. Spurred on by the UN to reinforce democratic processes, the GoA has launched a participative democracy programme alongside regular reconstruction of buildings and public institutions. Communities are involved at all levels of project processes and NGOs are asked to limit their role to project facilitation. UN-HABITAT is testing some of these programmes in urban areas, such as the HSF⁴.
- **Political factors:** Operations in so-called “informal” settlements, i.e. where public services are non-existent or needs are most pressing, are all too often being placed on hold until their status has been officially regularised. Integrating these suburbs that have been built without any sort of town planning, sometimes as a result of illegal agreements, is one of the most important tasks facing the GoA.

2.1.3 New contexts, new roles for NGOs

The reconstruction process in Afghanistan has now reached the halfway mark, according to deadlines established for international financial aid by the new agreement of London Conference (2001-2010)⁵. The context and conditions have evolved. Aid agencies implementing building projects in urban areas have had to redefine their roles as well as their programmes given that the institutional context has changed. Several different strategies can be observed.

2.1.3.1 Refocusing on project engineering expertise

Before and during the war, NGOs managed aid programmes from start to finish, from the initial decision right through to project completion, functioning like building firms with their own equipment and resources. The aforementioned “NGO Law” prohibits NGOs from undertaking operational work (withdrawal of Hard Work) and since 2005 NGOs have refocused on other roles, such as the “Software” components with project processes. They have reinforced their expertise in research consultancy, and social and technical engineering, carrying out the following activities:

- Supervision, organisation, planning, social monitoring;
- Technical engineering, financial management, (monitoring of works is not carried out by NGOs);

³ *NGO Law* published in the Official Gazette No. 857, 6 July 2005 (04/15/1384 HS)

⁴ HSF Programmes (Human Security Trust Fund for Informal Upgrading settlements), C-Damp Programmes, Community based Disaster Awareness and Mitigation, C-Set Programmes (Civil Society Empowerment Programme)

⁵ Compact 2006.

- Delegating operational work to the private sector with a call for proposals issued to private companies.

2.1.3.2 Monitoring the implementation of national policy and capacity building

This period is marked by development activities rather than emergency relief and NGOs are solicited to participate in implementing national programmes, such as NSP, and providing training. NGOs are carving out a new role for themselves with these new responsibilities:

- Facilitating Partners for Communities
- Coordinating international sector-based interventions with United Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).
- Supporting training courses for managers, e.g. Technical-Management Training for the CAWSS run by the ICRC in Mazar and Jalalabad.
- Technical management consultancy in certain fields, e.g. Sustainable Management of Natural Resources by German Agro Action (GAA).

2.1.3.3 Initiatives in order to build capacity in municipalities

In order to develop urban planning capacity within aid processes, organisations are planning to extend programmes to other municipalities.

- UN-HABITAT has drawn up a process to assess the scope of activities of municipalities with the City Profile. This survey has already been conducted in Kandahar and Hérat, and is now being carried out in Jalalabad and Mazar.
- CARE International is planning Urban governance building aid programmes.
- GAA plays a facilitating partner role for medium-sized municipalities and this process is currently being tested in some small towns northeast of Kunduz.

2.1.3.4 Diversifying NGO roles and programmes

NGOs are diversifying their activities and developing increasingly specific or new expertise in line with context changes and in response to the complexity of constraints.

- Drafting project proposals and sourcing funding opportunities.
- Research with an increasing number of preliminary surveys, e.g. ACF's urban vulnerability analysis and studies on urban issues currently being carried out by Groupe URD.
- Expertise, technical and financial management.
- Technical innovation, e.g. in the domain of sustainable development, GERES' thermal insulation, Solidarités' automatic public taps, etc.
- Support for economic development, e.g. Micro-Finance Facilitating, or more specific development projects such as those fostering bilateral exchange, e.g. ACTED's cross border programmes.

2.1.4 New contexts, new stakeholders

Stakeholders operating in this post-emergency phase would benefit from specific research programmes, especially on urban issues. The needs of urban populations are becoming increasingly pressing and diversified with the transition towards development modalities. With the support of international aid funding, different types of organisation are carrying out research in relevant areas.

- Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)⁶, an Afghan research centre, is conducting socio-economic research on urban issues in different cities.
- ALTAI Consulting (ALTAI), a French consultancy firm, is carrying out research on the socio-economic impact of rehabilitation operations with European Commission funding⁷.

⁶ Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) www.areu.org.af

⁷ ALTAI Consulting, Socio economic impact of Kabul Jalalabad Road Rehabilitation, Report CE -2005

- Emergency Market Group (EMG), a US private company, is looking at ways of legalising land tenure with USAID funding and in close collaboration with Afghan administration⁸.
- FKH, Geoexpert services, a private engineering company is conducting preliminary technical building studies funded by NGOs, the private sector and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT).

2.2 Change in focus from habitat to urban issues

Groupe URD first pinpointed a number of urban issues that remained unaddressed by aid agencies working in the habitat sector during its field visits in the region in 2002-03.

2.2.1 Actors failed to fully anticipate the scope of the demographic explosion

In 2002, Groupe URD had already identified that urban issues were set to become a problem over the coming months: “At present, the majority of aid projects are implemented in rural areas, in villages. However, people’s needs in towns and cities are extremely pressing. UNHCR reports that large numbers of people are migrating towards cities and the need to intervene in urban contexts will soon become extremely urgent”⁹. The research team goes on to explain the extent of the pull factor that cities represent for rural populations: “UNHCR estimates that a third of the refugee and IDP population intends to migrate towards major urban agglomerations for financial reasons, and in most cities (e.g. Kabul) over 50% of buildings have been destroyed”¹⁰.

2.2.2 Specific constraints, land tenure in particular

As the situation developed, these observations were confirmed. The following year, the research team noted: “It will be important to find ways (e.g. financial incentives) to encourage populations to settle in the provinces in order to contain uncontrolled demographic explosion in large urban centres and prevent rehabilitated houses in rural areas from being abandoned. Access to habitat projects is not enough of an incentive to convince people to stay in areas that are economically unviable. The success of habitat projects is therefore closely linked to access to land and employment”¹¹.

NGOs equipped solely with their humanitarian mandate have not succeeded in stemming the tide of people migrating towards urban centres. Population displacement has had an impact on land occupation giving rise to major problems such as illegal occupation, insecurity, plundering, absence of basic public services and pollution. As well as upsetting the economic balance, integrating these populations poses legal and administrative difficulties for city authorities who are attempting to ensure basic urban services. Improving the living conditions of populations in the suburbs is an integral part of controlling urban development processes. Amongst the different conditions required for ensuring urban stability, land tenure is a major issue in Afghanistan. The value of land varies according to proximity to urban areas, agricultural land, green belt, river banks and road networks. The uncertainty surrounding land occupation and development projects has prompted certain aid organisations to query the relevance of their operations in certain neighbourhoods in terms of sustainability.

2.2.3 Ensuring a coherent framework for urban interventions

The first field missions carried out by Groupe URD highlighted the importance of establishing a coherent framework: “A common reconstruction policy has not yet been defined but building

⁸ Emerging Markets Group, Ltd, (EMG), *Land Titling and Economic Restructuring in Afghanistan* (LTERA) Project

⁹ Groupe URD, *Projet Qualité in Afghanistan*, Field mission report 1, 20 July 2002 – 24 August 2003

¹⁰ Groupe URD, *Quality Projet in Afghanistan*, Second field mission report, 15 January 2003 – 12 February 2003

¹¹ Ibid.

projects are springing up all over the place. Only the UN report *Immediate and transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People 2002* sets priorities which look further afield than the building of houses, as it explicitly addresses general housing issues and urban renewal [...] The question of urban reconstruction has yet to be taken fully on board by the majority of stakeholders. UN-HABITAT and PNUD are alone in preparing an initial evaluation and recommendations based on urban recovery and reconstruction needs (Urban Recovery and Reconstruction, and Water Supply and Sanitation)¹².”

- Need for coherence in terms of deadlines

In 2006, interviews with different organisations in various cities highlight the lack of coordination between programmes and development strategies in the short term, medium term and long term. Taking the water supply system in Mazar as an example, a large proportion of the secondary water supply network is nearly complete (ICRC). However, it will only be possible to connect these pipes to a primary network after funds are released in 2010 in accordance with the World Bank’s financial strategy for development aid. These delays are compounded by a high degree of uncertainty over the running, maintenance and capacity of this water supply system.

- Administrative immobility

Stakeholders have been coordinating with urban authorities who have been crippled by 30 years of incapacity to exercise their functions and overwhelmed by the extent of recent uncontrolled land occupation. The building works currently being carried out in cities whether it be for humanitarian purposes or private interests are being carried out sporadically rather than within an integrated process of coordination.

- Lack of urban policy framework

Setting up an urban programme framework that is coherent, well thought out and widely communicated as a support for decision making and rehabilitation, reconstruction, demolition or building operations is urgent and yet too slow in coming. In 2006, certain national strategies are defined on the basis of technical or geographical sectors, but reality in the field makes their application difficult: confusion over land occupation, inadequate administrative capacity, economic weaknesses, incompetence or local issues at stake. To this day urban development is marked by sporadic uncoordinated interventions.

2.3 The urban sector: an imprecise social context

2.3.1 A change in socio-cultural equilibrium in Afghan cities

Afghanistan, with its mountainous landscape and tormented history, is dominated by the rural question. Successive occupations, invasions and trade through-routes have in turn built and destroyed Afghan cities and the most recent wars have by no means improved the situation. Afghan cities are few in number and need to establish a balance between their history and the current situation. As well as protecting or rediscovering their cultural heritage, new populations of diverse origins need to be integrated. The mere juxtaposition of populations is not enough to ensure a coherent social structure. Social and cultural reconstruction is a major issue at stake in the reconstruction of Afghan cities which are undergoing major social upheavals. For successful social urban management, stakeholders need to have a good understanding of the situation, which in turn raises the question of collecting reliable urban data.

¹² Groupe URD, *Quality Projet in Afghanistan*, First field mission report, 20 July 2002 – 24 August 2003

2.3.2 Incomplete demographic data

Urban demographics have evolved considerably over the past decades with mass migration towards cities prior to the end of the hostilities. A census has not been carried out since 1979 and there is a notable lack of reference documents presenting demographic figures. The few reference documents that do exist are incomplete, using estimates or calculations based on unofficial criteria, rendering them scientifically invalid. Access to scanty official data is not simplified by the fact that to this day the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Kabul does not have a website. The figures put forward by the heads of urban departments in the cities visited differ widely from the statistics presented in Table 1, which has been taken from an international statistics website¹³.

Table 1: Population figures for Afghanistan's major cities

Main cities visited	1979 census	1988 estimate	2006 calculation
KABUL	-	1,424,400	3,120,963
KANDAHAR	178,409	225,500	401,915
MAZAR-e SHARIF	-	-	314,915
HERAT	140,323	-	278,209
JALALABAD	53,915	-	208,960
KUNDUNZ	53,251	-	166,824
GHAZNI	30,425	-	149,998
BAMYAN	-	-	131,233
PUL-e KHUMRI	31,101	-	57,364

Source: www.gazetteer.de/c/c_af.htm

Variations in the different sources of information pose serious problems for stakeholders in adjusting to people's needs, demands and resources to be mobilised.

It is interesting to compare available figures and official data at the international level, for example:

- Data used for provisional planning in the National Programme 2004-2024;
- Figures used by the National « Urban Water Supply Investment » Programme to estimate provisional funding requirements for providing drinking water in town until 2024¹⁴;
- Data collected during interviews in the field with heads of urban departments in municipal offices or local MUDH offices (Box 2).

Box 2: Variation in information collected

Kabul. According to the Urban Planning and Policy department in the municipality, the population of Kabul exceeded 4 million inhabitants in 2005 whereas the CAWSS based its studies on figures of 3.5 million (i.e. this variation concerns 30% of the population).

Provincial cities. The variation between data provided by local managers, mayors or engineers from technical services gives rise to almost whimsical figures. For example, the CAWSS designed its water supply strategies in **Mazar-e Sharif** on the basis of 837,800 inhabitants whereas the mayor refers to a population of 2 million citizens. The lack of reliable statistics takes on a surreal dimension when an engineer from **Kunduz** in charge of ensuring conformity with administrative building regulations within the municipality talks about a population of 1.5 million inhabitants whereas the CAWSS is providing water supplies for only 122,000 inhabitants.

Jalalabad. The mayor estimates that the city has a population of 450,000 inhabitants, the CAWSS is drawing up infrastructure plans for 250,000 people.

¹³ www.gazetteer.de/c/c_af.htm

¹⁴ Urban Water Supply Investment Programme established by the Central Administration for Water Supply and Sanitation (CAWSS) within the MUDH

Finally, **Bamiyan** is indicative of the significant lack of coordination between the databases used by different actors. The CAWSS aims to provide water for 11,970 inhabitants, i.e. barely 10% of the population, whereas statistics indicate a total population of 131,233 inhabitants (see Table 1: Population figures for Afghanistan's major cities).

Source: www.gazetteer.de/c/c_af.htm, Groupe URD interviews

The above figures illustrate the lack of reliable data for urban populations, hence the need for precise assessments prior to planning programmes.

According to the head of UNAMA, UN agency for coordination in Bamiyan, a census is planned for 2007 once the elections have run smoothly. These data will have to be placed in the context of continuous rapid expansion of urban populations.

The main difficulty which the census will need to overcome is determining what boundaries will be used for counting inhabitants.

2.3.3 Urban destabilisation

Unreliable demographic data is the result of extremely rapid and uncontrolled growth in almost all major cities in Afghanistan. The ratio of rural populations against urban populations has swung over in favour of urban populations. Kabul city accommodates over 60% of the population of Kabul province and 50% of the total Afghan urban population, resulting in an imbalance. This population concentration is the source of explosive situations of dissatisfaction. The untrammelled rise in urban populations is the cause of extensive urban disorder where the question of social stability and economic equilibrium has become critical.

2.4 The urban sector: disorganised administration

In the majority of cities visited, poorly equipped and seemingly abandoned neighbourhoods are situated right next to other neighbourhoods undergoing rapid expansion without any obvious urban planning. Interlocutors pointed out several illegal or informal neighbourhoods. There are many reasons for this disorder and illegality but stakeholders are unanimous about the lack of flexibility imposed by administrative boundaries defined within the Soviet Master Plan. Spontaneous settlements both within and outside of the limits designated as legal by the Master Plan have upset the balance of urban centres and made it unclear who is responsible for what.

Figure 4 and Figure 5 (presented below) highlight the lack of correlation between how urban territories and urban responsibilities are defined. The failure to take into account the cumulative impact of these two notions, urban boundaries and urban responsibilities, explains why large parts of urban populations do not have access to public services.

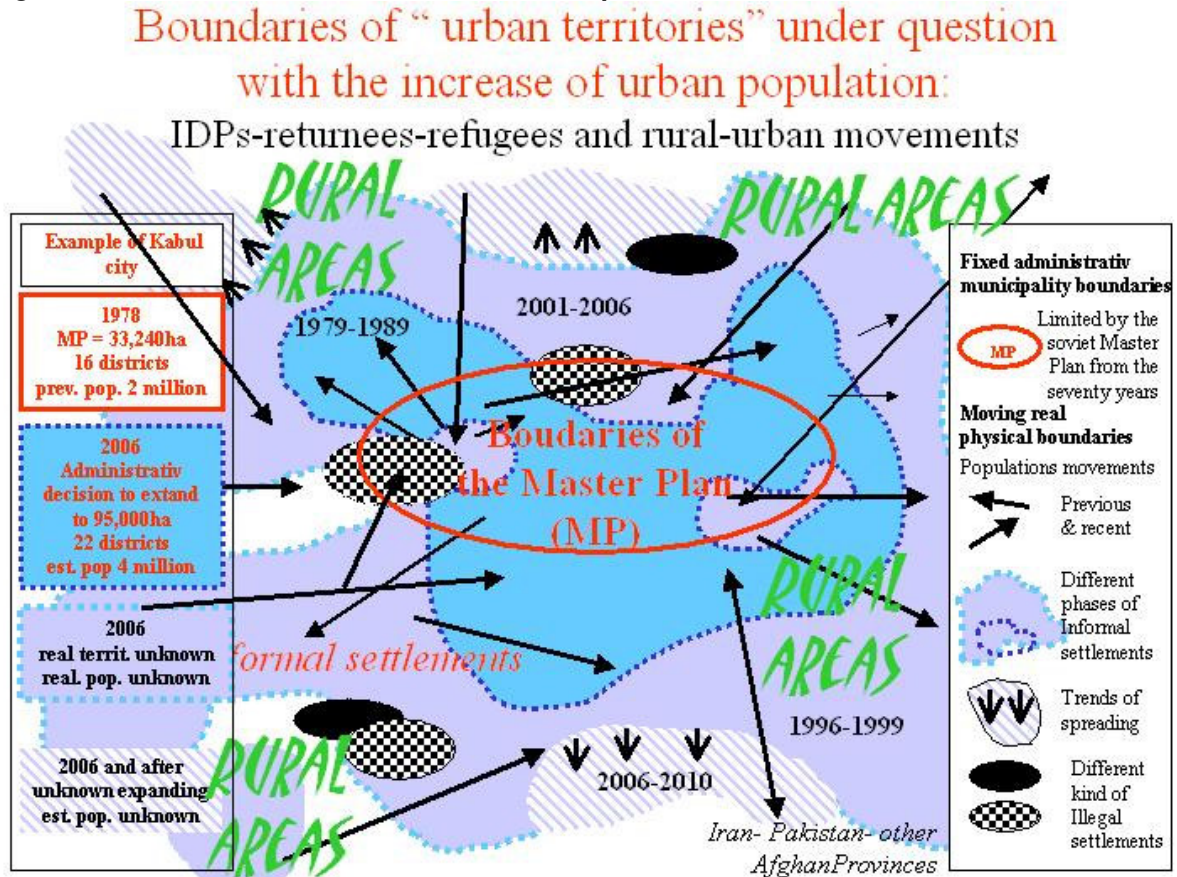
2.4.1 City boundaries in question

Figure 4 illustrates how the layout of Afghan cities today no longer corresponds to the concepts and limits defined in plans dating from the Soviet occupation, and although realities have evolved, administrative boundaries and people's mentalities have not.

These Master Plans were drawn up for all major Afghan cities between 1970 and 1978 by Soviet engineers. They provided an administrative framework for cities by designating a geographic boundary (illustrated by a red oval in Figure 4 and Figure 5) and defining settlements by zone. Although cities were administered in this way for over thirty years with regulations and directives being issued by the highly centralised Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, in the current urban situation this system no longer functions.

Urban systems and people's attitudes appear to be frozen in time. In Jalalabad and Ghazni, people seem to be stuck in 1970, and in Mazar -e Sharif and Kabul municipal administration is still using data from 1978. **The notion of what a city is, the general understanding of where city limits lie, reference data, how citizens and local authorities portray their city, administrative, legal and technical responsibilities have little bearing on present realities.** There is a high degree of distortion between the fluctuating city boundaries as lived by the inhabitants (illustrated with dotted lines in Figure 5) and the territory administered by urban development policy, determined in the Master Plan.

Figure 4: Boundaries of urban territories under question



Source: Groupe URD

2.4.1.1 Undefined urban territories as one of the main causes of lack of public services

The homeless, refugees, returnees and IDPs settle where they can find a space regardless of their original destination, resulting in a disorganised urban administrative framework and facilities. These settlements, representing between 30-70% of the total population depending on the city, are charged an 'informal settlement' tax because they lie outside the urban administrative framework, or an 'illegal settlement' tax because for example the land was seized and settled illegally. These neighbourhoods do not have access or very little access to basic public services (water supply, electricity, drainage systems for waste water, rubbish collection) and decent access routes. illustrates some of the examples of informal and illegal settlements encountered during the field mission which exist in many forms, including some which are considered 'informal' despite lying within the areas outlined in the Master Plan.

Box 3: Two example of an illegal settlements

In **Mazar-e Sharif**, settlements that do not correspond to the areas outlined in the Master Plan are categorised as illegal. This One such example is a large residential neighbourhood in the southwest district, situated in the centre of the city near the Mosque. This neighbourhood, which lies within the area outlined in the Master Plan, contains several zones that were originally

designated as parks in Soviet plans and were not built up. The consequence for these illegal settlements is that they have been voluntarily overlooked in terms of public services. City officials would like to see these zones turned back into parks. It is not certain whether the ICRC who has been working in Mazar-e Sharif for several years, and has built nearly all the secondary water supply systems in the rest of the city, is ready to invest resources in a neighbourhood whose future for the moment remains so uncertain.

Example of an informal settlement. In **Pul-e Khumri** it is the informal settlements on the side slopes that do not benefit from municipal services. As well as the irregularities that persist for settlements that have not been subject to urban planning, discord has emerged between the municipality and AKDN who is in the process of building water points for these informal settlements with water taken from the river and reservoirs. The municipality argues that providing water supply systems without first building drainage systems for waste water is contributing to increased river pollution. They fear that providing this type of service will encourage other people to settle in these neighbourhoods thus affecting the living conditions the other citizens who obtain their water from this same river.

Given that the legal framework for urban matters is obsolete, the situation is compounded by administrative incompatibility, the technical incapacity of municipal services and legal incompetence (to resolve land ownership disputes).

Given the limited technical capacity of municipal services in resolving problems (e.g. water supply, waste disposal, power), the situation is rendered more complicated still by the existing legal and administrative framework. Urban administrative authorities do not have the necessary powers to intervene in favour of informal and illegal settlements. Only legal authorities are capable of resolving administrative irregularities, such as the case of informal settlements. Similarly, in the case of illegal settlements, legal authorities are required to intervene to settle disputes over land tenure.

City administration as it stands is incapable of providing any services for its inhabitants. The situation is often highly confusing. International aid organisations who are trying to compensate for administrative shortages are concerned about the sustainability of their interventions in zones that might never be integrated into the city in administrative terms. Several difficulties contribute to this general level of confusion.

2.4.1.2 Shortage of documents and urban tools

There are no up-to-date urban plans defining administrative boundaries. It is precisely this lack of collective reference that gives rise to mutual incomprehension, unlawfulness, misunderstandings, even misappropriation of funds, privileges or gangland killings, as has recently been the case in Mazar-e Sharif¹⁵. The old Master Plans, omnipresent in municipal offices and technical administrative offices, are preventing stakeholders from developing a realistic analysis of the situation. Plans are established in Kabul and are sometimes not being shared effectively with the municipalities. For instance, there was no evidence of the new Jalalabad Master Plan drawn up in 2003 being used in the municipality. This lack of communication seriously hampered the development of any ownership.

2.4.1.3 Technical and legal difficulties in providing services for citizens

Urban laws and responsibilities do not apply to zones lying outside urban administrative boundaries.

¹⁵ According to the information collected during field interviews.

2.4.1.4 Maintaining the status quo or fighting corruption and nepotism?

Inventories and assessments that were carried out over thirty years ago are proving to be a stumbling block for urban officials.

For example of block on statu quo: The Kunduz’s municipality for example has refused to recognise a residential neighbourhood close to the city centre as being legal, despite the fact that it is today completely integrated into the city. According to the 1971 Master Plan, this zone was set aside for industrial activities and so it remains an informal settlement.

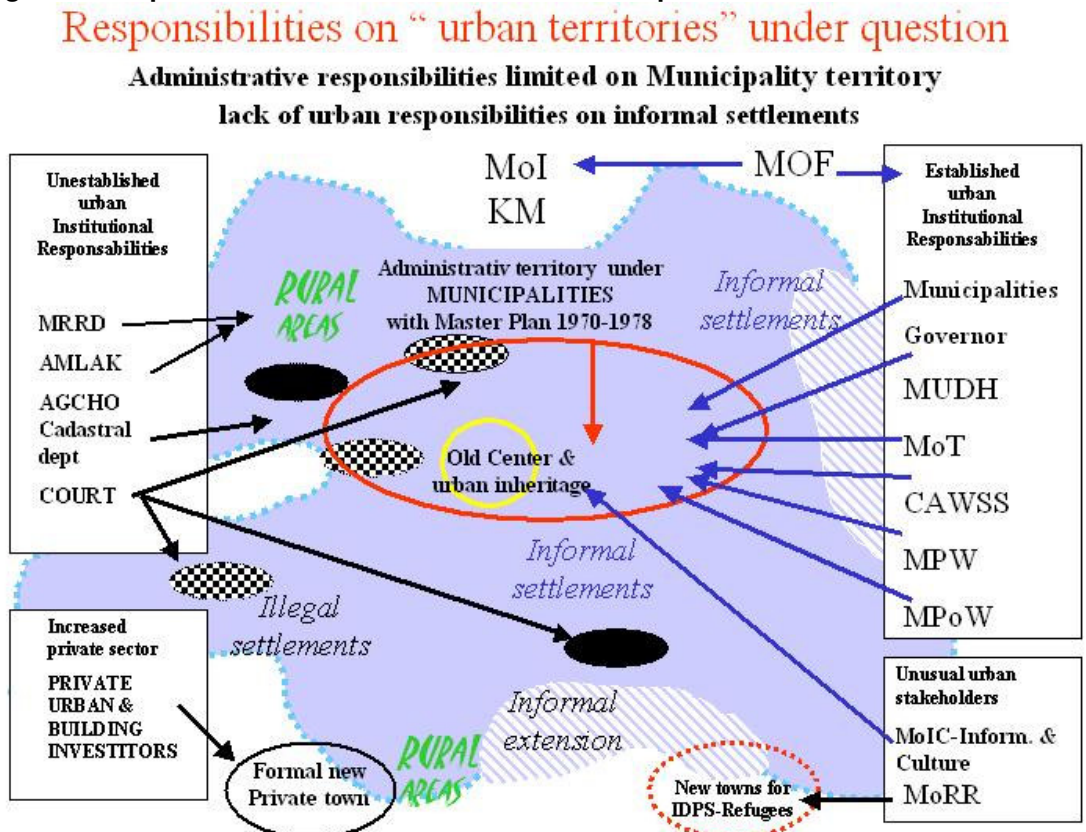
Other examples of ‘political abuse’: in Mazar-e Sharif, land was distributed by the mayor to homeless people when they did not actually own the land. Now, the real owners are demanding that the municipality return their land. Difficult negotiations are on going to day.

In Jalalabad, a certain lack of coherence in the spatial development of the city may be observed whereby distant suburbs are integrated into city administrative boundaries and yet more central neighbourhoods still do not have access to municipal public services. These situations may well arise as a result of local political contradictions.

