



Effective Monitoring and Beneficiary Accountability Practices for Projects Implemented Remotely in Insecure Environments

**Interim Research Report:
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TEARFUND



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1. Glossary

The list below defines the meanings of acronyms and terms contained in this assessment.

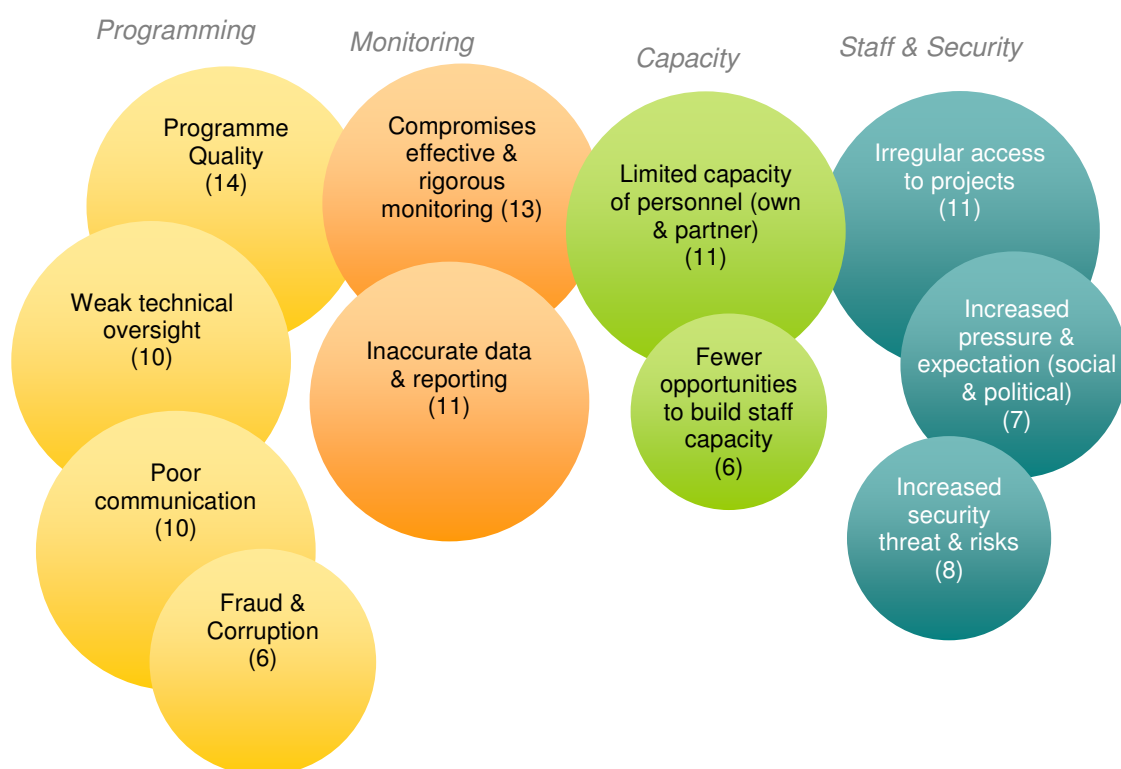
Acronym / Term	Explanation
ANSO	Afghan NGO Safety Office
Beneficiary Accountability	Beneficiary accountability is an attitude and an approach that promotes the dignity of those affected by enabling them to influence decision-making and play a more active role in their own recovery. To be truly accountable, project staff must accept responsibility for their actions and agree that they can be called upon to give an account of how and why they have acted / failed to act. For the purposes of this project, beneficiary accountability is understood to be implemented across 5 standard practices: Participation, Transparency, Feedback and Complaints, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Staff Competencies and Attitudes.
Direct Operations	Project implementation that is undertaken directly by a humanitarian and/or development organisation, using their own personnel.
INGO	International Non-government Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
Monitoring	An ongoing measure of progress, quality and impact of a project to determine what is and is not working well, so adjustments can be made along the way.
Monitoring activities	Activities that collect and/or report information to indicate project progress or quality, i.e. water testing, interviews, weekly progress reports, or collecting beneficiary feedback for accountability purposes.
NGO	Non-government Organisation
Operation through Limited Presence	Project implementation that is undertaken with reduced numbers of personnel at the project location. Most commonly, expatriate and/or senior national staff are relocated from the project location, giving responsibility for day-to-day project implementation and management to local staff members based <i>in situ</i> .
Partner-led Operations	Project implementation that is undertaken through a local, national and/or international NGO and/or private contractor. This term is most commonly used to refer to project implementation that is undertaken through local and/or national partners in this report.
Peer Monitoring	The commissioning of monitoring from a peer agency which is still active in the area of operation (e.g. a local NGO), specific to agreed terms of reference. This provides an independent check of project activities to assure beneficiaries, donors, and project management of project quality, and obtains impartial input.
Private Contractor	A private, for-profit organisation that is contracted by humanitarian and/or development organisations in order to undertake project implementation.
Remote Management	An operational response to insecurity, involving the withdrawal or drastic reduction of the number of international and sometimes national personnel from the field. Remote-management transfers greater programme responsibility to local staff, local partner organisations or private contractors. Projects and programmes are then managed and overseen from a different location.

2. Executive Summary

Remote management approaches to project implementation are increasingly being utilised by humanitarian and development organisations in an attempt to reach vulnerable populations in conflict-affected regions that experience medium-to-high insecurity, whilst safeguarding portions of organisational personnel. What may once have been perceived as temporary modes of operation have ceased to be so and remote management has become a (semi) permanent approach to project implementation in many countries (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan). With the boom in remote management approaches has come the introduction of several publications and guidance papers seeking to provide recommendations to humanitarian and development organisations that utilise these management approaches. What has been consistently lacking, however, is a distinctive focus on project monitoring and beneficiary accountability; more particularly, how these practices are affected by the use of remote management. This project, *Effective Monitoring and Beneficiary Accountability Practice for Remotely Managed Projects in Insecure Environments*, has sought to begin to address this, identifying key issues and concerns for project monitoring and beneficiary accountability that arise in remotely managed projects, and seeking to develop existing and innovative good practice solutions to address these issues¹.

At the outset, 28 project stakeholders identified 35 individual issues and concerns. Of these, eleven issues were particularly prevalent, being raised by at least six project stakeholders or more. For this reason, these issues and concerns have been analysed individually in this research report (see Figure 1):

Figure 1: Dominant issues identified by all twenty-eight project stakeholders, relevant to monitoring and beneficiary accountability projects operating under remote management.²



¹ A final project report, to be produced and circulated by end February 2012, will draw out the existing and recommended good practices that can be developed by individual organisations to improve project monitoring, which in turn will lead to an overall improvement in programme quality, fraud mitigation, and accountability.

² Figure 1 does not include the full range of issues or concerns that were highlighted by individual project stakeholders.

Whilst there is evidence already of humanitarian and development organisations seeking to respond to these issues and to develop good practice for remotely managed projects, the implications for effective project monitoring, beneficiary accountability, and programme quality are too severe for some organisations. Nine organisations (32%) would be opposed to the practice of remote management under any circumstances, stating that the issues and concerns discussed in this report cannot be adequately addressed and that remotely managed projects almost always lead to deficiencies in programme quality, personnel safety and security, and appropriate financial management. Having said this, a clear majority (64%) noted that they are interested to keep the practice of remote management in place and are interested to develop good practice guidelines, tools, and systems in order to address the issues highlighted in this research.³

This report identifies and investigates each of the prevalent issues raised by individual project stakeholders, within the context of different remote management approaches (where relevant, looking at the specific impact of different remote management approaches on these issues). It critically reviews each issue, drawing on the experiences and concerns raised by project stakeholders. The findings of the report will be used in conjunction with a final project report (to be developed in February 2012), which will consider existing and innovative practice to address each issue raised and to improve the general practices of project monitoring and beneficiary accountability, and their impact on programme quality for remotely managed projects.

3. Introduction

This interim research report draws together the key findings and practices that have been highlighted in the research undertaken to date as part of the project: *Effective Monitoring and Beneficiary Accountability Practice for Remotely Managed Projects in Insecure Environments*. The project has been divided into two phases: an initial research phase, of which this report is a part, and; a secondary innovation phase, in which good practice solutions and recommendations will be developed to address the issues highlighted in this report. A final project report, drawing together the key findings, practices and recommendations from both of these phases, will be developed as part of the final project outcome and will be shared with all project stakeholders as well as with the wider humanitarian and development community.

The project is being coordinated by a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer⁴, working in Afghanistan and Tearfund, an international non-government organisation (INGO).⁵ Due to the geographical location of the Project Coordinator, there is a strong focus in this project on remote-management approaches and strategies in Afghanistan (fifteen out of twenty INGOs interviewed are operating in Afghanistan). However, humanitarian and development organisations from outside Afghanistan have also been given the opportunity to participate in the research for this project. Organisations currently operating within Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan have participated alongside those organisations operating within

³ One project stakeholder, (4%), was undecided as to whether they felt that remote management approaches could be a success. One project stakeholder commented that those organisations that support the practice of remote management, likely do so due to a concern that if they do not remotely manage projects in insecure locations, they will lose funding. This stakeholder also commented that there can be significant pressure from their organisational head office experienced. There are few choices aside from remote management, at present, to respond to the needs of vulnerable populations in insecure environments.

⁴ Hereafter, this Monitoring and Evaluation Officer will be referred to as the Project Coordinator

⁵ Tearfund currently supports humanitarian and development projects in more than 45 countries. It has an operational humanitarian response to crises in six different countries, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Pakistan, Sudan, and South Sudan. Within each of these countries, the organisation has its own direct operational programme, as well as working through local and/or international partner organisations.

Afghanistan in developing the research contained within this report. (See Figure 2 which highlights the different conflict-affected countries in which project stakeholders, included in this research, are currently operating in).

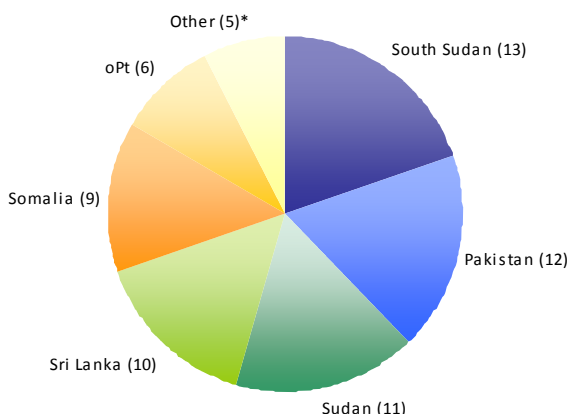


Figure 2: Countries other than Afghanistan with operations by research participants (INGOs and Good Practice & Research Organisations)

NB:* Other' countries include Iraq, Myanmar (Burma) & Chad

The project has sought to be demand led by humanitarian and development actors to ensure that the research and future proposed solutions to address and enhance project monitoring and beneficiary accountability are useful and relevant to individual humanitarian and development agencies. To this end, a selection of humanitarian and development organisations, institutional donors, and research and good practice organisations have all participated in a combination of individual interviews and focus group discussions as part of the research for this project. A baseline assessment of monitoring and beneficiary accountability practice at one of the project implementation areas supported by the Project Coordinator has also been utilised in this report.

This report has been designed to share the findings of the initial research phase with the project stakeholders and with the wider humanitarian and development community, in order to engage continued interest in the project, and to solicit feedback. The research is intended to enable humanitarian and development organisations operating in medium-to-high insecurity environments to identify issues that they may themselves be experiencing, and to identify areas of project monitoring and beneficiary accountability practice that can be improved.

4. Context Analysis

Deterioration in security across areas of Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and South Sudan, in conjunction with a rising number of violent attacks against humanitarian workers, has led increasing numbers of humanitarian and development agencies to trial and/or adopt systems of remote management. Between 2005 and 2011, there were 180 serious attacks on humanitarian and/or development workers in Afghanistan, including the killing of seven UN staff by a mob in Afghanistan's northern provincial capital, Mazar-i-Sharif. Almost 150 humanitarian and development workers in the northern and southern republics of Sudan were affected by similar attacks, as well as approximately 100 aid workers in

"It is not anticipated", the organisational representative noted, "that the volatile patterns of insecurity in [the regions in which the INGO is operating] will change within the next five years, and as such, it is anticipated that the remote management approach in all areas of [the organisation's] work in Afghanistan will continue indefinitely".

(Deputy Country Director for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

Somalia.⁶ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) states that “violent attacks against aid workers [have] tripled in the last decade”.⁷

Remote management strategies have been piloted and developed by a variety of humanitarian and development organisations as a way of continuing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable civilian populations, whilst removing portions of their staff from harm’s way, in medium-to-high insecurity environments.⁸ What were perhaps initially seen by these organisations as reactive and temporary responses to high insecurity are now increasingly considered to be permanent strategies of working in medium-to-high insecurity areas.

Of the fourteen INGOs interviewed as part of this research that are currently utilising a remote management approach, the majority (eleven) had no expectation that they would be able to resume standard operations for at least a number of years. The remote management strategy that is currently being utilised by one INGO in Afghanistan was described as having been intentionally developed as a permanent policy (as opposed to a policy that views remote management as a temporary expedient). This organisation has already been implementing a remote management approach in its programming in Afghanistan for three years (following a serious security incident in which four staff members were killed). Of the thirteen other organisations, more than half (seven, 54%) have been implementing projects remotely for two years or less, five (38%) have been doing so for between two and three years, and one (8%) has been doing so for more than three years.

Despite calls from institutional funding and UN humanitarian coordination agencies for humanitarian and development organisations to stay and deliver programmatic interventions in insecure areas, there is a growing recognition from within these agencies that rising insecurity, particularly in areas of Afghanistan and Somalia, is causing organisations to switch to remote management approaches. One institutional donor, for example, takes a strong stance against remote management approaches in the projects which it supports in Afghanistan. However, during an interview for this project, the agency representative confirmed that in Somalia the agency has had to reluctantly accept that organisations funded by the agency will almost all utilise remote management approaches to implement their projects.

