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KANDAHAR FOOD ZONE MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

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KANDAHAR FOOD ZONE MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION



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Measuring Impact of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI) Project

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ACRONYMS AND OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Automated Directives System
AGE	Anti-Government element
CBPSA-PC	Community Based Planning to Support Alternatives Poppy Cultivation
CDC	Community Development Council
CNCE	Counter-narcotics Community Engagement
COR	Contracting Officer’s Representative
DCN	Department of Counter-narcotics in Kandahar Province
DDA	District Development Assembly
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (referred to as “the government” throughout the report)
GIS	Geospatial Information System
GLE	Governor Led Eradication
GPI	Good Performers Initiative
IDLG	Independent Directorate for Local Governance
IR	Intermediate Result
IRD	International Relief and Development
IP	Implementing Partner
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigational, and Livestock
MCN	Ministry of Counter-narcotics
MISTI	Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Initiatives
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
MRRD	Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled
ODG	Office of Democracy and Governance
PMP	Performance Management Plan
RADP-S	Regional Agricultural Development Program – South (USAID-funded)
SAM	Stability Analysis Mechanism
SIKA	Stability in Key Areas
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SOI	Source of Instability
STAB-U	Stabilization Unit
UNODC	United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since July 2013, the Kandahar Food Zone (KFZ), implemented by International Relief and Development (IRD), has conducted a number of alternative livelihood activities in Kandahar aimed at addressing drivers of poppy cultivation. Working closely with the Ministry of Counter-narcotics (MCN), KFZ has also conducted capacity building for the ministry in its Kabul and Kandahar offices. KFZ is the USAID-funded pillar of a four pillar MCN strategy called MCN-KFZ which was designed by the Afghan government to reduce poppy cultivation and increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of national and sub-national administrations. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) funds the other three pillars which focus on poppy eradication through provincial governments, drug demand reduction, and strategic communications on anti-poppy cultivation.

This mid-term performance evaluation covers the alternative livelihood activities of KFZ and whether its approach met the program's objectives as well as the US Government's counter-narcotics plan in Afghanistan which aims to ensure programming is realistic, durable, and sustainable.

This report describes findings from KFZ's activities and grants up to November 2014, during which KFZ programmed lengthy canal rehabilitations to increase access to affordable irrigation water, implemented vocational trainings tied to alternative development, and conducted capacity-building trainings for MCN staff.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Counter-narcotics programming in Afghanistan is an inherently difficult endeavor. The country has experienced constant and considerable increases in poppy cultivation since the fall of the Taliban. Eradication efforts have largely been insufficient and unsuccessful and have often been followed by reduced support for the Afghan government. Previous alternative livelihoods programming in Afghanistan has seen mixed results, often because it was not adequately tied to a multi-agency approach, but was rather narrowly implemented. Many of these programs focused on crop substitution and similar alternative cropping schemes that sometimes had counterproductive effects, such as the Helmand Food Zone (HFZ) which pushed poppy farmers out into marginal desert areas with no government control, resulting in a considerable increase in poppy cultivation levels.

KFZ as a program has performed well in executing its contract, but was significantly hindered by factors outside of the program's control. These issues and recommendations for program improvement as well as for future USAID-funded alternative livelihood programming are prioritized and discussed below:

1. The KFZ scope, timeframe, and funding should be changed to better reflect the realities on the ground, the work of the four MCN-KFZ pillars, and need to occur when there is adequate Afghan government political will to conduct counter-narcotics.

Scope – KFZ needs to be tied to a provincial poppy elimination strategy and a provincial eradication plan, both voluntary and enforced. KFZ projects should overlap with eradications so that these projects can be considered as the answer to eradication, the answer to a shift to a licit economy, and as the answer to root causes of poppy cultivation. KFZ's efforts will be most effective when combined with an eradication program.

Timeframe – KFZ should have been a multi-year program instead of its current duration of two years. Most alternative livelihoods programs are multi-year, multi-agency efforts in order to work through several seasonal planting cycles and observe whether the model works. KFZ was limited to programming during one poppy cultivation seasonal cycle and USAID may not see any impact on poppy cultivation levels until several months after the program closes out.

Funding – KFZ targeted seven districts in Kandahar but was not adequately funded to address drivers of poppy cultivation in each district. Now that the main drivers of poppy cultivation have been identified through KFZ’s CBPSA-PC, it is clear that village respondents identified a lack of affordable irrigation water as the main driver. This necessitates irrigation improvement work that can be costly. KFZ’s limited budget forced it to program irrigation improvement work in only two out of seven districts. While the impact of such irrigation improvement projects has not been evaluated yet, should it be positive, USAID needs to consider funding future alternative livelihoods programs in Kandahar that can conduct irrigation improvement work in all targeted districts. A more thorough cost analysis during the project design process can contribute to a more realistic budget.

Political Will – Alternative livelihoods cannot achieve success without eradication. The Afghan government needs to actually conduct counter-narcotics/eradication if it promises to do so. Without the political will to enforce counter-narcotics/eradication, the success of any alternative livelihoods program will be extremely limited.