2.4.2 Disconnection between urban territory and administrative responsibilities

Administrative and legal responsibilities on urban matters are determined by the boundaries laid down in the Master Plans of the 1970 and in no way reflect present day realities. As illustrated in Figure 5, urban territories no longer have coherent administrative boundaries with appropriate administrative infrastructure. This failure to unite the spatial aspect of urban planning with administrative responsibilities has given rise to urban areas where law and order has broken down and urban responsibilities have not been properly defined.

Figure 5: Responsibilities on urban territories under question



Source: Groupe URD

2.4.2.1 Urban territory divided up into distinct territorial responsibilities

Urban institutional responsibilities are exercised in a limited area of the city, which is determined by the boundaries laid down in the Master Plan.

- Political matters are the responsibility of the city mayor, the governor under the GoA, and the ministry in charge, MUDH, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Public Works (MoPW), Ministry of Mines and Industry (MMI), Ministry of Trade (MoT) and Ministry of Transportation (MT), etc.
- Administrative and technical issues are the responsibility of the ensuring conformity with administrative building regulations within the municipalities, of the engineers from MUDH district offices, and from CAWSS offices.
- Financial matters are the dual responsibility of the municipality and the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

2.4.2.2 Urban occupation with no urban responsibilities

Urban areas that lie outside the Master Plan boundary do not fall within urban jurisdiction or under urban administration. The institution that is responsible for administrative matters and ensuring law and order is directly related to the original function or properties of the area in question.

- Administrative issues are often the responsibility of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) or the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food (MAAHF) when the land was originally used for farming. In fact, the administrative responsibility depends on the type of land owner, for example, the Army, or the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) as is the case for much of the industrial city of Pul-e-Khumri. Religious authorities also own significant proportions of land.
- Legal matters and land ownership are either the responsibility of the body in charge of registering farming land, either under the responsibility of the Cadastral department of Afghanistan Geodesy & Cartography Head Office (AGCHO) when this structure exists at the local level.

2.4.2.3 Emergence of new stakeholders with limited expertise urban issues

Up to now, humanitarian organisations were the one in charge of providing aid to urban populations, despite the fact that they are not accustomed to the complexity of urban contexts.

- Humanitarian organisations. A certain degree of coherence between humanitarian organisations and Afghan institutions seems to have been achieved in determining domains of intervention. This is true for the case of the rehabilitation of roads linking cities, the development project in the valley of Bamiyan under UNESCO coordination, or the case of renovation work on water supply networks carried out by CARE International in Ghazni and the ICRC in Mazar-e-Charif . However, the same cannot be said for operations carried out within urban centres, such as in Jalalabad, where the UNDP and the ICRC do not appear to be coordinating the work that needs to be carried out on water supply networks.
- Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR). The MoRR is set to become a key player in an emerging urbanisation process with its plans to provide an estimated 35,000 houses for refugees. It has entered into negotiations with different landowners, such as ministries, private landowners or municipalities with a view to creating new towns. Although this attempt to speed the process up is an interesting initiative, the MoRR has not taken the time to ensure that its development plans are economically viable, and has not always succeeded in acquiring the freehold, a basic requirement before embarking on development plans. An NGO was contracted to build housing on 1,000 plots of land for a new town near Pul-e Khumri, and yet in the end private landowners refused to allow the building work to go ahead for 500 of the plots.
- Law courts, district law courts or national law court (Supreme Court in Kabul). Disputes over landownership that cannot be settled through negotiation have to be commonly referred to law courts, and currently represent a major issue at stake in urban development. The American private company EMG, on USAID funds acts as a link for the different administrative parties concerned in land tenure issues in the city of Ghazni.

Finally the private sector, which includes two types of player with a true potential for playing an active role in Afghanistan's development:

- City inhabitants by definition have a dual role to play in urban development: (i) as active participants, with self build housing schemes and initiatives to stimulate the local economy (cf. the World Bank) and (ii) as end users. With UN backing and in line with new Afghan policy, these inhabitants have become stakeholders in urban issues by means of community representatives.
- Private investors. The GoA is relying on private investors to play an essential role in economic recovery and urban reconstruction. Indeed, they have rapidly undertaken highly visible building projects in city centres (e.g. Kabul, Jalalabad, Hérat, etc.) and are heavily involved in planning new neighbourhood extensions (e.g. in Khabul, Ghazni). This expansion is placing pressure on urban territory and on land prices. Taking Bamiyan as an example, where tourism has had a staggering impact on property prices, urban officials need to set up a framework for urban development and impose limitations, in order to ensure quality development that is coherent with well-balanced urban environments.

2.5 Slow progress in defining urban policy

Although strategies and priorities have been established in Afghanistan since 2002, converting strategies into coherent policies has not yet been formalised for the urban sector. To this day, clear and realistic national urban policy, enabling city administrators to govern and cope with the multitude of existing development and rehabilitation needs, has not yet emerged.

2.5.1 A key step is missing in the process of defining urban policy

Strategies are defined at ministerial level, national programmes as NSP (National Solidarity Programme) are piloted and implemented with urban communities. However, municipalities do not fully participate in this process. Alternatively, local authorities are consulted but are then excluded from assessment processes which come under the responsibility of the MUDH in Kabul. Local officials, the governor and the mayor participate in certain phases, but as urban planning and the drafting of reference documents takes place in Kabul, local authorities do not fully appropriate themselves. Furthermore, local political and technical staff turnover is high and objectives are changed frequently. Provincial towns, bastions of local warlords far removed from central government, fluctuate between a top-down power structure or one that is overly influenced by local interests (local authorities or powerful individuals).

2.5.2 Weaknesses constitutive at municipal level and lack of external counsellors

Under the soviet system, municipalities had very little autonomy, resources and expertise required for managing urban development within their territory. This administrative and financial weakness, which lends itself to a certain degree of nepotism and power abuses engendered excesses that has yet to be eradicated by coherent urban policy¹⁶ at the benefit of public interests.

Whereas the ministries benefit from international support and expertise, no international consultants were encountered in any of the municipal offices visited. Municipal staff are looking for ways to break even and develop new power-sharing modalities with the ministry in charge, but they require immediate support and expertise in urban issues and town-planning;

¹⁶ A new law on municipalities is under consideration.

2.5.3 Absence of institutional coordination

For all the different activities related to the urban sector, at ministerial, provincial and municipal levels, there is marked division of labour with little coordination and a huge lack of communication. Communication and monitoring activities are not functioning properly both horizontally and vertically.

Coordination does exist at different technical levels, such as water supply, but it is not the case for the urban development sector as a whole

During this transitory period, UN agencies are responsible for ensuring coordination roles but there is an urgent need for an organisation responsible for coordinating urban affairs at all the different levels.

2.6 Creating synergy in urban development

The situation in Afghanistan's cities has reached a critical point both for the inhabitants themselves, and the country's officials, who are faced with unprecedented urban expansion. The entire urban management process for town-planning is deregulated and obsolete. At all levels, officials lack the necessary expertise and urban tools which would allow them to provide for the city's inhabitants, to build and repair existing infrastructure and basic services or to work towards sustainable development. There is a considerable lack of technical capacity and absorption capacity for the new urban population. This is the negative side, an acknowledgement of failure, lack of resources and incompetence. On the other hand, an impressive amount of building work is being carried out by the private sector, but it is not subject to coordination within national strategies, nor to basic regulations. The intense traffic that surrounds city bazaars points to the beginnings of economic growth but urban traffic runs untrammelled. In order to overcome this situation of urban fragility and to engage in coordinated and effective reconstruction, it is necessary to bring about synergy between all those with potential to contribute to urban development. Some of our observations have enabled us to identify certain avenues worth exploring.

2.6.1 The need to place urban issues within an improved spatial understanding

In order to resolve the current urban crisis, it is necessary to bring together different actors' strategies and activities, and ensure that all those involved share a common understanding of where urban boundaries lie. Indeed reaching a consensus on the definition of urban spaces and on their roles remains a priority. It is here that specific urban tools are sadly lacking, such as **up-to-date urban plans that are easy to update.**

2.6.2 Developing a range of urban tools

It is necessary to compile an extensive inventory, to compare existing urban reference documents and design new ones to help in assessments, localisation and prioritising inhabitants' needs. Updated data are needed for drawing up urban proposals, proposing solutions and providing support for decision-making, negotiations, coordination, monitoring and communication tools. The latter indeed symbolise the very beginnings of exchange and partnership. Other domains within the urban sector, such as legal administrative departments (like the cadastral departments), are also affected by the lack of relevant tools.

Until Afghan staff have been fully trained in each of the subjects and relevant tools have been produced, the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) and the Municipalities would welcome support in the form of studies on various topics (environment, transport, computer assisted design (CAD), town planning). This may be an opportunity:

- for NGOs to **develop their activities**, especially those already involved in the building sector. Some NGOs have already begun developing new expertise, for example the geographic information system (GIS) for their projects.

- to **diversify aid**, developing an expertise in urban issues (socio-urban issues, development strategies, town-planning techniques, etc.).
- to **open up towards the private sector** and research consultancy, which has a valuable role to play in providing expertise in environment and social issues, urban strategies, local economy and urban development. There is a potential for establishing interesting partnerships on the basis of complementary expertise.

2.6.3 Exchange of expertise, an opportunity for all stakeholders

Afghan institutional staff working in the urban sector is severely lacking necessary expertise and are actively seeking ways to improve their knowledge base. The need for professional capacity building in urban development is present at all levels, in all technical subjects, for decision-makers and especially municipal offices. A large range of training courses, providing an opportunity for actors to share their experiences and gain experience, should be offered to Afghan officials. Demand is high for this type of exchange at intermediary levels, even though the first steps are difficult, and time and money demanding. A number of avenues should be explored:

- **Decentralised local development aid** offers great potential given the tendency for aid to remain centralised at government level. Capacity building for municipal, administrative and technical offices should foster exchange, and share knowledge and know-how in town-planning and urban management with foreign counterparts, such as district and city authorities, town or village councils, etc. Municipal offices, public facilities and social housing associations should be able to participate in these exchanges and share their expertise.
- **University exchange programmes** for students of town planning, architecture, social or technical engineering, geography, cultural heritage and other fields related to urban issues, need to gather pace. A number of foreign students are already participating in NGO programmes. Both Afghan and foreign students would benefit from university exchanges and internships in both Afghan institutions (as MUDH offices or municipal offices) as well as international organisations.
- **Urban professional exchanges:** Establishing an arena in Afghanistan for debate on urban issues would give professionals the opportunity to exchange their ideas.

2.6.4 Developing communication tools

Communication campaigns were lacking in general. Promoting better communication at several levels would give meaning to urban projects, and maybe restore people's confidence, or at least provide a platform for debate amongst populations who still have cause for concern and still feel insecure. Projects that are under consideration, building work that has been approved, development plans on hold, building work underway are all subjects that need to be communicated to people and within the urban stakeholders. The notion of public space would find an echo in this idea.

In conclusion, inhabitants need to be placed at the heart of urban administration:

“How shall we go about identifying, accessing, establishing contacts and providing sustainable help for so-called vulnerable populations in urban areas?” is the relevant question in humanitarian terms.

“How shall we go about resolving urban problems, providing basic services to the town’s citizens and developing coherent urban evolution”, is the relevant question in urban terms.

Efforts to reconcile the two notions of ‘**vulnerability**’ and ‘**citizen**’ should bring the beginnings of a solution and coherence in aid of improving inhabitants’ living conditions. Analysing urban spatial management issues with the support of urban development expertise should provide sufficient evidence to Afghan decision-makers of the importance of integrating so-called ‘informal’ zones where the majority of vulnerable people live into the legal administrative framework. These inhabitants, vulnerable people transformed into legal citizens, will have rights and administrators will be under the obligation to provide them with all the services required in urban areas. Stakeholders should be looking to support these mechanisms.

Persons met during the field mission

Urban Development	
In December 05 Visit to Pul-e-Khumri	Meeting to the Municipality Meeting to AKDN Visit reservoir
12 to 15 march 06 Visit to Jalalabad	Meeting to the Municipality
Preparation In Kabul	Visit to AIMS Kabul (to get maps of cities to visit) Contact with Dina Amiri, customer service Assistant
22 March	Meeting with the ONG Solidarités Contact with Clément Bourse Country Director
Thursday 28 March	Meeting to European Commission in Kabul Contact with Giorgio Kirchmayr, Programme Manager, Infrastructure Sector for Jalalabad information And With Eng. Basher Ahmad, Project officer, infrastructure
	Meeting to EMG LTERA (USAID) Preparation for Ghazni , Pul-e Khumri and Kunduz Contact with André Hernandez
Friday 31 March	Team meeting: discussing the itinerary
Saturday 01 April	Literature and document review Consultation to ACBAR Meeting with UN-Habitat Contact with Suman Kr. Karna, urban Development Advisor
Sunday 02 April	Meeting to the MUDH Contact with the Deputy Minister ; M Djallazada + different Department
Monday 03 April	Team meeting: discussing the multi sector framework
Tuesday 04 April	From Kabul to Bamiyan by road
Wednesday 05 April	Meeting in UNAMA Contact with Dr Ernst Fassbender, Representative Head of Bamiyan Office
Thursday 06 April In BAMIYAN	Meeting to the provincial MUHD office Contact with Engineer ...Head of the Office (the Master Plan) Meeting in UN-Habitat Contact with Eng. Muharmad, District Manager Contact with Mohammad Yasin Hotak, Acting Director Visit NSP in villages with M. Abd Razaq Provincial technical eng. Visit NSP in Villages with Eng. Yasin Hotak Provincial social eng. Contact with Solidarites: no more involved in Shelters in Bamiyan Contact with Geres not involved with Construction in Bamiyan
Friday 07 April	From Bamiyan to Samangan
Saturday 08 April	From Samangan to Mazar-e Sharif
Sunday 09 April Monday 10 April	Meeting in CAWSS Office Contact with Technical Head Officer Meeting in the MUDH Office Contact with Eng.Hamid Basharmal, in charge of upgrading projects Meeting with UNOPS in the Ministry of Public Works office Contact with Senior regional Mohamad Zia radyar (Ex Head of Un – Habitat in Mazar-e Sharif in 2002-2003)
In Mazar-e-sharif	Meeting in UN-Habitat Contact with Eng Islamudin Amaki ,Provincial manager (NSP) Contact with Eng.PadashMir Rahmtzai, Provincial Manager (HSF) Meeting to Municipality of Mazar-e Sharif Contact with His Excellency the Mayor. Mr Mohammad Yonus Moqim Contact with Eng. Mohammad Malik Rauf (ex Head of the Department of Construction Control from 2002 to 2006) Meeting to ICRC ; Contact with Valentin Magendo, Programme Manager
Tuesday 11 April	From Mazar-e Sharif to Kundunz
Tuesday 11 April	Meeting in Kundunz Municipality Contact with eng. Abdul Rahim The Controle Construction department Director

Wednesday 12 April	Meeting to the MUDH Office Contact with Mr. Said Shamsudin Sadat department Representative	
Thursday 13 April	Contact with a Eng. Architect Building Design Depart Officer	
In Kunduz	Meeting to AGCHO, Cadastral Department of Kundunz Baghland Contact with M. Aga Mirza, Cadastral department Manager	
	Meeting to CAWSS Office Contact with Dr. Azimi, Director	
	Meeting to AIMS Office Contact with M. Naseer Tasmin NE Field assistant	
	Meeting to German Agro Action (Welt hunger hilfe) Contact with Mr. Amjad Ali Khan, project manager	
	Meeting to ACTED Contact with Eng. Ad. Qahar, area Deputy coordinator	
	Friday 14 April	From Kundunz to Pul-e Khumri & from Pul-e Khumri to Kabul
	Saturday 15 April	Workshop preparation
Sunday 16 April	Kabul-Ghazni-Kabul	
In Ghazni	Meeting in Ghazni Municipality Contact with the Deputy Mayor	
	Meeting in Ghazni Department of Engineers Contact with eng. Ansami and Eng. Harovullah	
	Meeting to EMG LTERA With Amir Khan, ghazni Office Director	
	Meeting to AGCHO Office, Cadastral Department Contact with the administrative Deputy	
	Monday 17 April	Meeting to the WB Contact with Jonathan Parkinson Independent consultant (waste Solid Collect Programme)
Tuesday 18 April	Meeting in AGCHO in Kabul Contact with Eng. M. Askar (Falah), vice president	
Wednesday 19 April	Meeting to CARE Afghanistan Contact with Dad Mohammad Baheer, Wat/San Programme Manager	
	Meeting to ICRC With Valerie Meilhaud, Water and Habitat coordinator	
Thursday 20 April	Working on presentation	
Friday 21 April	Workshop preparation	
Saturday 22 April	Workshop preparation	
Sunday 23 April	Workshop preparation	
Monday 24 April	Presenting the main findings: workshop	
Wednesday 26	Meeting to the MUDH Contact with the Deputy Minister Ang. Q. Djallalzada	
Thursday 27	Working on EIMS report	
Saturday 29	Working on EIMS report	
Sunday 30	Meeting to the MUDH Contact with M. Eberhard Kohlsdorfer, Advisor	
Monday 1 May	Meeting to UNESCO Kabul office for Bamiyan Project Contact with Brendan Cassar - Cultural Programme Section	

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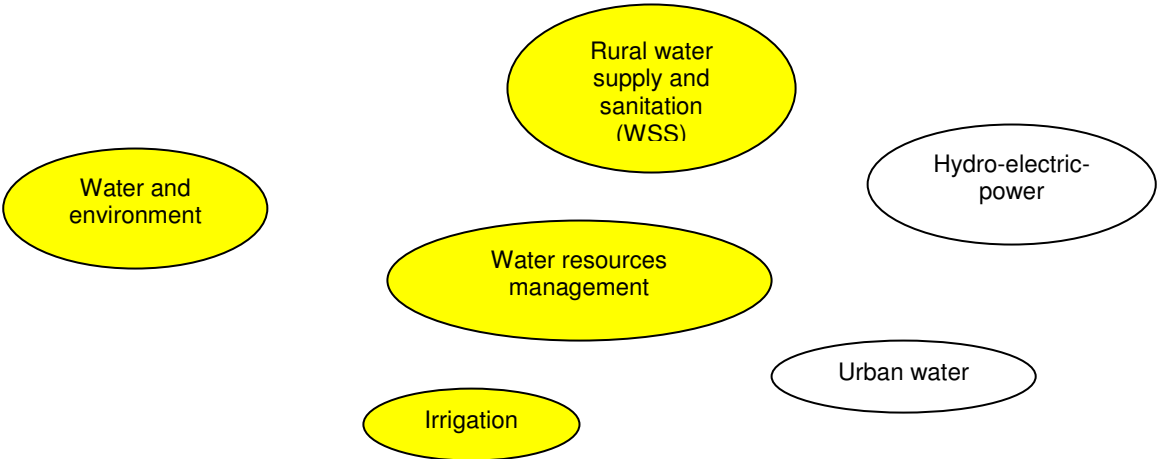
3 WATER / IRRIGATION SECTOR

*By Nicolas RIVIERE (independent consultant for
Groupe URD, nicolas.riviere@mageos.com)*

This report follows on from and complements a water sector review which was conducted in summer 2005. While the water sector review focuses on a historical and institutional global analysis, this present exercise comprising three weeks of fieldwork in spring 2006 deals with operational aspects and field level issues.

Since the water sector is relatively broad and complex, the diagram below presents the various domains or sub-sectors pertaining to the water sector.

Figure 6: The different water / irrigation sub-sectors addressed in this report



Source: Groupe URD

Water resources management concerns the overall management of water resources taking into account economic, social and environmental dimensions and the various geographical levels (regional, national, basin, sub-basin and watershed). Work within this area consists mostly of developing appropriate institutions to carry out capacity building activities. Water resources management is a central tenet of the new institutional framework as its purpose is to coordinate water-related uses and applications represented by the sub-sectors.

Irrigation involves the rehabilitation, modernisation or construction of irrigation schemes. The ‘hardware’ component covers infrastructure while ‘software’ relates to management capacity to ensure efficient and sustainable operations and irrigation scheme maintenance.

Water and environment comprises various activities within watershed areas for the water protection and conservation in relation to other natural resources (soil, forestry, rangeland and other biomass).

Rural water supply and sanitation (WSS) aims at constructing water points and latrines. Software activities are mainly associated with transmitting information about how to operate and maintain water points as well as the proper use of water (‘hygiene education’). This domain has been included in this report whereas it was not taken into consideration in the water sector review.

The two other domains, namely urban water and hydro-power have not been included in this research.

This report mainly focuses on irrigation and WSS as they constitute the core activities in relation to livelihoods and economic development. These two issues will be dealt with separately when the institutional framework and operational issues differ significantly.

3.1 Institutional context

3.1.1 Key players

Table 2 summarises the key actors in the water sector. It encompasses findings from both the review and fieldwork and presents the main opportunities, challenges and risks that have emerged since 2001 for each group.

Table 2: Actors of change: opportunities, challenges and risks

Key players	Opportunities	Challenges and risks
GoA at central level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MEW - Lead role for the water sector in charge of overall water management and institutional coordination, and irrigation and hydro-electric power - Concerted effort to carry out wide reaching sector reform since 2001 with donor support - Establishing a ‘strategic policy framework’, thus laying the foundations for a dynamic and effective sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MEW - Should get sufficient budgets in relation to the importance of the sector - Lack of capacity; HR and facilities are not adapted to the new modern concepts and policies →PPR process required - Short-term and medium-term strategy and planning - Increase legitimacy - Institutional reforms to be completed and implemented - ‘Working Together for Participatory Water Management’ with all stakeholders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MRRD - One of the strongest ministries within GoA - Well-defined responsibilities within the water sector; in charge of WSS (drinking water) in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MRRD - Necessary transition from Rehabilitation to Development - more comprehensive and integrated approach required for an effective WM; more capacities are needed for assessment and monitoring; - Interference with the NSP in the irrigation sector; insufficient linkage with MEW/ID
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MAAHF: - Agriculture remains the highest water consumer (more than 99%); - In charge of Natural Resources Management - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MAAHF: - Secondary role within the new institutional framework limited to On-Farm WM – Institutional current disputes within the GoA to gain back the full Irrigation section

Provincial Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MEW/Irrigation Department: - - Revitalization of the ID departments in process... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MEW/ID: - General lack of capacities and large inequity among provinces - Lack of understanding of the new concepts and policies, and the MEW's new roles and responsibilities; - New and mixed functions of facilitation, coordination, regulation, monitoring...; - - Future role of the ID within the RBA and the sub national levels set-up? .
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MRRD: - Well equipped and staffed offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MRRD: - More collaboration with the ID and AD is needed ; - Technical and monitoring capacities for a proper quality control
UN Agencies ¹⁷ / FAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experienced stakeholders in irrigation; Involved as TA in the Emergency Irrigation Rehabilitation Programme (funded by WB) and other irrigation pilot projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation to policy-making and capacity building; - Involvement for a better linkage between MEW and MAAHF, between the water and agriculture sectors
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MEW: - World Bank, EC, ADB and German Government/GTZ - Overall coordination satisfying - Consensus on the institutional reforms - MRRD/WSS: - USAID, EC, Japan Government/JICA and UN - MAAHF: - USAID/RAMP for irrigation rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination on capacity building efforts are needed - Harmonization approaches for the irrigation development sub-sector - More support and investments - More dialogue with other donors and the MEW
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experienced stakeholders in the Afghan context and with the sector (especially WSS); - Relevant linkages in between the communities and the other actors - Community mobilization and organisation promoted in the water sector; and other windows of opportunities; - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scope of action reduced due to new actors, especially the private sector; - Improve coordination and communication at the field and central levels; - Involvement at institutional level; - Specialization and capacity building in a more demanding environment; - Bad image within the population and aid context - Clarification (in process) between professional and fake NGOs

- ¹⁷ UNFAO is only referred here. A lot of UN agencies (UNICEF, UNOPs, WFP, UHRCR, etc.) largely involved during the transition post 2001 period have now withdrawn completely or drastically; - UNICEF highly used to be present in WSS sub-sector; less now; UNEP engaged for the National Environmental Agency's creation

Independent consultants and international consultancy firms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharp technical profile and experience; - Technical Assistance and capacity building of MEW and MRRD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptation in the Afghan field realities; - Effectiveness and Sustainability of the capacity building efforts and other institutional inputs;
Private sector (construction companies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emerging private sector profiting from the law concerning NGOs (2005) and the reconstruction and development efforts ; - Relevant infrastructures building in the water sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accountability and capacity building - Better registration, regulation and monitoring procedures by the state -
Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seen as a stakeholder with important role and responsibilities in the new institutional framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - -Passive behaviour, heritage of war and the humanitarian period; - Building trust by external aid actors and the GoA - Lack of awareness on water management issue; infrastructure oriented behaviour; - Local governance, institutions and systems (<i>mirab</i>) disrupted by the war;

3.1.2 Water and Agriculture: a difficult but essential collaboration...

According to rough estimations, agriculture and irrigation use 99 % of the water mobilized today in Afghanistan. Despite that, the link between the MAHF and the MEW remain very difficult. Since the sixties, the irrigation sub-sector has been a great institutional and political issue at stake. Institutional disputes between the Ministry of Agriculture and the water line Ministry goes back to the early seventies when it was decided agriculture and irrigation should be split into two separate administrations (Irrigation Department).

Nowadays the sub-sector officially lays under the Ministry of Energy and water's responsibility. Most of the funds for irrigation are channelled through this ministry. The 2004 water policy strategic framework states that the MAAHF is (only) entitled to farm water management issues". The MAAHF disagrees with the tasks and roles' separation and claims legitimacy on irrigation and thus a wider responsibility. The agriculture Master Plan prepared in 2005 highlights the lack of clarity regarding the place where water issues are being addressed. Water issues are not addressed as such and investments regarding irrigation or needs of rehabilitation are not mentioned except for the basic food crops in the food security chapter...¹⁸⁾

In spring 2006, the dispute reached a high intensity. MAAHF decided to rename itself as Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and to re-set up an irrigation department.

The issue remains unsolved. It has for sure negative consequences. There is not any collaboration between the MEW and the MAAHF. Irrigation schemes rehabilitation or modernization strategy and operations are isolated from the agricultural sector and its development. It might also impede the collaboration on other issues or sub-sectors like watershed and natural resources management.

¹⁸ Agriculture Master Plan by the MAAHF (pg. 11)

3.1.3 Water Supply and Sanitation: special highlights

The author has left aside the Water Supply and Sanitation sub-sector in the Water Sector Review done last year. However some specific elements during this second phase are presented in this document.