There are different approaches taken to remote management, as well as different justifications as to why remote management approaches are utilised. Some organisations have retained a project office in project locations but have relocated all expatriate and often national re-locatable staff to another project office (most commonly the programmatic head office). Other organisations have closed down their project office and have elected to work through local and/or national partner organisations. Still other organisations have elected to work through private contract organisations in order to implement project activities. The key consensus across all of these different approaches is that remote management is “*an operational response to insecurity, [involving the withdrawal or drastic reduction of] international and sometimes national personnel from the field, transferring greater programme responsibility to local staff or local partner organisations, and overseeing activities from a different location*”.⁹

What was also evident in the research, however, is that some organisations choose to operate through local and/or national partners for reasons other than the deterioration of security. The most common reason cited by interviewees was that working with such

⁶ One World, “Afghanistan – Humanitarian work most dangerous in ten year” (2011): 1. Article cites that this statement is supported by Jan Egeland (former Chief UN Humanitarian Coordinator). Similar statements also appear in the UN OCHA supported publication, “*To Stay and Deliver*” (2010).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Humanitarian Outcomes, “Once Removed: Lessons and Challenges in Remote Management of Humanitarian Operations for Insecure Areas” (2010): 7.

⁹ Ibid. (paraphrased in places by Bryony Norman).

organisations is part of an organisational mandate to build the capacity of such organisations. For the purposes of this research, the issues that they experience in terms of monitoring projects and building accountability with beneficiaries have been included in the analysis, yet they are not considered as remotely-managed projects. These projects can be implemented in insecure locations, but for the most part the justification for utilising a remote management approach is to build the capacity of local and/or national organisations and to enable effective and sustainable development programming. This would be the approach taken by these organisations in Afghanistan or Darfur as well as in safer countries such as India, Nepal or Malawi¹⁰.

Remote management approaches to project implementation have significant implications for project monitoring and, therefore, for the assurance of project quality in insecure areas. Where senior project staff (expatriate or national re-locatable) cannot directly monitor activities and meet beneficiaries, they rely on local staff to monitor objectively the project that they themselves are implementing. There is a danger that the risks and pressures that would be shared by senior project staff are transferred solely onto the local project staff, increasing the potential for burnout, security incidents targeted at local staff, and instances of corruption due to extreme social and political pressures.

“Shifting to remote management [means] accepting an unavoidable lowering of technical sophistication and versatility, as well as for programme monitoring and evaluation standards”.

(Reference taken from a paper published by Humanitarian Outcomes, 2010)

To date, there has been limited published research that addresses the issues of project monitoring and beneficiary accountability practices in remotely-managed project locations. While the Humanitarian Practitioners’ Network (HPN) has published guidelines on remote management,¹¹ limited guidance is provided specifically on remote monitoring. Likewise, Oxfam International collaborated in 2009 with Merlin to develop a discussion paper for the Somalia NGO Consortium which focused on remote programming modalities. A briefing paper developed by G. Hansen focused on the operational modalities of remote management in Iraq (2008). The Humanitarian Outcomes paper, *Once Removed* (2010), as well as the UN OCHA paper, *To Stay and Deliver* (2010), address the issues related to humanitarian programming in insecure locations, including remote management. Though many of these existing publications pay some attention to the issue of remote monitoring, they only do so as an aspect of the wider issue of remote management, and research and guidance on the issue is limited.¹² The Humanitarian Outcomes paper, for example, highlighted that remote management approaches can lead to deterioration in programme quality and monitoring, but did not identify any stringent guidelines or procedures to address this issue¹³. An opportunity therefore exists to capture and critically evaluate current practices so as to determine the extent to which recent adaptations ensure quality project implementation in insecure areas.

¹⁰ However, organisations that operate in more secure project environments have fewer restrictions on their programming and rigour of project monitoring. They can ensure that their personnel, either national or expatriate, can regularly visit project implementation areas. It was noted by one project stakeholder that the expertise, systems, and processes that have been developed by organisations that seek, as standard, to operate through local and/or national implementing partners is a crucial asset in this research. The Project Coordinator has already arranged follow up meetings with those project stakeholders whose organisations operate through local and/or national partner organisations as standard (January 2012). The Project Coordinator will glean valuable information regarding the monitoring and accountability practices of these organisations and will incorporate it into the final report.

¹¹ Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN), “Security”, *Humanitarian Exchange* 47 (2010).

¹² The Humanitarian Outcomes paper (2010) includes a chapter on *Programme Quality and Effectiveness*. The research that is included here is a useful introduction to the issues related to remote monitoring, and has been used as part of the research for this project.

¹³ This was outside of the terms of reference and remit for the Humanitarian Outcomes research.

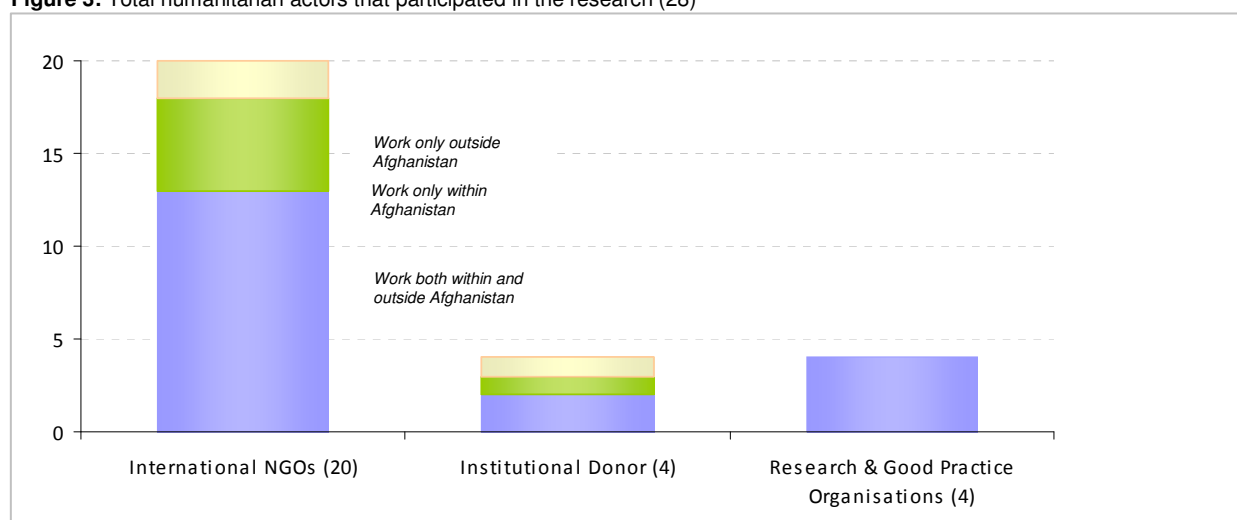
5. Methodology

Whilst the overall focus of this project is on developing innovative solutions for **project monitoring and beneficiary accountability** in remotely-managed projects, the initial survey of humanitarian and development actors addressed wider issues of remote management to establish the context for remote monitoring and accountability problems. This interim report highlights the key issues raised in the research to date.

49 organisations were invited to participate in this research.¹⁴ Of those invited, fifteen organisations either declined or did not respond. Individual representatives of 28 organisations participated in an individual interview with the Project Coordinator. A further three organisations will be interviewed by mid-January 2011,¹⁵ and an additional three organisations have participated indirectly in the research (primarily through email).

A variety of organisations within the humanitarian and development community were invited to participate in the research. Whilst the majority of interviewees (20) represented humanitarian and development INGOs (operating in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan), representatives from four institutional donors and four good practice and research organisations also participated,¹⁶ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Total humanitarian actors that participated in the research (28)



The Project Coordinator sought to ensure that the perspectives of organisations of different sizes,¹⁷ scopes, approaches and sectoral foci¹⁸ were included. Fourteen INGOs out of 20

¹⁴ Some of the organisations and/or agencies that were contacted included different regional offices for the same organisation. For example, UN OCHA Afghanistan 'North', UN OCHA Afghanistan 'Kabul', and UN OCHA Somalia were all contacted. Each of these units, though within the same organisation, have been treated as individual agencies / organisations for the purposes of the research.

¹⁵ The three organisations which are yet to be interviewed have either postponed original interview dates or are based in the UK and have requested a face to face interview during the Project Coordinator's visit to the UK (mid-December 2011).

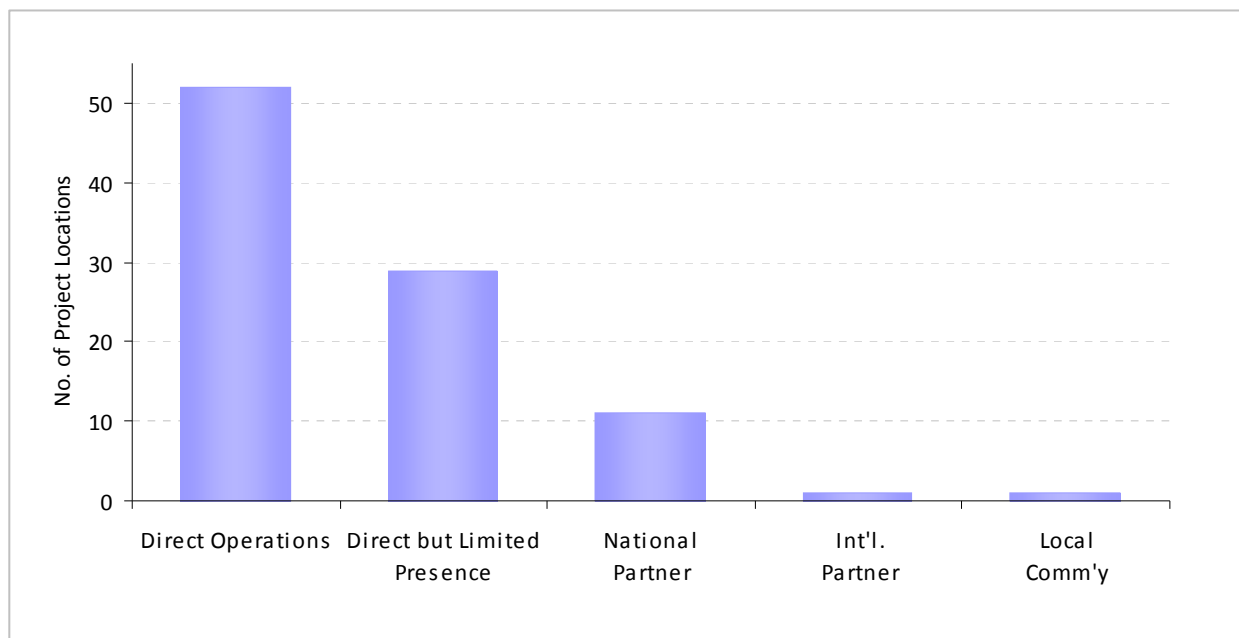
¹⁶ Of the four institutional donors that participated in a research interview, one was a donor that has a significant focus on the coordination of humanitarian action. Of the four research and good practice organisations that participated in a research organisation, one is an organisation that has a significant focus on the coordination of humanitarian and development interventions within Afghanistan. The percentages and figures detailed within this report do not include the data collected from three other humanitarian and/or development organisations, that did not participate in an individual interview but who did provide feedback and ideas throughout the research period.

¹⁷ Of the twenty INGOs that were interviewed, six were operational in one country only whilst fourteen were operational in a number of countries, often having a broad support base in an international organisational Head Office. Sixty percent of organisations reported employing more than 200 local and national staff members. It was more common for INGOs to have between one and ten expatriate staff members (45%), and it was rare for organisations to have more than twenty expatriate staff members (15%). See Annex 1, Figures 1 and 3 for further details.

¹⁸ Nine of the organisations interviewed were development-focused INGOs; three were humanitarian-focused, and eight were both development and humanitarian in focus. See Annex 1, Figure 4 for further details of the specific sectors that were implemented by INGOs.

operate in at least one project location using a remote management approach, whilst the remaining six operate through a standard operating procedure (see Figure 4).¹⁹ There were opinions and experiences raised both for and against the practice of remote management. Several of the issues highlighted have been included in this interim research report.

Figure 4: Mode of Operation in INGO Participant's Project Locations



A template of interview questions was designed for each group of project stakeholders.²⁰ The questions were used to guide discussions and to ensure that data could easily be analysed after interviews were completed. The three organisations that participated indirectly engaged in several ongoing discussions relating to project monitoring for remotely managed humanitarian and development projects. Of the 28 organisations that directly participated in the individual interviews, follow up discussions have been undertaken with approximately six of them. Data from each of the interviews, as well as from ongoing discussions with various project stakeholders, have been documented and analysed and the highlights appear in this report.

In addition to interviews and ongoing discussions, the initial research included a baseline assessment of the monitoring and beneficiary accountability practices of the Project Coordinator's own organisation, Tearfund. An external consultant was contracted to assess Tearfund's projects in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Individual interviews were undertaken with the Tearfund Project Manager (local staff member) and the two Tearfund Community Supervisors (both local staff members). Focus group discussions with other project staff members in Kandahar (all local), as well as with beneficiary and community representatives, also took place. The consultant utilised focus group discussions with personnel from a peer organisation within Kandahar that has conducted 'peer monitoring' of Tearfund projects. The findings and recommendations have been documented in a Baseline Assessment Report, available on the Humanitarian Innovations Fund website: <http://www.humanitarianinnovation.org/projects/small-grants/effective-monitoring>. Several of the key findings have also been incorporated into this report.

¹⁹ Some of the six organisations referred to here do operate through local and/or national partners. However, as highlighted in Section 4: Context Analysis, the justification for operating this way is to build the capacity of these local and/or national partners (as opposed to a response to deteriorating security).

²⁰ Separate questionnaire templates were developed for interviews with INGOs, institutional funding agencies, and good practice and research organisations.