2. Alternative livelihood programs need to be multi-year and multi-agency efforts in order to ensure that enough poppy crop planting and harvesting cycles occur so that programming can affect behavior change from illicit to licit livelihoods. KFZ is not a multi-year program, nor is it truly tied to a multi-agency effort as there is almost no collaboration with INL, which funds the other three MCN pillars. Designing KFZ as a two year experiment was shortsighted. Future attempts at alternative livelihoods need to be designed for a longer duration (minimum of five years) to achieve better results as short duration programs like KFZ cannot achieve proper goals and objectives.
3. Under Component 1 (Capacity Building), KFZ was tasked with building the capacity of MCN’s Alternative Livelihoods Directorate. This was misdirected. While well intentioned and mandated by its contract with USAID, these trainings were conducted in a ministry that does not program (it only works on policy and planning), does not have a budget or promises of a budget for behavior change programming, nor has the capacity to implement such programming at this time. The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) and the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) work on similar programming, serve as implementers, and can implement MCN policy. It would have been better if the task order asked KFZ to ensure capacity for alternative livelihoods programming in all three ministries instead of just the MCN.
4. There is a need for a program like KFZ to have a strategic communications component instead of relying exclusively on INL’s counter-narcotics public information work (which wasn’t conducted in every KFZ district). Component 2 of the contract should be adjusted to reflect this need with sufficient funds added by USAID. Strategic communications will allow KFZ to sensitize farmers on the negative consequences of poppy cultivation at the family, provincial, and national levels. This would also allow KFZ to tie sensitization with alternative livelihoods programming.
5. Lack of access to sustainable and affordable sources of water for irrigation is one of the key drivers of poppy cultivation. There is an undeniable need for improved and efficient irrigation systems. Given

this fact, future USAID counter-narcotics/alternative livelihoods programming should be designed around this particular driver of poppy cultivation in order to maximize impact. This would include larger scale infrastructure improvements in addition to small grants and cash for work programming.

6. USAID should not encourage programming in districts for which an adequate budget does not exist. Given its limited budget, KFZ realized that it would be best to not program anything in Arghistan, Kandahar City, Maiwand, Takhtar-Pul, and Shawalikot districts as none of the vocational trainings without grants for irrigation infrastructure improvement would adequately address drivers of poppy cultivation. USAID forced KFZ to program in all districts even though the wasteful nature of such programming was identified by KFZ leadership.
7. The KFZ model might have seen higher returns/greater impact if it wasn't so spread out. A limited scope, such as working in only two high risk districts per year, subsequently tied to alternative livelihoods programming and the MCN-KFZ pillars should see better gains over time, rather than short duration and ambitious programming spread over multiple districts. A staggered and highly targeted approach would make most sense if the KFZ model is to be continued as a multi-year program.
8. Experience has shown that spending funds on short-term classroom-type training courses and workshops have been largely unproductive. In KFZ's case, they are even more unproductive as in five out of seven districts they are not tied to increases in affordable irrigation water – a major driver of poppy cultivation. KFZ conducted these vocational training courses because it needed to program something in those five districts. This was wasteful. Such trainings should not occur if it is clear that they will not adequately address a driver of poppy cultivation.
9. Continue appropriately-timed programming to divert farmers away from poppy cultivation. KFZ times all of its programming to coincide with the poppy cultivation, weeding, and harvesting months (October – April). This is done intentionally to divert farmers away from poppy cultivation and into training courses and jobs. Such diversions are well thought out and timely.
10. USAID should award future contracts of this type in Kandahar in February/March of any year to best fit within the poppy planting calendar. This would allow the program enough time to conduct assessments, conceptualize alternative livelihoods programming, receive grant approvals, and conduct the necessary coordination with the Afghan government before that year's first poppy planting begins. As KFZ was awarded in July and poppy planting in Kandahar begins in October, the program did not have enough time to address poppy cultivation in its first year.

Conclusion

KFZ's design does not predicate success on the other three MCN-KFZ pillars, does not include communications and outreach activities, and does not include a sufficient budget or timeframe in order to foster change in the social, political, and economic behaviors that drive poppy cultivation. While KFZ did identify the root causes that motivate communities to cultivate poppies, the program was unable to conduct meaningful mitigation activities in all seven districts due to a limited budget. While promoting alternative livelihoods needs to be complemented by more traditional narcotics supply reduction activities such as eradication, KFZ programmed in Kandahar during years of almost zero eradication. While promoting alternative livelihoods needs to also be complemented by public information about narcotics, KFZ's scope did not include communications and outreach work and did not adequately integrate with

MCN-KFZ's public information pillar. Lastly, KFZ was meant to serve as a model in targeted districts, improving the Afghan government's ability to continue behavior change programming beyond the life of the program. This element of KFZ's design is misdirected. KFZ conducted capacity building trainings at the MCN's Alternative Livelihoods Directorate. While well intentioned and mandated by its contract with USAID, these trainings were conducted in a ministry that does not program (it only works on policy and planning), does not have a budget or promises of a budget for behavior change programming, nor does it have the capacity to implement such programming at this time.