Institutionally wise, the situation is quite simple compared to the irrigation sub-sector. MRRD is in charge of issues related to WSS. NGOs surely represent its main interlocutor, not only at field level but also at central or institutional level. It is specificity within this sub-sector compared to the entire water sector where the NGO's role has become secondary. Drinking water is by nature linked to well-being and health and is thus a core activity for NGOs. Most of them have developed relevant skills and know-how on both technical and sociological aspects in Afghanistan and in other countries. The transition Relief Rehabilitation and Development, pre and post 2001, in this sub-sector has been observed as smooth. Some "old" stakeholders like NGOs and UN agencies (UNICEF) have helped a lot to keep a continuum. The dynamic ACBAR WatSan coordination committee has as well played a crucial role in this matter. It informally helped albeit to organise the sub-sector and to promote a quality and development approach even in emergency situation. Such coordination remained effective after 2001 with 2 monthly meetings, one general (by MRRD) and one technical (by Dacaar).

A simple and practical policy document developed in 2004 gives good albeit large guidelines for sub-sector stakeholders. A five years' plan has been elaborated at the same time.

Except EC and ECHO (still directly funding NGOs), the other donors (USAID, JICA, UN agencies...) route their funds through MRRD. For projects and programs' implementation, NGOs act mainly as facilitating partners. They are in charge of the overall management, and specifically of software activities described below. Tripartite agreements are generally signed between the donor, MRRD and NGOs. In some cases, MRRD is in charge of some projects' implementation. In any case the construction of water points (digging of wells and boreholes) is done by the private sector.

Role of DACAAR in the WSS sub-sector

Within the WSS sub-sector, it is worth highlighting the role of an NGO called DACAAR. This organization has been working for more than 15 years in Afghanistan in Water Supply and Sanitation and Rural Development. Since the nineties, through the WSS ACBAR coordination committee, DACAAR (with other NGOs) has taken part in the sub-sector' development contributing to process improvements and technical innovations (see Box 4).

Box 4: Role of DACAAR in the WSS sub-sector

After 2001, DACAAR remains strongly positioned in this sub-sector at both operational and institutional levels. As a key stakeholder, it has been helping MRRD to develop tools, procedures and an overall relevant institutional framework.

At the same time as field work and project implementation, DACAAR has been engaged within the WSS sub sector in the following activities:

- Design and development of a computerized based Geographical Information System (GIS) as a monitoring and planning tool; the data base aims at gathering the entire Afghan territory's water points. It will be handed over to MRRD.
- Setting up a ground water monitoring system in order to follow up the evolution of the quality and level of water tables.
- Training and capacity building at MRRD central and provincial levels and at Kabul University
- Chairing the monthly basis WSS technical working group

Through the impulse of the coordination staff and some dynamic NGOs, the sub-sector has been developing even during the emergency war time an integrated and quality based approach. Software activities along with the construction of water points were included in order to ensure the action's sustainability. Communities should be prepared to operate and maintain the water points, as well as be trained for a proper use of water. Water committees within each recipient community are constituted before any construction of water point. Some blacksmiths are trained within each project or campaign to become referent in an area for the maintenance of the pumps. Hygiene education is systematically provided. A guidelines document for trainers and supervisors has been drafted by both MRRD and MOPH.

Although the WSS sub-sector is well structured and benefits a lot from the NGOs experience, many challenges remain such as the followings:

- Assessment and design: At both NGO and MRRD levels, capacity among the technical staff remains weak on hydrogeology science; Since the identification of the water point's location and the control on other technical parameters are not always adequate some water points or schemes (dry wells, water salinity ...) get unusable.
- Monitoring system and water quality control: Once the projects are completed, a specific task and monitoring system should be sustained at the regional level in order to verify each water point on a regular basis.
- Coordination and regulation: despite the current mechanisms and the overall sub-sector's fair functioning, some aspects remain weak. For example, there is no efficient centralization of data and information required for monitoring and planning purposes. MRRD and DACAAR are struggling against NGOs to get their water points in order to fill the national data base.
- Standardized and professional approach: Absence of regulatory documents and work in the sub-sector does hamper an understanding and uniform approach from the field stakeholders i.e. NGOs and the private sector;
- Planning: unlike other water sub-sectors such as irrigation, there are national and provincial planning in WSS. However, due to the difficulty of gathering data and information and to the absence of any monitoring system, assessment of needs is not very accurate and planning becomes thus difficult.

3.1.4 Institutional framework : Limited Understanding and Ownership at the sub national level

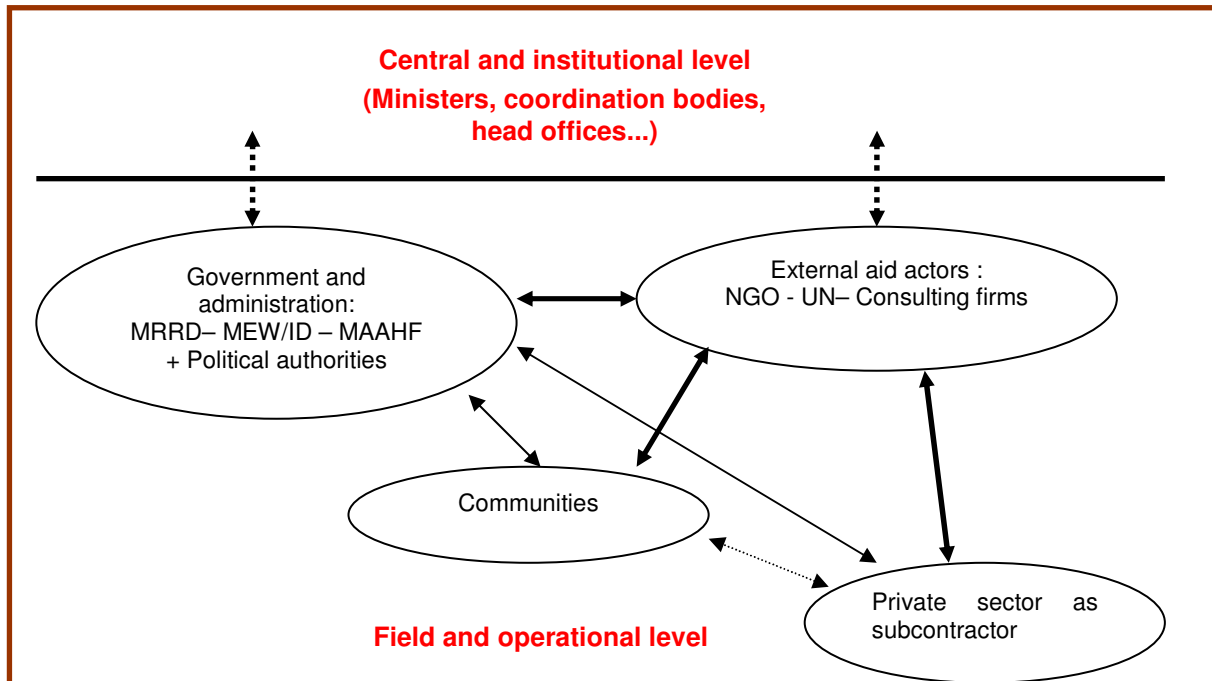
It was noticed during the field trip that field staff from the administration and from the aid agencies like NGOs have an important lack of knowledge of the new water institutional framework and policies. A provincial Irrigation Department Director mentioned to the author that he heard about it on the radio. Some staff also looked upset by these nice ideas and concepts, far away from the field realities and from the problems they are facing on a day-to-day basis. The concept of Integrated Water Management remains vague and abstract for a lot of staff, especially for Afghan officers.

The MEW is aware of this large gap between central and sub national levels, and between institutional and operational levels. Building awareness is the first step on this overall reform process. To respond to that, the MEW plans on having some workshops at the provincial level to present and discuss these issues through the GTZ advisor. It may help to define more concrete and progressive processes for the reforms' implementation at the river basin level and other sub levels.

3.1.4.1 Organizational framework at the sub national levels

The chart below (Figure 7) presents the field level organisation between all the various stakeholders of the (macro) programmes and (micro) projects' coordination and implementation.

Figure 7: Organisation of the aid in the water sector at the sub-national level



3.2 General analysis

Since 2001 the increase in the type and number of aid stakeholders associated with a significant division of the roles and responsibilities has made the organisation and coordination's overall aspects more complex. This new situation leads to 4 main questions or concerns:

3.2.1 Improve individual capacity of each actor to fully understand and play its role.

For Afghan stakeholders (GoA, communities and private sector), the issue refers to capacity and accountability since they lack experience, awareness and means to carry out new functions and tasks. For external stakeholders, the question is more related to adaptability to new institutional and organisational situations and/or to the Afghan context.

3.2.2 Define leadership and improve collaboration

Working together is essential in the new institutional and operational setup. It is not a "natural" asset for many of the involved stakeholders. Coordination in the field and at operational levels does occur through general or specific, formal or informal mechanisms. Duplication is not an issue anymore, as it used to be pre and post 2001. It has never been raised during the field visits. Collaboration could be more effective but there are few conflicts of cultures, interests, working methods within the various stakeholders.

In relation to a project or programme's implementation, efforts are done nowadays to first define the framework and the conditions to "work together". Thanks to an increasing stakeholders' awareness and capacity the, specific procedures and documents have taken place in the new aid scene for both governmental macro programmes and NGO projects. The latter are more developed and formatted while the former is more informal and takes various forms depending on the project and the implementer. Documents such as LoA, MoU, contacts, by-laws... have become more or less systematic. During the processes, although less developed, there are mechanisms for coordinating, exchanging and reporting like

steering committee. Although these frameworks and mechanisms are helpful, they are unlikely to resolve all the problems. Effective collaboration still relies a lot on day-to-day work and person-to-person relationships.

3.2.3 Improve monitoring and evaluation processes

In such a new context and organisational framework, effective M&E is essential. Who is doing what? “What” is not an easy question. Does M&E comprise different types and levels? Stakeholders’ M&E? The various on going processes’ M&E? “Who” comes after in order to have the relevant and capable staff for each M&E process. The stakeholders looks uneasy when addressing this issue. There is a real capacity and experience issue. Although every stakeholders and programmes stress the importance of M&E, although budgets are allocated for it, although rules and procedures are defined for each government programme, in reality the result is globally disappointing. Very often, involved massively in the implementation tasks, stakeholders showed less consideration for this separate process. There are no rules and regulations for M&E in the water sector yet and each programme through the donor and the Technical Assistance body defines its own system.

An independent and competent staff should definitely be set up at central and ministry level in order to regulate and supervise the whole M&E sector process.

The author has quoted two examples where the MEW has intervened in two NGOs’ projects in the past months in relation to its regulation and monitoring functions. In the first case related to a water flood control project in Bamiyan province, the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) from the MEW visited the project site. It expressed some concerns and recommendations to the NGO in relation with the implementation process and with the impacts. The NGO then adjusted the project and a constructive collaboration was developed with the quoted agency. The other case refers to the construction of a large dam in Wardak province. A crack on the dam was detected by an expert team from the MEW Kabul when doing the final (and unexpected) evaluation of the works. Some reinforcement works was then planed by the NGO and the expert team. These examples show positive signs for a gradual state empowerment and laws, rules and regulations enforcement.

3.2.4 Increase links between central / institutional and field / operational levels

Although it appears essential, the links between the central and the field level are too weak. To stick closer to reality, the uncompleted institutional development requires a better technical and sociological understanding of the local context and a stronger feedback from the field through research and operational works. Generally speaking, both individually and collectively, stakeholders fail to set an effective bridge between these levels. The two following boxes (Box 5 and Box 6) illustrate this issue.

Box 5: Building allows water mills within the revised water law

A Social Water Management research action project made by two NGOs (within the KRBP) has shown the very negative effects of water mills installed along the canals without regards for any effective and equitable water management. In some cases, water is completely lost for agriculture uses with serious consequences on irrigated land and on agriculture performance. A significant amount of water mills was built by powerful men during the nineties after the collapse of the state and administrations and the disruption of local traditional mechanisms.

The 1981 water act, currently under revision and adoption, stipulates in chapter 4 that “Usage and distribution of water requires within some circumstances special authorisation through the delivery of permit and license”. But the water mill case is not included in the list of defined circumstances. Thus it does not consider seriously the issue of the water mills

Nowadays there is a real need for NGOs and other field stakeholders to relay and bring up such information at the institutional and central level, and to advocate for institutional changes or adjustments.

Field operators are not used to this political and institutional oriented role and involvement. Requirements for better involvement are nevertheless high. Specific actions of capitalization and communication from field experience have to be developed. The institutional framework and stakeholders do not facilitate or encourage this tremendous process either.

Box 6: Water users association charter by USAID

USAID through Development Alternatives Inc. and RAMP has launched in their Kandahar project site some community mobilization research on water management. The main goal is to draft a *Water Users Associations* charter which would provide a legal framework and guidance for WUA's development in Afghanistan.

Such individual initiative from the field has to be seen positively. Nevertheless it should not be done in an isolated way like in this case, without integrating the institutional framework and without full dialogue with the other stakeholders. Sustainability is thus questionable.

Apparently they have been some institutional disagreements or disputes within the GoA whether and how this charter should be amended. The referred document has been circulating informally within the water sector and the stakeholders but nobody really knows where to stand on with that. Some NGOs involved in social water management projects were wondering whether they had to consider this current charter as a reference for their own work.

3.3 Trends analysis of the main stakeholders

3.3.1 Government

The Irrigation Department (representing at a provincial level the MEW for the irrigation and water management issues) was almost nonexistent in 2001. Within the on-going reforms and state rebuilding, the ID revitalizing process is very slow and inequitable. Where they are implemented, the few sector based programmes have been strengthening the involved ID offices' capacity. It does concern mostly the large provincial cities' ID. They might become the focus point of the future River Basin Authorities. Most of the ID, especially the ones located in Central Highlands (Hazarajat) and in the South, are left aside by the institutional development. In Wardak and Bamyán provinces, ID visits appeared to the author to be more liaison and coordination offices than operational ones. A lot of tasks and responsibilities are centralized at Kabul level. Beside the accessibility question apparently lies a strategic reason which is to target areas where there is a high irrigation development and WM potential

What is to become of the ID when the *River Basin Authorities* and other new institutions will be set-up at sub national levels (Cf. Box 1 in "rebuilding the state")?. Recent research (Social Water Management project within KRBP) on local WM highlights the past role of the ID. Especially in the case of community managed irrigations schemes, functions of regulation, enforcement and conflict resolution were ensured effectively by this administration. Within the new institutional set-up, these functions should be born by the new foreseen institutions.

Rural Rehabilitation Development departments have more facilities and capacities since they have been strengthened immediately after 2001 to be the transition minister in rural areas. Unlike the ID, the RRD network within the Afghan territory is apparently quite good. NSP and drinking water programmes are implemented in every province.

Political authorities i.e. the provincial and district (*Uluswal*) governors have been “naturally” withdrawn from technical issues while the administration and the ministers’ local representation were resetting. Before 2001, they were the sole NGOs’ authorities and interlocutors. The governors still play a role of facilitation and coordination, especially between communities, aid stakeholders and line ministries.

It is worth mentioning that, except for MAAHF, MRRD and MEW are not represented at the district level.

3.3.2 External aid actors

As far as the water management and irrigation sub sectors are concerned, it includes the private consulting firms and FAO. The role of NGOs is minor except within the KRBP. For the WSS sub-sector, NGOs remain the main stakeholder as external agency, and counterparts of MRRD.

From being a unique actor during the humanitarian emergency period, NGOs have become a “mere” link within an overall aid chain and organisation. Functions and tasks which used to be accomplished by NGOs have been divided. These changes met some resistance after 2001 due to their independence principle and lack of awareness on evolving context. “Mentally” and operationally wise, the shift appears effective nowadays when discussing with NGO officers and observing their current practices. As far as NGOs are concerned, the new environment requires substantial learning and building. Although NGOs are small and reactive institutions, this new situation required and still requires strategic redefinitions and deep reorganisations.

NGOs remain the main communities’ interlocutor. They play a crucial intermediary role within the current aid system and institutional framework between communities and other aid agencies and administrations. In spite of good progress, the NGOs staff’s turnover still hampers their own strengthening capacity process and the sustainable and efficient management of development projects.

In order to increase their technical and financial capacity, NGOs have developed since 2004 partnerships between themselves or with other institutions like research institutes or universities from the region or from Europe. This positive trend is especially visible in the water sector. It is encouraged by donors and it is fully required when participating in large and complex government programmes.

Few international NGOs like GAA and DACAAR have decided since 2001 to focus on the water sector in order to strengthen their capacity and expertise in this relevant field. NGOs have globally lost a lot of influence in this sector since 2001. Such NGOs are striving to reinforce their technical capacities and institutional positioning. They intend to employ relevant staff at central level for better institutional coordination and backstopping project. It is not an easy process as it requires independent funds.

No special investigation was conducted by the author to find out the role of Afghan NGOs. It is almost nil in the irrigation and WM sub-sectors and it seems limited to a few NGO in the WSS.

3.3.3 Communities and private sector:

Prepared by the GoA with the support of the donors, the 2002 National Development Framework and the current National Development Strategy both strongly emphasize the essential promotion of private sector and communities as one of the key factors which would lead to building a sustainable and prosperous Afghanistan. As a socio economic sector, water is very much concerned by this development trend. It basically implies a withdrawal of

the state (compared to the sixties and seventies) limited to legislation, regulation and facilitation functions, a development of construction and services delivery companies mostly for the infrastructure work, and the communities' empowerment (called water users) for the overall resource management functions.

3.3.3.1 Communities:

There is a traditional high communities' involvement in WM in Afghanistan. The state's presence and capacity in this country has never reached such a stage to replace the role of communities in dealing with such issues as natural resources management. The traditional irrigation schemes covering more than 90% of the irrigated area are communities' work through the well-known *mirab* system. In rural settings, drinking water points or schemes are also self operated and maintained. Communities are organised through the ancient *ashar*¹⁹ (idem) system for collective work like the maintenance of irrigation networks.

Nevertheless things are not simple with regards to current water management and involvement of the communities /water users. The context has changed a lot.

The *ashar* and *mirab* systems, and more generally local institutions and governance, have collapsed or have been highly disrupted in the last 25 years of war and instability. It is clearly confirmed by NGOs day-to-day field work as well as specific research work on socio anthropology and social water management.

Moreover the demand on water for irrigation and other uses has been increasing a lot with the intensification of agriculture and the overall development process underway. More efficient and equitable water management has become crucial, and traditional and local forms of organisation and management can not cope any more with this highly challenging situation. Water Users Associations and other water management related institutions have to be constituted based on the policy strategic framework sector.

NGO's and other agencies' officers encountered stressed that "Building capacity and awareness" on population related to water management has been the most important and difficult aspect of their job. Community's empowerment first requires trust between population and external aid agents. As a whole, this trust has become fragile since 2001 hampering the whole community mobilization processes. The Box below gives a concrete insight from an NGO officer dealing with a water project in Central Highlands.

¹⁹ Communal, usually unpaid, labour.

Box 5. Communities' involvement and relation NGO (aid) – communities in a water development project by Solidarités- extracts of LETY (2006)²⁰ report -

“In the transitional state from emergency to development, donor and international community want to implement a democratic process, to make sure populations take part in the project and are aware of their responsibilities. But the collective work is evolving through merchandising and populations still interpret external aid as punctual and direct. We assume that development approach promoted by international community will be hard to implement given the social structure and the resentment of population...”

“(..). the communities often do not understand NGOs' working methods. This leads to a range of resentment: disillusion, suspicion, rejection, distrust... “A lot of NGOs came, asked questions and did not do anything.” (villagers in Sum e malek and Sum e takhak)...”

“(...)We have to consider here the massive aid following the withdrawal of Taliban. This aid was following an emergency approach with lots of means, direct gifts... “In some respect, affected people only seem to be onlookers of aid, unsure how to engage proactively with the aid community” (ALNAP, 2003). We have to take into account the current context of intervention for NGOs implementing development approach... They (NGOs) have to manage resentment coming from this background. We personally feel misunderstood from the community about our field work and its interests. The will is to change methods but the local population is still interpreting the aid as a relation donor-beneficiaries.”

While it may still occur in other sectors like agriculture, financial contribution from communities in any related water projects is nowadays systematic. It is often set at a level of 10% in relation to the NSP standards. Nevertheless a lot of NGOs do think that this participation is too low to ensure a strong incentive on the project implementation. Some NGOs or some projects apply or plan to apply higher contribution rates up to 30 or 40 %.

3.3.3.2 Private sector:

Private construction companies have been emerging thanks to the 2005 NGO act forbidding NGO to do construction work. Many Afghan NGOs shifted to private companies. The first (indirect) benefit is thus to clarify the NGO sector and to sort out the fake NGOs which used to deal more with profit construction works.

As noticed in the field, the referred law and the arrival of the private sector in the aid scene are well accepted by the external aid actors like NGOs. Nevertheless they are having a hard time on a day-to-days basis dealing with this emerging and “anarchic” (unregulated) private sector because of its lack of experience, professionalism and accountability. The State private sector registration and regulation are not set up yet. It has been very often highlighted as a severe bottleneck within the overall current aid organisation.

It is worth mentioning that at field level, application of the NGO's act referring to this construction matter presents a certain flexibility. Some construction works are still carried out by NGOs with a strong communities' involvement and responsibility.

²⁰ Lety D., *Land development in Central Highlands of Afghanistan - Case study of Shaman plain flood control project (Bamyan Province) -Agrarian system & impact assessments*, Groupe URD, 2005

Within the management of some government programmes like NSP, the private companies monitoring and their work does not appear clearly. NGOs as facilitating partner in charge with social and community mobilization aspects do not apparently have a well defined role on technical and hardware issues. It relies more on ID or MRRD provincial offices. But their capacity is far insufficient for an effective monitoring with regards to the activity volume and to the private sector's immaturity. It may globally lead to a poor performance and quality in the construction work as quoted by population and NGOs.

The new aid organisation at sub-national levels in relation to the state, administration and communities' promotion and the private sector is well implicated nowadays in the water sector. External aid actors remain the hub of the current organisation. The government tries with great difficulties to follow the pace. Many adjustments and improvements at each stakeholder level and between them are required to make this organisation effective. Time and funds are required.

Within the water sector, there is a gap between programmes' objectives and activities and what is reasonably possible in such context. The state and communities' capacity building and empowerment should be considered in a progressive manner supported by a coherent strategy. There are great expectations from donors and the international community upon the state and the population. They expect them to quickly and massively take the lead on the development process. Capacity building means, beyond trainings, awareness campaigns, water user associations development, equipped offices, a question of education and human and society development.

Persons met during the field mission

Thursday 30 March	Paris – Dubaï
Friday 31 March	Dubai – Kabul Team meeting: discussing the itinerary
Saturday 01 April	Meetings at MEW with Dr Thilo – Advisor for the Ministry of Energy and Water, Hans Husselman (Rodeco/GTZ) – Water sector Reform project team leader and Sayed Sharif Shobair (FAO) – EIRP Coordinator and Chief Eng.
Sunday 02 April	- Theo Riedke (GAA) – Country Director - Hans Huselmans
Monday 03 April	Marek Stys (People In Need) – Country Director Team work: Methodology Kabul – Bamyan
Wednesday 05 April (Bamyan)	Habib Hussaini (ICRC) – Head of Bamyan office Mohammad Yasin Hotak + Eng Muharmad (UNHABITAT) – NSP program Eng. Saïd Anwar (MRRD/OC) – NSP programme Jeff (Global Partner) - Head of Bamyan office
Thursday 06 April (Bamyan)	Sylvain (Solidarités Yakawlang) – EU funded program Manager Mohammad Yasin Hotak (UNHABITAT) – NSP program Manager Ing. Shafiq Ullah (MRRD) – Water and Sanitation programme
Friday 07 April	Bamyan – Eibak (Samangan province)
Saturday 08 April (Balgh)	Eibak – Mazar Y Sharif Ondrej Horvath (PIN) - Water and Sanitation EU funded Program Officer in Dare Suf district (Samangan province)
Sunday 09 April (Sare Pul)	Visit of GAA in Sare Pul province (drinking water project and NSP) - Interviews with Daniel Bronkal (GAA), Nahida Shah (GAA) - Community Health Advisor for hygiene education and Juergen Hofmeister (GAA) – NSP manager
Monday 10 April (Balgh)	Robert WILKENS (PCI Asia consultant) – ADB EIRRP-TIC team leader Max Kent McGowan – Consultant for ADB BRIWRM Project Valentino ICRC Watsan
Tuesday 11 April (Kunduz)	Mazar – Kunduz ACTED Kunduz GAA – Walter Osenberg – “Social Water Management” project (KRBP) Ing. WAHAB- Mercy Corps Kunduz – head of infrastructures department
Wednesday 12 April (Taloqan)	AKDN and Group URD - PMIS (Participative Management of Irrigated Systems) (KRBP) Eng. SALIM – Irrigation department Director – Taloqan province
Thursday 13 April (Kunduz)	M. Khalima AMINI – Irrigation department Director – Kunduz province Jelle BEEKMA – KRBP – Kunduz
Friday 14 April	Kunduz – Kabul
Saturday 15 April (Kabul)	Kabul: team work
Sunday 16 April (Kabul)	Benny Werge (Dacaar) – Rural Development Programme Manager; Didier (Dacaar) – Water and Sanitation programme advisor and Jahangir Khan (Dacaar) – Research Support Officer Valérie MEILHAUD (ICRC) - Water and Sanitation Coordinator Eng. Hashim Mayar (ACBAR) – Deputy Director
Monday 17 April (Wardak)	M. Amanullah (Solidarités Afghanistan Belgique) – Field Office Manager Eng. Anwar (MEW/ID) – Director Eng. Wali Mohammad (MRRD) – Programmes Director Jorgen Holmstrom (SCA) – Regional Director + Dr Wakil Ziar and Arif + Quadratullah (NSP PM) M. Shah Mahdan (Dacaar) – RDP regional coordinator Brendan Whitty (AREU) – Research support Officer
Tuesday 18 April	Dacaar team in Jeghatu district (Visits of projects; interviews with farmers and water users)
Wednesday 19 April	Visits in chak and Jalez districts
Thursday 20 April	Dr V. Haraprasad – Water supply advisor (MRRD) Gedlu Sima (UNHCR/MRRD)
Friday 21 April	Workshop preparation
Saturday 22 April	Workshop preparation
Sunday 23 April	Workshop preparation
Monday 24 April	Workshop
Tuesday 26 April	Dr Henri Sutter (AKDN) – Rural Development Coordinator Hans Husselman (MEW/GTZ/RODECCO) – Water reforms Advisor Eng. Ramazan (MADERA) – Area Manager (Wardak province)
Wednesday 27 April	Patricia Garcia (GAA) – Program Manager Leendert Vijselaar (Dacaar) – Water Supply and Sanitation Director
Monday 1 st May	Kabul – Paris

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4 AGRICULTURE SECTOR

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Around 85% of the Afghan population lives in rural areas. Agriculture and raising of livestock are of great importance to the Afghan economy and are essential for rural livelihoods. In 1978, just before the Soviet invasion, Afghanistan was self sufficient in food and at the same time exported agricultural produce. During the 25 years of war that followed, 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. In many cases, farmer's strategies depend on the risks and opportunities they have to deal with. Given that climatic risks²¹ as well as other kinds of hazards weigh significantly on farming systems, farmer's often orient their farming strategies towards risk reduction whilst maintaining sufficient flexibility to develop coping mechanisms. The coping mechanisms used by Afghan farmers during wartime have been well documented by many authors and experts.