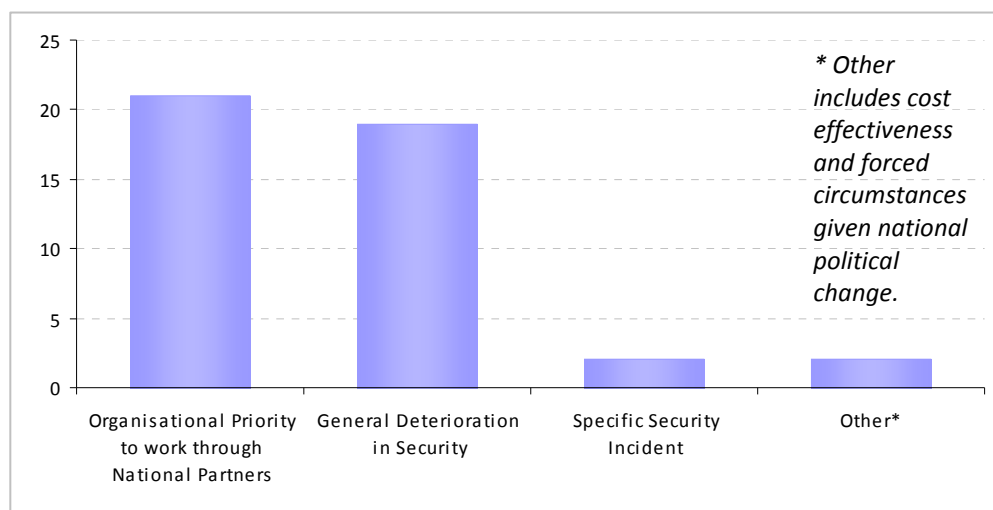
The Project Coordinator had planned to visit Kandahar as part of the initial research phase for this project. Unfortunately, due to security issues at the time of the scheduled visit, it has been postponed until later in the project implementation period. A review of existing research into remote monitoring and accountability was undertaken in August to October 2011.²¹

This interim research report provides an introduction to remote management for humanitarian and development practitioners, and the context into which remote management approaches are often utilised. It summarises the predominant issues related to monitoring and beneficiary accountability under the constraints of remote-management strategies. At this stage of the research, this report does not seek to outline specific good practice that can be utilised to address these issues. Good practice responses will be developed in the next innovation phase of the project, and will be detailed in a final project report. In the interim, this report documents the findings of the initial research phase for benefit of the project stakeholders and the wider humanitarian and development community, in order to engage continued interest in the project and to solicit feedback.

6. Overview of Remote Management Approaches undertaken by Project Stakeholders

The INGO stakeholders interviewed are currently implementing projects in 103 locations. 42 of these locations (41%) utilise some type of remote management approach (see Figure 4). Figure 5 illustrates that for most INGOs, the rationale to undertake remote management is due to an organisational priority to promote the capacity building of local and/or national partners (in 21 project locations), or as a response to deteriorating security in a project location (nineteen project locations).²²

Figure 5: Participant INGOs' Rationale for Remote Management Operational Approach



This section describes the range of different approaches that INGOs have adopted in the locations they remotely manage.

²¹ See Section 9: Bibliography for a full list of the documents reviewed as part of this research.

²² Humanitarian and development organisations that operate through local and/or national partner organisations as part of a deliberate and ongoing capacity building initiative often do so in secure as well as insecure project locations. In secure project locations, it is often possible for their own personnel (expatriate and national) to regularly visit both project offices and implementation areas. A representative of one such organisation noted that where it is possible for organisational representatives to visit project implementation areas of their local and/or national partners, the organisation is not, strictly speaking, implementing a remote management approach.

6.1. Remote Management Approach (1): Primary organisation is directly operational but with a reduced number/range of personnel based *in situ*

In 29 project locations (69% of the locations under remote management), INGOs had elected to relocate expatriate and/or senior national staff away from the project location (giving responsibility for day-to-day project implementation and management to local staff members based *in situ*)²³. Expatriate and/or senior national staff members were most commonly located at the programmatic head office (in-country). The number of visits made by staff from this head office to such project locations varied between organisations. Bi-weekly, monthly, and quarterly visits were the most prevalent practice by the organisations interviewed, though it should also be noted that some organisations had capacity to visit the project locations only on a bi-annual or annual basis.²⁴ There was also variation between the organisations in terms of the type of staff member that was able to visit project offices and/or project implementation areas. The most common practice for project areas of medium-to-high insecurity was that expatriate staff members were authorised to visit only the project office (in a provincial capital). Expatriate staff members were most often not authorised to visit project implementation areas. Senior national staff members, in most of these cases, were still able to visit both project offices and project implementation areas, subject to a daily assessment of security in the region.

INGO representatives noted that by using this approach, the organisation is still able to access vulnerable population groups in medium-to-high insecurity project areas. Strong focus was given by most organisations to promoting accountability between the organisation and the beneficiary and local community, as well as developing positive acceptance of the organisation. It was the assessment of the Project Coordinator that this had been achieved most successfully in project areas in which the INGO had an historical presence of operating for more than five years. One INGO working in Afghanistan noted that they have worked with communities in the same five provinces for up to thirty years (working with refugees from these communities on the Pakistan border during the Soviet and Taliban wars in Afghanistan). The interviewee noted that where the INGO had expanded operations into a sixth province, the organisation had experienced greater issues and difficulties with the remote management approach, citing as one of the primary reasons for this that the organisation had less experience in this provincial area, and was having to develop a relationship with the community from scratch. This finding was supported by at least six other INGOs from within Afghanistan, Sudan, and South Sudan. Representatives from these organisations confirmed that they would not choose to establish a remotely-managed project in a new location, not having had prior opportunity to build acceptance with local communities, and not necessarily having expertise in the specific security environment, context and/or culture in this new project location.

6.2. Remote Management Approach (2): Primary organisation operates through and/or with an international partner organisation, managing the programmatic intervention from a different location

One organisation confirmed they work with an international INGO to support the development interventions that it is implementing in Herat province, Afghanistan. This decision was taken not in response to insecurity in the project area but because the organisation chooses to operate solely through international and national partner

²³ These figures include organisations that have utilised a remote management approach as part of their standard operating procedure, as well as those that have selected to utilise the approach in response to deteriorating security levels.

²⁴ One organisation noted that for a project implemented in Kandahar, it had been at least two years since their last visit to the project office. Face-to-face interaction with the Project Manager is undertaken in Kabul on a bi-weekly basis in this instance. Similarly, another organisation noted that it is 'rare' for senior national staff members to visit any of the project locations outside of Kabul (expatriate staff members visiting only the project locations in Kabul province). Visits by the senior national staff members to the relevant project offices might be undertaken on an annual to biennial basis.

organisations. At least two other organisations noted that they worked in conjunction with other INGOs in between one and three of their project locations. This approach had been utilised primarily due to the external INGO's having either greater capacity or greater expertise in a project location and/or humanitarian or development sector.

However, during interviews with institutional donors and good practice and research organisations, several examples were highlighted, particularly of UN agencies, where INGOs are contracted as secondary partners in order to implement projects in insecure locations. Two institutional donors noted that, with the restrictions on UN security movements, project interventions were often sub-contracted out to INGOs that have a historical presence in a particular project location. These organisations noted that this practice is particularly prevalent in Afghanistan and Somalia.²⁵

This approach to remote management enables organisations to utilise the expertise and capacities of INGOs that have an established relationship with project communities and that are able to easily interact with them. The extent to which organisations (including UN agencies) follow-up on and directly monitor the projects themselves varied in the responses provided by different groups of stakeholders. It was the opinion of one good practice and research organisation that there could often be limited follow-up and direct monitoring undertaken by organisations/agencies that implement projects using this approach, impacting the overall control that the organisation/agency has over project quality and overall success.

6.3. Remote Management Approach (3): Primary organisation operates through or with a local or national partner organisation, managing the project from a different location

In eleven project locations (26%), remote management through a local and/or national partner was the approach undertaken. The justification for this remote management approach fell between three separate options: i) deterioration in overall security in the project area; ii) organisational priority to work with and to build the capacity of local and/or national partner organisations, and; iii) cost efficiency.²⁶

Three of the interviewed INGOs operating in Afghanistan are working through or with local and/or national partner organisations in response to deteriorating security. There was varied direct support provided by these three organisations to the local and/or national NGOs. One organisation, operating in Uruzgan through local partners, noted that they had recruited local personnel to support the partner organisations. It was also noted that senior national staff members travel regularly to the province in order to support and monitor the project implementation. It was not clear to what extent the other two organisations visit and support the local and/or national partner organisations they work with, or to what extent they conduct monitoring visits to review project progress and quality.

6.4. Remote Management Approach (4): Primary organisation contracts out direct project implementation to a private organisation, managing the project from a different location

²⁵ Tearfund has been responsible within Afghanistan for implementing UN World Food Programme projects in Jawzjan province in 2010 and 2011, and is currently seeking to implement a response to the food crisis in Somalia through INGOs that are already working there.

²⁶ It was noted by one organisation that, in response to an earthquake experienced in Afghanistan's northern province Samangan, the organisation elected to work through four national NGOs as the organisation had no prior experience or office presence in the region. To establish an office and organisational presence in the region for a relatively short-term emergency response programme was not seen as cost effective.

None of the INGOs interviewed were working with or through private contractors. However, representatives from two research and good practice organisations confirmed that they had undertaken evaluations for humanitarian organisations that had contracted out programmes to private contractors.

Many private development contractors are currently operational within Afghanistan. It was the impression of the Project Coordinator, after interviews conducted with good practice and research organisations, as well as with some INGOs in Afghanistan, that this method of operating often had limited direct supervision and project monitoring by the primary organisations, and that issues had been experienced by at least one high profile UN humanitarian agency in relation to poor programme quality and corruption, resulting from poor project implementation by the private contract organisation.

6.5. Remote Management Approach (5): Primary organisation supports the local project community to implement and monitor project activities themselves, in project locations where it is not possible for even local or national staff members to visit the project location

Significant concern was raised by the majority of project stakeholders, particularly institutional donors, with regard to this final remote management approach. Most stakeholders regarded it as a last resort for a short-term project or for a project that is in the final stages of completion. One organisation confirmed that they are currently operating through the local community (in two separate districts in Kabul, Afghanistan). Security had seriously deteriorated and attacks were targeted against the INGO.²⁷ The project office was relocated to a different district, approximately two hours drive from either project location. Local, national and expatriate staff were restricted to visit or to be based at only this project office, and were not authorised to visit the project implementation areas. The INGO in question was implementing a National Solidarity Programme (NSP) in these two districts²⁸. The programme was near completion and so the INGO decided that rather than to close down the project intervention, it would continue with close collaboration with the local communities.²⁹

One institutional donor noted that they had serious concerns about any remote management approach that disallows senior national and expatriate staff from visiting project implementation areas. Within Afghanistan, they will not fund any projects that cannot be visited by their own staff (expatriate or national).

INGOs that favoured participatory approaches with communities, and which engaged their input in assisting with project implementation and monitoring, were numerous amongst those interviewed as part of the research (ten of twenty INGOs). It was far rarer, however, for organisations to revert to implementing projects solely through local communities.

²⁷ These attacks included: the burning of the INGO project office in the location; the burning of one of the INGO vehicles at the project location, as well as; several verbal threats made against the INGO personnel in the project location.

²⁸ The NSP is a country-wide, national government-supported development programme, implemented across Afghanistan with the support of NGOs. The programme encourages local community leadership structures to engage with and support the implementation of project activities. At the outset of each NSP programme, a Community Development Council (CDC) is developed to assist in the implementation of project activities. Because it is community-focused in nature, it is understandable that the INGO in question in this section chose to keep the programme going through the local community structures that they had developed.

²⁹ The INGO selected four Community Mobilisers (local community members) and provided training in project planning, assessments, implementation, and monitoring. Community Mobilisers worked closely with the INGO's engineering staff in order to support Community Development Councils (CDCs) in implementing the project. Remote monitoring was achieved primarily through photographic evidence of project progress, surveys (undertaken by the Community Mobilisers), and verbal observations reported by the Community Mobilisers.

Of the fourteen INGOs that are remotely managing at least one project location due to deteriorating security, only two have developed a formal remote management policy. Of the twelve organisations that have elected to work through local, national, or international partner organisations, as part of an organisational strategy to develop the capacity of such organisations, only three have developed a partnership policy. These organisations strongly recommended developing a remote management policy or strategy as an essential tool that can substantially assist in improving project quality and monitoring.

The two remote management policies that the Project Coordinator was able to review were both developed by INGOs that have significant expertise in working in countries that are prone to medium to high insecurity (one working in Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan; the other working in Iraq, Israel / Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, and South Sudan).

These remote management policies include (amongst other key issues) standard operating procedures for remote management; practical templates and guidelines of best practice for project implementation, monitoring, and management; criteria for when remote management might need to be temporarily suspended, and; criteria for a return to standard operations. A critical recommendation from one of these organisations, however, was that it is necessary not only to develop a stand alone remote management policy but also to adjust all existing policies and procedures to support remote management.

It is a concern that the remaining organisations are embarking on remote management without a clear policy framework or appropriately adapted support systems. This is one of several issues that will be addressed in the remainder of this report, and that the next phase of this project will aim to address.

What was critically apparent in the interviews undertaken by INGOs, particularly those operating in Afghanistan, Darfur and Somalia, was that there is no foreseeable end in sight for remote management in some project locations. With deteriorating security and increasing levels of threat against humanitarian and development workers, the INGOs working in these three countries confirmed that they did not anticipate ending remote management for a period of at least five years. Those INGOs that did foresee an end to remote management only did so as they are planning to close/complete the project and will not remotely manage elsewhere.

7. Overview of the Issues Experienced and Concerns Highlighted by Individual Project Stakeholders

35 issues and/or concerns related to project monitoring and beneficiary accountability practices for remote management approaches were highlighted by project stakeholders. Whilst the majority of these issues were highlighted by only one or two individual project stakeholders, there were several that were repeatedly highlighted, and others of a similar nature that, when analysed by the Project Coordinator, were combined into appropriate categories. The remainder of this report will focus on the dominant issues that were raised or experienced most commonly in the research. There are, of course, the other issues and concerns that were raised infrequently by individual groups of stakeholders that are still of interest to this research. Where relevant, these will be incorporated into the next sections.³⁰

³⁰ These include: reduced potential for donor involvement; 'power' held by partners and private contractors, and; deteriorating team dynamic and relationship (all included as part of the following section on *poor communication*); risk to organisational reputation (included as part of the following section on *programme quality*); reduced relationship with community / acceptance; deterioration of beneficiary selection processes; reduced community participation; absence of planned M&E frameworks; insufficient budget to support monitoring and evaluation, and; insufficient evaluations undertaken – (all included as part of the following section in *rigorous monitoring*).