It is therefore imperative that alternative livelihoods programming be based on realistic, durable, and sustainable successes within a larger counter-narcotics strategy. KFZ's scope, timeframe, and funding must be reworked by USAID in order for this to occur. A well thought out program can have significant positive outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

The Strategic Partnership Agreement signed by the United States and the Afghan government on May 2, 2012 paved the way for continued US commitment to helping the Afghan government break the narcotics-insurgency nexus and further connect the Afghan people to their government. This strategy prioritizes US counter-narcotics assistance during transition to Afghan security force responsibility. The US supports a counter-narcotics plan in Afghanistan that is realistic, durable, sustainable, and that protects US national security interests¹.

As part of the US “whole of government” approach to assisting the Afghan government in sustaining security and stability gains, the US counter-narcotics strategy for Afghanistan focuses on building Afghan capacity, the interdiction of drugs, and *providing licit alternatives to poppy cultivation*. It also supports the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) and the US Afghanistan-Pakistan Strategy, and is aligned with the US Agriculture Assistance Strategy for Afghanistan, which focuses on sustainable agricultural sector practices and “foundational” investments. Additionally, the strategy addresses supply and demand reduction, stopping drug traffickers, public information campaigns, and regional and international cooperation.

KFZ is based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), signed on September 15, 2012 between USAID and the Afghanistan Ministry of Counter-narcotics (MCN), in which USAID intends to support the goals and objectives of the MCN Kandahar Food Zone program (MCN-KFZ) designed by the Afghan government to reduce poppy cultivation and to increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of the national and sub-national administrations. Through this MoU, USAID partnered with MCN by supporting one component of the MCN-KFZ structure – the alternative livelihoods (AL) pillar.

MCN-KFZ is defined as a multi-pillar, multi-agency model comprised of these four pillars:

1. Governor-led eradication of poppies (INL)
2. Demand reduction programing (INL)
3. Counter-narcotics public information and awareness - strategic communications (INL)
4. *Alternative livelihood programming (USAID)*

USAID is only responsible for the fourth pillar that supports the third and fifth objectives of the US Counter-narcotics Strategy for Afghanistan.² As such, USAID funded KFZ is a two-year, \$18.7 million project implemented by International Relief and Development (IRD) and designed to identify and address the drivers of poppy cultivation in seven (7) targeted districts in Kandahar province chosen by MCN, USAID, and the Kandahar Provincial Governor. These districts are Panjwai, Maiwand, Zharai, Kandahar City, Arghistan, Shawalikot, and Takhtar-Pul seen in Figure 1.

The decision to invest in these seven districts was based on the below criteria:

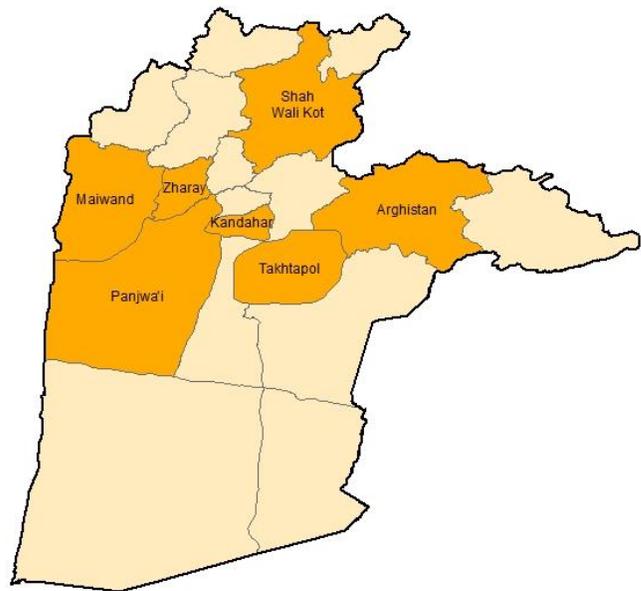
- 3 year average poppy cultivation

¹ US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan, Annex B, USAID KFZ SOW given to MISTI.

² Objective 3: Support sustainable agricultural development and licit alternatives to poppy, in line with the objectives set forth in national and provincial development strategies. Objective 5: Build a more capable, accountable, effective, sustainable, and self-reliant Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics.

- Percentage of probable poppy cultivation in agriculturally productive areas
- Trends in poppy cultivation
- Impact in Value Chain Linkages
- Afghan government presence
- Security conditions, permissible access
- Potential to leverage other investments

FIGURE 1: KFZ'S TARGET DISTRICTS IN KANDAHAR PROVINCE



USAID designed KFZ with two components to support the fourth (AL) pillar:

- 1. Build capacity in the MCN Alternative Livelihoods Directorate and at the Kandahar Directorate of Counter-narcotics (DCN) office.**
- 2. Provide alternative livelihoods and community infrastructure to increase licit economic activities (shift farmers away from poppy cultivation and into licit livelihoods).**

In line with the second component, KFZ's scope has the following goals:

- Rehabilitate more than 150km of irrigation canals in three target districts³
- Have more than 85,000 Kandaharis benefit from infrastructure and alternative livelihood activities⁴
- Improve more than 20,000 hectares with irrigation to provide farmers with alternative licit income
- Reduce poppy cultivation in areas where KFZ improved the irrigation infrastructure

While these objectives (outputs) will be evaluated in the *Findings* section, it should be noted that USAID designed this program to work in conjunction with the other three MCN pillars (eradication, demand reduction, and public awareness). These three pillars have not worked well and have hindered the ability of KFZ to reach its objectives through the fourth pillar (alternative livelihoods) alone.