Three core ministries have been involved in agriculture and natural resource management—the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry (MAAH), the Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources, and Environment (MIWRE), and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). This report is mainly focused on the agricultural sector.

For decades, the development of the agricultural sector in Afghanistan has been mainly associated with emergency relief and rural rehabilitation. Roads, bridges and canals have been rehabilitated or build. Projects have been oriented towards emergency aid such as free distributions (seeds, fertilisers, tools, etc.) or free services. Over the past two years, the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) has given a priority to the development of the private sector that is expected to ensure a rapid growth of the rural economy. The 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 focuses on 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.

There is a wide diversity of agro-systems within Afghanistan. Agro-systems and farming systems are shaped by a number of different factors such as climate, altitude, soil specificities and access to water, roads and markets. These different parameters were taken into account when designing the field mission itinerary. Other factors such as proximity to the border, the role of the private sector, NGO activities over the past years are other elements of diversity and were also taken into account. In this report, we will only address issues that are strictly related to the agricultural sector. The community mobilisation component (also called social mobilisation) will be taken into account in this report but activities related to rural infrastructure, water and sanitation, irrigation²² and micro-finance programmes will not.

4.1 Patterns and current trends in agricultural Programmes projects implemented by NGOs

Before turning to the question of achievements, constraints and keys issues or threats in the agriculture sector, it is useful to consider the context in which they take place.

4.1.1 The MAAHF, moving towards a strategy for the agriculture sector?

Prior to 2004, the MAAHF as a whole benefited from less international support than other ministries such as the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). The change in

²¹ In Afghanistan, crop and livestock production fluctuates each year in relation to the severity and duration of droughts which range from mild to severe.

²² For water/sanitation and irrigation see Rivière, water and irrigation sector review, Groupe URD – LRRD programme, 2005

government that took place in December 2004 and the nomination of a new Minister of Agriculture led to renewed donor interest. In January 2005, the Ministry was renamed “Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry **and Food**”, as opposed to Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry (MAAH).

The Master Plan of agriculture aims at fixing the priorities for the development of the agricultural sector. At the time of writing (May 2006), a draft of the implementation document of the Master Plan is under discussion. This document presents the sequence of activities that should be undertaken to execute the Master Plan. It lays out in what order activities should be implemented, when, and gives a profile of each activity.

Nowadays, the MAAHF officially employs a total of 12,000 staff members at national, provincial and district levels. At provincial level, the different departments of agriculture are more or less effective depending on the province. We noted a strong heterogeneity in the level of equipment, funding availability and technical knowledge. In Kunduz, where the French cooperation has assisted in rehabilitation of extension and research units, the research section is active and together with International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), MAAHF staff is involved in research activities (seeds test mainly). However, the Bamiyan office has fewer resources and the department is effectively dormant. In each case, staff requests more training and more investment in research and extension work. This is certainly linked to the fact that during the 1970's the agricultural extension system functioned well and was seen as the main pillar of the ministry's activities/role?. However, during the war period the system collapsed and the staff is now aging and the methods used are outdated.

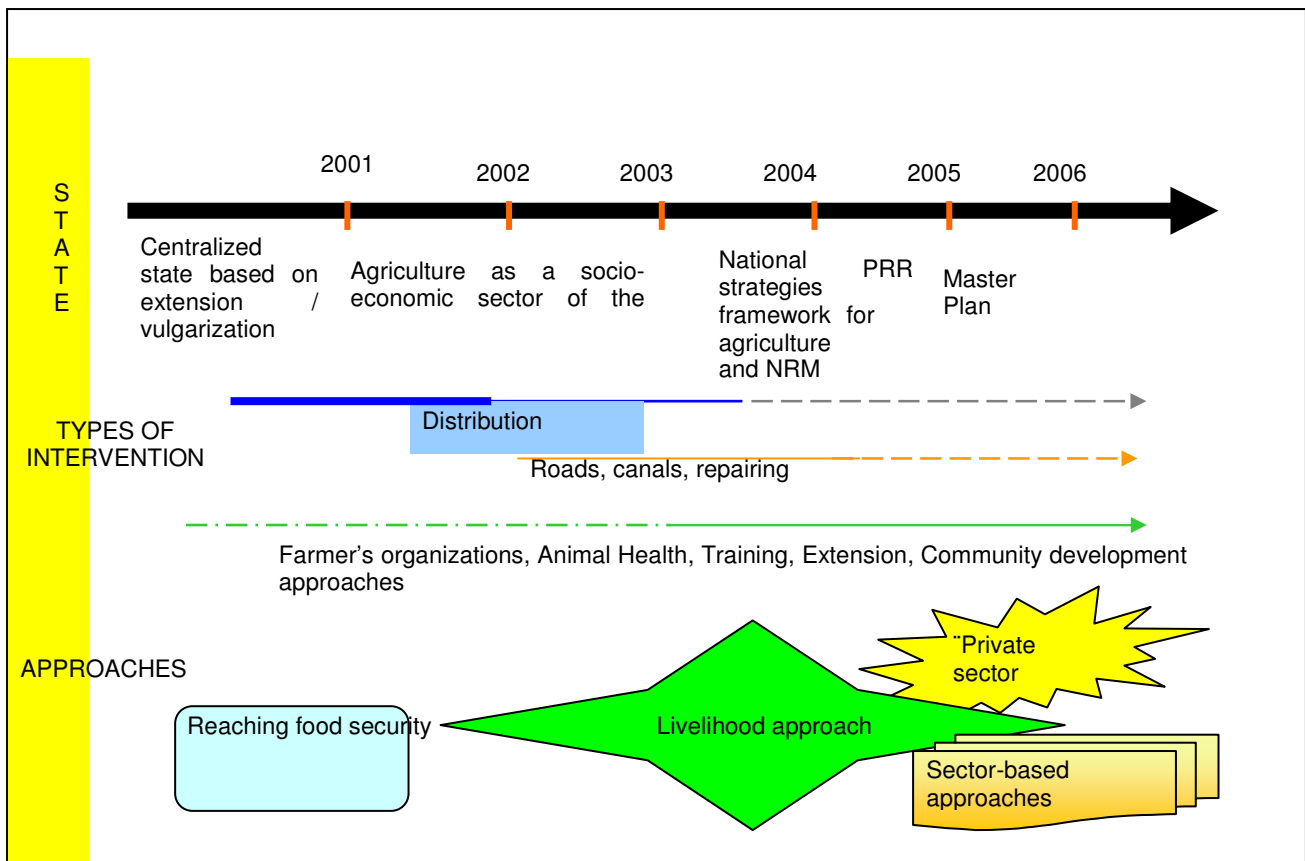
At the provincial level, the focus is often placed on re-establishing former public research and extension system. MAAHF's staff expects this system to be run by the government and inputs to be provided by the private sector. The staff's role would be to distribute inputs, provide training rather than provide relevant and adapted services to farmers. It is worth underlining that the intentions expressed in the Master Plan in relation to the role and responsibilities of the MAAHF are not well understood by staff at the provincial/ district level. Indeed, the Master Plan emphasises that the MAAHF is responsible for ensuring that services are provided to farmers (monitoring and evaluation task) and yet it also states that the MAAHF is not necessarily responsible for the actual delivery of services.

4.1.2 Evolution of the types of programmes in the agricultural sector

The types of programmes and approaches adopted within the agriculture sector have evolved considerably over the past years. Before 2001, although the farmer's condition was clearly affected by the war and the Taliban regime, some NGO's were already implementing some development programmes.

After the withdrawal of the Taliban and the drought period, many NGOs launched agricultural projects in Afghanistan. From 2001 until 2003 most of the programmes were oriented towards emergency and rehabilitation (distribution and infrastructures reconstruction were quite important at that time), but some donors (like the EC, SDC) were also funding longer term approaches to enhance food security. Moreover, what is clear is that since 2002-2003 there has been a clear shift in the way food aid was delivered: from free food distributions and food-for-work programmes to address acute food insecurity (related to drought, displacement, etc.), the programmes progressively shifted towards a use of food aid to support development objectives. The livelihoods concept began to spread throughout the aid stakeholders since 2002-03 aiming a widening the concept of food security. This was undoubtedly a step forward towards a development approach to start considering rural livelihood beyond the borders of the sole agrarian incomes. Nowadays, the livelihood approach remains widely spread in terms of methods mostly regarding poppy eradication.

Figure 8: The evolution of the type of interventions and approaches in the agricultural sector



Source: Groupe URD

4.1.3 The growing place of the private sector

The MAAHF has defined a framework for the private sector development. The Master Plan is dedicated to prioritizing the public services needed to fully mobilize these immense private sector potentials. It guards against subsidies to public provision of any goods and services that the private sector can provide. It specifies rules and regulations that can foster private sector growth, especially in exports. The Master Plan warns that *“in Afghanistan at this stage of rehabilitation and development the private sector farmer and entrepreneurs require critical government services if they are to compete on international markets. Some of these services are purely temporary, much provided by foreign assistance and envisioned as provided outside of government institutions, to disappear when no longer needed.”* The food and agricultural business sector is seen as one of the most important player, especially as some donors’ strategies clearly include promoting their national businesses in the country. This is notably visible through the arrival of large dairy companies (Land O’ Lakes, Tetra Pak, Nestlé). Furthermore, the urbanisation of the country means there will be an increasing demand for commercial food products.

4.2 Main evolution of the agricultural sector

4.2.1 Main trends

During the last decades, Afghanistan has undertaken huge economic policy changes, from a semi-marked-led economy in the 1960 and 1970’s to a highly centralized system in the 1980’s, the ministry of agriculture was characterized by a lack of policy, means and vision during the civil war and the Taliban time. During the war most of the agricultural service delivery, extension and vulgarization activities were implemented by the NGOs and eventually by other international organisations. The fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and the creation of the AIA (Afghan Interim Authority) followed by the establishment of the ITSA (Islamic Transitional State of Afghanistan) in July 2002 marked the beginning of the massive flows of aid.

The first document to outline and define the main policies and strategies for the coming years was the National Development Framework (NDF) presented in April 2002. This document provides a number of guidelines and principles to guide the reconstruction of the country. The NDF sets the role of the government as regulator, policy/ strategy maker, evaluator and promoter of the entrepreneurial investment while production and management of the economy is assigned to the private sector. This document address the division of responsibilities and roles between the public and the private sectors. Provision of justice, security and equality, investment in human capital as well as social wellbeing remain the responsibility of the state, while creating an encouraging and friendly environment for the private sector.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAL) has been seriously damaged during the two decades of war and its capacities to deliver viable and reliable service to the farmers have been dramatically reduced. Most qualified staff had either left the country or had joined international organisations like UN agencies or NGO's which provide ten or twenty times the salary than the one given by the government institutions. Consequently, to fulfil this new roles and responsibilities, the MAL was forced to start a huge and long reform to shape new strategies, policies, and structures in lines with the goals described in the NDF.

In 2004, "a policy and strategy framework for the rehabilitation and development of agriculture and natural resource sector in Afghanistan" was prepared by the MAL and reviewed by the major development partners.

4.2.2 The main key players

The table below summarizes the main opportunities, challenges and threats brought in since 2001.

Table 3: Actors of change: opportunities, challenges and threats

- Key players	- Opportunities	- Challenges and threat
- MAAHF at central level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of a policy for the agriculture sector (the Master Plan) - Definition of the responsibilities of the departments - Slowly gained the confidence of the donors - Enhancement of the private sector through the support of certain sectors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weaknesses in term of capacities - Lack of comprehensive understanding of the Afghan farming systems and the diversity of farmers strategies - Need to develop links with the NGOs for lessons and knowledge sharing - The MAAHF remains responsible for addressing the poorest needs: What are the plan to address vulnerabilities in the future - Urgent need to share the new definition of the MAAHF's roles with the MAAHF staff at different levels and the Afghans.
- Provincial Agriculture Departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have slowly started the application of PRR decree to ensure that adequate salaries can be paid and the trained staff stay within the PADs. - National plan for capacity-building under EC funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of understanding of the MAAHF new roles and responsibilities at the provincial level. - Lack of technical knowledge and updated tools of farming system analysis - Corruption level remains important
- UNFAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation to policy-making and capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure sustainability of their action. - Should UNFAO implement project on its own? - Some questions remain about the relevance of an emergency approach for some FAO's programmes?
- Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Willing to work with and through 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs to define a common approach

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the MAAHF - Adopted a coherent, policy-based approach to agriculture sector development. - Willing to strengthen the staff capacities at the different levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - regarding certain issues (eg. contradictory approach in between free seeds distributions and the development of a sustainable wheat seeds market.)
- Implementing partners (IP's)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They have a good access to communities. - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Experience often restricted to Afghanistan with limited exposure to international debate. - Their knowledge is not well optimized as they rarely participate to the definition of the programmes. - Risk of institutionalization - Lack of quality assurance methods -
- NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In length experience in providing agricultural service delivery and implementing agricultural programmes. - Some NGOs have an in-depth understanding of farmer's strategies, assets and constraints - Agents of social change ensuring that the most vulnerable are given consideration. They are a good link in between the state, the communities and the growing private sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial vulnerability for some of them - Need to strengthen their links with the MAAHF - More lesson learnt sharing mechanisms are needed - Some of them have a good potential to develop their advocacy roles - Need to clarify their mandate and responsibilities -
- Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quick impact projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The concept clearly blurs distinction between the military and humanitarian assistance - Difficult coordination with NGO methods and principles. - Free distribution is often harmful. - Lack of understanding of national policies and of the MAAHF strategies -

Nowadays, we can differentiate three main types of NGOs regarding their length of involvement in Afghanistan, their mandate, principles and amount of core funds...

4.2.3 Non specialized NGOs and “Implementing Partners”

This type is made up of national and international NGOs. Most of the NGOs belonging to that type started implementing projects in 2002. They started working in the country during the emergency period and were involved in different sectors (health, education, water/sanitation, agriculture, infrastructure rehabilitation). Nowadays, these NGOs are often Implementing Partners (IPs) for UN agencies or national programme (like the NSP).

Donors that favour QIP (Quick impact projects) are used to work with this type of NGOs because one of their main advantages is certainly their reactivity and their flexibility regarding their methods and the approaches. Their strategy is partly based on a high implementing rate of programmes and a high visibility.

Their methods and programmes are often based on an emergency mode. They are mainly used to implement short terms programmes based on distribution of agricultural inputs. The assessment phase before the implementation is very weak, sometimes quasi-inexistent. The Monitoring &

Evaluation (M&E) processes are always based on quantitative data that are often analyzed at the Kabul level by people having a very limited understanding of the context. There are often seen as a way of implementing a programme which has been designed by others. We noticed that in many cases, their advices or ideas were not valued. In many cases, they are just told the modalities of the programme and the place to implement it. The head of a National NGO met in Mazar complained that its organisation was not involved in the selection of the areas and the beneficiaries. According to him: *"We surely have a better access to the field, we know farmer's needs, we should be the one in charge of the assessment and the methodology. At least we could advise them. But our role is limited to deliver the aid, that's it."* About an emergency programme implemented last year he said *"It was an emergency programme we did not have time to discuss but the results were not good. Part of the wheat did not germinate because the seeds were not adapted to the area"*. In some cases those NGOs have a good knowledge of the area (social networks, farmer's expectations) and they should be much more consulted during the project's design.

However, one of their main limitations is their lack of understanding of some concepts like the livelihood framework and participative tools.

4.2.4 NGOs with a long involvement in Afghanistan

Another type is made of NGOs (mainly international but also national NGOs) which are involved in Afghanistan since many years. Some of them started working in the country during the Russian time. They generally kept the same areas of intervention since years and built strong relationship with the population. These NGOs are in general well appreciated by the population since they have proved their commitment to the communities. Nowadays they are involved in farmer's trainings, improved seeds programmes (with demonstration plots, wheat seeds enterprise development) and animal health. Most of them are willing to keep a focus on the most vulnerable people. However, these NGOs are also willing to develop the private sector and shape some of their approaches to strengthen private initiatives.

Most of these NGOs have developed different community approaches and some of them are nowadays involved in NSP projects. Most of them have understood that they need to shift from emergency methods towards a development mode. They are aware that their responsibilities are to avoid creating artificial service delivery mechanisms. Many NGOs staff met during the mission and then in Kabul pointed out the fact that they are aware of the need to invest more time, money and energy in a in depth assessment before implementing a project. They also underlined the fact that they should develop an M&E system based on quality. Some of the NGOs classified in this group have already set up a branch dedicated to research and evaluation. They have often spent lot of time and energy in building the capacities of their staff. The fact that there is a need to increase the number of Afghan staff at the highest position is more and more evident. Serious changes are needed for the staff to shift from a prevailing patronising idea: *"changing farmer's attitudes"* towards the idea of programmes that will meet the real farmer's needs and will be able to monitor those change to constantly adapt the answer to the needs.

The three constraints faced by these NGOs are the following. Firstly, they rely very much on donor's funds. Most of the time, they have no –or very limited- core funds which prevent them to have a room for manoeuvre to implement project that they find relevant. They generally have to deal with a high staff turn-over as the salaries they propose to local and international staff are low. Very often, they loose the staff they have trained after some years.

Finally yet importantly, those NGOs are generally weak in term of communication and coordination with the government at Kabul level. However, their capacities to work in partnership with the local authorities are good as they are used to it since years and have the relevant networks.

4.2.5 Large NGOs with own funding

The lengths of experience in Afghanistan vary a lot for NGOs belonging to this category. Some of them are involved in Afghanistan since one or two decades, others have started their programmes right after the fall of the Taliban.

During the emergency period, those NGOs have been implementing food and non-food items distribution. In 2003, some of them like AKF-A (Agha Khan Foundation for Afghanistan) decided to move away from the initial sector-based and emergency driven approach towards a more holistic integrated and demand driven rural development programme²³. They stopped all the free distribution programmes to make sure to leave the space for the development of a demand driven approach. Other agencies like Oxfam have a wider mandate: they implement both emergency and development programmes. Since Oxfam principle is to address the most vulnerable needs, it happens that they implement more emergency-oriented programmes when they think that it is necessary.

More generally, those NGOs are implementing a wide range of activities: seeds programmes, animal health, agro-business development, natural resources management. In general, they have a very good communication strategy and have a strong network around the world. (Oxfam is working in 30 different countries around the world). Those NGOs clearly state their will to develop an integrated approach and have been the standard-bearer of the livelihood approach for some years. In general they have developed a strong focus on community development and have their own approaches and tools. For instance, AKF-A uses the village development planning process to identify sector-based issues and opportunities at the village level.

Their main assets are often a good access to technical expertise and experienced staff at least at the Kabul and provincial levels. Their integrated approaches are well recognized and often well appreciated by the donors and partner's agencies. The fact that they have core funding gives them an important room for manoeuvre. Since the salaries are generally among the highest of the ones proposed by NGOs, they generally manage to keep their staff longer than other NGOs.

One of their other important assets is that they have already realized the importance to increase the quality of their project. They plan to do that through increasing the research activities, the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in ensuring the link between the communities and the growing private sector.

Those NGOs also have to face a certain numbers of constraints. Although most of these NGOs have invested time and money to build the capacities of their staff; most of the decision-makers are expatriates. This is also linked to the fact that those NGOs belong to a worldwide network and have to understand and put into practices many concepts and methods often forming the core principles of the NGO. Because they are often quite large, they generally lack of flexibility and reactivity to answer certain needs. Their overhead costs are among the highest as the administrative structure is fairly heavy.

4.3 The main achievements to date

Since the election of Hamid Karzai in 2002 and the parliamentary election of October 2004, many things have evolved. For some times, one had the feeling that all these changes were only taking place in Kabul, however, since 2004 the provincial departments needs and expectations are better addressed.

²³ FOCUS (the humanitarian branch of the AKDN (Agha Khan Development Network) remained in charge of the humanitarian aid.

4.3.1 Securing the agricultural production

As the Master Plan states: “the government and donors succeeded in rescuing the people from eminent starvation, repairing and expanding infrastructure such as rural roads, and providing some marketing facilities to assist agriculture to move forwards.”

In some areas the food security issues have been addressed for most of the farmers. Livelihoods have been secured due to emergency, rehabilitation and development projects. The long assistance and selfless efforts that some of the NGOs made during the conflict period, have had an impact on some households. Their contributions in turning around the agriculture performance are impressive. Improved wheat seeds programmes, extension and vulgarisation programmes, kitchen gardens projects, animal health programmes and so forth have increased farmer’s coping mechanisms. Beyond the economic impact, it is important to underline the social “political” impacts of these programmes. NGO’s activities during the conflict period and even nowadays have had the immense advantage to support the population. Nowadays, some NGO’s have the significant advantage to have gained the trust of the communities they are working with.

Wheat is the main cereal and staple food accounting for about 70% of the total cultivated field crops. With an average yield of 2 tons per hectare, the productivity of irrigated wheat is generally considered to be between two or three times that of rain-fed wheat. The wheat seeds market has evolved a lot in the last years. Nowadays, although over 50% of the wheat field crop in Afghanistan is occupied by improved varieties, the quality of seeds in use remains poor. The informal sector made up of farmer’s saved seeds and exchanges as well as supplies from local markets is the main source of accounting for nearly 85% of all the seeds used. Nevertheless, since 2001 seeds control procedures have been established and a seed law has been designed by the MAAHF (assisted by FAO). Many demonstration plots have been set up throughout the country to encourage the development and the utilisation of improved wheat seeds. Nowadays, NGO’s and the FAO actively work to set up or strengthen the private seed market (e.g.: the wheat seeds enterprise programme of the FAO). However as we will explain later, the lack of common strategy regarding the seed sector is harmful.

Although wheat is an important crop for the afghan population, reaching self sufficiency in wheat should not be a priority. The neighbouring countries are producing much bigger quantities of wheat and export part of it to Afghanistan. Afghanistan could not protect an inland market for years and would not be able to compete with the wheat coming from the neighbouring countries.

According to Maletta, (2003) *“of the 6.5 million hectares of actually cultivable land in the country, only about four million hectares at best can be cultivated per year. This is mainly because 3.5 million hectares apt for rain-fed cultivation could not be all planted simultaneously as they only admit crops on a rotational basis; also because the remaining 3.0 million hectares of irrigated land are only partially cultivated because of various problems in the irrigation systems, ranging from destroyed infrastructure to abuse of water rights, plus the protracted effects of the recent drought on the availability of water at underground aquifers and reservoirs, both still undergoing replenishment. Some irrigated land is cropped twice a year, but most give only one crop per year.”* Since the population’s density is increasing, high value crop are becoming more and more needed. For instance, in Baharak Valley (Badakshan province) renting a land is so expensive that cropping wheat is not interesting anymore²⁴.

Wheat is certainly not a crop which will secure the afghan farming systems on a longer term. The emphasis on livestock improvement and horticulture proposed by the master plan are certainly two sensitive objectives. The agro-ecological constraints However, one has to be careful that this benefit to the poorest.

²⁴ Duchier J.C., Pascal P., *Understand need diversity to design sustainable programmes*, www.urd.org, 2005
Duchier J.C., *Blé ou pavot? les paysans ont choisi*, www.urd.org, 2006

4.3.2 Rationalization of the functioning of the MAAHF

At the provincial level, salaries are now been paid on a regular basis. Duties and responsibilities are more or less given to the MAAHF staff. In some provinces (e.g. Balkh and Kunduz) there are some effective research activities on different crops (often in partnership with ICARDA, FAO).

4.3.3 Improvement of the coordination mechanisms

The coordination in between the different aid stakeholders and the department of agriculture has considerably increased. In 2004, the government was complaining to be left aside by the different stakeholders regarding the types of projects implemented. Since 2005, at the provincial level, the staff acknowledges that things have improved. Nowadays, the Department of Agriculture is often part of the assessment and of the choice of the type of programmes to be implemented.

The PCB meetings have been helpful in improving coordination and exchange of information. The ministry's strategy and policies are better shared with the provincial level thanks to a series of workshops organised by the MAAHF.

4.4 Constraints / Key challenges and risks

Major changes have happened since 2002, both at the national and provincial levels. Huge amounts of money have been invested in rebuilding the institutional framework of the Afghan government. Still, Afghans are holding their breath. The gains made so far are fragile and challenging work remains to solidify the gains.

4.4.1 Finding the balance between decreasing the vulnerability and strengthening the private sector

According to the new name given to the ministry of agriculture (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food), one would expect food security issue to be emphasised by the MAAHF and the donors, notably to counterbalance the prominence given to commercial agriculture and international trade. This is not the case, as commercial agriculture and the development of the private sector remain the main focus of the American support to this ministry, notably through the RAMP (Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Programme) .

The issue of the relevance and limits of food aid in Afghanistan remains a vast debate. Some claim food aid needs have been over-estimated (Neun & Fitzherbert, 2003) even though the results of the NRVA 2003 tend to confirm that many Afghan households still suffer from acute food insecurity and are in need of food aid until longer-term social security and safety nets are established. People living in mountainous areas where the winter seasons last for more than 6 months are partly food insecure. In Ghor, Samangan, in some districts of Bamyán province and in Nuristan, many families face a lack of food (in term of quality and quantity). Even though it is not a national problem anymore, some Afghan families face this problem every year, and a great number of them will continue to face it in case of a drought period or floods.

Undoubtedly, the development of the private sector will strengthen the Afghan economy as it can fuel the local economy and replace certain imports. Nevertheless it will be important for the GoA and NGOs to carefully monitor the way the private sector engages, as there can be negative impacts, for both Afghan consumers and producers. It is important for the Ministry to clarify the strategies targeting the most vulnerable farmers. Out of the 396 pages of the Master Plan, the word "vulnerable" is only quoted 13 times! The core principle is basically that the development of the private sector, will, in the end, help the poorest²⁵. This statement might be –at least partly–

²⁵ "It is the multipliers from that increase in farm incomes that will drive the rural nonfarm sector and take care of the poor. Much of that increase can come soon through large increases in the production per hectare of existing orchards

correct at some points. However, we can wonder when this will happen? How many years should the poorest wait to benefit from the private sector developments? For the time being what does the State plan for the most vulnerable? Of the landless people who represent a growing part of the Afghan farmers? Moreover, the fact that some donors like the EC has chosen to reallocate its funds for food security's programme in the coming years is quite worrying. One of the most common criticisms towards the current process of reconstruction in Afghanistan is the impression that the 'get rich quick' class at the top will get richer and richer while the poor who were encouraged to invest heavily in 'reconstruction' and promised prosperity will be left aside.