Any issues that were highlighted a minimum of six or more times by project stakeholders are more prevalent and potentially pose a substantial threat to the assurance of effective project monitoring and beneficiary accountability, specifically in remotely managed project locations (see Figure 1).

The following sections will take each of the individual issues and/or concerns, highlighted earlier in Figure 1, and will summarise the specific learning from them.³¹ The Project Coordinator sought to identify whether any of these issues were exacerbated by the remote management approach in place or by the particular project that the organisation was trying to implement. Where obvious, these factors will be highlighted in the next sections. Individual case studies of good and bad practice, as well as relevant quotations from individual interviews, have also been included in order to bring to life the issues raised.

Some humanitarian and development organisations will find these issues to be insurmountable obstacles for the continuation or consideration of remote management practice. The following sections will highlight the issues and concerns raised by individual organisations. The final sections of this report will then identify next steps in the project but will also assess the total numbers of organisations that participated in the research that are either for or against the practice of remote management.

7.1. Remote Monitoring Issue (1): Potential Deterioration in Programme Quality

“Remote management would present difficulties in ensuring that project implementation is being completed to a reasonable / high quality”.

(Country Director of an INGO operating in Afghanistan)

This issue was raised by fourteen out of 28 (50%) project stakeholders. For the majority of these stakeholders, it was acknowledged that the issue/concern was speculative; an anticipated risk resulting from other assumptions regarding remote management: e.g. limited programme supervision by senior management, limited technical oversight, irregular objective/external monitoring, limited capacity of personnel, social and political pressures on local personnel, as well as other factors³².

Part of the reason that this issue was highlighted by so many individual project stakeholders is that it links with and is impacted by several of the other issues/concerns that were raised. It is difficult to look at this issue in separation from these other issues/concerns. Each of these issues will be reviewed in the following sections, and their impact on programme quality will be highlighted specifically.

Whilst the majority of feedback in relation to this issue was indeed speculative, six out of 20 organisations were able to speak with experience of the negative impact that remote management had had in terms of quality programming. One INGO in Afghanistan that has been implementing projects remotely through a modified team

“Without direct oversight and management, ensuring project quality will become more difficult. Should an implementing partner or private contractor not be able to meet the existing quality standards of the humanitarian organisation, there is a risk that the project quality will suffer, and that the reputation of the humanitarian organisation will be damaged”.

(Representative from a UN humanitarian agency, supporting programming in Afghanistan)

³¹ The final issue (Issue 11: Capacity Building and Mentoring Opportunities) will be addressed as part of the section focusing on Issue 5.

³² It has not been possible within this project to conduct a robust assessment of the quality of individual programmes implemented by project stakeholders. Thus, the comments that are in this section are based on anecdotal remarks and experiences from each project stakeholder. A robust assessment into the impact of remote management on programme quality would be highly beneficial and is a recommendation from the Programme Coordinator for individual organisations to undertake, where relevant.

structure based *in situ* (local staff only), highlighted that they have experienced a “*failure to either implement projects to a high quality, or to spend money correctly*”.

An INGO operating in Sudan explained that they had struggled to ensure high quality for technically complex projects, particularly construction work. Other organisations that were interviewed also highlighted this as a key concern.

A humanitarian and development coordination agency based in Afghanistan noted that they would be concerned for the quality of any programme that was implemented remotely and that had a technically complex focus (requiring technical supervision and expertise to

adequately support it). The representative from this agency noted that they would consider all sectors of humanitarian and development interventions to be technically complex,³³ and so noted that remote management is almost never a suitable option for humanitarian and development organisations to utilise. They emphasised that this concern did not arise out of a critical or biased opinion of or against local and national staff and their capacity. Rather, it was stressed that “*project quality can only be measured effectively, and trust and working style developed, through cross-checking, triangulation of data, and ongoing supervision. Remote management approaches make cross-checking and triangulation of data very difficult and supervision can only ever be achieved from a distance. Without strong systems supporting each of these in place, ensuring and measuring programme quality is not possible*”.

“In project locations of medium to high insecurity, I would be surprised if any type of project or sector would lend itself to working in a straight forward manner, whilst being remotely managed”.

(Representative from Afghanistan-based research and good practice organisation)

Likewise, two research and good practice organisations noted that there are no project types or sectors that ‘lend themselves’ to successful remote management. For every project type or sector, significant issues in relation to ensuring project quality will arise.

Both of these research and good practice organisations had undertaken programme evaluations for organisations that are remotely managing programmes.³⁴ All three programmes evaluated experienced significant issues in terms of ensuring good programme quality. The representative from one of these research and good practice organisations noted that, “*in both cases, this remote management approach had led to significant issues for the organisations in question, and had compromised the quality and integrity of their project interventions*”. The representative from the second research and good practice organisation concurred with this finding, noting that “*the quality of project work is not effectively monitored or challenged (until it was too late, in this instance), and thus projects continue operating with corruption and poor quality operations*”.

“Despite delays, project activities and outputs are being completed to a standard of quality that is good / acceptable (including for shelter and infrastructure programmes)

(Country Director of INGO working in Afghanistan)

“Quality and impact of programmes remains high, especially in participatory community development”.

(Country Director of INGO working in South Sudan)

At the same time, some organisations have been able to remotely manage programmes while maintaining high quality. In the instances where this was most apparent, the organisations in question demonstrated a focus on training

³³ The only noted exception to this was Education. Whilst still technically complex, the interviewee considered this sector could be adequately supported by national government.

³⁴ In all three cases, the remote management approach that was in place utilised secondary partner organisations in order to directly implement project activities. The primary organisations (x2) were located away from the project implementation area, and personnel from these organisations had undertaken limited supervision visits and/or monitoring.

and capacity building for local staff members based *in situ*, regular visits to project implementation areas to review project progress and quality, controls and checks to ensure ongoing programmatic supervision, as well as monthly opportunities for lesson learning and for the sharing of good practice.

One INGO, operating in Afghanistan, has developed a *Quality Assurance Team* of three national staff members. Each staff member is well respected and accepted by Programme Managers and Field Coordinators. Each of them is from a different province within Afghanistan, and visits each project implementation area on a regular basis, reviewing project progress, quality, and impact. The team has proved highly successful in supporting the implementation and securing the quality of projects in the six medium-to-high provinces in which the INGO is operating:

Quality Assurance Team: Promoting High Quality Programming for Remote Management

“We have developed a highly efficient national Quality Assurance Team...Each team member is from a different province, and is currently based in Kabul. Each has been immersed in our organisational ethos and values. Despite concerns from other organisations as regards national monitoring teams, our organisation’s experience is that this team works highly efficiently and effectively in supporting the quality of programming, and monitoring and investigating programme and personnel issues. The team is dispatched to the project locations with regularity – focusing on monitoring project quality and progress, and assisting project staff in the development of project log-frames and work plans. They have a strong understanding of the people and culture of Afghanistan, and are able to provide an objective, third-party approach to project monitoring”.

(Country Director and Deputy Country Director for an INGO operating in Afghanistan)

Quality assurance in remotely managed projects is not impossible, despite the concerns and issues expressed. In the next phase of this research and innovations project, the existing good practice in this area will serve as the basis for practical guidelines and recommendations to support humanitarian and development practitioners.

7.2. Remote Monitoring Issue (2): Deterioration in the Potential to Ensure Effective and Rigorous Monitoring

Thirteen of the 28 project stakeholders were explicitly concerned about effective and rigorous monitoring. However, like the issue of quality assurance, several other concerns and issues feed into and impact this overall issue.³⁵

“Competing priorities are often experienced, including donor reporting requirements, proposal development, cluster meeting engagements etc. These different priorities can make it difficult to schedule regular monitoring and support visits to project locations. Time management and managerial issues required improvement to address this issue”.

(Deputy Director of Programme Development and Knowledge Management; INGO operating in Afghanistan)

A primary concern highlighted by a research and good practice organisation is that humanitarian and development practitioners (whether INGOs, NGOs, CBOs, or institutional donors) do not sufficiently plan and budget for effective, rigorous monitoring systems. In only eight out of 20 INGOs interviewed was there an organisational monitoring and evaluation framework in place. Likewise, only ten of the INGOs interviewed had

³⁵ These include: reduced regularity of visits and access to project implementation areas; inaccuracy of data and reporting; weak technical oversight; poor communication between staff based *in situ* and staff based at primary organisations or organisational head offices; limited capacity of local project implementing staff; reduced relationship with community / acceptance; deterioration of beneficiary selection processes; reduced community participation; absence of planned M&E frameworks; insufficient budget to support monitoring and evaluation, and; insufficient evaluations undertaken.

standardised monitoring and evaluation tools and templates. Three INGOs noted that rigorous project monitoring was often one of the practices that was dropped when projects experienced competing priorities and deadlines.³⁶ Similarly, one organisation noted that often, in an attempt to be as efficient as possible and to reduce the time taken to facilitate project monitoring, short-cuts could be taken.³⁷ These issues were highlighted across the board for many of the INGOs that participated in this research, whether they were remotely managing projects or not. It was noted, however, that such problems were exacerbated in remotely managed projects, where there was less direct supervision by senior programme staff, and fewer visits to project implementation areas.

There was differentiation in the resources and finances that were dedicated to project monitoring. Thirteen of the twenty INGOs interviewed had access to either a monitoring and evaluation focal person within the organisation, or to a team of specialist professionals. One organisation had also employed a Data Analysis Officer to support the analysis and reporting of project data. Despite these measures, concerns were raised by a research and good practice organisation that has undertaken programme evaluations for INGOs, UN agencies, and institutional donors within Afghanistan. These concerns were numerous, focusing on inadequate numbers of visits by primary organisations or senior programme staff to project implementation areas, inconsistencies in data collection, inadequate data analysis, inadequate follow up by institutional donors, inadequate numbers of evaluations undertaken, insufficient budget allocated to monitoring and evaluation, as well as insufficient planning for project monitoring and evaluation:

Experiences from one research and good practice organisation of inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems

In response to a question posed to the representative of this organisation, concerning whether they had observed or experienced any issues related to project monitoring in any of the remotely managed project evaluations that they had undertaken; the following issues were highlighted:

- *Stronger monitoring systems should be required by institutional funding agencies. It was noted that there is currently a lack of consistency between institutional donors in terms of the project monitoring that they require. Often, there are monitoring systems specified, but there is little follow up carried out to ensure that this monitoring is maintained and that it is adequate. Appropriate monitoring and reporting, from local implementing partners right through to institutional donor agencies is necessary.*
- *Insufficient funding and capacity is allocated to resource adequate monitoring and evaluation functions. It was suggested that institutional donor organisations need to be more willing to allocate funding to support these processes.*
- *Monitoring and evaluation processes are not planned effectively, often an afterthought that are added later to project plans, rather than carefully designed into the project planning process. It was noted by the interviewee that they had not seen any evidence of strong monitoring systems in place in either of the projects (x2) that were being evaluated.*

(Representative from a research and good practice organisation, based in Afghanistan)

Various systems are employed by INGOs in order to support project monitoring. Regular reporting of project progress and impact is just one of these systems. However, this practice differs considerably in terms of the regularity of reporting. Whilst thirteen out of 20 INGOs confirmed that monthly reporting procedures were in place for their projects, only seven INGOs had developed more regular follow up and reporting systems (either weekly or bi-weekly reporting). Likewise, the number of direct monitoring visits that were undertaken by

³⁶ The Country Director of an INGO, operating in Afghanistan, noted that: “There can be a tendency in particularly busy projects for monitoring and evaluation to be one of the first things to limit”.

³⁷ The Country Director of this INGO, operating in Afghanistan, noted that: “Other processes (including monitoring) are often not completed properly, with some short cuts taken in an attempt to try and be ‘more efficient’.

primary organisations to implementing partners or by senior programme management staff to project implementation areas varied. Whilst all of the INGOs interviewed confirmed that they do undertake face-to-face monitoring and mentoring with implementing partners and/or local personnel, the regularity of these practices varied, as did the location at which they were undertaken. Four organisations noted that they either do not or irregularly visit project implementation areas. Of these, three organisations had not been able to visit project implementation areas in Kandahar, Afghanistan, for at least a period of two years. In contrast, other organisations interviewed had developed practices of monthly to quarterly (sometimes bi-annual) visits to all project locations that are remotely managed. This latter group of project stakeholders was confident that such visits supported project monitoring and helped to build the capacity of local personnel and partner organisations to carry out effective monitoring.

INGO representatives did not all agree regarding the value of having a separate monitoring and evaluation focal person and/or team. Some organisations argued that this practice compartmentalises monitoring and evaluation and removes the responsibility for this function from direct project implementing staff. As observed in Section 7.1. of this report, one INGO's Quality Assurance Team has experienced and observed positive effects from their focus on monitoring within the organisation. Even this organisation, however, emphasised that effective project monitoring is always integrated throughout the programme and project teams. Effective project monitoring is not just about developing protocols/team focused on this issue. Rather, it is about integrating good practice and relevant training across the programme.

“There can be a tendency once an M&E team or staff member is recruited to put the responsibility on one person or on that unit. M&E should be fully integrated by all programme and project staff so that it does not become compartmentalised”.

(Country Director for an INGO, based in Afghanistan)

“In remote management situations, it is often the case that expatriate staff (those who are not directly involved in implementing project activities), are not able to visit and monitor project implementation areas. Having not been directly involved in the implementation of projects, expatriates can often be more objective and thorough in their monitoring and evaluation. Without the possibility of their being able to visit project implementation areas, this objectivity is reduced, and the quality of monitoring detrimentally impacted...Remote monitoring is often merely reduced to a tick box exercise, even with national staff who are highly competent. Getting detailed and consistent data, and analysing and reporting on that data well, is often not something that is possible in remote management approaches”.