Under component two, KFZ is designed to address the drivers of poppy cultivation through infrastructure grants and vocational trainings, to include capacity-building. As of November 2014 (the end of the period of performance), KFZ began work on rehabilitating eleven canals in Panjwai and Zharai districts, totaling roughly 150km. The goal of these canals is to provide access to 27,400 hectares of farmland in the area,

³ In reality, irrigation projects only covered two districts, Panjwai and Zharai. There wasn't enough funding to program irrigation projects in all seven targeted districts. These two districts were chosen based on their proximity to the main water sources in Kandahar and where canal construction would include the most beneficiaries. Unfortunately, the lack of sufficient funding as well as realities on the ground prevented Maiwand district (which produces three times as much opium as the second largest producing district – Zharai) from benefitting from infrastructure projects.

⁴ See the last findings section on output targets. KFZ has not met this figure yet under the period of performance.

including close to 8,000 hectares of land currently under poppy cultivation⁵. Work on these canals began in October 2014 and is scheduled to finish by early Spring 2015.

KFZ also identified 36 alternative livelihood projects such as masonry trainings, vegetable greenhouses, pre and post-harvest market and water management trainings, as well as farm machinery repair/mechanics. These and the canal construction projects were chosen by the beneficiary communities through a conflict assessment tool called Community Based Planning to Support Alternatives to Poppy Cultivation (CBPSA-PC), a modified tool commonly used by USAID-Afghanistan for its stabilization programming⁶. The tool essentially distills community grievances through a filter that checks for whether these grievances are tied to stabilization objectives. If they are, then they are further filtered on whether they drive poppy cultivation. KFZ then develops mitigation activities against the remaining grievances through projects approved by community representatives. Through this process KFZ involves social capital from the beneficiary communities with alternative livelihoods programming.

It should be noted that alternative livelihoods is the term given to rural development activities that provide licit economic alternatives to farmers and other rural workers currently dependent on or vulnerable to poppy cultivation. The key aim of the alternative livelihood pillar of the NDCS is to strengthen and diversify alternative livelihoods that free farmers and other rural workers from dependence on poppy cultivation. Currently, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) and MCN each have their own alternative livelihoods departments with similar mandates. MCN, however, has no implementation role and no funds to implement a national program aside from the Good Performance Initiative⁷.

It is important to note that MCN does not have any implementation role or funding for alternative livelihoods. Instead, it is a policy and planning ministry that has no direct alternative livelihood programming or actual counter-narcotics impact as eradication is conducted by the provincial governors through the security forces (Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense), demand reduction is conducted largely through the Ministry of Public Health, and public awareness communications is done through INL-funded Sayara Strategies, a private research and communications company in Afghanistan.

This mid-term performance evaluation evaluates the alternative livelihood activities of KFZ and whether its approach met the program's objectives as well as the US Government's counter-narcotics plan in Afghanistan which aims to ensure programming is realistic, durable, and sustainable.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The objective of this evaluation is to assess the performance, relevance, and success of the KFZ program within the context of the US Government's overall counter narcotics strategy in Afghanistan. Specifically, this evaluation is being undertaken to provide information to the senior management of USAID/Afghanistan on whether alternative livelihoods activities implemented by KFZ are achieving their

⁵ Based on KFZ AOR's "Concept Note" to USAID arguing for an extension to the program and a funding increase of \$45 million.

⁶ The original tool is called the Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM), SAM looked at sources of instability and made it easier to develop programming to mitigate against the community-identified sources of instability. KFZ modified SAM to make it identify drivers of poppy cultivation as well as sources of instability. It then tied the two together. Mitigation activities were developed exclusively to counter the community-stated grievances in the CBPSA-PC sessions.

⁷ This is an INL run program that provides an annual \$1 million grant to provinces that are poppy-free.

desired results by examining the performance of KFZ according to its approved program objectives, funding, timeline, and targets.

This mid-term performance evaluation documents accomplishments, areas for performance improvement, and lessons learned from the effective date of award (July 30, 2013) to November 2014. This mid-term evaluation incorporates the results of MISTI's Stability Trends Analyses report and MISTI's Stability Analysis Methodology evaluation (concluded in October 2013). Additionally, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Opium Survey reports for 2013 and 2014, MCN policy and strategy reports, and reports concerning the Helmand Food Zone were consulted. With these data sources incorporated, this evaluation serves as a vehicle for extracting key lessons and determining the need for KFZ strategy modification and/or an extension.