Addressing vulnerabilities remain a challenge for the GoA and the international community and should not be left aside because some key players should prefer to shift towards a model where the state would only have a monitoring role.

4.4.2 Issues related to the reduction of poppy's production

The GoA has made drug eradication a priority in the country strategy. A U.S.-led and DFID antidrug effort focus on eliminating poppy cultivation at the level of the individual farmer. Some NGOs believe that this plan could hurt individual farmers. Poppy is a very high value crop. Most of the stakeholders agree nowadays that there is no single crop able to compete with poppy in term of benefits. The eradication campaign taking place in Afghanistan impoverishes farmers and turn millions of Afghans against their government. Many analysts are convinced that the current increase of insecurity in some parts of the country (Mazar, Baghlan, Herat) is a direct consequence of the eradication campaign. In Jalallabad we met farmers saying that they have decided to grow poppy this year since, despite some promises, they did not get any other alternative last year when they agreed to grow other crops. Some NGOs like CARE, Mercy Corps, and Oxfam known for their advocacy roles have condemned those campaigns arguing that this will not tackle the core of the problems which is not driven by the poor farmers but by the processors and merchants who sell it further up the chain.

Some alternative livelihoods programmes are implemented in the provinces but are only targeted few provinces (North eastern part, southern and eastern parts of the country). Poppy production is a direct consequence of poverty. If their poppy fields are destroyed some farmers will have no their choice but sell their lands, assets or even family members to survive. Poppy eradication will take time and should be based on a pro-poor long term approach. Some NGO's have an important role to play since they have a good knowledge of the decision making process of farmers.

4.4.3 Some concerns about the wheat seeds market

For many years, improved wheat seeds programmes have been at the core of development programmes. A total of about 10 000 tons quality seed of improved varieties (accounting for about 5% of total seed requirements) is nowadays produced in the country every year. As we mentioned earlier, the efforts made to strengthen the wheat market have been worth it. However we would like to raise some issues.

4.4.3.1 Free or earned?

Firstly, the improved seed market remains mainly artificial as almost all of the seeds are bought by development agencies to be given out to farmers either for free or at very low cost²⁶. The price is preferential and prompts farmers to sow wheat in their fields. For many years NGO's are trying to set up a sustainable wheat seeds market at the village level. To achieve this objective they set up demonstration plots to test the varieties and exposed farmers to the results. They have also set up

and vineyards. Farmers will grow wealthier just from the gradual maturing of tree and vine plantings, but the rural non-farm population will be delayed in receiving the benefits of cash income increase." Master Plan, p21

²⁶ Lots of NGOs are proposing low price "packages" composed by one bag of wheat and one of urea

a network of contract growers (also called seeds multipliers). Although the emergency period is over, some aid stakeholders such as USAID and USDA (United State Department for Agriculture) keep on funding free wheat seeds distribution in several provinces. When a free distribution occurs in an area, the wheat seeds producers have lots of difficulties to send the improved seeds they have been produced and some of them stopped this process of selling out their seeds. This also calls into question the credibility of the NGOs trying to implement a long term approach.

Free wheat seeds distribution will be undoubtedly very harmful for reaching sustainability since they jeopardize the long term approach developed by different agencies. The FAO is working on the development of wheat seeds enterprise at the provincial level²⁷. Some initiatives that intend to reach a sustainable development of the wheat seeds market are called into question by other practices and approaches.

Free wheat seeds distribution could be relevant in some well-defined cases, on the contrary wide distribution programmes of seeds and agricultural tools should be discouraged since it seriously handicaps the prospects of an effective demand driven services, which is, in theory, the goal of the MAAHF. For instance we do not see any reasons to distribute free wheat seeds in Jalallabad or Kunduz provinces, where the private sector is starting to develop and most of the farmers have enough cash to buy their own seeds. For the same types of reasons, FFW/CFW (Food for Work, Cash for Work) processes should be avoided as much as possible where there are no emergency needs. The longer the organisations continue delivering services or inputs without any user's contributions (unpaid contributions), the more dependency will be created.

4.4.3.2 Lack of common policies

Secondly, although, many experts have proved that wheat is not an alternative to poppy cultivation (Pain, Favre, Duchier and Pascal, which year??) and argued that to curbe the poppy production in Afghanistan, a long-term integrated approach is needed, wheat seeds distribution remain part of some alternative livelihood programmes. In 2004 and 2005 USAID has distributed for 25 millions USD worth of wheat and fertilisers to discourage farmers to plant poppy. This distribution has been granted by the MAAHF at the national level, however some of the departments of agriculture we have visited argued they had not been consulted. Many NGOs highlighted the fact that they were not aware of the distribution. Apparently in some cases, the distributed seeds were not adapted to the agro-ecological conditions. For instance in some areas, the germination rate was lower that the one of the local varieties. NGOs also report that some farmers were complaining regarding the quality but did not protest too much because it was a free aid.

There is indeed a very urgent need for a common approach aimed at improving crop production, food security and farm incomes. The current strategies related to improved wheat seeds differ in many ways. They might end to be contradictory and conflicting in some aspects.

4.4.3.3 Lack of assessment

Finally yet importantly, there is a very important lack of assessment. In some cases, (e.g.: Baharak valley in Badakshan²⁸) farmers sew wheat instead of trying out other cropping system adapted to their constraints such as the lack of land. Somehow, wheat seeds programme slow down farmer's copping strategies. The study implemented in Baharak valley shows that 80% of households can not ensure the sustainability of their farming system based on wheat. When farmers face a lack of land (which is more than common in Afghanistan), higher value crop would be much more interesting for them than wheat. . In some given circumstances, like drought, floods that occur just after the seedling, locust, or other pest, the aid community should resort to free seeds distribution.

²⁷ At the same time, a five-year project funded by EC is scheduled to start in 2006, to follow on from the current FAO implemented project (on wheat seeds enterprise). This new project will cover all aspects of the commercialisation and privatisation of the seed businesses.

²⁸ 2005, Duchier, Pascal, Understanding diversity to design sustainable programs, the case of wheat seeds programs in Baharak, Badakshan province, Groupe URD, www.urd.org

In some parts of the country (remote and mountainous areas), well prepared and targeted free distribution might be relevant. When such projects have to be done, they should be based on a sensitive selection of the beneficiaries and followed by a careful evaluation and lesson learned exercise.

4.4.4 Some concerns about the national-scale programs

Some programmes like the NSP or the GAIN (Greening Afghanistan Initiative Network) or the RAMP (Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program) are implemented at a national scale. The main concern about these programmes may be the lack of adaptation to the local specificities. For instance regarding the GAIN project, we can wonder why it has been decided to give 2500 trees per women. The distribution of such a high quantity of trees might rise some problems. On this 2500 trees per women, 500 are supposed to be planted by the women on their land and 2000 are suppose to be sold. If 10 women are given 2500 trees in a village, then 20 000 trees will have to be sold in the village!!! The IP's of one of the GAIN project we have met was not able to give us a clear view of the ways they will be using to help these women to sell their trees (marketing, storage...).

Regarding the NSP programs, the two main constraints is the heavy load of paper work and the approach at the village level. For some types of structures like irrigation, the village level (where the CDC have to be created) is certainly not the most adapted as the resource is managed at the canal level.

Agrarian systems in Afghanistan and farmers strategies (constraints and opportunities) are very diversified. Local specificities have to be understood carefully and taken into account. The national-scale programmes should be flexible enough to take into account the diversity and meet communities needs, constraints and opportunities as well as possible.

4.4.5 Mobilising communities: the importance of defining a common approach

The situation on the field is rather confusing. There are many different types of councils or communities groups established by NGOs (including the CDC). In a single village, one can find 3 or 4 different types of communities groups regarding the type of project and the IPs or FPs (Facilitating Partners). It seems that the MRRD is currently trying to harmonize the types of community groups. This is an important step if the CDC are planned to be used as a gateway to develop and strengthen farmer's institutions.

4.4.6 Strengthening the development of farmers organisation and financial services

Forming farmer's groups or cooperatives are one of the current priorities of the MAAHF. Farmer's groups are seen as a way to strengthen the private sector development in improving and rationalizing farmer's organisation. One should be careful of the way the idea of farmer's organisation is explained to the community. The print of the Russian way of cooperative remains strong and many farmers do not see the direct benefit of forming groups. For this process to be efficient and sustainable, the profit should be obvious for the farmers (access to credit, reducing the cost in the process of their products...).

In Afghanistan, many farmers are facing a high level of indebtedness. Depending on the types of credit interest rates can reach a very high level. This represents a very big constraint for the farmers and limits their capacities of investment and innovation. MISFA and USAID for instance are funding some micro-finance projects in the provinces. However, the length of funding is sometimes not appropriate. In Kunduz, one of the NGO we have visited explained that they got a one year funding to implement a micro-finance project. After one year the donor refused to extend the funding for some reasons (regarding new priorities in term of strategy in Afghanistan). One year is obviously not enough to implement a micro-credit project. This particular time of programmes require time as this type of financial mechanisms is completely new in Afghanistan. Since communities' awareness and training take time, micro-credit project should be planned for at least four to six years.

4.5 Propositions

4.5.1 The MAAHF: clarifying roles and responsibilities

In theory even though the exact strategy remains quite unclear, the role of the MAAHF is well defined. The roles and responsibilities of this ministry have been totally reviewed. In the 70's and the 80's the ministry had a role of service delivery (distribution, extension and vulgarisation). Its actual role is mainly shaped around monitoring activities and policy making in order to provide a stable environment to the private's sector development. However, this new direction given to the MAAHF policy is largely unknown at the provincial and district levels. Our interviews with members of the provincial staff clearly showed that for them the role of the MAAHF remains the same than in the 70's and 80's: agricultural inputs delivery, research, extension and vulgarisation. This lack of knowledge of the new roles of the MAAHF shaped in Kabul might be harmful since it keeps on raising expectations among the communities. On the field we met several farmers complaining about the MAAHF because they were not getting seeds or bags of fertilisers. Moreover, many NGOs met on the field highlighted the fact that very often the MAAHF at the provincial level try to get the maximum out of them. NGO's are often asked to pay incentives when they want the MAAHF staff to be involved in their projects (although the payment of incentives by NGOs is forbidden by the Afghan constitution).

4.5.2 From coordination towards collaboration

4.5.2.1 Keeping the momentum

One of the key challenges ahead will be to keep the momentum between key stakeholders, at a time when resources committed to Afghanistan are likely to start diminishing, and when a large number of NGOs have phased out their activities or are seeing their field of action restricted by donor and government policies. While this shift from NGO to government-lead is healthy and essential to the political transition in Afghanistan, the difficulty lies in ensuring that this shift is managed at the right pace. In some areas, the NGO have a crucial expertise and capacity which government institutions do not yet have. The prevailing negative discourse on NGOs –whose image has been plagued by the large number of “mushroom NGOs” created to capture international funds and by alleged cases of corruption– is putting NGOs in a difficult position and sometimes fuelling the government's reluctance to engage with non-governmental partners. This discourse has also probably fuel the increasing violence against the NGOs (16 NGOs members have been killed during the last 6 months).

It is extremely important for the GoA to make a distinction between the “NGB's” (Non-Governmental Businesses as some like to put it) and the professional NGOs that can bring genuine experience and added-value to the ongoing reconstruction process. In parallel, it is important for NGOs to continue learning and improving their commitments with the GoA. While some have succeeded in doing so and are proving to be genuine partners of the government, others have little experience of doing so and have not adapted to the shift from relief-type to more developmental approaches.

4.5.2.2 Changes of attitudes between the MAAHF and the NGOs

The MAAHF and the NGOs should definitely change their attitude towards each other. The latter have in most cases realised that they should improve their links with the MAAHF and share their information. The new documentation centre in the MAAHF is a good initiative to gather the disparate information about agriculture in the country. However, there is still a strong feeling of competition from the MAAF towards the NGOs. Now that their roles have been clarified, they should cooperate to learn from each other on a regular basis. The lesson learnt sharing exercises between the different stakeholders involved in agriculture should be strengthened and based on practical experience. As an example, the working Group on Community-based Nutrition and Food

Security Interventions organised by UNFAO and the MAAHF is a very thoughtful initiative. The objectives are presented in annexe 2.

This particular type of meeting is oriented towards lesson learned sharing about what works and what does not. The objective is to go beyond the sole coordination in learning from each other's experience. The main constraint for this type of initiative is the high staff turn-over, which slow down some meetings since it takes time to the new comers to have relevant points of views and come up with constructive recommendations. To alleviate this constraint, a better way of collecting the information and sharing it within each stakeholder could help. In many cases, the results of this kind of meeting are not shared with other outside the meeting room. There is no process of capitalisation of information.

4.5.3 Addressing the most vulnerable needs: in between the State and the NGOs core mandate

Many NGOs are currently working on the redefinition of their roles, mandates and strategies for the coming years. Some of them are willing to stay in Afghanistan for a couple of years, others plan to stay for 10 to 15 years as they believe they have developed relevant competences to meet people's expectations. The more experienced NGOs are generally following three main trends:

- Strengthening their advocacy roles (e.g.: Oxfam) and to invest in some new approaches like early warning methods or disaster preparedness.
- Specialisation (in different sectors regarding their comparative advantages and previous success: animal health, horticulture and NRM (Natural Resource Management) as this three activities are the pillars of the Master Plan
- Strengthening the M&E systems to be able to assess the level of quality of the projects they are implementing. Those are often the same ones to invest in short term consultancies to meet people's needs on a sustainable basis.

4.5.4 From an emergency/ rehabilitation mode towards a long-term development approach

4.5.4.1 Quality as a priority

For years, NGOs have implemented relief and rehabilitation programme in a very uncertain context (war, political changes, warlords influence). One of the most important roles of the humanitarian aid was to maintain hope and prevent a worsening of the crisis. QIP project to enhance yields were favoured during many years. Nowadays, one of the major stakes raised by the Afghans, the GoA and part of the international community is quality

4.5.4.2 The need for a comprehensive understanding of farming systems

The MAAHF is willing to be able to measure the real impact of the programs. Afghan farming systems are highly diversified. Not considering and monitoring this inter and intra households' diversity might have many negative impacts (non sustainable programs, waste of time and money, disillusioned beneficiaries not to say irritated). Qualitative assessments, research-action projects are very much needed to get a better understanding of farmer's strategies and diversities. New tools and methods have to be used and the staff needs to be trained to use these new methods.

The farming system method which is used to analyse the main dynamics and opportunities in an agrarian system, presents some interesting advantages compared to the livelihood framework. It is hard to figure out how a system works without considering how it has changed over time. Indeed analysing the past gives insight into the present and reinforces our capacity to predict the future. The historical trends are carefully studied thanks to interviews with the eldest. The study of their functioning is particularly useful in judging the conditions required for these systems to reproduce themselves and to assess the sustainability of the agriculture they are linked to. Like in the livelihood framework, assets and constraints are established. The farming system analysis method,

in contrast to the livelihood analysis, looks carefully at technical aspects (cropping calendar, cropping system, tools used...).

Programmes should be based on a comprehensive understanding and monitoring of the households' diversities and evolutions trends.

4.5.4.3 Building local capacities

Least but not last, capacity building of the GoA and NGOs' local staff should be used to promote programmes' design. The in-depth knowledge of the local staff which generally have a good understanding situation of the needs and constraints should be better valued. In addition, the staff at the provincial level should be more involved in the design of the agriculture policy and to set up the priorities. Ultimately local research should be implemented before designing a program.

4.5.5 Step forwards for the NGOs

In the current development trends of the country, NGOs and more widely the aid sector have to find their place, delineate their roles and limit their scope of intervention. During many years aid agencies have been the only ones able to provide agricultural support to the Afghans. They have undoubtedly developed real competencies. However, now that the private sector is growing, NGOs must concentrate on some specific roles and clarify their scope of interventions.

Although the actual trend is to put most of the efforts in developing the private sector. a large part of the population remains however vulnerable. As many donors are phasing out emergency programmes, the main risk is that the emergency needs will be addressed without any global and common strategies. If this is the case, an anarchic approach might lead to different negative impacts. **The NGOs should concentrate on services that cannot currently be delivered by the private sector.** They should focus on the most vulnerable people because unless the private sector is well developed and wide spread throughout the country, the poorest would not gain any important advantages.

NGOs might also have a role to play in advocacy and lobby to defend the interests of the poorest. The current CSANDS process, in which NGOs are involved, is an interesting initiative in which some NGOs have decided to be part of. Even though one can wonder whether the aid community will be able to agree on the same point of views and messages, the decision makers should go beyond that and take into considerations the NGOs views. Some NGO's are willing to be seen as a bridge between the government and the private sectors and have started investing in the agrobusiness. The fact that in general NGOs have gained the trust of the communities might facilitate the development of the private sector. NGO's expertise and experience should be valued and shared with the GoA and the private sector.

The long period of conflict has weakened all government institutions—buildings and equipment have been destroyed, existing staff are poorly paid, they lack appropriate technical and managerial skills, and ministries generally lack the capacity to effectively carry out their functions. Although, during our field missions we saw some signs that the organisation and roles definition of the MAAHF are improving, many things have to be done to improve afghan's farmer's life.

On our opinion, the main challenges to developing Afghan agriculture remain institutional. Public and private institutions are ill-equipped in terms of physical infrastructure, regulatory framework, human skills. The structure of the ministries also reflects a centralized form of administration inconsistent with current rural development thinking which calls for decentralized. The emergence of the private sector strongly supported by the international community is an important step towards the development of a modern and competitive agricultural sector. Nevertheless, vulnerable groups remain numerous in Afghanistan and the different risks (agro-climatic, politic, and economic) are high for the afghan farmers. The actual roles and responsibilities distribution in the agricultural sector is more and more in favour of the private sector development. Are the afghan farmers yet ready to take advantage of the private sector emergence as it is planned? What will it change in the poorest life in the future? Such questions have to be addressed and clear answers should be given to the Afghans.

Peace building in Afghanistan is strongly linked to poverty and risk reduction. Since the beginning of the year, the security situation is worsening and areas at high risk are increasing continuously. Afghans are losing confidence in the government and in the future day by day. Regarding the agriculture sector, the MAAHF should put more effort in explaining to its staff and to the afghan farmers what are the plans for the future and what they could expect and not from the government. Communication policies are also part of a government claiming good governance practices. NGOs still have a major role to play in Afghanistan to as the only stakeholders dedicated to the most vulnerable. Advocacy and lobbying are also part of the prerogatives they should enhance.

Persons met during the field mission

Agriculture		
Tuesday 04 April	Kabul-Bamiyan	
Wednesday 05 April	Bamiyan	Global Concern Dept. of Agriculture ICRC
Thursday 06 April	Bamiyan	Solidarités GERES UNFAO
Friday 07 April	Bamiyan-Eiback	
Saturday 08 April	Eiback	AAD Dept. of Agriculture BRAC
Sunday 09 April	Mazar-e-Sharif	UNFAO UNHCR SCA
Monday 10 April	Mazar-e-Sharif	WFP / Gain Project WFP/ GAIN IOM COAR
Tuesday 11 April	Mazar-Kunduz	Dept. of Agriculture (Kunduz)
Wednesday 12 April	Kunduz	Visit the vet clinic, the Kunduz silo and the diary farm of the FAO FAO – seeds program
	Taloqan (Takhar province)	Mission East Concern
Thursday 13 April	Kunduz	Mercy corps Mercy Corps ICARDA CFA
Friday 14 April	Kabul-Kunduz	
Saturday 15 April	Kabul	Team work
Sunday 16 April	Kabul-jalallabad	
Monday 17 April	Jalallabad	MADERA (meeting) MADERA (field visit) MADERA (vet clinic) If Hope (field visit)
Tuesday 18 April	Jalalallabad	Dept. of agriculture FAO Mercy Corps GTZ/PAL project
Wednesday 19 April	Jalalabad-Kabul	
Thursday 20 April	Kabul	FAO AKDN

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5 NUTRITION

By Domitille Kauffman(dkauffmann@urd.org)

With a chronic malnutrition rate of up to 50% and a low rate of severe malnutrition, the nutrition profile in Afghanistan today is not dissimilar to that of other countries in the Middle East and South-East Asia. Determining the causes of a high malnutrition rate is no easy task as the prevalence of malnutrition is often related to a combination of many factors. In the case of Afghanistan, the following factors require a mention: low diet diversity, inappropriate hygiene practices, low birth weight as a result of poor maternal diet and micronutrient deficiency diseases.

The preliminary findings²⁹ of the second National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) conducted in July-September 2005 have highlighted high disparity in the prevalence of food insecurity throughout the population as a whole: disparity between rural and urban areas and disparity between provinces. Consequently, in central and southeastern provinces (Nimroz, Day Kundi and Helmand) over 46% of the population consume less than the minimum calorific requirements (adjusted for age and sex). In the central provinces of Bamyan, Day Kundi, Ghor and the western province of Nuristan, the diet of over 60% of the population is affected by very poor food group diversity.

This chapter is organised around four sections: the first and second sections give an overview of how nutrition sector has taken shape (since 2001) and present the main trends and achievements to date. The third and fourth sections present the main challenges and risks for the future and discuss the issues at stake for the nutrition sector.

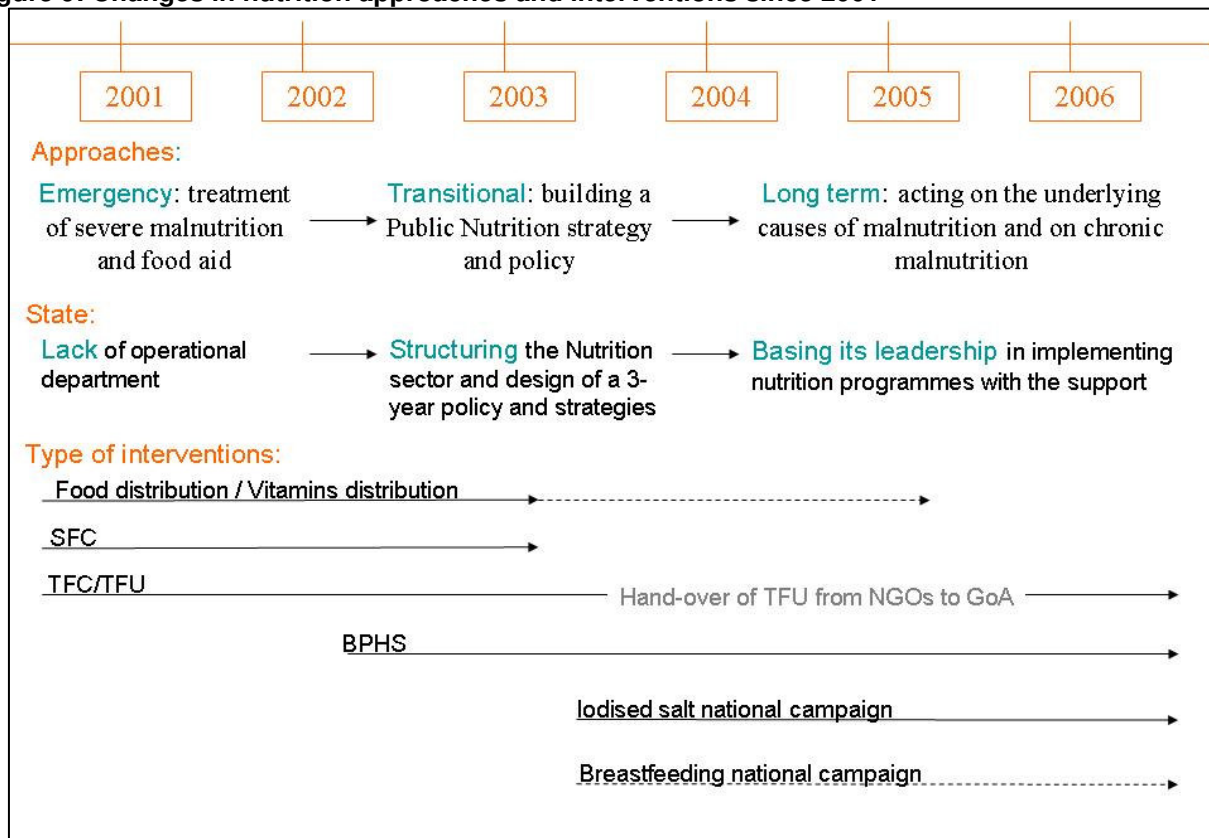
²⁹ Personal communication. Data are not yet published.

5.1 Patterns and current trends in nutrition programmes

5.1.1 From NGO emergency relief to long-term government policy and programmes

Figure 9 summarises the main changes that have taken place in nutrition programmes, looking at how activities and those responsible for implementing programmes have evolved in parallel.

Figure 9: Changes in nutrition approaches and interventions since 2001



NB: The Basic Package for Health Services (BPHS) is a national policy that has been developed for the health sector. BPHS activities are implemented by NGOs through a sub-contracting agreement with the GoA.

5.1.2 Key players

Table 4 summarises the main opportunities, challenges and risks that have emerged since 2001.