(Representative from an Institutional Donor, supporting programmes in Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan)

For remotely managed projects, the majority of day-to-day project monitoring falls to the local staff and/or implementing partner based *in situ*. Concern was raised by institutional donors, as well as research and good practice organisations and some INGOs, that the reliance on these persons to effectively monitor projects that they are themselves implementing poses an issue of objectivity. The Project Coordinator's own experience of supporting the monitoring of projects in Kandahar has been that while local project staff are enthusiastic to visit project implementation areas and to record findings, there can be a reluctance to highlight specific programming issues or areas that are not working successfully. Likewise, Tearfund's baseline assessment of monitoring and beneficiary accountability practice in Kandahar revealed that the data recorded by local project staff were sometimes inaccurate and required regular follow up from expatriate staff in Kabul. The lack of objectivity and the inaccuracy of some programme data were not fraudulent on the part of the local staff members. Rather, it

was a result of limited capacity (to collect, analyse and record data), and fear of highlighting what is not working well in a project.

Other issues that affect an organisation’s ability to effectively and rigorously monitor projects are recorded in the remaining sections of this report. This is one of the fundamental issues that contributes to the success or failure of a remotely managed project. Developing good practice around this issue will be a key focus of the innovation phase of this project.

7.3. Remote Monitoring Issue (3): Reduced Regularity of Visits and Access to Project Implementation Areas

This issue was highlighted by eleven out of the 28 project stakeholders that were interviewed (39%). Though it was possible for ten of the organisations that are implementing projects remotely to visit the project office in that location, only three organisations were able to authorise senior programme management personnel to visit the project implementation areas. In two of these cases it was only national personnel that were authorised to visit the project implementation areas; expatriate personnel were not authorised to visit.

“Expatriate staff have tended to visit Kandahar at least one time per year, though it is recognised that the ideal should be between two and three times. More commonplace practice is for senior project staff from Kandahar to visit Kabul or Jalalabad and to meet there instead”.

(Community Development Director for an INGO, operating only in Afghanistan)

The focus of visits to project offices varied from organisation to organisation. Often, one of the primary purposes was to build the capacity of local staff, using mentoring and training workshops. Security training workshops are also a common element of project office visits, with senior security personnel from within an organisation providing in-house training for local project staff based *in situ*. Reviews of project records, files and data are also strong foci of visits to project offices, as well as project monitoring and project impact reviews.

“Concerns have been raised by the community that we are spending inadequate time on the ground during our day trips. Concerns have also been raised regarding the waste of our resources due to having to use expensive helicopter flights to access remote project locations, instead of investing the resources on direct implementation.

(Area Coordinator for an INGO, operating in West Darfur, Sudan)

In terms of the regularity of visits made by senior programme management personnel to remotely managed project locations, general practice varied between organisations (as was noted in the previous section of this report). The variation of practice often depended on the funding and resources available to the organisation. All of the four organisations that noted that they either ‘do not’ or ‘do not regularly’ visit project offices and/or implementation areas are small-to-medium scale INGOs operating in only one or two countries, and without the support and resources of an international head office. The Project Coordinator observed that, for these organisations, risk management and support structures are not in place to support more regular visits to project locations; nor is there

the necessary budget.

Representatives from the INGOs that were interviewed often commented that visits by local project staff to organisational head offices (within country) were undertaken to compliment visits taken by senior programme personnel to project locations. Monthly to quarterly programme and/or security meetings were often the most prominent justification for these visits, though training and capacity building were also noted as being foci of such visits.

“Historically, we would drive or use public transport to visit this project location (at a cost of approximately \$40.00). Deterioration in security has forced air travel to become the more common transport, but it is significantly more expensive, restricting the number of face-to-face visits undertaken. Travel budgets have had to increase to address this issue”.

(Country Director for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

For several research and good practice organisations and institutional donors interviewed, concern was raised that in

order to adequately monitor and supervise good quality project implementation, organisations have to ensure that regular visits by senior programme management personnel to project implementation areas are scheduled. This practice was well established by one INGO operating in Darfur. Twice weekly humanitarian day trips were recorded as being undertaken by senior programme management personnel (including technical advisors) to all four project locations that were managed remotely. *“Time on the ground usually ranged between three to four hours. 12 to 15 technical staff visited the project on each scheduled field day with three to four staffs dropping into each focus village”.*

This INGO demonstrated one of the better examples of practice for visiting project implementation areas. Whilst other INGOs visited primarily on a monthly to quarterly basis, this INGO visited project locations twice per week. Despite this, however, the INGO still received criticism from the local communities that they did not spend long enough ‘one the ground’ during each of the project visits. Criticism was also levelled against the INGO that essential financial resources were wasted by the INGO using helicopters to fly staff into the project locations, in order to avoid road travel.

Increasingly, humanitarian and development organisations have to rely on air travel as opposed to road travel in order to access project offices and/or implementation areas. Of the INGOs that were interviewed, almost all were utilising air travel instead of road travel. Where road travel had previously been in place for an organisation, this had often been suspended and changed to air travel due to greater insecurity along main road routes. An INGO that does continue to use road travel between districts in Kabul noted that this raises significant security concerns, particularly for community members who are brought out to remotely-based project offices. Visits can be cancelled at short notice due to insecurity, based on day-to-day risk assessments of local security.

The absence of visits to project offices and/or project implementation areas was a primary concern raised by institutional donors as well as research and good practice organisations. Both of the research and good practice organisations that were interviewed commented that often local implementing partners or privately contracted organisations do not believe that primary organisation personnel will ever visit the project location. Furthermore, it was noted by these organisations, as well as other INGOs and a humanitarian coordination agency, that such organisations will allude to serious security incidents, or in some cases even create serious security incidents in order to discourage visits from primary organisation and/or institutional donor personnel. This power struggle seriously undermines the potential for effective and rigorous project monitoring, and for the assurance of high programme quality. Some institutional donors are not prepared to fund organisations that are not able to ensure that senior programme personnel (including expatriates) and their own agency representatives can visit project implementation areas.

“Expatriate staff, whilst not necessarily being permanently based at a project location, must be able to at least visit the project implementation areas, and to visit regularly. It is also equally necessary for our own personnel to be able to visit the project location and implementation areas, whether expatriate or national (at least once during the period of project implementation).”

(Technical Assistant for an Institutional Donor, supporting programmes in Afghanistan)

Monitoring Visits Discouraged by Implementing Partner Organisations and/or Local Staff

“There could be a danger in remotely managed projects that project staff will advise head office or project management staff against visiting the project location, citing insecurity as the reason. These project staff may even create a security incident, should head office or management staff continue with their plans for the visit, to discourage them from doing so in future. Humanitarian and/or development organisations need to factor this into their visit planning, and their regular communications and relationship building with local project and/or partner personnel”.

(Director of a Humanitarian and Development Coordination Agency, based in Afghanistan)

There was some disagreement amongst the different project stakeholders regarding the type of personnel that should visit project implementation areas, as well as the regularity with which they should visit. Though general practice on regularity of visits to project offices and/or implementation areas varied considerably, there was at least some consensus that greater regularity of visits was best practice. *“We aim to visit project offices and/or implementation areas as regularly as possible”*, was a common response by individual INGOs, as well as a common recommendation from other project stakeholders. There was significant complaint, however, from various organisations that expatriate staff needed to be able to visit project implementation areas. This is not possible for the majority of organisations that are implementing programmes remotely. Often in these cases, national staff are able to visit the project implementation areas with regularity. Whilst this would be disputed by some institutional donors, this was a practice that several of the INGOs were happy with. However, a further concern that was highlighted by institutional donors and research and good practice organisations was the transfer of security risk from expatriate personnel to national and/or local personnel.³⁸

“We see no differentiation between expatriate and national staff members in terms of security and risk. If our expatriate representative is not authorised to travel to a project implementation area, we are not willing to send a national representative as an alternative”.

(Technical Assistant for an Institutional Donor, supporting programmes in Afghanistan)

Regularity of visits and access to project implementation areas is a key requirement for ensuring robust project monitoring. Visits by senior programme management and/or primary organisation personnel to project implementation areas are essential. Further discussion within the wider humanitarian and development community regarding risk transfer to local and/or national staff is still required, as is greater consensus on the regularity of visits. These form the backbone of adequate project monitoring and quality assurance, however, and they must feature in all programmes that utilise a remote management approach.

7.4. Remote Monitoring Issue (4): Inaccuracy of Project Data and Reporting

“We do experience issues across all of our project areas in ensuring that good quality data is collected and sent to the Kabul office (for analysis). Whilst data issues for more secure, non-remote management project areas (Jawzjan, Balkh, Bamyan etc.) can be solved in one day, it can take up to a month to address similar issues faced in our remotely-managed project location”.

(Country Director for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

Eleven out of the 28 project stakeholders (39%) highlighted that the generation of accurate project data and timely and accurate reports would be detrimentally affected by the utilisation of remote management approaches. Adequate data collection, thorough data analysis, and effective management and utilisation of data, through project reporting and regular lesson learning, were the key foci that were highlighted in relation to this issue.

Project stakeholders unanimously highlighted concern with relation to the quality of project data that is collected at a project implementation area level. It was noted that the data that was collected by local staff and/or implementing partners/private contractors could often be inaccurate, requiring time and resources to address and investigate the

³⁸ Out of the twenty INGOs interviewed as part of this research, seven did not have an organisational risk analysis and/or security plan in place (35%). Likewise, thorough and regular security and risk analysis training was not provided to local and national staff in five INGOs (25%). In these instances, the Project Coordinator was concerned by the lack of basic risk and security management practised by the INGOs, and was concerned that ‘risk transfer’ is a significant issue that should be addressed.

inaccuracies, and to produce more solid data.³⁹ These issues were heightened in remotely managed project locations, where communication with staff or partners based *in situ*, as well as visits to project implementation areas, were significantly delayed.

Collecting high quality data is an essential element of project management. Concern was raised, however, that these practices are often not being undertaken to a high standard in remotely managed project locations. One institutional donor referred to monitoring and data collection having become a tick-box exercise for humanitarian and development organisations that operate programmes remotely, even where the capacity of local and national staff members is high. Similarly, the representative for a research and good practice organisation based in Kabul noted that, in their experience of undertaking project evaluations for a UN humanitarian agency, accurate project data collection was not a common practice. It was the concern of these organisations that, without accurate data being collected at a project implementation level, humanitarian and development organisations are forced into a situation whereby they experience “a deficit in project progress, quality and impact reporting”.⁴⁰

“Ensuring that adequate needs (and other) assessment data and monitoring data is collected is essential, but often not happening with success. Data analysis is therefore skewed and unreliable or misleading”.

(Director of a Research and Evaluation Organisation, based in Afghanistan)

The project stakeholders interviewed did not unanimously agree that the low quality of data collected was a staff capacity issue, however, evidence cited by several organisations did support this assumption.⁴¹ The Country Director for an INGO operating in Afghanistan noted that monitoring and evaluation, and the processes that support these systems, are complex. They urged the humanitarian and development community to recognise that local, national and expatriate staff do not automatically understand how to implement these systems and

“Technical skills to support project monitoring and evaluation, report writing and data analysis have been particularly difficult to hone in the absence of regular training, mentoring and capacity building”.

(Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

processes (particularly referencing data analysis and surveying as examples). They explained that further focus on building the capacity of staff and partner organisations in these processes and systems is necessary.⁴² This recommendation was supported by two local staff members, both managing field operations for a different INGO in insecure locations of Afghanistan. They did not feel confident in the practice of data collection and/or analysis and recommended that their organisation provide training to them on these topics.

Remote management approaches also have a detrimental impact on the opportunities to build capacity of and to mentor staff. Whilst historically senior national and expatriate staff members may have been based at the project location, supporting local

³⁹ In most instances, the responsibility for regular project data collection fell to local staff members and/or local partner organisations based *in situ*. In some cases, national staff members were also able to visit project implementation areas and to conduct data collection and other monitoring practices (e.g. through community and beneficiary surveys; market analysis; individual interviews; focus groups discussions, and; transect walks). In one case, where access to two project implementation areas was not possible for even local staff members, the responsibility for collection data as regards the project progress and implementation fell to the local community and to four locally recruited Community Mobilisers.

⁴⁰ Comment from an institutional funding agency representative, supporting programmes in Afghanistan and other countries in Southern Asia.

⁴¹ Of the twenty INGOs that were interviewed, twelve (60%) confirmed that their local and/or national staff demonstrated low capacity in relation to data collection; five (25%) confirmed that their local and/or national staff demonstrated low capacity in relation to data analysis, and; nine (45%) confirmed that their local and/or national staff demonstrated low capacity in relation to producing timely and accurate project reports.

⁴² The Country Director from this INGO, operating in Afghanistan, commented as follows: “Monitoring and evaluation practices are complex – they require constant capacity building and training (particularly in the areas of data analysis and surveying). Staff not only need to understand how it is achievable, but also why it is necessary or important. Monitoring and evaluation also needs to be contextualised for each project environment. Questionnaires developed for communities living in rural areas, for example, are not necessarily going to be suitable for communities living in urban areas. Questionnaires will need to be contextualised in these cases”.

staff with direct project implementation, day-to-day mentoring and cross checking of data would have been possible. In the absence of these opportunities it was recognised as being more difficult to build this capacity. It is not impossible, however. One INGO with significant expertise in operating both humanitarian and development programmes in insecure locations commented that they have been able to substantially build the capacity of local and national staff in data collection and data verification. This has led to huge improvement in practice within the Afghanistan programme over the past year.⁴³

In recognition that data collection for remotely managed projects is most commonly undertaken by local staff and/or local implementing partners/contractors, several recommendations were made by project stakeholders to ensure that the data that is collected and submitted to programme management and/or primary organisations is triangulated. Concerns were raised that the processes of triangulating data have not been well established to date by humanitarian and development organisations that seek to operate remotely. It was recognised that primary organisations or programme management personnel make fewer visits (if any) to project implementation areas. There is an almost total reliance on local project and partner personnel to collect data for the projects which they are implementing, creating an issue of objectivity. One institutional donor representative noted that, *“there are fewer opportunities to cross check and verify project data that is submitted by a local partner, private contractor, or local staff member, making the reliability of that data weaker”*. This concern was echoed by a humanitarian and development coordination agency, based in Afghanistan, the Director of which noting that, *“An external entity (someone who is not themselves directly implementing the project) is required to triangulate and cross-check data and project information. There is a danger in remotely-managed projects that this will not be possible due to the limitations of who is actually able to visit the project location”*. Recommendations for good practice were highlighted by two specific project stakeholders. A research and good practice organisation recommended various methods for data triangulation (which will be explored and systematically developed in this project’s final report); whilst an INGO representative noted that their organisation was in the process of developing data triangulation processes with project communities. There is ample scope to address this issue, and to develop strong systems to triangulate and verify data, particularly in remotely managed projects.