Key Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were examined through the evaluation:

- 1 Are the assumptions and logic built into KFZ's theory of change still valid and consistent with the evaluation findings?
- 2 To what extent did program activities and grants address drivers of poppy cultivation?
- 3 How did KFZ integrate results from the CBPSA-PC into the identification of projects and the execution and management of grants?
- 4 To what extent do stakeholders see the Ministry of Counter Narcotics as an effective government institution in counter narcotics to deliver services?
- 5 Will the scope, timeframe and funding of KFZ bring about the desired changes in poppy cultivation levels in the targeted districts?
- 6 To what extent are the MCN-KFZ pillars working together and supporting each other to achieve the same goal? If there are limitations, could this approach still make a success if expanded in scope?
- 7 How do KFZ and other USAID funded projects working in Kandahar address the poppy cultivation calendar within their activities? Limitations?
- 8 How has the timeframe of KFZ affected the alternative development of the communities benefited from the infrastructure projects?

At the IR and sub-IR levels, these questions were answered:

1. To what extent was the capacity of MCN increased to manage its programs?
2. To what extent were activities implemented in a timely manner (according to the pre-planting decisions for poppy and planting/harvesting for poppy, etc.)?
3. How has the KFZ approach improved community social capital in identifying sources of instability and drivers of poppy cultivation?
4. To what extent were output-level results met?
5. What were the critical factors in meeting or not meeting targets for Year 1?

Methodology

This performance evaluation used qualitative methods, including observation, interviews, and a desk review of project documents to evaluate KFZ's performance up to November 30, 2014. The Kabul-based

evaluation team consisted of one expatriate and three Afghan evaluators who conducted interviews with KFZ, USAID, INL, MCN, MAIL, RADP-S, Kandahar provincial governor's office, and project stakeholders to understand processes, challenges, and lessons learned of the program. The expatriate evaluator traveled to KFZ's Kabul offices to conduct interviews with expatriate and Afghan managers. The Afghan evaluators traveled to Kandahar for interviews. They also managed a team of field interviewers who traveled to project sites and all seven KFZ districts.

To gain a deeper understanding of how the program performed in the field, the evaluation selected all 11 irrigation infrastructure improvement and 28 alternative livelihood vocational training activities under the period of performance for closer study. KFZ project data was examined to understand how projects varied in terms of type, value, beneficiaries, and location. Further project analysis involved examining KFZ's district profiles and project concept notes for project relation to identified drivers of poppy cultivation. Survey data from UNODC's 2013 and 2014 annual opium cultivation surveys was used to further understand programming. The map (Figure 2) shows all KFZ districts and locations of vocational trainings as well as canal rehabilitations. A complete list of projects visited appears in Annex B.

Security conditions in certain project areas prohibited the Kabul-based Afghan evaluators from visiting each site. Instead, the team recruited and trained male interviewers from each district to visit the selected project sites and interview direct and indirect beneficiaries and project stakeholders. One female interviewer was hired to conduct interviews with female beneficiaries. The interviewers conducted at least four interviews for each project site visited. The Afghan and local interviewers documented perceptions of project selection, implementation, monitoring, effects on drivers of poppy cultivation, and how valued they were by the community in which they were implemented. They also evaluated the degree to which communities recognized MCN's involvement. The evaluation team did not hire engineers to inspect project quality or accountants to review records. The evaluation was designed to examine community perceptions of processes, outputs, and some limited outcomes. Measuring program impact was not an objective of the performance evaluation.

The evaluation team visited all seven (7) districts in Kandahar province. In total, the evaluation team conducted 208 interviews: 1 with USAID staff, 21 with KFZ staff, 25 with Afghan government officials, 28 with district entities, 3 with RADP-S, and 103 with beneficiaries. A table with interviews by category appears as Annex A.

Limitations

The evaluation design had many strengths including the collection of data from all requested districts and multiple project sites. The hiring of a female interviewer added depth to the gender portion of the evaluation as access to females by male interviewers is almost impossible in rural areas of Afghanistan. In addition, the evaluation team has previous experience evaluating USAID stabilization programs in Afghanistan.