Table 4: Actors of change: opportunities, challenges and risks

- Key players	- Opportunities	- Challenges and risks
- Public Nutrition Department (PND) within MOPH at central level	- Quick to set up a specific department for managing nutrition, the Public Nutrition Department, and define policy and strategies - Benefits from donor support in implementing programmes throughout the country	- Risk that nutrition becomes isolated from the other sectors
- Public Nutrition Office within the Provincial Public Health Departments (PPHDs)	- Have gained autonomy by promoting specific province-based programmes	- Lack of capacity for implementing activities - 'Province-politicised' department experiences difficulties in recognising the leadership of the GoA and the legitimacy of central-level staff - Lack of transparency between line managers (PPHD or PND)
- UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO, FAO)	- Play leading role in nutrition sector - Carry out capacity building activities and implement innovative programmes in collaboration with ministries	- Risk of 'government dependency' resulting from the implementation of national policies
- MAAHF at central level	- Supports nutrition activities by means of FAO-funded project	- Lack of understanding of integrated approaches
- Donors	- Play lead role in prevention of malnutrition by increasing the focus on nutrition in their sector policies	- No specific indicators on treatment of malnutrition - Focuses on sector-based approaches at the expense of cross-cutting issues such as nutrition
- Implementing partners (NGOs as contractors)	- Capitalise on their experience, improving their expertise and effectiveness	- Risk that nutrition is being overlooked in BPHS implementation
- NGOs not involved in contract activities	- Monitor nutritional impact of food security and livelihood programmes	- Excluded from nutrition activities due to lack of expertise and available funds
- Private sector	- Develop new expertise and competitive advantage by producing supplemented food	- Technical and/or financial dependency on UN-agencies for producing supplemented products

5.2 Main achievements to date

5.2.1 Building operational facilities at national and provincial levels

5.2.1.1 Setting up the Public Nutrition Department (PND) at provincial level

Soon after the war ended, the Public Nutrition Department was set up within the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) and is responsible for defining national policy. The second phase focused on increasing the involvement of the Provincial Public Health Department (PPHD). The MOPH

benefited early on from the Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) process and this helped in the launch of a recruitment process for Provincial Nutrition Officers (PNO), responsible for all nutrition programmes at the provincial level. PNOs are based at the PPHD and have a dual managerial line: (i) they work under the responsibility of the Provincial Health Director as part of the PPHD, and (ii) they are managed directly by the PND.

Thanks to the PRR, PNO wages have been raised to USD250 per month. Even though this salary is considerably more attractive than the salary previously offered by the government, it is lower than the standard wage offered by international or local NGOs. This increased competition over the recruitment of technical labour has in some cases slowed down the appointment process. For instance, in Bamiyan, the first PNO moved to a position with a higher salary in an international organisation leaving his post unfilled. Despite these unavoidable constraints, the ongoing recruitment process has been partly successful in strengthening the nutrition sector at Provincial level. Out of the seven provinces visited, five PNOs have already been appointed (including Balkh, Kunduz, Nangahar, Takhar and Samangan). The overall objective is to appoint at least one PNO per province.

Box 7: PNO tasks and responsibilities

PNOs are often young and recently graduated. Their tasks and duties are to:

- Monitor the implementation of the national public nutrition programmes by supervising the monitoring system and participating in surveys and assessments. For instance, in Jalalabad, the PNO in charge visits the salt factories for quality control twice a month (control on hygiene, storage, content in iodine, etc.).
- Perform surveys on nutritional issues.
- Attend the PHCC meeting every month.
- Manage TFU functioning (appointing and training medical staff, sending requests for therapeutic milk supply to UNICEF, etc.)
- Ensure coordination with other organisations.
- Establish relations between provincial departments of Agriculture Animal Husbandry and Food (AAHF) to promote community-based food security and nutrition projects (kitchen garden, vegetables growing, etc.).

5.2.1.2 Nutrition coordination at national and provincial levels

National level

The coordination bodies set up over seven thematic working groups have evolved in conjunction with the implementation of the three-year public nutrition policy. Some working groups have ceased to exist such as those dealing with supplementary feeding centres (SFC), food security and nutrition surveillance, and nutritional surveys (Groupe URD, 2005). In contrast, certain issues such as nutritional education and flour fortification are increasingly being taken into account, and are discussed during task force meetings which are chaired by MOPH and attended by UN-agencies (mainly UNICEF, FAO, WHO, WFP) and relevant ministries involved in nutrition (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food, MAAHF in particular).

Even though coordination mechanisms have been operational for several years, the main challenge is to set up a real cooperation mechanism based on lessons learnt and capitalising on previous experience. This in turn should encourage stakeholders to share responsibilities on the basis of an objective analysis of each agency's expertise and comparative advantage.

The working group on 'community-based food security and nutrition interventions' led by the MAAHF-FAO has been re-initiated over the past year. The objective of this working group is to build on different experiences and identify the main factors which affect whether a strategy is successful or not in Afghanistan. This initiative is a significant step forward as it goes beyond coordination and aims for close collaboration. The functioning of this working group is still experiencing a few teething problems: i) attendance is not always optimal, ii) there is a high turnover of participants, and iii) working methods have not yet been formalised (i.e. should meetings be organised around a specific topic or to discuss more general issues?).

Provincial level

A coordination body, the Provincial Health Coordination Committee (PHCC), has been set up quite successfully. During this monthly meeting, PPHD, WHO, UNICEF and medical NGOs share information about health concerns and BPHS implementation. The PNO takes part in the PHCC.

Apart from the PHCC, there are no specific coordination bodies addressing nutritional issues and sharing information and experience at the provincial level. Task force initiatives and working groups set up at national level are not replicated at the provincial level by UN-agencies and ministerial departments. Additionally, there is no specific coordination between NGOs (involved in BPHS, food security and nutrition interventions, education), Provincial Department of Ministry of Public Health, Provincial Department of MAAHF and Provincial Department of Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA). PNOs suffer from this lack of a 'nutrition coordination body' as they would benefit from external support for carrying out their work.

Thus, the next step in coordination mechanisms is to strengthen coordination on nutrition at the provincial level. This might be addressed by setting up a 'provincial task force' chaired by the PNO (possibly co-chaired with UNICEF).

5.2.2 Implementing the public nutrition policy in Afghanistan's provinces

5.2.2.1 Setting up medical facilities for treating severe malnutrition is ongoing

Since 2003 and the withdrawal of NGOs due to the imposed phasing-out of SFCs, NGOs have also gradually phased-out their TFC activities or handed over responsibility for them to the government. The PND has progressively taken over the leadership of malnutrition treatment. This was achieved either directly by managing the TFUs based in government hospitals or indirectly by sub-contracting NGOs for the implementation of the BPHS and the functioning of district hospitals. As yet, not all provinces are equipped with TFU facilities but headway is still being made: seventeen provinces are already running a TFU and the PND plans to equip 25 provinces before 2007³⁰. Amongst the visited provinces, Balkh (in Mazar-e-Sharif), Samangan (in Eibak) and Bamyan (in Bamyan) run a TFU whereas Takhar and Kunduz are not yet equipped.

5.2.2.2 The success story of the iodised salt campaign

As formulated in the Public Nutrition Strategy document (2003-2006), objective 2 is "*to ensure that more than 90% of households have access to iodized salt throughout the country*". Since this statement was written, the Universal Salt Iodization (USI) campaign has been successfully implemented. UNICEF has played a key role in this campaign under the coordination of the MOPH. Three years since the launch of the USI program, it is remarkable to observe that (i) Afghan factories are producing iodised salt, (ii) iodised salt is available at the market in any province, and (iii) more than 40% of the population already consume iodised salt³¹. This good coverage rate has been achieved over a relatively short period, thanks to a strategy that combined an appropriate timeframe (the first step was to develop iodised salt production and to ensure that iodised salt is available at the market; the second step involved launching a widespread communication campaign through different media: TV, radio, posters, etc.) with effective coordination. For example, joint assessments have been carried out at provincial levels to control food safety (the iodine content in the salt sold at the market or the quality of the salt produced in the factory). Food safety issues will be important in the future.

5.3 Constraints, key challenges and risks

³⁰ Personal communication.

³¹ Personal communication. Official data should be available at the end of 2006.

5.3.1 Providing provincial departments with the necessary capacity

The provincial departments are responsible for supporting and monitoring the implementation of national policy throughout the country. Fulfilling these tasks and duties imply (i) significant capacity and resources at provincial level, including qualified human resources, resources required for running a department, transport, etc., and (ii) a certain degree of autonomy in planning activities. These issues are particularly at stake in the nutrition sector. As mentioned above, the presence of the PND has been reinforced over the past few years, but ensuring the effectiveness of PNO activities remains a key challenge. Dealing with an unclear budget allocation and a slow and centralised decision-making process that prevent PNOs from implementing any unplanned activities are seen as a real constraint. Establishing what type of support and means of intervention will be made available to PNOs and fostering ownership are currently priority issues.

Another concern that lies within PNO responsibilities is the functioning of TFU. Problems such as delays in therapeutic milk supply, unqualified and insufficient medical staff, lack of equipment and insufficient funds are commonly faced by the PNO and medical staff responsible for running the TFU, and PNOs are overwhelmed by the magnitude of work.

Similar constraints are faced by other provincial departments such as the department of women affairs. They have scarcely any resources to implement their programmes and as a result, their activities are often limited to supporting activities carried out by other departments or organisations (participating in an assessment, taking part in training sessions).

5.3.2 Gaining access to the communities and overcoming the cultural and financial barriers

Raising awareness about nutritional issues in rural areas in Afghanistan with its wide cultural diversity and low levels of education is especially challenging. Actors have to cope with the remoteness of the communities and cultural differences which result in misunderstandings and misinterpretation. Although the USI campaign has up to now produced good results in term of coverage, the objective of achieving 90% coverage may be unrealistic in the short term. This uncertainty is based on the observed reluctance to adopt iodised salt in the most isolated areas, where **unfounded rumours** about iodised salt are spreading (e.g. iodised salt reduces female fertility and is more expensive than regular salt) and regular salt is still produced and available in the bazaar. The relative failure of the small-scale flour fortification projects implemented by WFP illustrates that proper access to the community is largely dependent on the application of appropriate raising awareness strategies. The **lack of appropriate communication** is one of the main factors leading to these disappointing results.

The difficulty of selecting the best site for setting up TFU is another illustration of the importance and complications involved in accessing communities. Due to socio-cultural and financial constraints (e.g. transport costs, hospital fees), it is difficult for women to stay away from their home for long. However, villages are often too distant from the district, provincial or regional hospitals where TFUs are currently set up. One of the main issues facing decision-makers is how to overcome financial and cultural barriers in order to achieve nutrition objectives.

5.3.3 Ensuring project sustainability

5.3.3.1 From donor-supply to government-supply or economic sustainability?

In the present context, several nutrition programmes are grant-maintained depending on regular financial or material support from international bodies. The aforementioned USI campaign is representative of this type of programme built on the back of UNICEF financial support. Thus, since the beginning of the USI campaign, UNICEF has been the 'main project manager', providing both (i) training and capacity building for the GoA and Afghan factories (in iodised salt production, quality control, etc.), and (ii) direct material support to production lines by supplying the iodine to the Afghan factories. Thus, it is important to ask whether iodised salt production as it currently stands is sustainable. How can stakeholders prepare for the future when iodised salt will be

produced without grants? Who will take over the supply of iodine from UNICEF? The GoA? Or Afghan factories themselves? In order to lay the foundations for sustainable production, it is necessary to plan how iodised salt production can become self-sustainable and economically viable without any grants. However, the question of sustainability raises the following issues: (i) people already complain about the excessive price of iodised salt (which is in principle unjustified at present because theoretically iodised salt is the same price as regular salt thanks to UNICEF's support) and we can assume that they will refuse to buy this product if its price increases, and (ii) it might be possible to increase consumption of iodised salt by applying strict controls on imported salt at Afghan borders. However, these controls are not applied effectively at present. Accordingly, the sustainability of this programme will depend upon the state's capacity to apply strict border controls in the future.

Another great concern is the running of TFU. Although the need for TFU has been recognised and policy exists defining its roles and responsibilities, the running of the TFU has not yet been given sufficient consideration. For some TFUs, the shift from NGO management to government management saw the end of assistance from the international community and of all financial grants. The sole material support that they continue to receive is therapeutic milk supplied by UNICEF. However, the supply of therapeutic milk is increasingly dependent on the capacity of the PPHD to provide data and forecasts and UNICEF is encouraging the PPHD to be more autonomous in this activity. Thus, the questions over the running of TFUs require urgent attention.

The future of BPHS is also a great challenge and in particular, the issue of who will pay for health services currently provided by NGOs when international donors (e.g. USAID, World Bank and European Community) eventually withdraw from the country. The GOA? The population by means of a social security system? The patients? For more details, see chapter 5 on the health sector.

5.3.3.2 Difficulty to deal with short fund cycle programmes and to aim at long term impact on nutritional practices

In the current Afghan context, many uncertainties persist regarding funding availability (cf cross cutting issues' report). Operators are often obliged to run programmes with short funding cycles that are wholly inappropriate for activities with a long-term impact. This is especially true for the nutrition sector whose objective is to address the underlying causes of malnutrition and thus raise awareness and change habits within the community (increase food diversity, improve hygiene practices, improve mother and child care, etc.). Changing people's attitudes and persuading them to accept new ideas requires time. For instance, it is questionable whether an effective nutrition campaign is possible without a long funding cycle. This long-term approach needs to be taken into consideration when future nutrition programmes are being designed.

5.4 Propositions and issues for discussion

5.4.1 Strategies for improving nutrition practices within the community

Even though some initiatives (see section 2.1.2) have succeeded in strengthening lessons learning mechanisms between stakeholders, the nutrition sector still suffers from a lack of monitoring of the nutritional impact of the community-based interventions.

In parallel, whereas numerous assessments have provided practitioners with significant information on numerous nutritional topics in Afghanistan, such as nutrition habits³², child care, etc., some other issues such as food recipes, food processing and preservation processes have not yet been studied in sufficient depth. Thus, this lack of basic information is a limiting factor in designing specific community-based interventions with real impact in term of nutrition.

³² Duchet C., *Les femmes Afghanes au coeur de l'économie rurale – exemple d'une vallée dans le Nord de l'Afghanistan*, Groupe URD 2005

Some promising small-scale projects implemented recently deserve a mention such as FAO-supported teacher training (MOPH and MAAHF supply guidelines) and pave the way for relevant community-based interventions. The principle of this project is to provide training for teachers on nutrition issues and with a long-term view to including nutrition topics either in literacy courses or at school for children.

Improving nutrition practices within communities depends on:

- Thorough and regular monitoring and lesson-learning processes between stakeholders to understand what makes community-based interventions work.
- Being innovative and trying out new small-scale projects.
- Improving background knowledge on certain nutrition topics in Afghanistan, such as food processing, recipes and food preservation.
- Establishing a country-wide nutrition education strategy as a support for community-based interventions.

5.4.2 Maintaining the focus on nutrition

When a country enters into a phase of development and economic growth, there is a risk that nutrition issues are no longer considered a priority and are hence overlooked. The reasons for this tendency are presented in Box 8 and illustrate the need to maintain a focus on nutrition in Afghanistan.

Box 8: Ten reasons for the weak commitment into nutrition programmes

1. Malnutrition is usually invisible to malnourished families and communities.
2. Families and governments do not recognize the human and economic costs of malnutrition.
3. Governments may not know there are faster interventions for combating malnutrition than economic growth and poverty reduction or that nutrition programmes are affordable.
4. Because there are multiple organisational stakeholders in nutrition, it can fall between the tracks.
5. There is not always a consensus about how to intervene against malnutrition.
6. Adequate nutrition is seldom treated as a human right.
7. The malnourished have little voice.
8. Some politicians and managers do not care whether programmes are well implemented.
9. Governments sometimes claim they are investing in improving nutrition when the programmes they are financing have little effect on it (for example, school feeding).
10. A vicious circle: lack of commitment into nutrition leads to underinvestment in nutrition, which leads to weak impact, which reinforces lack of commitment since governments believe nutrition programmes do not work.

Source: Repositioning Nutrition as Central to Development – A strategy for Large-Scale Action – Overview, Abridged from Heaver (2005b).

In the current Afghan context, nutrition lies at the crossroads between health, agriculture and education. This implies that nutrition should be addressed by means of cross-sector projects.

A direct consequence of this need for a cross-sector approach is frequent changes in funding allocations. Since multilateral donors favour sector-based approaches and nutrition is no longer targeted as a sector in itself, nutrition issues are dealt with through the health sector. Consequently, excluding UNICEF and to a lesser extent other UN-agencies (FAO, WHO, UNDP), there are no multilateral donor providing specific support for nutrition programmes.

5.4.2.1 Placing an emphasis on nutrition in health programmes

If international donors such as the World Bank, which provides funds for BPHS implementation, have established nutrition as a priority in their policy paper for development (World Bank, 2006), this does not always translate into practice in the implementation of the BPHS by NGOs. This is partly due to the fact that health care facilities (CHC, DH) suffer from various problems, including:

- 1) Overloaded and understaffed. The scope of the BPHS is broad and medical consultations take place during opening hours from 8am to 1pm/2 pm. Accordingly, the staff has to prioritise its activities and some BPHS's activities are hence neglected. This choice is often made at the expense of the nutrition activities.
- 2) Insufficient qualified staff for growth monitoring.
- 3) The effectiveness of nutrition activities are measured on the basis of a single indicator (number of children under five checked for growth monitoring) in the performance-based partnership agreement (PPA) involving donors, NGOs and MOPH. It appears that this indicator alone is not enough for ensuring a real focus on nutrition. Adding a second indicator, such as the number of children receiving treatment, is one option that should be considered for strengthening nutrition in the BPHS.

Thus, there is a need to place nutrition as a core and common issue among the health stakeholders from donors to medical staff, in particular those in charge of growth monitoring.

5.4.2.2 Re-establishing a role for NGOs in the conceptual framework for nutrition

Another consequence of the sector-based approach is the reduction of funds allocated to food security activities. Indeed, the MAAHF in the process of changing its name to the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI). Animal husbandry has now been included within agriculture as a whole and it is not immediately clear which ministry will be responsible for heading food issues. These amendments are indicative of changing priorities in national policy.

If this tendency is normal within the LRRD framework, stakeholders need to ensure that the most vulnerable people who are still dealing with food insecurity problems are not overlooked. The MAAHF Master Plan is reassuring as food security constitutes one of the three main pillars. It remains to be seen how effectively the Master Plan will be implemented.

In agriculture and education, nutrition issues are rarely dealt with as a priority, especially in programmes which do not have any specific objectives or expected results linked to nutrition. For instance, a vegetable growing project does not always include training on nutrition issues (basic knowledge about nutrition, diet diversity, cooking methods, etc.). In this case, the nutritional benefit that might be expected from this type of intervention is often not achieved because vegetables are sold rather than consumed. Resolving this problem implies changing NGO priorities and establishing nutrition as a core issue in their interventions. NGOs should thus increase their focus on raising awareness campaigns, monitoring the impact of nutrition programmes and capitalising on successful approaches.

5.4.3 Fostering effective collaboration with sector-wide lesson learning mechanisms

The nutrition sector has undergone swift and effective changes since 2002 but implementing the designed strategies has required coordinated involvement of several bodies. The commitment of several ministries (MOPH, MAAHF, MRRD, MoWA, Ministry of trade, etc.) is thus a necessity for building strategies on the underlying causes of malnutrition (cf. the conceptual framework for malnutrition UNICEF, 1992). Although the restructuring process has evolved at different speeds in each ministry, the implementation of the Public Nutrition Strategy and Policy 2003-2006 depends on the successful collaboration between departments. The MRRD has undergone fairly rapid development and has already been involved in hygiene promotion activities within the communities for the several years now. MRRD's wide experience in public awareness campaigns from design, implementation to monitoring and evaluation (see Box 7: PNO tasks and responsibilities for more details about MRRD and NGOs hygiene promotion campaigns) undoubtedly needs to be shared with the MAAHF and the MOPH, as they are both working on the design of a nutrition education campaign. The limited capacity for sharing information demonstrated by these ministries is all the

more regrettable given that hygiene education is cited as being an important strategy for reducing the prevalence of malnutrition³³.

³³ “Strategy 7: Reduce health risks associated with malnutrition, specially the control and prevention of diarrhoeal diseases”, from Public Nutrition Policy and Strategy 2003-2006.

Box 9: MRRD hygiene promotion campaigns

Since 2003, the MRRD has been involved in hygiene promotion through the Hygiene Education Department. A national programme in which NGOs are the implementing partners of the national strategy for water, sanitation and hygiene promotion has been designed. Supported by an active working group on Hygiene Education, the HEWG³⁴, the MRRD has edited guidelines and other communication supports (picture cards, flipcharts) to support NGOs in programme implementation, and also provides 'training for trainers' for NGO staff.

The results of this type of campaign are mitigated depending on the area (level of education, level of poverty and ability to afford the necessary hygiene materials such as soap). Coordination with NGOs remains a great challenge and NGO field staff are confronted with many constraints. MRRD policy is not always fully understood by NGO staff working directly with the communities and many express reservations as to whether the strategy is well adapted to reality in the field. NGOs complain that (i) the MRRD has failed to supply them with adequate methodology in terms of what should be done and how best to manage relations with the communities and (ii) there are insufficient financial resources available for hygiene promotion activities.

This programmes would also benefit from improved monitoring and impact evaluation mechanisms. The KAP (Knowledge Attitude Practices) survey, a monitoring tool used by NGOs, is an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of hygiene promotion. However, the link between the number of people trained in hygiene and the reduction in hygiene-related health problems such as diarrhoea requires more clarification. Some NGOs have already begun working on this issue. The next phase will be to build on evidence about the impact of hygiene promotion.

The importance of setting up sharing mechanisms is also relevant for UN-agencies. UNICEF has acquired expertise in public awareness campaigns about iodised salt. Similarly, WFP implemented a number of small-scale projects on flour fortification and has planned to design a large-scale project. Mechanisms for sharing lessons learnt between UNICEF and WFP have not yet been institutionalised and this is an important issue for the future of supplemented food programmes. Some amendments have been already put in place through the development of an active task force on flour fortification. This type of initiative deserves support and implies that the institutions involved must set up formal lesson learning mechanisms.

³⁴ HEWG is an active collaboration body, composed of UN-agencies (UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR), different ministries (MRRD, MOPH, MoWA), international NGOs (ACF, AKDN, DACAAR, SCA) and local NGOs (HOW)

During acute or protracted emergencies, nutrition is dealt with as a sector in itself focusing on the treatment of malnutrition. In the LRRD framework, the main feature of development programmes is the shift from curative treatment to prevention, and a focus on the underlying causes of malnutrition. As a result of the transition from short- to long-term approaches, nutrition is no longer considered as an independent sector with its own donors, NGOs and specific nutrition programmes but as a cross-cutting issue. Nutrition issues are now addressed by other sectors and, as a result, nutrition-related issues need to be fully integrated into the design of these programmes.

Public awareness campaigns are being carried out to tackle nutrition issues. The objectives of these campaigns are ambitious as they aim to change people's lifestyles and necessarily touch upon issues that are considered to be private. Since stakeholders are in the process of designing coordination mechanisms for nutrition education, it is important that the messages conveyed are uniform. A certain degree of standardisation should be an objective when tools, such as training for farmers in vegetable-growing programmes, literacy training for teachers, for information during visits at health facilities, etc., are being developed.

Since 2001, the design and implementation of nutrition programmes have evolved and numerous achievements can be observed. However, if the shift from emergency to development is achieved too quickly, especially from curative to preventive treatment, it is only pertinent if the facilities provided for treating nutrition-related problems are sustainable. The future is likely to generate valuable lessons on what is the optimal pace for change and the factors that affect this pace.

One of the most urgent challenges that has emerged in this rapid shift from emergency to development consists in ensuring that certain groups of people are not excluded from this growth. This was the conclusion that the working group on community-based food security and nutrition interventions reached in April 2006 and illustrates the concern shared by several stakeholders involved in food security and nutrition. To what extent will national policy address the needs of the most vulnerable who are still suffering from food insecurity and who cannot afford adequate food intake for their households? This should be established as a priority given that Afghanistan's development depends upon its capacity to share the benefits with the population as a whole.

Persons met during the field mission

		Nutrition
Thursday March	29	Team Interview: discussing the itinerary
Monday	03 April	Team work: Methodology
Tuesday April	04	Kabul – Bamian
Wednesday April	05	Interview with Mrs. Seema Sakha, health & hygiene supervisor, AKDN, Bamian Interview with Dr Sisawo Konteh, Regional Health Programme Manager, Aga Khan Health Services, Bamian Interview with Eng. Taher Ataey, Head of department, Department of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food, Bamian Interview with Mrs Fatima Rosalin, nutrition & gender assistant, FAO, Bamian
Thursday April	06	Interview with Amina Hassanpur, health officer, Department of Women Affairs, Bamian Visiting Women Resource Centre, Shuahada, Bamian Interview with Mr Mohammed Rahim, HIMS Officer, Provincial Health Department, Bamian Interview with Sophie Baisse, Programme officer, Solidarités, Bamian
Friday	07 April	Bamian – Eibak (Samangan province)
Saturday April	08	Interview with, Dr Allawdin Ammar, Nutrition and TB manager AMI, Samangan Eibak – Mazar E Sharif
Sunday	09 April	Interview with Dr Bahrami, health & nutrition officer, UNICEF, Mazar-e-Sarif Interview with Mr. Morali Mohan, Programme Manager, Save the Children UK, Mazar-e Sharif
Monday	10 April	Visiting GAIN project, WFP and BRAC, Mazar-e-Sharif Visiting Tuberculosis male and female clinics, WFP and Lepco, Mazar-e-Sharif Interview with Mr. Waheed, TB programme officer, WFP, Mazar-e-Sharif Interview with Amed Jama, Head of Programme, WFP, Mazar-e-Sharif Visiting TFU and children cares department, Mazar-I-Sharif Regional Hospital Interview with Dr Mirwais Rabi, Balkh Provincial Health Director, Balkh province Interview with Dr Abdullah Noorzai, PNO, Mazar-e-Sharif
Tuesday April	11	Mazar E Sharif - Kunduz Interview with Daler Javodov, NSP manager, ACTED, Kunduz
Wednesday April	12	Visiting the veterinary clinic of GoA and a diary farm of FAO, Kunduz Kunduz - Taloqan Visiting a private mill (WFP flour fortification project, Kunduz Interview with Haji Gholam Mohaiudin, Factory director, Kunduz Interview with Dr Mohamed Salim, CAF Interim Deputy Director, Taloqan, Takhar Province Interview with Marie Sadie, Training Manager, CONCERN WORLDWIDE, Taloqan, Takhar Province Taloqan - Kunduz
Thursday April	13	Interview with Dr Yamar, PNO and Dr Safar, PPHD Kunduz Province Interview with Dr. Hedayatullah Saleh, Provincial project officer, Kunduz Interview with Naida, Administrator, Department of Women Affairs, Kunduz Interview with Nurul Haque Sarka, Agriculture Programme Manager, CFA, Kunduz Interview with Xaver Hagensbusch , Mercy Corps, Kunduz
Friday	14 April	Kunduz – Kabul
Saturday April	15	Kabul: team work
Sunday	16 April	Interview with Andrew Pinney, early warning system adviser, MRRD, Kabul Kabul - Jalalabad
Monday	17 April	Interview with Eng. Abdul Ahad "Samoon", Eastern Field Coordinator, IRC, Jalalabad Interview with Dr Mashoud, Deputy Director, PPHD, Jalalabad Interview with Dr , PNO, Jalalabad Visiting the TFU, University Hospital Interview with Dr Abdul Wahid Wahidi, Project officer health & nutrition, UNICEF, Jalalabad Interview with Heimo Posamentier, Project for Alternative Livelihoods, Livelihoods Advisor, GTZ, Jalalabad Interview with Brishna, health & hygiene supervisor, IRC Visiting "Hygiene promotion" programmes for women, IRC, Jalalabad
Tuesday April	18	Interview with the owner of the factory Spin Ghar, Jalalabad Interview with Eng. Amin, Water Program, Manager, Eng. Sharifa, Female Hygiene promoter and Eng. Ramatullah, Male Hygiene promoter ,DACAAR Jalalabad
Wednesday April	19	Jalalabad - Kabul Interview with Fazila Banu Lily, HAWA Programme Manager, CARE international Interview with Malina Fahiz, health and hygiene coordinator, AKDN
Thursday	20	Interview with Dr Javed Logarwal, Hygiene Advisor, MRRD

April	Attendance at the working group on <i>community based food-security and nutrition interventions meeting</i>
	Interview with Charlotte Dufour, Household, Food security and Nutrition expert, FAO, Kabul
	Interview with Maja Ulrich Hebe, Hygiene & Sanitation Coordinator, and Shakilla Assad, Women's project coordinator, DACAAR
Friday 21 April	Workshop preparation
Saturday 22 April	Workshop preparation
Sunday 23 April	Workshop preparation
Monday 24 April	Presenting the main findings: workshop
Tuesday 25 April	Interview with Kayhan Natiq, Public Health Specialist, WORLD BANK
	Interview with Maliha Dost, Donor Relation & Research Assistant, Afghanaid
Wednesday 26 April	Visiting HAWA programme: "Food processing training for women", CARE international, Kabul district 13 Kabul – Dubai

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6 HEALTH SECTOR

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Within the LRRD context, the 3-week field work sets out to explore the different issues pertaining to the health sector as well as those previously identified in the review³⁵. For most observers the health sector reconstruction in Afghanistan has made considerable progress during the past five years. Many efforts aimed at providing a policy framework for implementation and gave high priority to the development of Primary Health Care (PHC) services located close to the people and to contracting with NGOs in order to enhance effective implementation. In addition efforts to improve the quality of secondary health care included the development and introduction of an Essential Package for Hospital Services (EPHS).