“Whilst data is being collected at a project level, there is little adequate verification or triangulation of this data to ensure that it is reliable”.

(Representative from an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

“Whilst monitoring systems might be in place, often data that is collected by local implementing partners is not analysed and findings from this data are not articulated or used. Data that is collected goes into a pool of unused data and key lesson learning fails to be captured. This is an issue of inadequate management and project oversight, rather than an issue of low capacity”.

(Representative for a Research and Good Practice Organisation)

The final concern that was commonly referred to by project stakeholders related to adequate project data management systems for remotely managed projects. Even where data of a high quality is collected, it often ends up in a pool of unused data and is not utilised for project reporting and/or lesson learning. Evidence from individual interviews with INGO representatives seemed to support this concern, to a certain extent. It was clear that not all of the INGOs interviewed had necessarily developed adequate data analysis and management systems. Just three organisations had advanced databases in place in order to support data analysis and data sharing (between project locations and organisational head offices), and only one organisation had recruited a dedicated Data Analysis Officer, based at the programme head office and

⁴³ A representative from this INGO, operating in Afghanistan, commented as follows: *“Historically, we had experienced capacity issues in terms of documenting and verifying data. There has been a focus on addressing this issue over the last year, with significant improvement noted. Project proposals are now designed around a results-based framework, with indicators for access, demand, quality and policy. Staff are encouraged to promote this in their project planning and implementation”*.

supporting data analysis from all of the individual project locations. Whilst the Project Coordinator acknowledges that not all humanitarian and development organisations have the resources to support the recruitment of a dedicated data analysis officer, it was the recommendation of two research and good practice organisations that ‘*dedicated capacity to collect, manage, analyse, and report on data*’ is required.

There were several recommendations to support improved practice, as well as examples of existing good practice, that related to this concern. These will be reviewed and developed as part of the next phase of this project.

7.5. Remote Monitoring Issue (5): Limited Capacity of Own and/or Partner Personnel

There was considerable variation in the opinions held by project stakeholders with regard to this issue. Whilst eleven out of the 28 project stakeholders that were interviewed did identify limited capacity of own and/or partner personnel as being a substantial issue experienced in remotely managed projects, there were organisations that reported and were observed to be operating successfully, with local and national staff of high capacity. Two organisations had already nationalised all of their Project and/or Provincial Management positions, whilst a further organisation is currently in the process of nationalising many positions, with national staff found to be of high enough capacity to be able to take on these roles.

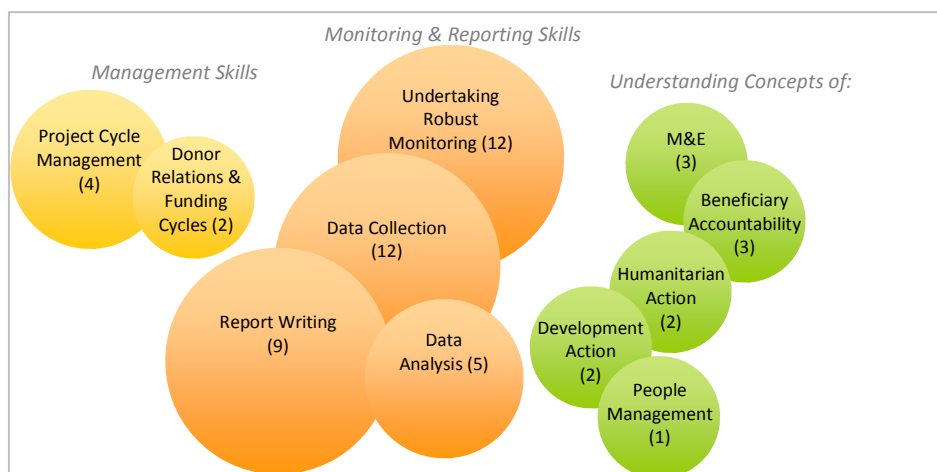
There was equal recognition from a humanitarian and development coordination agency, and various institutional donors, that local and national staff often exhibited high capacity. Capacity, they noted, was not their primary concern with relation to remote management practice. Rather, the concern of the agencies focused on the appropriateness of expecting local and national staff to live and work in an area of medium to high insecurity, without the personal and professional support of expatriate co-workers.

“We have been perceived by some organisations as being an agency that is preferential to expatriates in our approach to project management and monitoring, as opposed to national personnel. This is not the case. Rather, we are concerned to ensure that adequate duty of care remains in place for national and local personnel”.

(Technical Assistant for an Institutional Donor, supporting programmes in Afghanistan)

Each project stakeholder interviewed was given the opportunity to raise any concerns or examples related to capacity issues that they feared or had experienced, and which had been exacerbated in the implementation of remote management approaches. Responses were reviewed and trends in the capacity issues highlighted were analysed (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Staff and/or partner capacity issues related to monitoring & beneficiary accountability identified by INGOs



The capacity issues that were highlighted primarily fell into three separate categories: Management Skills; Monitoring and Reporting Skills, and; Concepts of Humanitarian and Development Action (and related practices). The majority of capacity issues highlighted related to Monitoring and Reporting Skills, with robust monitoring and data collection being highlighted as the most prevalent capacity issues. Report writing came a close second, followed by data analysis and project cycle management. It is interesting that these issues are closely interlinked. The previous sections of this report focused on these issues, which were separately highlighted as key concerns for ensuring good humanitarian practice in remotely managed project locations.

“Staff capacity issues are a key concern for the remote management approach in Melut, particularly because across the board, capacity is weak”.

(Former Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for an INGO, operating in Sudan and South Sudan)

Staff capacity issues were often worse in remote management situations where more senior programme staff were not based with local project staff and could not, therefore, provide day-to-day mentoring and capacity building opportunities. Staff training workshops present an additional expense, requiring training personnel to travel to the project location (which is not always possible in insecure environments), or requiring a selection of project personnel to travel to another location to participate in the training.

It was a common theme throughout the project stakeholder interviews that switching to a remote management approach, in a project area where the organisation has had a historical presence, is often far more effective than initiating a remote management approach for a project in a completely new project location. An INGO, operating in Afghanistan, commented that where senior programme management staff had previously been able to be based in Kandahar or Maimana (which are both now being remotely managed), significant time had been dedicated to building the capacity of staff. Now that remote management approaches are in place in these project locations, the local staff based *in situ* are better equipped to manage the day-to-day management and implementation of projects. This was contrasted with a third project location, Kush, which had switched to a remote management approach soon after the project was initiated, without substantial time undertaken for staff capacity building.⁴⁴

“It is really important to ensure that adequate training is provided, not only to the humanitarian organisation’s own staff but to the staff of local partners or private contractors as well. A crash course in emergency basics (e.g. how to conduct assessments, how to facilitate distributions, how to monitor project activities), should take place”.

(Representative from a UN Agency, supporting humanitarian programmes in Afghanistan)

Training workshops and capacity building initiatives were common practices referred to and recommended by the project stakeholders interviewed. In terms of ensuring high capacity personnel, it was recommended by far more project stakeholders that resources and funding be applied to increasing opportunities for internal and external training opportunities, rather than to paying higher salaries and/or providing financial incentives to personnel to work in insecure areas. There was variation between the INGOs interviewed in terms of the capacity building systems that they had developed. The examples of best practice saw local and national staff receiving training relevant to their roles on a monthly to quarterly basis. Training, of course, requires resources and funding, and it was the recommendation of research and good practice organisations that this be budgeted into project budgets, so as to ensure the continued

⁴⁴ The Community Development Director of an INGO, operating in Afghanistan commented that, “Whilst in Kandahar and Maimana, expatriate staff were historically able to be located with local staff and to build capacity through regular training and mentoring over a prolonged period of time, this has not been possible in Kush...This has had an impact on the quality of work, which is poorer. Staff are more complacent, less critical of their work. Their capacity is often lower, and experience is showing that this is difficult to address remotely”.

capacity development of personnel.

In order to effectively implement a project using a remote management approach, it is essential that the local staff and/or partner/contracted personnel are provided with adequate tools, resources, training, and support. Recognition of staff capacity issues is vital, and targeted training to address specific weaknesses should be undertaken regularly. This project will next seek to identify practical training tools and materials that can be developed in order to support organisations that seek to improve the capacity of staff in understanding and implementing concepts of project monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

7.6. Remote Monitoring Issue (6): Weak Technical Oversight of Project Implementation

Ten separate project stakeholders (36%) noted concerns that remote management approaches may lead to a deterioration in the technical oversight of projects, particularly those with a technically complex focus (e.g. infrastructure, engineering etc.).

Of the organisations that are currently utilising a remote management approach, three raised particularly insightful comments regarding their experiences of technical oversight for project implementation. One organisation had not chosen to operate remotely due to insecurity, but had elected to work through three local implementing partners that had an existing presence in Samangan, Afghanistan, where an earthquake had affected the population. Instead of establishing a new project office in this region and for only a short project period, the organisation elected to work through local implementing partners in order to undertake emergency shelter and housing and school reconstruction. The Country Director of this organisation was interviewed and commented that, despite the final project outcome being of good quality, issues were experienced along the way in terms of the technical oversight that was provided for project implementation.

“We experienced a failure to monitor project activities closely enough or to push implementing partners to keep to the project time frame, resulting in delays in some project activities and outputs, and in the extension to project the project implementation period. Too much freedom was allowed to local implementing partners, and insufficient project oversight was undertaken by us”.

(Country Director for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

“Four Community Facilitators (CFs) have been recruited from communities in the two districts of Kabul which exhibit deteriorating security. These CFs, though not direct employees, do receive a financial incentive for their work. They have been provided with extensive training by our engineering personnel, based at the Kabul sub-office. This training has enabled them to undertake project assessments, monitoring checks, photographs of project activities, and detailed updates on project progress. Our staff work closely with these CFs, to ensure that project milestones are met, and that the quality of work being undertaken is of a high standard.

(Country Director for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

They also noted that their organisation’s technical specialists had not provided adequate support to the local implementing partners, with insufficient visits undertaken and inadequate controls in place to review and guide project implementation. This had resulted in the overall delay of project completion, and in implementing partners consistently missing the deadlines for key indicators and project outputs.

A second organisation is currently finalising a community development project in two districts of Kabul. When the project was initiated, access to all project implementation areas was possible, yet mid-way through the project the organisation experienced a severe deterioration in security (which included targeted attacks against the organisation’s project office and against a vehicle owned by the organisation). The decision was made to relocate all personnel (including local and national personnel) to a project office that was established two hours away from

both district locations. Since the decision to withdraw personnel, there have been no visits undertaken by this organisation to the two affected project implementation areas. All project implementation and monitoring has been undertaken by the local community (Community Development Council representatives), and by four locally-recruited Community Facilitators (community members that have been recruited and trained by the organisation to oversee project implementation and monitoring). Engineering personnel are based at the project office and provide training to the Community Facilitators in terms of implementation practice and monitoring. Engineers are provided with photographic evidence of project progress. They use this evidence, in conjunction with observation reports and survey data (provided to them by the Community Facilitators), in order to develop plans for future project implementation. The level to which they have direct oversight of the project is limited, but this organisation noted that they are experiencing success in their approach, which focuses on using local communities to support project implementation and monitoring. It would be interesting to evaluate the project in these two districts, once it is completed, to review the quality and impact of the work undertaken.

An INGO operating in West Darfur has recently initiated a new project, utilising a remote management strategy. They raised concerns regarding the technical oversight that would be possible for this project, particularly in relation to the regularity of visits by technical specialists to project implementation areas. Visits by technical specialists would be undertaken twice-weekly in this instance, far more regularly than the practice exhibited by other INGOs that were interviewed and that utilise remote management approaches. However, there was concern from this INGO that even twice-weekly visits were insufficient to adequately ensure technical oversight and supervision for projects.

Strong or even adequate technical oversight for project implementation requires that primary organisation and/or programme management personnel must visit the project implementation area on a regular basis. The recommendations from the majority of project stakeholders were in favour of monthly to quarterly visits being undertaken.

Strong concern was raised by one institutional donor should personnel not be able to visit project implementation areas, or should visits be undertaken irregularly.

“Our institutional donor representatives visited partner project locations after a period of reduced monitoring. Their findings were very negative (cash transfers not carried out, roads not constructed etc). This was particularly the case when longer-term projects had been under implementation and our representatives had not been able to visit them regularly. This raises concerns that in remotely managed project locations, where partner staff do not even regularly visit project locations, dangers to programme quality because of a lack of consistent monitoring are even graver”.

(Technical Assistant for an Institutional Donor, supporting programmes in Afghanistan)

7.7. Remote Monitoring Issue (7): Poor Communication between Primary Organisational Head Office and Field Location

“We often send emails to the project offices to help clarify project implementation details. These emails ask specific questions for clarification, but often we do not receive a response. Communication can often be very ‘one-way’”.

(Country Director of an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

Ten out of the 28 project stakeholders interviewed highlighted this issue/concern. Each INGO was asked to outline the different communication practices that were in place for their projects (both remotely managed, as well as those with standard management). The predominant practices included daily to weekly email (eighteen of INGOs interviewed), daily to weekly telephone and/or Skype calls (all INGOs interviewed), face-to-face interaction (all INGOs interviewed), and programme meetings (twelve). The frequency of face-to-face visits (either at programmatic head offices or project offices) as well as the frequency of programme meetings

varied between organisations. Some noted that they tried to ensure that face-to-face interaction was achieved on a monthly basis whilst others confirmed that this would be carried out on a quarterly basis. Few organisations noted that face-to-face interaction would take place with less frequency than this, though six-monthly to annual interaction was not unheard of.