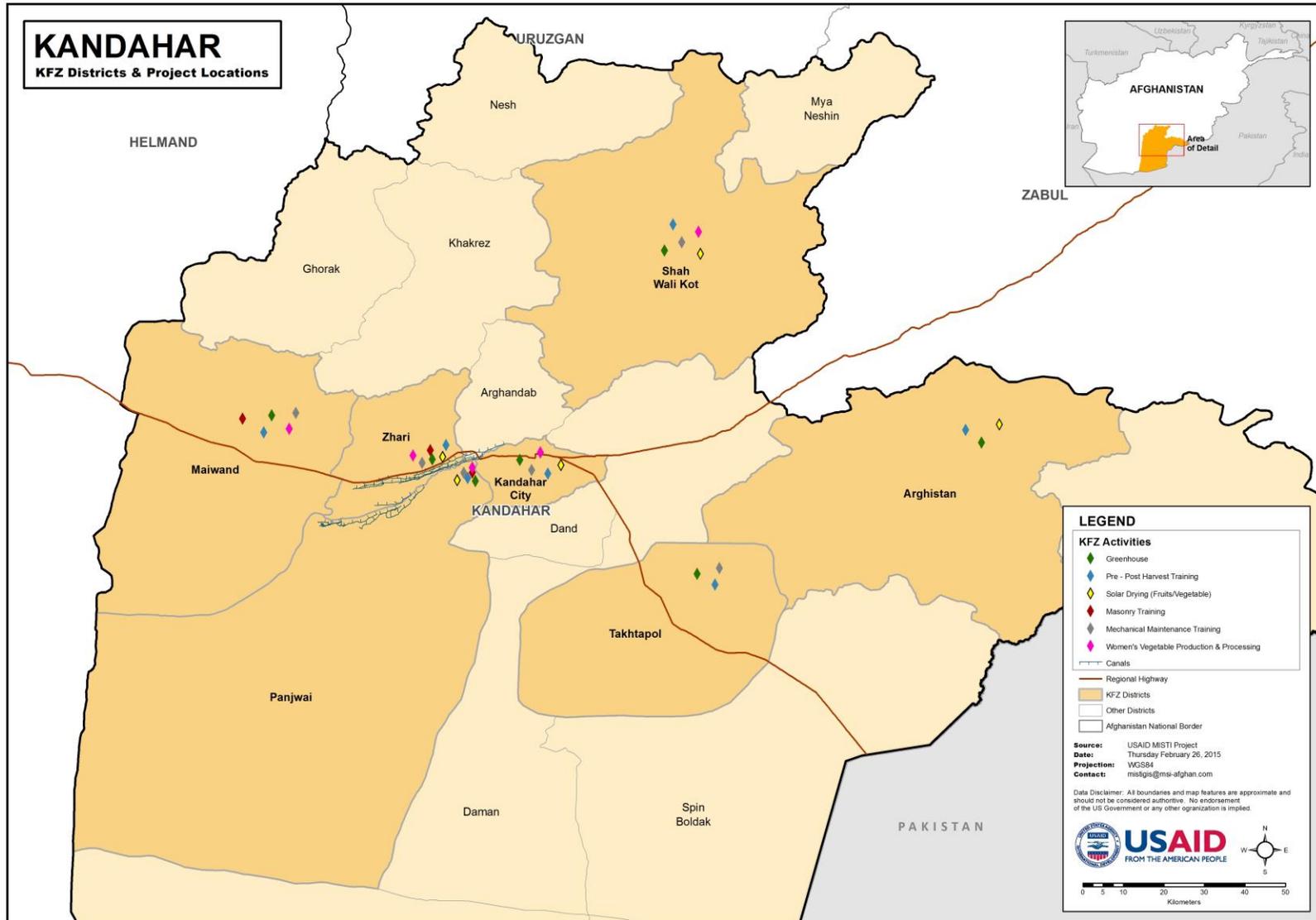
Nevertheless, some limitations should be noted. Kandahar is an insecure province. Travel to certain project sites presented risks to the MISTI team. While MISTI was able to travel to each project location, the team interviewed four beneficiaries. This was slightly lower than MISTI's standard of five in-depth interviews per location. MISTI did not interview anyone from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) or from Sayara as these were outside the scope of the evaluation. Although the MoPH runs the drug demand

reduction pillar and Sayara operates the public information pillar, MISTI was able to assess the work of these two pillars through interviews with stakeholders in Kandahar and Kabul.

TABLE I: DATA-COLLECTION SCHEDULE

Area	Dates Data Collected
Kabul – USAID, MCN, KFZ, external interviews	December 2014 – February 2015
Kandahar Fieldwork	February 2 – 12, 2015

FIGURE 2: MAP OF KFZ OPERATING DISTRICTS AND KFZ PROJECT LOCATIONS



FINDINGS

I. Are the Assumptions and Logic Built into KFZ's Theory of Change Still Valid and Consistent with the Evaluation Findings?

KFZ's theory of change shows a thorough understanding of how alternative livelihoods programming needs to work within a counter-narcotics context. Although it is well formulated and many of the necessary indicators in the results framework are present to measure it, the theory of change was, unfortunately, invalidated due to constraints outside of KFZ's control.

Theory of Change

KFZ is premised on the theory of change that if the root causes of opium cultivation are addressed, and communities are simultaneously introduced and linked to alternative livelihoods opportunities, communities will have a greater ability to withstand economic shocks and stresses and greater propensity to pursue licit economic livelihoods that are permanent and sustainable means of income.

Rationale⁸

The theory of change that drives KFZ is based on a large body of evidence that informs stabilization and counter narcotics programming in general. Reducing poppy cultivation is not simply a function of crop substitution or eradication. Reducing poppy cultivation must be seen as behavior change -- social, political, and economic responses (drivers) to problems (including instability) that households and communities face. Thus, by addressing those root causes that motivate communities to cultivate poppy, while at the same time introducing or linking communities to alternative livelihoods, communities will choose to pursue licit means of economic livelihoods that are permanent and sustainable. Efforts to promote alternative livelihoods are complemented by more traditional narcotics supply reduction activities, including eradication and counter narcotics public information. KFZ serves as a model in targeted locations, improving the Afghan government's ability to continue behavior change programming beyond the life of the program.