6.1 The institutional context

6.1.1 The main key actors

Before turning to the question of achievements and dilemmas in the health sector, it is useful to consider the context in which they take place. Table 5 : Actors of change: opportunities, challenges and threats summarizes the main opportunities, challenges and threats brought in since 2001.

Table 5 : Actors of change: opportunities, challenges and threats

- Key players	- Opportunities	- Challenges and threats
- MOPH at central level	- Openness to innovation and change - Fast in adapting to the new environment - Purchaser-Provider split	- Changes at the Minister level may threaten the continuity in policies
-	- Creation of the Grant and Contract Management Unit (GCMU) staffed with highly qualified national staff under World Bank funding	- This type of structure does not guarantee the continuity and sustainability of the project when the external funding dries up. - Emergence of a cluster of skills and risk of market distortions and expectations above the norms for similar positions - Risk of unbalanced power relationships within the MoPH with one unit concentrating most of the resources
- Provincial Public Health Departments (PPHDs)	- Application of PRR decree to ensure that adequate salaries can be paid within a restructured PPHD - National plan for capacity-building under EC funding	- Sustainability of the reform remains an issue - Need to make their role in the PPA model better understood - Need to clarify and strengthen their future role in the provision of health care
- UN agencies (UNICEF, WHO)	- Participation to policy-making	-
- Donors	- Willing to work with and through the GoA then in place - Adopted a coherent, policy-based	- In the future will contribute to a single pool of funding to support the implementation of BPHS

³⁵ The review was conducted in October 2005.

	approach to health sector development	- Commitments to invest in this sector over the long term are uncertain, especially in relation to the EPHS
- Universities	- Adding to the evidence-based on new approaches - Developing monitoring/evaluation tools and strategies for health care funding	-
- Implementing partners (NGOs as contractors)	- Comparative advantage in health service delivery -	- For international NGOs: - The added value of expatriates is questioned - Experience often restricted to Afghanistan with limited exposure to international debate. - For national NGOs: - Risk of institutionalization and emergence of monopolies
- NGOs outside contracting	- Agents of social change ensuring that issues of equity are given consideration. -	- Financial vulnerability - Maintaining links and collaboration with the MoPH
- Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)	-	- The concept blurs distinction between the military and humanitarian assistance - Difficult coordination with NGO work - Lack of understanding of national health policies - Lack of expertise in health system development

Presently the NGOs involved with Performance-based Partnership Agreements (PPAs) have managerial authority over the staff. They follow the MoPH technical protocols and guidelines, adhere to the health information system and reporting requirements, coordinate and report through the provincial authorities. They have also invested in technical and management training, and instituted standards and protocols. The few NGOs who opted out of the process from the beginning have engaged in urban health care, in programmes targeted at vulnerable groups such as street children or persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The trend over the past years for international NGOs has been to hand over decision-making to national staff. Nowadays most key positions are with Afghans, a process that has been fast. Although this shift should be commended, the presence of international staff can remain of added value, especially for bringing in competences that are lacking in Afghanistan. The mushrooming of national NGOs, who form a heterogeneous group, heightens many challenges, such as financial sustainability, transparency and accountability. The legitimacy of some, referred as to “business companies”, has been contested, contributing to the controversy about what the NGOs role should be in Afghanistan. The tendency has also been to employ large numbers of staff, leading to plethora organisations with the risk of inefficiencies and rigidities.

To date the most apparent tension for NGOs is the vulnerable financial situation. A second cycle of funding in relation to PPAs is anticipated but the key question is whether NGOs will continue to deliver BPHS beyond that round. There is no easy answer to it and still limited evidence on whether NGOs perform better than the government in delivering health services. A step towards handing responsibility to the state in order to ensure health service provision has been discussed but many respondents had mixed feelings: on the one hand they would consider the MoPH taking back a direct role in the provision of health services; on the other hand their confidence in the

government system to carry out this task is low. In particular a considerable degree of scepticism was expressed because of the political culture and poor governance which may favour powerful interests and do not necessarily act in the best interest of the people.

6.1.2 A targeting approach to ensure effective services for the rural populations

In the Afghanistan circumstances, the trend of contracting out the basic package of health services with NGOs³⁶ and on the country-wide scale has been viewed as an effective and desirable way of expanding coverage. The approach is largely supply led with the assumption that, by allocating more funding to the services included under the Basic Package for Health Services (BPHS), resources would be channelled to the most in need.

The evidence suggests that the strategy has been successful in (i) expanding funding for PHC and allocating these resources to the facilities used by the rural poor; and (ii) in improving accessibility of health facilities in areas where few or no services existed. However, in insecure provinces such as Uruzgan or Zabul, funding for the BPHS has been under-spent. The remaining gaps in coverage, especially in very remote and difficult areas, are intended to be gradually addressed. For example the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan will implement the BPHS in Nuristan.

As far as the Essential Package for Hospital Services (EPHS) is concerned, the field interviews and visits did not add further information to the issues highlighted in the health sector review. Since then radical changes have not taken place and the complexity of the provincial and regional hospital system renders the implementation environment a sensitive and difficult endeavour.

6.1.3 Redefining the role of the provincial Ministry of Public Health

In the early days the central MoPH in Kabul has moved very fast but little adequate attention has been paid to the provincial level. Firstly the wider political agenda has placed considerable pressures on the health system, notably with regard to the timing of interventions. Because both donors and MoPH were concerned with increasing visible health service delivery outputs, speeding up the policy process was unavoidable. Secondly translating policy into successful achievements has been time consuming in terms of administrative and monitoring procedures at the expense of capacity-building processes at provincial and district levels.

Obviously the advent of PPAs has created a new environment and has triggered new working relationships between PPHDs and NGOs. From the outset the fact that provincial authorities had limited involvement in the process created a climate of mistrust and uncertainty. Many NGOs had to overcome tensions at different points of time, to learn from experience and to change their management approaches with the assistance of the GCMU managers who played a key role in problem-solving and mediating. The NGOs had to deal not only with the technical and managerial aspects but also with the provincial health authorities playing off in some occasions one NGO against another and the local politics. In many instances the “politicisation” of provincial authorities and local elites, their interferences in management decisions, while pursuing their own interests, the corruption and a significant bias towards physician-based and hospital-based care were among the factors contributing to difficult collaboration.

To date the majority of respondents described their relationships as smoother and fruitful. A health coordination committee is operational in all the provinces visited, with a joint monitoring schedule of activities between the PPHDs and implementing partners. Improvements in the delineation of responsibilities between the hospital management and the provincial health director are visible in a number of provinces. In addition the new system and policy environment do offer hope and potential to build the institutional capacity of the PPHDs. For example the Priority Reform and Restructuring (PRR) decree has offered the opportunity for bringing new skills and competences.

³⁶ Known as Performance Based Partnership Agreement (PPA).

At central level, the General Directorate for Provincial Public Health, with the EC assistance, is also developing an implementing plan for capacity-building.

Nevertheless although the PPHDs have been given greater responsibility to oversee the BPHS development, they still have limited autonomy. In a number of developing countries the district level has been seen as the managerial focus. Provincial and district health authorities have gained full responsibility for the delivery of health services, recruitment and management of personnel, health planning and budgeting and importantly, mobilizing additional resources and deciding their allocation. This picture is far from the Afghan reality where complex political dynamics makes the state structure still highly-centralized. For Evans et al (2004), Afghanistan can be categorized under the typology of deconcentration, the most limited form of decentralization where some form of authority is given to lower levels of government, but the periphery remains subordinate to central government.

Although contracting often suggests a degree of decentralisation of resource allocation, the limited range of choices granted to provincial authorities by the central MoPH and the current model of contracting leaves them little room to reassert their authority and to be responsive to local needs. The district health level presents an even more limited capacity and the greatest challenge if to be revived.

In addition the fact that up to date most provincial health departments depend on NGOs for building their institutional capacity and for resources seems to be the rule rather than the exception. This situation creates certain ambiguities in the purchaser-provider relationship at provincial level and questions the model of contracting in relation to the role the PPHDs should play in PPA management.

The Cambodian experience with contracting demonstrated the importance of establishing a solid institutional capacity to effectively run the delivery of health services at peripheral level. Provincial health authorities in particular needed the proper management instruments to function within a competitive market. Leadership, ownership and a clear separation between purchasing and provision of health services were also identified as critical to success.

Health Net TPO, the Dutch NGO, has long debated the possibility for the PPHDs to become funding and planning agencies with a strong regulation role. Although attractive, the concept may be premature in the Afghan context, as it will require an impetus for a decentralization policy, which presently appears to be low given the existence of politically fragmenting forces.

6.1.4 The links between the health facilities and the communities

Considerable progress has been made in training mid level staff, including Community Health Workers (CHWs). Given the fact that the CHWs only receive a basic 10-week training, doctors have questioned the relevance of CHW clinical services which prompted the revision of CHW's job description. According to most respondents, the CHWs undoubtedly contribute to the increase in preventive activities and are a powerful intervention for family planning increase. Nevertheless, drop out rates are of particular concern. Plausible arguments are made both for and against their work on a volunteer basis but some NGOs are already attempting to develop mechanisms for compensation in order to retain them.

Within the international community the value of Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) training is controversial. The justification for this investment is that a large proportion of births are attended by TBAs, especially in rural areas where access to maternity care providers such as doctors and midwives is limited. Opponents argue the following: (i) training TBAs is a stopgap measure, as they cannot address many problems; (ii) it has not been shown effective in terms of impact on pregnancy outcomes. It has also been said that the training is not cost-effective because most of TBAs have a low caseload.

To date on the basis of international studies results it may be difficult to justify the time and expense associated with TBA training as compared with other possible health investments. Indeed Afghan policy-makers chose to improve access to health facilities, that can provide timely, emergency obstetric care intervention of choice, and to train skilled staff such as community midwives. Nevertheless the fact that access is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future has been used by a few NGOs working outside contracting to justify the investment in TBA training. In the Afghan circumstances and although aid workers should be realistic in their expectations, TBAs may still represent the strongest link between the women and the health facilities and could be valuable resources in the referral to functioning facilities. In particular the indicators related to institutional deliveries and caesarean section, which have been reported as a great need for improvement, may call for different strategies and increased ways of collaboration with existing resources at community level, including TBAs.

6.2 The dilemma between achieving results and improving quality of care

6.2.1 Expanding the scope of BPHS

Since its first introduction the BPHS has been reviewed to address the gaps in the scope of services provided. For example mental health and disability components have been added; and the BHCs ought to be staffed with a doctor and the health posts with a community supervisor. In the fast-paced implementation environment, these changes have placed an extra burden on the NGOs and health providers who are, at the same time, facing the challenges of providing a wide range of health services while meeting targets via output and process indicators. Observations show that the ability of the Comprehensive Health Centres (CHCs) and district hospitals to cope with the increasing demands of health care, especially at the Out Patient Department (OPD), is often limited, which questions the absorptive capacity of health facilities and threatens the quality of care.

The fact that users bypass the first level of health care may explain in part the patient overload. Some NGOs have suggested either to build new facilities or to train more personnel to meet the demands but more primary care facilities or personnel may not be enough. Perhaps one additional response would be to open the health facilities in the afternoons. Most public health facilities are open from 8 am to 1 or 2 pm only. Assuming a physician spends about 10 minutes with one patient³⁷, this works out to about 36 patients a day in the current setting but is hardly compatible with an increase on the number of consultations if targets are to be met.

6.2.2 Ensuring quality

Within the field visits the objective was not to evaluate the changes in the quality of care. Nevertheless positive changes were particularly evident at the facility level: the prices for drugs were openly advertised at the entrance; drugs and equipment were available; and a number of female providers, including health professionals from Tajikistan, were present.

By contrast there seems no marked change with regard to clinical care, time spent in service or interpersonal relations between providers and users. This is in line with the health facility assessments carried out by the MoPH and the John Hopkins University.

³⁷ According to the Balanced Score Card as developed by the John Hopkins University and the Indian Institute of Health Management Research, the time spent with patients (> 9.1 minutes) is one of the indicators to assess the quality of service provision.

Patient load and clinical practices are likely to have a significant bearing on the quality of health care. Having too many patients to attend in the mornings has several implications: consultations are poorly performed and the monotony of the work makes health workers little motivated. In addition, the direct outcome of spending less time on clinical diagnosis is that doctors can see more patients, a tendency that seems widely practised.

Several tools for monitoring and evaluating the performance and quality of health services have been introduced but appear to have little influence over health staff practices. As a matter of fact the environment and the structure in which the health workers act have not changed fundamentally despite an increase in NGO salary scales. In addition the fact that private practices are common after official hours provides little incentive for health professionals to improve quality of services during their work with NGOs.

6.3 The necessity to take the private for profit sector seriously

6.3.1 What do we know about the private for profit sector in Afghanistan?

International experience demonstrates that the users of health services often achieve a mix of public and private providers depending upon circumstances and perceived advantages of seeking care at single or several sources. In the Afghan setting, different categories of private providers exist from traditional healers to midwives and doctors but have been little understood, investigated, or explained. Although anecdotal evidence indicates that private services are widely used, little is known about their significance. Likewise there is no study to explain their popularity, both in terms of costs or accessibility. Studies examining the efficiency and quality of private care are lacking too, which limits the information on the benefits and constraints of private health care for rural populations in relation to that of the public sector.

6.3.2 The blurred line between public and private work

One key element to consider is that the allowance of private practice among the government health professionals is an arrangement widely supported. While the private health care services are officially recognised in the Afghan Constitution, authorities do not object if health workers open private clinics, laboratories or pharmacies and accept that health workers supplement their salary and seek alternative sources of income.

The delivery of an essential package does not require that health staff do not engage in private practices. It does, however, need them to devote sufficient time in order to deliver the basic package service at a reasonable level of quality. But this is threatened because:

- There is a 'grey zone' between official fees and unofficial co-payments;
- The prices for health services may be more difficult to monitor and influence;
- The equity implications of the costs are of particular concern;
- It makes professional practices less amenable to change;
- Although health workers know standard treatment procedures, they may still apply the wrong treatment for financial gain or under pressure of the patient;
- The private medical care is essentially concerned with the provision of symptomatic relief through curative care but has little role in addressing the root causes through preventive interventions;
- There is no consumer protection or regulation to assure the quality of these services.

6.3.3 The need for regulation and enforcement

While such imbedded practices cannot be changed overnight, forces to change fundamentally this informal system are weak. The widespread growth of the private sector and the lack of effective mechanisms to address associated problems could make the health sector more and more vulnerable to the market failure problems, including information asymmetry leading to less satisfying overall performance with high costs. It is, therefore, argued that the government, the

health-related UN agencies and NGOs have an important role in instituting processes and mechanisms to ensure provision of safe and appropriate health services from this sector.

6.3.4 Are there possible ways of collaboration?

International debate on the role of the private sector has primarily focused on issues of cost and quality. But more recently the comparative advantages of private practitioners have been called into attention, including their proximity to the patients; the confidence patients have in them and patients' acceptance of their services despite the costs.

In Afghanistan, one documented example in relation to creating alliances with private providers comes from WHO. In the capital city of Paktia province the organisation has developed collaboration with private pharmacies in order to address the negative aspects of their Tuberculosis (TB) related practices, including their disregard of recommended drug protocols, their inaction with regard to defaulters and their lack of minimum essential records.

This example suggests that policy-makers and aid organisations have a growing interest in trying to capture the potential benefits of the private sector, while attempting to counteract its failings.

6.4 The need to address demand-related issues

The development of the BPHS in Afghanistan is primarily a supply-led approach. In the early days policy-makers made the implicit assumption that public health facilities, which will offer a standardized package of activities, will respond to people's demand for health care. However, although services are becoming more available to the general population, there is limited information on the responsiveness of the system, such as patient demands, reactions and requests. To date there is a dawning realization from the GCMU and the World Bank in particular that expanding health services is not enough but that a better understanding of the demand side is needed.

The cultural reality of Afghanistan highlights a number of factors affecting demand and access. Access to health services will be dependent, among others, on distance, security, and availability of female staff. Other factors influencing the feasibility of the health system, such as barriers related to health beliefs, provider practices, social restrictions on women's mobility, may well affect utilization of health services. It is also possible that the opportunity costs and difficult access act together to reduce the utilization of PHC. Furthermore patients may not be willing to pay for treatment they see as less effective, convenient or accessible than that obtainable from other sources. For example, a pre-test survey in Ningarhar province showed that annual health expenditures, which represented approximately 59 US\$ per capita, not only formed a substantial share of total of out-of-pocket payment but were mostly spent outside public health facilities (Gibson *et al*, 2005).

Finally users may lack the requisite knowledge to make appropriate choices in the health service market with a high demand on curative health care. Attempts to communicate wider messages about health services and quality use – particularly the appropriate use of drugs and the knowledge of the referral chain- is currently very limited. This would require increasing the public's awareness of, and trust in, the new services.

6.5 Summary of issues for debate

The opinions presented above were shared and debated during the 24th April workshop. Most of the suggestions presented below are a result of these discussions:

6.5.1 The BPHS: a careful development

A structured PHC system is functional with increased level of activities and coverage of underserved and remote areas. These considerable achievements should not overlook the questions below in Box 10.

Box 10: The main remaining questions regarding the BPHS

How to maintain focus on results without compromising quality?

Policy-makers should take this issue as a serious concern and expand the scope of BPHS carefully taking into account not only cost-effectiveness and efficacy of interventions but also the capacity of the health facilities to cope with increasing range of activities and demands.

How to better understand demand-related issues:

More in-depth research on factors affecting utilisation of public health facilities would provide background material which will help the MoPH and its health sector partners to better understand the physical, financial, organisational, cognitive, and socio-cultural barriers and to promote more appropriate health-seeking behaviour and health service utilization.

In the future what is desirable: competition or collaboration?

Contracting can take various forms depending on the purpose of the contract. Exposure to other contracting arrangements, including contract binding the state to local authorities or contracting-in, should be encouraged to suit the reality of the PPHDs and possibly of the districts so that both administrations become active actors and managers of the process. For their part, donors need to reinforce their assistance in a way that reinforces the capacities of provincial and district health administrations.

6.5.2 Limiting factors to change: the unregulated private for profit sector

The private for profit sector does matter but:

- Studies examining the efficiency and quality of private care are lacking;
- It has a limited role in preventive interventions;
- Consumers lack protection and regulation;
- The NGOs have little influence over the practices of health staff;
- There is possible negative impact on the quality of care and on ethics and professional values.

Until now there have been little calls for the government to further regulate private health care providers in order to provide a higher quality of care and help to achieve the goal of assuring health care to all citizens. If equity is not going to be compromised and in order to render the private for profit sector complementary to public services, there is need to consider it as an integral part of the health system. The government and NGOs have an important role in instituting processes and mechanisms to ensure the provision of safe and appropriate health services from this sector.

The policymakers and providers need to make a concerted effort to address these issues and develop appropriate strategies to handle the various concerns. The government has a key role in developing a coherent policy on the legislation, regulation and control of private sector health services. The NGOs as providers should advocate for regulation and enforcement, investigate the potential for building partnerships, search for alternative mechanisms such as linking salary supplements to staff performance, career opportunities, or peer pressures, and educate consumers to improve health-promoting behaviours.

6.5.3 Strengthening intersector collaboration

The crucial question is how best to achieve sustainable improvements in Afghan peoples' health. Multisector improvements on security, roads, and education are among the multiple factors likely to have an impact on health. But it is common knowledge that the epidemiological transition, from

predominantly communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases, has largely been attributable to economic development leading to improved education, nutrition and sanitation rather than to effective health care provision either by public or private sectors. Indeed health care is not only equated to doctors, drugs, health centres and hospitals.

The limits of health care provision stress the need to keep attention outside medical aspects such as balanced food, safe water, and hygiene. The need to invest in other sectors such as water and sanitation and education is critical and will require stronger inter-sector collaboration between Ministries.

6.5.4 The unresolved issue of sustainability

In the current competitive and resource-constrained environment, one key concern is the sustainability of the BPHS through the PPA strategy. The system, which includes both MoPH and NGOs providers, is still very precarious. Even though the cost sharing schemes, as currently piloted, bring into the system additional revenues, they are unlikely to pay for the level of BPHS estimated, on an annual basis, at \$140 million.

While donors have advocated for an increase of government expenditures on the health sector in the next years, they have increasingly considered the MoPH as a credible partner. Experience thus suggests that some donor agencies are prepared to pool their resources, provided that the government is reassuringly competent and in areas where the MoPH has been able to articulate convincing strategies.

Comparing the picture emerging from the first Groupe URD's Quality Project mission in August 2002 with the situation prevailing in 2006, progress has been impressive. Nevertheless health sector development remains highly context dependent and subject to continuing changes in an unstable environment.

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7 EDUCATION

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7.1 Main features for education sector

It is important to highlight some general features to understand better the education sector in Afghanistan. (see Table 6)

- The current enrolment rate is the highest in Afghan history as far as western style education is concerned (without taking Islamic education into account), with more than half of the 7 to 13 aged children enrolled (35% to 40% are girls).

Table 6: Figures on the education sector

Year	School age population	Number of schools	Number of enrolled children	Number of teachers	Enrolment growth compared to 1978	Growth in N° of schools compared to 1978
1978	2,8 million	3 352	995 000	29 900		
1980	2,8 million	3 824	1 115 000	35 300	+ 12 %	+ 14 %
1985-90	4 million	586 ^a	622 000	15 100	- 62 %	- 83 %
1991-2001	4-4,5 million	2200-3 000	5-700 000	15-20 000	? ^b	?
In 2002	4,5 million	6 784	2 900 000	73 000	+ 291 %	+ 202 %
In 2003		> 8000	3 700 000	80 600		+ 240 %

Source: Ministry of Education, 2003

^a Schools supported by government- mainly in cities. Schools supported by communities, local commanders and NGOs are not included here, which were estimated to some 1500 schools.

^b In 1992-96, civil war was raging and complete anarchy and there was no data available. During the Taliban, 'madrasas' and schools were not differentiated and no data is known.

In 2004, more than 4,3 millions children were enrolled in grades 1 to 12³⁸. However, more than 2.5 million school-age boys and girls (ages 7–18) were still not enrolled, despite the fact that, as stated in the Constitution of Afghanistan, education to grade 9 is compulsory. The enrolment rate is currently even higher but updated reliable statistics are hard to find. Some people visited evoked more than 5 millions children in school in 2006 and around 105 000 teachers. The influx increased a lot in the past few years and will continue to increase. Rehabilitation of pre-war facilities is by far insufficient and the financial and human inputs in the education sector remain highly necessary. The fact that the overwhelming majority are students in the first grades adds to the challenge.

- **The urbanization rate is weak.** This is an obstacle to school enrolment and education service delivery. Education delivery would be easier in a more urbanized country.
- As far as education is concerned, **there is a high diversity among regions** depending on different factors:
 - Level of infrastructure destruction: war did not have the same impact in all the regions. In the front line regions, destructions of infrastructures have been massive and in those cases, education facilities rehabilitation or reconstruction is crucial.
 - Geographical constraints. In the mountainous regions, as in Bamiyan province, the landscape is a big constraint and it is sometimes a real challenge to reach remote villages and provide education.

³⁸ *Securing Afghanistan's Future: Accomplishment and the Strategic Path Forward* (Technical Annex/ Education), Kabul: TISA and International Agencies, 2004

- Security is also an important obstacle. Difficult or very risky access sometimes discourage government or NGO to providing education, especially for girls (in Zabul, Helmand, Khost for example)
 - As mentioned in the previous criteria, girls' enrolment is still problematic in a lot of regions. At the national level, an estimated 35% of girls are enrolled but there is a very high diversity depending on the areas. For example in Herat and Kabul provinces, girls' enrolment can exceed 50% but in other provinces such as Zabul (3%), Helmand (5%) or Khost (7%) the rate is close to zero. Girls' enrolment is related to security situation, cultural factor, geographic and economic constraints. Parents are reluctant to let their girls walk long distance to go to school, which is connected to cultural but also security factors.
- The **high diversity among the population** should also be highlighted as an important constraint for the education sector. Years of war led to numerous **over aged children**. They need specific care in education and specific methods of teaching. One of the strategies is the accelerated learning process to reintegrate these children in the formal system, after 2 or 3 years. Another strategy is to provide them minimum knowledge through literacy courses even if it does not cover all the curriculum. The high rate of illiteracy is also a big challenge. The objective is to have 50% of adult women literate by 2008.
The **population migrations** presented a double problem for education: some former teachers migrated outside of the country, and some refugees graduated in foreign countries. Their reintegration can be difficult (recognition or equivalence of diploma, adaptation to Afghan situation...). Moreover some refugees had better access to education in camps or in neighbouring countries like in Iran and Pakistan than populations within Afghan borders. Some refugees came back to Afghanistan with a good level. It can be a problem in classes, when the students have a better level than the teachers or can not find a satisfactory class reaching his level.
The **minorities** raise the problem of the teaching language (Uzbek, Tadjik, Nuristanee...)
The **nomadic people** also represent a very specific population, with special needs. An inventive and flexible approach is needed to try to fulfil their needs.