Programme meetings tended to involve the bringing together of senior programme and project staff at either a programmatic head office or project office. Meetings were undertaken on monthly, quarterly and/or bi-annual basis. The purposes of meetings varied (some for security discussion and planning, others for programmatic reviews and learning). One INGO, operating in Afghanistan, conducts monthly Grant Review Meetings (GRMs). These bring together various staff members, from both the Kabul head office as well as each remotely-managed provincial office. The purpose of the meetings is to review project progress and to discuss transferrable learning. The meetings are used as an interactive monitoring opportunity. This INGO has developed substantial experience in managing projects remotely and there were several good practice that could be shared with other humanitarian and development practitioners that are seeking to do the same.

“Discussion of monitoring data, project progress, and quality is undertaken at the Grant Review Meeting. We have found that interactive discussion held at the Kabul office between key project and programme staff – both from the Kabul and field-based teams – helps to stimulate progressive thinking and increase personal accountability with regard to monitoring and programming. For us, this interactive forum has worked far more successfully than simple written reporting”.

(Deputy Country Director of an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

Other organisations interviewed were still in the process of developing such rigorous communication systems. Specific issues related to communication that had been experienced included: absence of responses to queries raised by email and/or telephone; absence of regular updates on project progress (even where these had been requested); limited coordination between personnel, and; limited follow-up by primary organisations and/or programme management personnel. Regular communication was described by the Director of an INGO, operating in South Sudan, as *“a continual frustration”*. It was noted that the majority of communication that is conducted between the Nairobi head office and project offices within South Sudan relies on email, and *“responses are often slow”*. An INGO operating in Sudan concurred with these frustrations, noting that internet and telephone connections in Darfur and areas of the South Sudan could significantly hinder regular communication and slow down the process of project decision making.

“There has been experience of a lack of coordination, collaboration, or engagement between staff. In one example (the development of a baseline assessment), there was too much separation between colleagues and insufficient communication. This resulted in issues experienced as part of the assessment process”.

(Representative for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

The concerns related to regular communication practices for remotely managed projects were not restricted to INGOs. One institutional donor explained that they were concerned that for remotely managed projects, *“there might be a lack of communication and accountability between their direct partner and the local implementing partner”*, through which the project is being implemented. They further recommended that for all remotely managed projects, there should be a communication protocol in place, which includes systems for regular communication between the institutional donor and the primary organisation, as well as between the primary organisation and any local implementing partner/contractor or locally-based personnel. These concerns and recommendations

were echoed by two research and good practice organisations.

The issue of building teams and effective relationships between head office and project office personnel was also highlighted. The Director of a humanitarian and development coordination agency commented, *“How can you build trust and team without adequate oversight and presence at a project location?”* Regular visits, regular telephone and email communication, and regular opportunities to participate in the planning and review of programmes are essential. These practices are carried out with varying degrees of frequency and success by different project stakeholders. Improving these systems will be essential for remotely managed projects, particularly in view of ensuring adequate communication (checks and controls over project implementation) is in place.

7.8. Remote Monitoring Issue (8): Increased Security Threat and Risks to Own Local Personnel, Partner Personnel, and/or Communities and Beneficiaries

Of the humanitarian and development organisations that were interviewed as part of this research, and that are implementing remote management approaches due to insecurity, it was noted that in fifteen project locations, this is due to a general deterioration in security. In two project locations, it was noted that this was due to a security incident targeted specifically against the organisation. Two organisations noted that, before shifting to remote management approaches, personnel from their own organisations had been killed whilst working in insecure project environments.⁴⁵ A further two organisations highlighted that they had experienced targeted attacks against their office compounds and/or vehicles, and that their staff had received threats from armed opposition groups (AOGs).⁴⁶

Security and risk management has had to become a key area of focus and capacity for humanitarian and development organisations that seek to operate in medium-to-high insecurity areas. As part of each individual interview with INGOs, representatives were asked to clarify what systems they have in place for security planning and risk management. Whilst the majority of organisations confirmed that they do have a Security Plan and/or Risk Analysis system in place, seven organisations noted that this had not been well developed within their organisations (see Figure 7, next page).

Likewise, each humanitarian and development organisation interviewed was asked to comment on the level and frequency of security and risk management training that is available to staff (expatriate, national, and local). Fifteen organisational representatives confirmed that their organisation provided and/or ensured security and risk management training for expatriate staff members; thirteen confirmed that this training was provided for national staff members, and; thirteen confirmed that this training was provided for local staff members.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ One INGO, operating in Afghanistan, noted that in 2008 four of its staff members were killed in one province. Following this acute security incident, expatriate staff members from four medium to high insecurity project locations were evacuated and relocated to Kabul. A remote-management approach was implemented in these project locations. The security incident followed a more general deterioration in security in the project locations, and was the final trigger for the move to remote-management. Following the incident, projects were closed for a period of approximately two months, before the remote-management approach was instigated across the four locations. Another INGO, operating only in Afghanistan, noted that 2008 one expatriate staff member was killed whilst travelling to the programme head office in Kabul. This same organisation also experienced a rocket attack against its compound in Jawzjan. Operations were suspended after both incidents, and remotely managed for a period of time. Standard operations have now resumed in all locations apart from Kandahar (where operations continue to be managed remotely).

⁴⁶ Trigger events that affected one of these organisations directly included: the burning out of an INGO-owned vehicle; the burning of the INGO project office, as well as; several threats against personnel. These trigger events, combined with the overarching deterioration in security, led to the closure of the district offices and the establishment of an office between two and three hours away from the project locations. Project staff are not permitted to visit the project locations, and are required to work with locally recruited Facilitators and CDCs in order to implement and monitor project activities.

⁴⁷ The training that is provided by organisations is often compulsory, and can be undertaken internally within the organisation or through external training sources (e.g. the Afghan NGO Safety Office, ANSO).

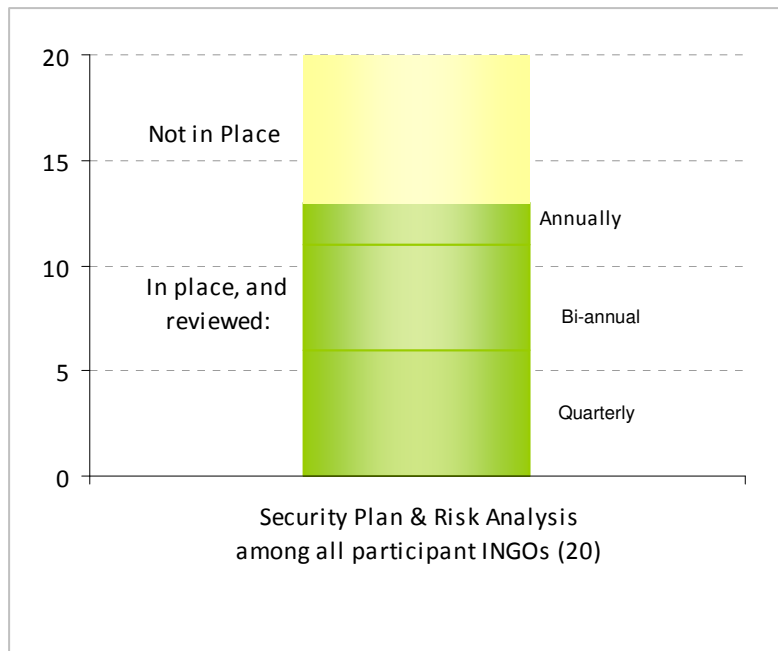


Figure 7: Number of Participant INGOs with Security Plan & Risk Analysis

One of the criticisms that have been levelled against remote management approaches is the danger of risk transfer to local and/or national staff members. It has been a historic criticism of remote management approaches that organisations fail to adequately assess the risks and dangers for local and/or national staff members who are left to be based *in situ* in a medium-to-high insecurity environment. Critics argue that being local to the region or country in which a programme is being operated does not automatically assure that security dangers will impact or affect local and/or national staff to any lesser extent than they do expatriate staff. There is therefore a concern that remote management approaches, which put greater responsibility on local and/or national staff, increase the level of risk and danger that is experienced by those staff members. As part of the research for this project, a baseline assessment of the Project Coordinator’s own organisation was undertaken. During this assessment, national staff members were interviewed and were asked to comment on the level of risk they experience during visits to the remotely managed project office in Kandahar.

"I think that [it is difficult] not just for expats but also for national staff from Kabul. I was not very comfortable [going to Kandahar]. But our [field] staff were going every day in Kandahar so it should not be a big deal. But our staff there say it can be a problem because we look different. But you need to take some risk and have some level of discomfort. Once I got to the field it was okay; I was afraid going through the city on the way to the field."

(National Staff Member for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

This is a concern that was shared unanimously by all of the individual project stakeholders in this research. The representative for a humanitarian and development coordination agency, based in Afghanistan, commented that, *"By leaving them [local and/or national staff members] to manage and implement the projects without direct support and supervision from an expatriate, the organisation responsible maximises the risk that is faced by the project team"*. The representative for an INGO operating in Darfur, Pakistan and Afghanistan questioned the appropriateness of expecting local and national staff to conduct monitoring visits of projects in insecure areas, when expatriate staff are not willing to do so: *"Because [our] staff are not able to visit project locations in order to conduct scheduled monitoring visits, how appropriate, safe and ethical is it for that risk (considered to be too great for our expatriate staff) to be transferred to partner staff instead?"* Likewise, an institutional donor, supporting humanitarian interventions in Darfur, Somalia, Pakistan and Afghanistan,

commented that remote management approaches may lead to *“heightened security risks for national and local personnel”*.

It was clear from the research undertaken that there is no easy answer to this issue and that in fact, there is significant debate amongst the humanitarian and development community as to what extent remote management does in fact automatically increase the security risks faced by national staff.⁴⁸ The INGO quoted in the previous paragraph also commented that, *“If they do not do this though [requiring local and national partners to visit and monitor projects when expatriate personnel are not able to], there is a concern that the project is not being monitored regularly and this is an issue as well”*. Obviously, robust security management, ongoing risk analysis, and regular training for all staff members and partner staff are essential. An immediate recommendation from this research is that security and risk assessment and management is undertaken with greater rigor, and that security and risk management training is made a compulsory requirement for all staff operating in insecure areas, national as well as expatriate.

An organisation based in Afghanistan that is not utilising remote management noted that when recruiting national personnel it is increasingly becoming a requirement that they have existing skills or capacity for security management. Ensuring that these skills and capacities are developed throughout the employment of local, national and expatriate staff members will be crucial to mitigating the security risks and concerns raised by some of the project stakeholders in this research. The question of whether this will ever adequately satisfy the concerns raised is still open. The next phase of this project will need to address these concerns and will seek to ascertain what good practice can be developed in order to mitigate against the risks highlighted.

The majority of INGOs that were interviewed did comment that they liaise closely with beneficiary communities in terms of regularly assessing risk and mitigating against it. One INGO, operating in Afghanistan, explained that before a project intervention has even been approved within a community or village, the members of that community or village are required to guarantee, 100%, that they will do their best to safeguard the security of all personnel related to the project. If this cannot be guaranteed, the project will not be initiated in that area. The representative from this organisation noted that, to date, this has been successful, with community members regularly contacting personnel at the INGO to warn them of potential security incidents, and to recommend when it is not safe to visit. This practice was common amongst the INGOs interviewed, however, it does not always guarantee that no security incident is experienced,⁴⁹ and there were concerns from the Project Coordinator that communities might provide a 100% guarantee simply to avoid the INGO choosing not to initiate the

“It is no longer possible to rely simply on good acceptance to ensure the safety and security of programme and project staff. In view of the fluidity of security across Afghanistan...it would be naïve to think that a reliance on community acceptance alone will protect staff...Communities can be manipulated to turn against organisations. Likewise...when there are community disputes or AOG actions against a specific community, an organisation might be targeted in order to indirectly target the community that the organisation supports”.

(Country Director for an INGO, operating in Afghanistan)

⁴⁸ One project stakeholder commented that there has not been substantial enough risk analysis undertaken in order to ascertain if national staff are exposed to greater risk as a result of remote management approaches. This stakeholder argued that expatriate and national staff do in fact face different degrees of risk. Whilst it is unethical to ask national staff to bear higher levels of risk, adequate risk analysis needs to be undertaken to gauge the level of risk that realistically faces them (within a particular context), and to assess whether remote management is an appropriate option. Remote management, the stakeholder urged, does not automatically cause national staff to be at greater risk.

⁴⁹ Another INGO, operating in Afghanistan, noted that during a visit to a potential project community, members of an armed opposition group (AOG) arrived demanding to speak with the INGO personnel. In this instance, the community members protected the INGO personnel, hiding them inside one of their homes. This put both the INGO personnel as well as the community at heightened risk.

project intervention in their community.

Discussion was initiated with each of the project stakeholders regarding how community acceptance-building measures, and beneficiary accountability practices, can be utilised in order to mitigate against security risks and threats to humanitarian and development organisations. Whilst several of the organisations interviewed did support the hypothesis that increased community acceptance leads to better protection of humanitarian and/or development organisation personnel, there were concerns that in a volatile conflict with increased fragmentation of insurgent groups, community acceptance is less reliable than it used to be as an indicator of security.

There was evidence of significant debate between the project stakeholders with regard to this issue and to the measures that can be used to (potentially) mitigate against it. Security of both the primary organisation's and partner/contractor organisation's personnel, as well as the beneficiary community, must be paramount in any remote management approach.

7.9. Remote Monitoring Issue (9): Increased Pressure and Expectation (Social and Political) on Local Staff, in Absence of Senior National and Expatriate Staff

A further and, to some extent, connected issue related to the security of project personnel and the quality of programming was raised by seven of the project stakeholders interviewed (25%). All of the project stakeholders that raised this issue are representatives of organisations operating or supporting operations in Afghanistan. It may be that this is an issue specific to the social and political context that is experienced in Afghanistan, though it would be interesting to explore further whether this is something that organisations operating in Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq, or Darfur experience. The issue itself relates to the extent to which remote management approaches exacerbate existing social and political pressures and expectations that are placed on local and/or national staff.

The issue assumes that social and political pressures, enforced by families, local communities, tribal groups, religious groups, AOGs, and government ministries and/or leaders,⁵⁰ do not have the same impact on expatriate staff as they do on local and/or national staff. The issue assumes that by placing the responsibility for project management on these local and/or national staff members, humanitarian and development organisations increase both the levels of stress and anxiety experienced by these staff members, as well as the level of risk for occurrences of fraud and corruption and reduced programme quality.