For this theory of change to result in strengthened and diversified legal rural livelihoods, KFZ needed to rigorously pursue the following principles in its programming:

- Develop a thorough understanding of the problems faced by communities and the drivers of poppy cultivation distinct to the context at the sub-district level.
- Foster change in the social, political, and economic behaviors that drive poppy cultivation.
- Increase the government's effectiveness and legitimacy to conduct alternative livelihood efforts and understand community-level drivers of poppy cultivation.
- Complement more traditional narcotics supply reduction activities, including government led eradication, rule of law (including interdiction, law enforcement and criminal justice) and public information campaigns.

⁸ Rationale taken from KFZ's program literature and USAID's SOW for this mid-term performance evaluation.

While KFZ did develop an understanding of the drivers of poppy cultivation through CBPSA-PC analysis, did attempt to foster change as much as it could given its limited budget and limited timeframe, did increase the MCN's understanding of community-level drivers of poppy cultivation, and did attempt to complement traditional narcotics supply reduction activities, the program does fall short on delivering on the last three principles. This is not the fault of KFZ, which programmed the best it could given existing constraints. The fault lies with the design of KFZ, its wishful scope, limited budget, and with an unwilling Afghan government that did not focus sufficient attention on counter-narcotics .

KFZ's design does not predicate success on the other three MCN-KFZ pillars, does not include communications and outreach activities, and does not include a sufficient budget or timeframe in order to foster change in the social, political, and economic behaviors that drive poppy cultivation. While KFZ did identify the root causes that motivate communities to cultivate poppies, the program was unable to conduct meaningful mitigation activities in all seven districts due to a limited budget. While promoting alternative livelihoods needs to be complemented by more traditional narcotics supply reduction activities such as eradication, KFZ programmed in Kandahar during years of almost zero eradication. While promoting alternative livelihoods needs to also be complemented by narcotics public information, KFZ's scope did not include communications and outreach work and did not adequately integrate with MCN-KFZ's public information pillar. Lastly, KFZ was meant to serve as a model in targeted districts, improving the Afghan government's ability to continue behavior change programming beyond the life of the program. This element of KFZ's design is misdirected. KFZ conducted capacity building trainings at the MCN's Alternative Livelihoods Directorate. While well intentioned and mandated by its contract with USAID, these trainings were conducted in a ministry that does not program (it only works on policy and planning), does not have a budget or promises of a budget for behavior change programming, nor has the capacity to implement such programming at this time.

2. To What Extent did Program Activities and Grants Address Drivers of Poppy Cultivation?

Overall, it is too early to measure impact under the period of performance as KFZ began to program activities a few months before the end of the period of performance. Furthermore, a limited budget forced KFZ to program irrigation infrastructure improvements in only two out of seven districts⁹. The other five districts received vocational trainings. However, these were not tied directly to irrigation infrastructure improvement and will likely have limited effects.

Based on KFZ's CBPSA-PC analysis in all seven districts, the following are the seven leading drivers of poppy cultivation with districts in which they are prevalent:

- *Driver #1:* A lack of timely and affordable supply of water forces farmers to cultivate opium as a reliable source of cash to fund diesel-driven pump wells (Arghistan, Kandahar City, Panjwai, Maiwand, Takhtar-Pul, Zharai, Shawalikot).
- *Driver #2:* The quality and quantity of perishable agricultural goods is not attractive to traders. As a result, the price of licit crops is too low to cover all farm input costs and associated risks. Farmers

⁹ Only in Panjwai and Zharai. The other five districts received only vocational trainings that were not tied to irrigation infrastructure improvements.

cultivate opium as a reliable cash crop with predictably higher returns (Arghistan, Kandahar City, Maiwand, Shawalikot, Takhtar-Pul, Zharai).

- *Driver #3:* Lack of alternatives to off-farm and non-farm income generation opportunities forces farmers to maximize returns from agricultural cash crops, which, in the environment, mean opium cultivation (Kandahar City, Maiwand, Shawalikot, Takhtar-Pul, Zharai).
- *Driver #4:* The lack of alternative livelihood opportunities leads to an over-reliance on certain crops and reduced ability to withstand economic shocks and stresses (Arghistan, Kandahar City, Maiwand, Takhtar-Pul, Zharai).
- *Driver #5:* Lack of licit access to credit for agricultural and non-agricultural investment pushes farmers to cultivate opium as repayment for cash loans or land use (Zharai).
- *Driver #6:* Insecure or uncertain prices for licit agricultural crops increases the propensity for farmers to seek higher returns from opium cultivation (Zharai).
- *Driver #7:* Lack of maternal healthcare and midwifery services, as high female mortality, combined with high dowry prices, drives a demand for cash that sales of opium can meet (Maiwand).