Groupe URD's research team is aware that the regions visited have specific characteristics, and are not representative of the high diversity among Afghan regions. Bamiyan, Samangan, Balkh, Baghlan, Nangarhar and Kabul provinces have good enrolment rates with slight diversity concerning girls' enrolment. Unfortunately, the situation is very different in Southern provinces, but the team could not go due to security reasons.

7.2 Main reforms since 2001

The main objective of this study has been to understand the reconstruction process and the main trends for the education sector, from grade 1 to 12. The higher education sector was taken into account but was not the principal focus of this study.

7.2.1 New Constitution

The new constitution established in 2004 states that basic education is free and compulsory:

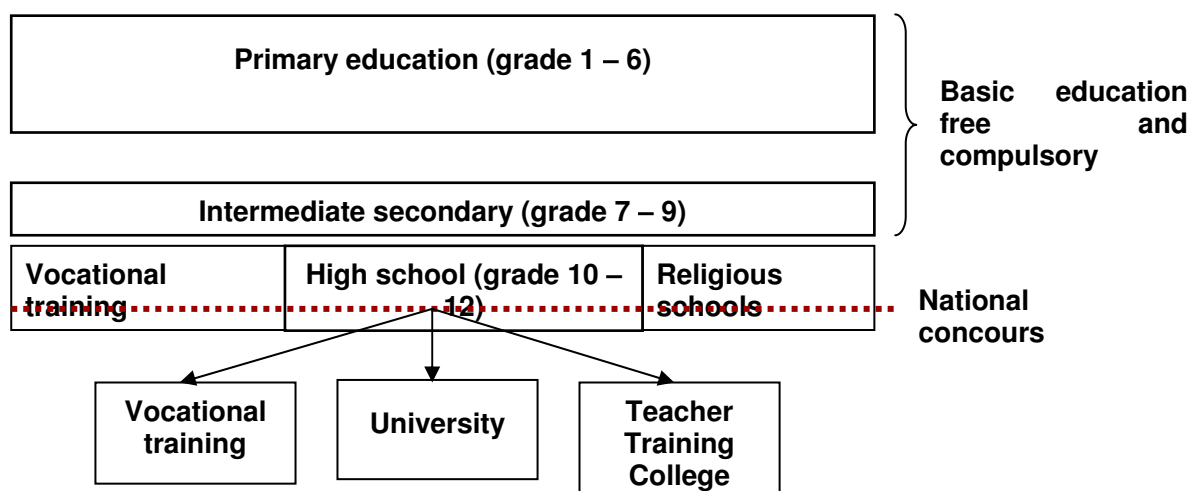
“Education is the right of all citizens of Afghanistan, which shall be provided up to secondary level, free of charge by the state.

The State is obliged to devise and implement effective programmes for a balanced expansion of education all over Afghanistan, and to provide compulsory intermediate level education”.

Art.22, Ch. 2.

In the Constitution the State is responsible for setting policies and programmes to provide basic education for children, to enhance women and nomads access to education, as well as to reduce illiteracy in Afghanistan.

Figure 10: The education's sector framework



7.2.2 New Curriculum and Textbooks

As a major reform since 2001, a new curriculum was drawn up, and the resulting elaboration of new textbooks is under process. Before 2001, textbooks dated from the 80's. Learning and teaching were largely based on out - dated curricula and pedagogical methods emphasizing rote learning. Some of the textbooks used before 2001 in Afghanistan (and for Afghan refugees in Pakistan especially) had been developed through support from the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), with USAID funding assistance. Since then, a new curriculum was elaborated by the government, with the support of UNESCO and UNICEF, and the financial support of some donors. An Independent High Commission of Education for Afghanistan was set with the support of UNESCO, to design 'objectives, policy and strategies' for the education sector. Textbooks are still under process for grade 3 and 6. Textbooks for grade 1 and 4 have been distributed and completed for grade 2 and 5.

7.2.3 Priority Reform and Restructuring

All the institutions of the government of Afghanistan are going through the Priority Reform and Restructuring process (PRR). For the education sector, the PRR process would enable the Ministry to be more efficient through the selection of the more qualified civil servants. In fact, the Ministry of Education (MoE), with its 105 000 teachers is the Ministry with the highest number of employees and it will need to hire more as there is an important need for teachers. In order to run efficiently these numerous employees, an efficient administration at the national and at the provincial level is necessary. Moreover, as the provincial level is a key component for evaluation, monitoring and bottom up information, competent employees are needed.

Qualified teacher is one of the main stakes of the education sector. An accreditation (salary will be based on competences and experiences) system should be implemented to enhance teachers' recognition. The PRR process will be a base for the implementation of an accreditation system. In fact, big curbs to quality teaching and education are the low salary level. The PRR process would enable the selection of necessary and as much as possible qualified staff, and would enhance a better administration, monitoring, supervision and allocation of the salaries.

For the MoE, the first step was completed. A committee was formed within the MoE and proposed a new organisational framework for the ministry. Nevertheless the following steps have not been completed. The changes suggested by the committee have not been implemented and the reform process has failed up to now. A new PRR process will be launched with the arrival of the new Minister. In Baghlan's Provincial Education Department (PED), an evaluation and monitoring team

from Kabul was expected, apparently to test the competencies of the local state employees and sack the incompetent staff.

7.3 A centralized education service delivery

7.3.1 A Ministry of Education highly centralised

The MoE is a highly centralised ministry. No decision power is left to the local administration. All the information must be transmitted to the central ministry but the communication from the top to the provincial education departments seems to be very poor. However, capacities of the MoE improved. For example, teachers' salary was a big issue at the end of 2004, the MoE was not able to pay them on a regular basis. Nowadays, the situation is much better, teachers' salaries are paid on a much more regular basis. Nevertheless, the high turn over among ministers and their assistants is a big limitation to the efficiency of the Ministry and a big constraint for all aid workers. Donors have to renegotiate each time with the new Minister team, explaining their strategies and wishes and reach a new agreement. The NGOs also have to renegotiate new agreements with the MoE, and the high turn over is jeopardizing the relations between the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) and the international community.

7.3.2 National policies evolutions

National policies and strategies changed since 2001. During the emergency period, the government was mainly following UNICEF's strategy with the "Back to School" campaign. The efforts of all stakeholders focused during 2002 on access to education for both boys and girls.

The focus on access to education is still prevailing but there is an increasing focus towards quality in education, which means better learning environment and better teaching methods and conditions. There is a national teacher training policy, the Teacher Education Programme (TEP), seeking to improve both the knowledge of teachers and their teaching methods. For the coming year (2006), there will also be an increased focus on the vocational training and religious school levels. In the new education system, the formal vocational training begins after grade 9, as well as religious schools. Those two branches have not been really developed yet in a structured way, but in the case of religious schools, funds are more difficult to get. Very few donors accept to invest in the religious schools (infrastructure, curriculum development, teacher training etc...) which might be a mistake given that this sector is sensitive and critical for the nation's restructuring and should draw the attention of international community. The formal vocational training system is still very weak, and vocational trainings for the moment are mainly informal, with no education prerequisite. The NGOs or the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs are in charge of training some specific populations, such as demobilised children, disabled, ex combatants in the framework of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programs. Vocational training is up to now very fragmented.

7.3.3 Provincial Education Department

The PED is bound to play a key role in the pyramidal education system, but this level has to be strengthened. Capacities and motivation are very unequal at the provincial level, and means and competences are lacking. Nevertheless, the administration has key functions under its responsibility: assessment, monitoring, evaluation. All those functions should be implemented at the local level, but even if people have the motivation, the lack of means and competence impedes the fulfilling of those attributions. In particular the lack of transport is seen as a main constraint.

7.4 Donors as key actors of strategy implementation

7.4.1 High dependence on donors' funding

The MoE is highly dependent on donors' funding in spite of weak absorption capacities. The main trends observed among the 3 main donors for the education sector are:

- USAID since 2004 became by far the main donor in education sector, leading to the withdrawal of the EC from this sector. With around 100 million USD per year, USAID is playing a key role.
- UNICEF's funding is decreasing. UNICEF has been forced to change and reduce its programmes in Afghanistan. The massive 'back to school' campaign launched in 2002 is now mainly focused on girls. Material supply in primary education is still on going for girls from grade 1 to 6 but only for 1st grader boys.
- The World Bank (WB) is the second most important donor, playing an increasing role in education sector.

Both for the ordinary budget - recurrent costs, and for the development budget, the GoA is highly dependent on donors' funding. The education sector has the largest number of employees in the government (105 000 teachers), and teachers salaries represent 60% of the ordinary budget in education. This is a heavy burden for the weak financial capacities of the state. For the development budget, donors' involvement is essential. Education infrastructures and teachers' training were the two priorities in 2004. Nevertheless, donors committed only 77 million USD against the 250 million USD education development budget estimated by the GoA for the year 1382 (March 2003-March 2004), leaving a huge funding gap³⁹.

On top of this funding gap, absorption capacities of the government are still weak, even if improving over the years. USAID is channelling the funds through the Strategic Objective Agreement, keeping the hand in funds management. The WB finally set a Grant Management Unit inside the MoE to decrease the disbursement delays due to a weak administrative capacity.

7.4.2 Evolution of the main donors' strategies

After those general assertions, it's worth detailing more USAID and WB strategies evolutions since 2001.

- At the beginning, USAID launched the Accelerated Primary Education Program, which aimed at "creating conditions for stability", which meant for the education sector to meet urgent needs: school building, textbook printing, teacher training, accelerated learning for over-aged children. This programme now evolved to the Accelerated Basic Education Program, which objective is the "access to quality education". The new strategy aims at improving quality and access to education, including a larger part of the Afghan population: children, youth, but also adults. One major impact of USAID strategy among the aid worker scene is on Afghan NGOs. A prerequisite to get USAID funds is to set a consortium between an American NGO and Afghan NGOs. The consequence of this is a scaling up of some Afghan NGOs in terms of budget, of staff, of geographical coverage, under the pressure of sizeable funds.
- Concerning the WB, there was a shift from the Emergency Education Rehabilitation and Development Project to Education Quality Improvement Programme. The WB is focusing a lot on community, district and provincial level authorities' involvement. The WB is encouraging the decentralisation process, defending the idea that a centralised MoE is not compatible with the education sector sustainability⁴⁰.

³⁹ World Bank, *Technical annex for a proposed grant in the amount of US\$ 35 Million to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for an Education Quality Improvement Program ("EQUIP")*, July 2004

⁴⁰ *Investing in Afghanistan's Future, A strategy note on the education system in Afghanistan*, Keiko Miwa, February 2005.

7.4.3 Exogenous concepts and difficult coordination

Those programmes implemented at the national level under the influence of donors are carrying exogenous development schemes and concepts, not always understood by Afghan authorities and population. The WB for instance is trying to introduce a decentralised model, to put the school at the top of the system, and to promote an administrative and to a less extent a political decentralisation.

In the programme run by the WB, District Education Officers (DEO) and PED are asked to play a decision role in the process (community's choice endorsement). As the role of DEO is still unclear, and the relationship between MoE and local levels highly centralised, this process is creating tensions, and the local administration may not have the competencies to play the role asked by the WB. People working in the MoE at the central level are sceptical about decentralisation, unaware of how to implement it and of its consequences. Aid stakeholders facilitating WB's programme have to comply with modalities not always efficient.

The ownership of the government concerning national strategies and programmes is sometimes questionable. Objectives determined in development schemes by donors are often too ambitious, as for example in the Teacher Education Programme (TEP). It is probably not possible to reach the objectives in the short term. The attempts of coordination at national level between donors and MoE and Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) are not always successful. The Education Coordination Group, encompassing MoE, MoHE, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Women Affairs, Academic of Science and the main donors, consists of different technical groups: construction, formal education, non formal education, vocational training, teacher training, curriculum, etc. However, in the case of USAID, funds are channelled through outside budget, and in this case the real coordination with MoE seems to be very poor. The TEP appears as an exception as the different donors pooled their funds together below the authority of the MoE.

7.5 Synchronisation of aid agencies with national policies

7.5.1 UN agencies supporting government policy design and implementation

UN agencies, mainly UNESCO and UNICEF, have been supporting the GoA in policy design and implementation. For example, UNESCO supported the creation of the Independent High Commission of Education for Afghanistan and the writing of its final report about the "Revival and development of Education in Afghanistan" published at the end of 2003. UNICEF and UNESCO have been supporting the curriculum and textbooks elaboration for several years (textbooks are now under elaboration for grades 4 and 6 and for intermediate and secondary education). UNICEF and UNESCO also worked on the capacity building for government. UNESCO, UNICEF, WFP, UNIFEM and FAO currently launched a joint programme, 'integrated functional literacy', supporting the literacy campaign of the government. The objective is to increase the women's literacy rate in Afghanistan up to 50%, knowing that today it is down to 14%. UNICEF and WFP are taking care of the literacy courses while UNIFEM, FAO and UNESCO will take care of the post literacy phase. This programme will be implemented in areas where the government has very little capacity for literacy. UNICEF has also an office in the literacy department of the MoE to support the coordination and management side of the department.

7.5.2 Better synchronisation between NGO projects and national policies

The International NGOs' (INGOs) projects are increasingly in accordance with national policies. Main NGOs working in education signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the GoA. The Memorandum of Understanding sets some criteria of selection and of intervention agreed between the MoE and the NGO, guarantees a better coordination between the MoE and the NGOs, and between NGOs themselves. It should also improve aid harmonization and practices. The MoE reinforcement led to a stronger need for aid workers to coordinate with MoE.

At the same time, NGOs that have been working for a long time in Afghanistan, handed over massively the schools they supported to the GoA. Under the Taliban, some NGOs were playing the GoA's role, providing service delivery, running schools, paying the salaries and supplying the materials. Some also ran low profile girls' schools. With the transitional GoA and the election of the new government, the MoE progressively took back its responsibilities, even if it is still too weak to support all the schools. The NGOs therefore had to shift to new types of projects and activities. The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) for example stopped the salary payment in the 414 schools they handed over to the government. SCA is now supporting some 'model schools', twin schools, and secondary schools as well as Community Based Schools (CBS). Most of the INGOs shifted to quality in basic education, access to education with CBS, accelerating learning and literacy.

7.5.3 Diversity among NGOs working in education sector

Two major criteria appear to be decisive for the strategy and the identity of the NGOs working in the education sector in Afghanistan: the time they have spent in Afghanistan and the type of funding they receive. The history of the NGO's involvement in Afghanistan is decisive. Obviously the need for adjusting to the new reality is not the same for an NGO just arriving in the new post war context or for an NGO working in Afghanistan for decades, having run project in very harsh conditions, and accountable to the population for education delivery in some extent.

The nature of the funding they receive is also an important factor. Some NGOs are acting as implementing or facilitating partners, receiving funds from the major donors and implementing their global strategy. NGOs working on project funded by the WB have very limited room of manoeuvre. In the case of the WB, room for manoeuvre is thin for NGOs working with the WB funding. The NGOs implementing the project *Cash Grant for School Development* have many procedures and project implementation instructions to comply with (facilitate community decision making process, work with PED, etc). Other NGOs, working with other types of funds (bilateral, own funds) have more freedom in terms of design and selection of their project and location. In this case they don't have to fit into the global programmes. They can explore windows of opportunities, work with marginalised groups, such as street working children, disabled, etc; and have more autonomy in running the project.

7.5.4 Coordination at provincial level

As described previously, coordination at the national level had been improved through Memorandums of Understanding, even if the effectiveness of the working groups at national level is not always clear. At the provincial level, coordination exists, sometimes hosted by UN agencies, sometimes hosted by NGOs or PED. A more systematic initiative was set with the Provincial Coordination Body and the sector working groups.

A more fruitful collaboration could be set at the provincial level if there were better competences and means at provincial education department level. The PED is theoretically in charge of the need assessment and the monitoring for the schools and the communities of the province and could represent a very interesting level for information sharing.

7.6 Which involvement from the community?

Community participation is an issue at stake in all development sectors in Afghanistan. In education projects, there is an increased involvement of communities.

Community and families involvement is crucial to avoid or minimize security problems and drop outs. The Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) have been set up to increase community awareness about school enrolment, and fight against the drop out of students and the absenteeism of teachers. Those two issues are key problems at the school level.

School Management Committees are also set in some schools, gathering teachers and headmasters to improve the running of the schools and to have a first level of conflicts and problems resolution. Community can also be the best protection against some elements of the society hostile to schooling, in particular to girls' enrolment. Schools are becoming targets in some areas. More than 80 schools have been attacked within the last four months. Raising community awareness can sometimes be the best way to fight against intolerance.

Even if it is stated in the new Constitution that basic education is free and compulsory, participation in kind or in cash is sometimes required. For the CBSs, participation of the community is requested to provide a place, a teacher, and sometimes a contribution for teacher salary. What is the relevance of requesting financial contribution if it doesn't ensure the sustainability of the project? Sustainability of CBSs can be questioned in both cases, if the NGO pays for the salary, or if the community is supposed to pay for it, knowing that most of the time, even if requested, the community does not pay. But sustainability should not be an issue at stake for the CBSs, given that they are conceived as temporary structures in order to fill the gaps left by the national education delivery system.

In other cases, at the school level, community is implementing the project (need assessment, contracting and monitoring) with an NGO working as facilitating partner. This is the case for the WB's Cash Grant for School Development project. In the province of Badakhshan, this project was launched under a pilot form with the Provincial Education Department playing the role of the facilitating partner. The question is whether the community is the right stakeholder to define its own real needs (as discussed in the multi sector part). In the second phase of this project, under the name of Education QUality Improvement Project – EQUIP, the WB divided into two categories the Cash Grant, with one related to infrastructure and the other one to quality improvement. In fact the WB, under their first programme “Emergency Education Rehabilitation Project”, noticed that the community was always asking for facilities improvement or construction and that education quality was only partially improved through the project.

7.7 Other issues for debate and recommendations

7.7.1 Donors' coordination and MoE ownership

An improved MoE ownership could be reached through a better coordination between donors. Coordination bodies must be reinforced and effective coordination and dialogue must be established between donors and MoE, not only for strategies and policies implementation but also for their design. The current attempt to run a census (number of schools, of students, of teachers, etc.) and to set an Education Management Information System should result in an improved and facilitated planning and coordination.

7.7.2 Future capacity of the State to handle the education system?

Future capacity of the State to handle the education system is another concern at different levels:

- To face the high influx of students. Given the strategy of CBSs, and improved access to education, there will be a big influx of students in schools in the coming year.
- To integrate newly created schools. The CBSs in some cases are meant to become formal GoA schools. Some new schools are also under construction or will be constructed. Given the difficulties of the MoE to manage the existing schools, number of teachers and of students, one can wonder what will be the consequence of the integration of new schools and new students to the national education system;
- To rationalize teaching staff (quantity, quality, certification, too low salaries). Although important efforts are made for improving teaching environment and quality, some significant challenges remain: what will be the capacity of the MoE to rationalize a very disparate staff, to level their knowledge and teaching methods, and improve their salary? Currently, one of the major problems for qualified teacher recruitment and for their involvement is certainly the low salary.

7.7.3 What does quality mean in education?

After the emergency phase in which the major concern was access to education, everybody is now concerned about “quality” in education. For some, quality can be reached through the constitution of model schools, well equipped, set up as an example for MoE and its local representatives. For other it means creating best practices in education, building capacity and raising awareness among the authorities. The TEP is a national attempt to improve teacher training mechanisms, teacher knowledge and teaching methods. While some children still have no access to education, computers are provided in some schools. Quality must not be put aside and minimized, because of a weak national education delivery system, but some urgent needs are still not met in several parts of Afghanistan.

7.7.4 What outcomes and what benefits after basic education?

Improved access to education and improved quality of education are key issues, but the outcomes and benefits of basic education must not be forgotten. Vocational training must be developed quickly, corresponding to the needs of the country, access to higher education must be fluidized and well adapted to the economic needs. Reportedly, many graduated students do not work within their field of competences after the university and find jobs that require lower capacities. No wonder some families ask about necessity and the usefulness of education. The current system of orientation selection after the national exam (after grade 12, to access higher education), based on a system of rating may not be fully appropriate: the best scores can study medicine, the low scores become teachers... This is probably not the best way to promote teacher self esteem and involvement.

7.7.5 Capacity building at provincial level

As underlined above, the provincial level is a key level for monitoring and need assessment. Schools and communities are the centre of the education sector and decisions should be taken according to the situation on the field. The provincial level is the link between the field level and the national level. But as competencies are missing, the information is not well collected (though evaluation, monitoring and need assessment) and not well transmitted to the central level. It's certainly not the role of NGOs to equip local administration, nevertheless, a good cooperation between both entities would be highly efficient, and transfer of competencies could be reinforced. NGOs should increase capacity building activities at provincial and district levels on issues of need assessment and monitoring.

7.7.6 Improve coordination at the school level

Coordination should be improved also at the school level. In some schools, several NGOs have been intervening over the past few years: an NGO equipping the laboratory, another one providing tents, another one building classrooms, others providing training for teachers and headmasters, etc. Coordination should be improved at school level in order to prevent overlaps, but also to have a balanced support. The risk to focus on easy-to-reach schools or communities always exists and must be fought against. A good coordination is a means to reduce gaps in humanitarian support. It can also be a way to reduce conflicting approaches of aid agencies. For instance, some organisations are distributing food to enhance school enrolment while in the same area other organisations are pushing community's participation in the education field towards the same objectives. The lack of coordination in this case discredits the projects.

In spite of those sector specific statements, the core issue for the rebuilding of the state and of the education sector is to reach clear and common political and technical views and objectives among the afghan elite. 'Ownership' is a concept used by occidental countries in order to give legitimacy to their interventions, but for Afghan people the will to rebuild a nation, and the underlying vision of society, is what really matters. Education is a crucial and sensitive sector, which gives shape and foundations to a country and its society. If foreign support is necessary and essential, the highest attention and priority must be given to Afghan needs, expectations and wishes

Persons met during the field mission

Education	
Thursday 23 March	Arrival in Kabul
Wednesday 29 of March	Meeting in the University of Kabul with Mr. Habib Soughadgar; Head of the French Department in the University
Thursday 31 of March	Meeting in Kabul with Mr. Habib Rahman, Assistant Education Manager for AKDN
	Meeting in Kabul with Mr. Abdul Raziq Azizi, Education Deputy Programme Manager for Care International
	Meeting in Kabul with Mr. Gul Habib, Education Technical Advisor for IRC
Sunday 02 April	Meeting in Kabul with Dr. Ahmad Khalid Fahim, Tech Advisor for Primary education for SCA
	Meeting in Kabul with Dr. Suman Kr. Karna, urban development Advisor for UN Habitat
	Meeting in Kabul with Mrs. Shahnaz Hakim, Education Programme Management Specialist for USAID
Monday 03 April	Preparation for the field surveys and the departure
Tuesday 04 April	Kabul – Bamiyan
Wednesday 05 April	Meeting in Bamiyan with Mr. Ezatullah Arman, Regional Education Officer for AKDN; Visit of Mother Literacy courses, adult literacy courses and rehabilitated schools in Shibar District
	Meeting in Bamiyan with Mr. Jumaddin, Master teacher trainer for Care International
Thursday 06 April	Meeting with Mr. Waseq, Head of the PED of Bamiyan
	Visit of a school supported by Care International through the CGSD project funded by USAID
	Meeting in Bamiyan with Mr. Noor Mahamad, Admin/Data manager officer for SC Norway/Sweden
Friday 07 April	Bamiyan – Eybak
Saturday 08 April	Meeting in Eybak with Mr. Kader, Regional Programme Manager for BRAC
	Visits of Schools from BEOC project with BRAC
	Meeting with Mr. Yahre Nazar head of the PED of Samangan
	Visits of governmental schools supported by USAID and AKDN
Sunday 09 April	Eybak - Mazar
	Meeting in Mazar with Eng. Ahmad Shah Azizar, Education Project Officer for UNICEF
	PED Coordination Meeting in Mazar
Monday 10 April	Meeting in Mazar with Mrs. Marketa Pohankova, Programme officer relief and development for PIN
	Meeting in Mazar with Mr. Mustafa Muzundar, Education Programme Officer for BRAC
	Meeting with Mr. Morali Mohan, Programme Manager for SC UK in Mazar
	Meeting with Mr. Ahmad Jama, Head of Programme on Mazar for WFP
	Meeting with Mr. Abdul Rauf Qaderi , Regional Manager for ACBAR in Mazar
	Meeting with Mr. Ghulam Yahya Abbassy, Education Sector Acting Coordinator and Mr. Moh. Rashid Scandary, Regional Field Officer for CHA
Tuesday 11 April	Meeting in the University of Mazar with Mr. Fahim, Sayara Programme coordinator and journalism teacher
	Mazar – Pul-e-Khumri
	Meeting in Pul-e-Khumri with Mr. Atiqullah Ludin, regional Programme Officer in Baghlan for AKDN
Wednesday 12 April	Meeting with; , Education Manager for SCA in Baghlan
	Visit of a SCA model school in Baghlan
	Visit of the teacher training centre in Baghlan, supported by AKDN
Thursday 13 April	Meeting with Mr. Abdul Sabur, head of administration of the PED of Baghlan
	Visit of a governmental girl High Schools and of a governmental boys high School
Friday 14 April	Pul-e-khumri - Kabul
Saturday 15 April	
Sunday 16 April	
Monday 17 April	Meeting in Kabul with Mr. Shahaduddin, Education Programme Manager for BRAC
	Meeting with Mr. Mansory, TEP department in Kabul
	Meeting with Mr. Karbalawi, director of Planning Department in the MoE
Tuesday 18 April	
Wednesday 19 April	Meeting with Mrs. Sherezad J. Monami Latif, Education Specialist for the World Bank and Mr. Habibullah Wajdi, Education Specialist for the World Bank.
	Meeting with Mrs. Manta Singh, Schools and Clinics Programme Support Officer for IOM and Mr. Bodgan Danila, Schools and Clinics Deputy Programme Manager for IOM
Thursday 20 April	

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