“Strong power relations at a project level may well influence and pull or push national and local personnel in ways that they cannot resist...NGOs that seek to implement remote management approaches to not adequately consider these issues and do not meet the duty of care needs of their staff”.

(Technical Assistant for an Institutional Donor, supporting operations in Afghanistan)

In the context of Afghanistan, where family, tribe, ethnicity and political affiliation are so strong, and where there are high levels of chronic poverty, local and/or national staff members may be susceptible to pressure from these groups to provide assistance to certain groups. Impartiality in targeting project beneficiaries, contractors, suppliers etc. arises as a potentially damaging outcome of this issue.

⁵⁰ The Country Director for an INGO that has been remotely managing a project, implemented through three local partner organisations, commented that they often experience government interference and pressures, including: “Pressures from local ministries and government agencies to ensure that more projects are implemented through local partners in future, and pressures to provide 100% financial advances to such local implementing partners – a breach of the INGO protocol”.

Whilst partiality to specific beneficiary and supplier groups is one outcome of this issue, and links closely with fraud and corruption, a secondary outcome raised by the seven individual project stakeholders is the risk to local and/or national staff well-being. The assumption in this instance is that local and/or national staff members are left without adequate support from expatriate staff members, to fend off social and political pressures. One institutional donor remarked that this issue, in the context of remote management, presents a serious duty of care deficit by humanitarian and development organisations. This concern was echoed by the Director of a humanitarian and development coordination agency, also based in Afghanistan, who noted that insufficient support and supervision was put in place by INGOs that seek to operate remotely in Afghanistan. They noted that, *“Pressures and threats might be made against local and/or national staff members (by their family, community, mosque, or governor). Not having the support of expatriate staff members to respond to these pressures puts the local and/or national staff member in danger and at greater risk of insecurity”*.

Two national staff members working for an INGO operating in Afghanistan confirmed that there can be substantial expectations placed on staff members by family, community, and/or tribe. These expectations are particularly exacerbated when the staff members are local to the area in which they are working. Whilst both staff members highlighted this expectation, they did both confirm that they did not feel any significant pressure as a result. They respond to the requests and expectations by emphasising the mandate and values of the INGO. *“This”*, they noted *“usually satisfies the community, family or tribe”*. It was the assessment of the Project Coordinator that these two staff members did feel comfortable with the level of expectation from family, community and tribe that they experienced. They further confirmed that they felt comfortable to share any concerns or issues with their line manager (expatriate; based in Kabul), and that they were provided with sufficient support by the organisation.

It is difficult to know to what extent local and/or national staff felt able to share honestly how they feel about this issue. It could be a concern, for example, that by raising this issue they may inadvertently put themselves at greater risk of scrutiny by senior programme management, and they therefore may be less inclined to highlight this issue. Sensitivity to the issues related to social and political pressures / expectations must be a key consideration for any humanitarian and/or development organisation, especially those that are remotely managing projects, as part of their duty of care to personnel. Training, mentoring, regular communication, face-to-face interaction, and the creation of space to discuss significant issues must be ensured.

7.10. Remote Monitoring Issue (10): Increased Risk of the Occurrence of Fraud and Corruption; Organisational Liability Increased

“When we experience increasing problems in not being able to visit projects and to see project progress and quality ourselves, there is an increasing reliance on the implementing partner to do this. There is a concern that this can lead to corruption or fraud”.

(Programme Officer for an INGO, currently supporting programmes in Darfur, Afghanistan and Pakistan)

The risks of fraud and corruption being undertaken are present in any humanitarian and/or development organisation, and by any project stakeholder (expatriate, national and/or local staff members; implementing partners; private contractors; suppliers; community leaders, and; institutions). What was recognised by the six individual project stakeholders that highlighted this issue (21%) was that remote management approaches intensify the opportunities for fraud and corruption to be undertaken, due to the assumption that limited, or at least less, project supervision is in place by senior programme management personnel.

Few of the INGOs interviewed directly admitted to having experienced instances of fraud and corruption in their programme interventions, though there were some that highlighted examples of this. Three INGOs, all of which operate remotely-managed projects within Afghanistan, referred to instances of fraud and corruption or financial disparity that had been experienced with their programmes within the last twelve months. Of these organisations, one had experienced small to medium sized instances of corruption with its own personnel (local and national) that are based at remotely managed project locations. One had experienced a lack of financial accountability between their personnel and the personnel of implementing partner organisations. The final organisation referred to community-level corruption having been experienced, particularly in regard to beneficiary selection processes.

These concerns were shared by the representatives of institutional donors and research and good practice organisations. Several of these representatives reinforced a correlation between this issue and the issue most recently explored, related to social and political pressures. It was noted by the representative of one institutional donor that they had strong concerns regarding the appropriate selection of beneficiaries, particularly in view of these pressures.

“Without adequate management and supervision, issues may arise in terms of selecting appropriate beneficiaries”.

(Representative for an Institutional Donor)

The severity of the context in countries such as Afghanistan or Somalia was invariably commented upon by different project stakeholders in this research. It was noted that in countries that have experienced long-term conflict and insecurity and that continue to experience chronic poverty and recurrent humanitarian crises, it is not surprising that fraud and corruption practices develop.

Social, Economic and Political Factors Leading to a Rise in Fraud and Corruption Likelihood

“The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has traumatised portions of the population. Historical social fabrics have broken down and new, diverse social fabrics have developed in their place. Normal is not a term to be used in reference to Afghanistan, where the day-to-day conflict and political context changes. One of the specific impacts of the conflict has been the breakdown in trust between many Afghans and ‘outsiders’ (foreigners). A second impact has been the development of a day-to-day mercenary attitude on the part of many Afghans – What is in it for me? – developed within the nature of ongoing conflict and uncertainty and the fear that any day might be one’s last”.

(Representative for a Research and Good Practice Organisation, based in Afghanistan)

“Good monitoring and quality management processes are essential for ensuring that humanitarian actors are not compromising in their commitment to programming and quality, and for ensuring that humanitarian organisations can be here for the long term”.

(Technical Assistant for an Institutional Donor, supporting programmes in Afghanistan)

The research and good practice organisation representative quoted above highlighted further concerns with relation to fraud and corruption. They explained that when there is an absence of external monitoring and rigorous supervision undertaken by a primary organisation, or by senior programme management, too much power is given to the implementing partner and/or local staff. When insufficient checks and controls are made in order to support the project intervention, there is the concern that projects will not be implemented to a high quality and that there may be a misuse of funds and/or resources. There was evidence that this had been the case in at least three organisations. The Country Director for one INGO noted that, *“small to medium sized instances of corruption have been experienced. These have tended not to be cash-based but focused on resources and other items. This is likely to have arisen due to a lack of adequate monitoring controls”.*

This issue was one of the primary concerns of an INGO, also operating in Afghanistan, which is opposed to remote management. The representative from this INGO noted that, from a personal perspective, they did not agree that remote management strategies could be implemented whilst safe-guarding adequate project monitoring and quality. Reasons supporting this position included levels of corruption being too complex to manage money transfers and appropriate expenditure and reporting. It was also noted that the interviewee's experience of observing remotely managed projects is that there is never sufficient follow up. Implementing partners in a remotely managed project often do not believe that the funding and/or primary organisation will ever visit, cross-check or triangulate information that that is sent. Examples were raised of reports being sent, and then re-sent on a different monthly reporting occasion (duplicating data), and this never having been checked or noticed by the primary organisation or funding agency. Inadequacy in checks and information verification is a key issue opposing remote management, this stakeholder argued.

Notwithstanding the financial impact that fraud and corruption practices can have on a humanitarian and development organisation, there is also a huge risk to the organisational reputation, particularly when the quality or impartiality of the programme is impacted. This issue was specifically highlighted by individual project stakeholders. A statement was made by a representative for an institutional donor, supporting long-term humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan. It was recognised that instances of fraud and corruption, leading to a deterioration in the quality of humanitarian and development programming and to a reduction in trust and acceptance by project communities, inversely impacts the acceptance that the wider humanitarian and/or development community has from communities and can reduce the longevity with which organisations can work in such communities. The risk of fraud, corruption, poor quality and preferential programming is heightened in project interventions which are remotely managed.

The risk of fraud and corruption can be mitigated against, even in projects which are managed remotely. The INGO that had experienced small-to-medium sized instances of fraud (referenced earlier in this section), has since developed and initiated a controls-based approach to project management and supervision. This INGO has selected to take a micro-management approach to project monitoring and management, and notes that this approach has significantly helped to reduce the potential for fraud and corruption. The approach has been supported by regular training on organisational process and by the development of a whistle-blowing policy which seeks to bring to light and address instances of fraud and corruption in the organisation. Complaints handling mechanisms are being implemented by other INGOs to support accountability to beneficiaries and to ensure that any complaint (whether related to fraud and/or corruption or not) can be addressed. These practices will be explored in the innovations phase of this project.

8. Conclusions and Next Steps for the Project

The research that has been undertaken to date has sought to identify the issues and concerns, related to or impacting project monitoring, quality, and/or beneficiary accountability that have either been experienced or are anticipated by different groups of stakeholders within the humanitarian and development community. The research highlighted 35 individual issues and concerns that had been raised by project stakeholders. Of these, eleven issues have been the focus of this interim research report.

Concerns regarding how remotely managed projects can ensure high programme quality as well as rigorous project monitoring were the two issues raised most frequently and with the greatest fervour by project stakeholders. All of the other individual concerns and issues that were raised, it could be argued, contribute in some way to these preliminary two key issues.

Despite the issues/concerns that were raised as part of this research, there was evidence that an overarching number of the project stakeholders are in favour of utilising remote management approaches in medium-to-high insecurity project locations (see Figure 8). Of the total number of project stakeholders interviewed, eighteen (64%) noted that they were supportive of remote management approaches (and that they were either utilising such an approach themselves, or that they would consider utilising such an approach should security deteriorate). Just one organisation noted that they are not currently able to make a decision as to the appropriateness of utilising a remote management approach,⁵¹ and nine organisations (32%) highlighted that they would be opposed to the practice of remote management, under any circumstances, citing that the issues/concerns that are contained in this report cannot be adequately addressed and that remotely managed projects almost always lead to deficiencies in programme quality, personnel safety and security, and appropriate financial management.

Whilst the issues and concerns highlighted in this report are serious, posing a substantial threat to programme quality, there is evidence that good practice solutions can be developed further and used to address these issues. The development by two INGOs of a remote management policy to guide remote management programming highlights how guidance and regulations, which must be fully integrated across other programme policies as well, can be utilised in order to inform and control project implementation and management. The development of controls-based tools and templates to support such policies by tracking and monitoring project implementation and management was also a positive example of practice. Likewise, the increasing recognition by humanitarian and development actors that capacity building and mentoring are important practices to ensure the ongoing development of personnel and/or implementing partners as well as high quality programming, is a highly positive observation in this research and something to be developed further. One project stakeholder commented that instilling values and humanitarian principles within project staff is an important approach to help ensure that staff understand and support the importance of programming to a high quality.

Whilst there is some debate as to whether micro-management, controls-based approaches to project monitoring and management are appropriate and successful, there was evidence from at least one organisation that this new approach had led to the improvement of project implementation and to the reduction of fraud and corruption.

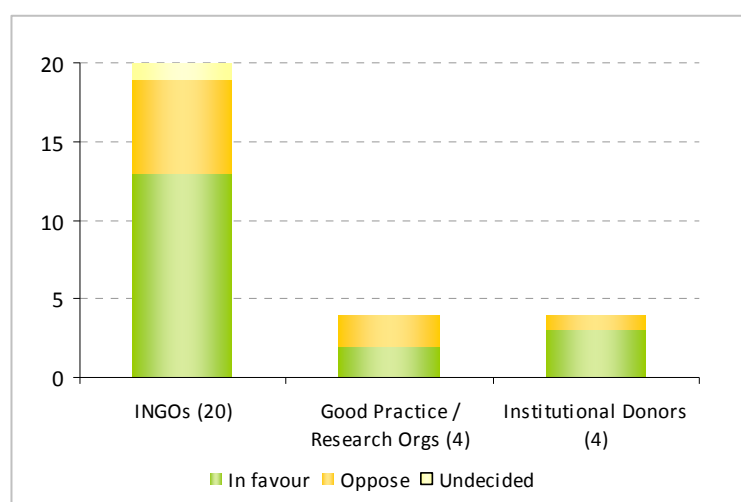


Figure 8: Number of all organisational participants in favour of, or in opposition, to remote management

The examples of existing good practice that have been collected to date must be critically reviewed to assess how successfully they address the issues highlighted in this report. The next phase of this research and innovation project will do just that. The Project Coordinator has already collected several examples of existing good practice and will liaise with the relevant project stakeholders to

generate evidence of the impact of these practices. The Project Coordinator will also

⁵¹ This organisation did highlight several serious concerns regarding the practice of remote management but was not able to make a decision either against or in favour of the utilisation of remote management approaches.

continue reading and reviewing other publications on this subject matter in order to draw out any recommendations for good practice from those sources. Similarly, Tearfund's Baseline Assessment of Project Monitoring and Beneficiary Accountability in Kandahar has highlighted several recommendations for the wider humanitarian and development community that will be reviewed, assessed, and piloted by the Project Coordinator.

Alongside these existing good practices, there is evidence of a need to innovate and develop further good practice. This will also be a strong focus in the next phase of this project. The Project Coordinator will work with existing project stakeholders to discuss the strengths, weaknesses and practicalities of any innovations and existing good practices. The project will also draw on continued interaction with a variety of stakeholders to ensure that resulting good practice is relevant and usable by humanitarian and development organisations of different sizes, scopes, foci etc.

The continued focus of this project is to develop practical guidance and recommendations, based on the past and present experience of humanitarian and development stakeholders, to improve the practice of project monitoring and beneficiary accountability for projects which utilise remote management approaches. The focus remains on promoting high quality humanitarian and development assistance to the most vulnerable population groups within medium to high insecurity areas, and on building effective and accountable relationships between beneficiary communities and humanitarian and development organisations.

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*Cover photographs courtesy of Bruce Clark and Kieran Dodds (Tearfund); final picture anonymous.