In order to address these drivers of poppy cultivation, KFZ programmed both infrastructure improvements and vocational trainings. While it is too early to measure impact on poppy cultivation, MISTI did evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each activity and these are discussed in detail below.

Hard Activities (Panjwai and Zharai only)

A significant number of canals and karezes in Kandahar are either damaged due to soil erosion, poor maintenance, and/or blocked wreckages. As a result, farmers use tube wells powered by expensive diesel generators. This extra expense forces farmers to cultivate poppies in order to recover incurred fuel costs used for licit crop production. There is also a lack of culverts, check dams, and flood protection walls, which has limited the supply of affordable irrigation water. In addition, the lack of arable land, due to the lack of irrigation, forces farmers to maximize returns through poppy cultivation.

KFZ's limited budget allowed it to program 11 canal rehabilitations in Panjwai and Zharai only. While the construction of the canals had only started at the end of the period of performance (construction started on October 6, 2014), based on MISTI's fieldwork in these two districts, beneficiaries have all said that with the canal rehabilitations, farmers will benefit from improved and reliable irrigation water which will lead to increased agricultural productivity. MISTI did not see any poppies cultivated near canal construction. Instead we saw lands cultivated with wheat and basil. We also saw farmers busy preparing lands for grape and pomegranate planting. Project beneficiaries, DDAs, CDCs, district governors, and provincial line departments showed their satisfaction with KFZ's infrastructure improvements and had high expectations that these would lead to increased rural household income, farm employment, and a reduction in poppy cultivation used to fund tube wells.

Using their Shamal system (which already included the mapping for households in Kandahar), KFZ took 2014 imagery data in December 2014 and began to map poppy cultivation in areas around their canal

rehabilitation zones¹⁰. KFZ can replicate this mapping capability rather quickly (they were able to make the mapping system more efficient, bringing down the time required to assess poppy cultivation levels from two months to two weeks). This means that KFZ may know the latest effects on poppy cultivation levels by May 2015 (when they can process the latest imagery), but the real impact would only be observed in 2016, when a new round of imaging becomes available.

Furthermore, through their imagery, KFZ is able to differentiate large poppy growers from smallholder farmers. This enables the program to focus attention on smallholder farmers who would most benefit from alternative livelihoods programming and encourage eradication of large farms to the government.

Therefore, it is too early to measure whether canal improvements will lead to reduced poppy cultivation. The UNODC 2015 Annual Opium Survey, which comes out in November 2015, combined with KFZ's data should provide the program, USAID, and MCN with an accurate assessment of impact on poppy cultivation levels by that time, but not before KFZ's currently scheduled closeout.

Vocational Trainings Tied to Alternative Livelihoods in the Other Five Districts

In the other five districts (Arghistan, Kandahar City, Maiwand, Shawalikot, and Takhta-Pul), vocational training may see fewer returns. The trainings do not adequately or singularly address the main root cause of poppy cultivation – lack of affordable irrigation water. Farmers use expensive diesel water pumps in order to irrigate their fields and cannot afford to plant licit crops as farm gate sales do not cover diesel pump expenses. KFZ's limited budget permitted it to program only vocational trainings in these districts. This left farmers with no option but to accept such trainings even though they were not prioritized on their drivers of poppy cultivation grievance list or linked to infrastructure improvements or the labor market. Many trainees in these five districts mentioned that they attended in order to receive KFZ's transportation allowance. Elders present in CBPSA-PC trainings needed canals but were offered vocational trainings due to a limited budget, accepting them just to receive some form of programming. Each training is discussed briefly below.

Pre and Post-Harvest Marketing and Water Management Training

While too early to measure the effects of this training, interviews with beneficiaries showed mixed feedback. Farmers are content with marketing training as it will help them improve their ability to sort, grade, and pack licit crops for higher returns at market. This training taught farmers how to understand the demand of the current market and better connect to traders. Water management training was important in Panjwai and Zharai where canals are being rehabilitated. Additional irrigation water will need to be managed in order to ensure proper and equitable use. Unfortunately, these water management trainings in districts without irrigation improvements will have limited effect as there are no new water sources to manage.

Masonry Training

These trainings were useful in Panjwai and Zharai where masonry training led to work on KFZ's irrigation infrastructure improvements. Beneficiaries learned masonry skills that were then directly

¹⁰ This means that KFZ poppy cultivation levels derived from their mapping in KFZ-only zones should not be compared to UNODC data which accounts for district-wide poppy cultivation.

applied to canal construction. Since these projects are implemented during the poppy cultivation season, the participants of the trainings were diverted away from planting poppies. In the other five districts, this training was not tied to construction work nor was it prioritized through CBPSA-PC. Beneficiaries accepted the training because they wanted a KFZ project. However, aside from diverting participants away from planting poppies during the time of the training, the impact on the other five districts is likely to be minimal. Furthermore, based on MoLSAMD (Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled) vocational training standards, this project was not planned according to Afghan government regulations. Each vocational training should be for at least six months and the graduated participants need to be linked to the market. KFZ did not adequately consider this in the other five districts. Beneficiaries said they attended the trainings in order to receive per diems¹¹.

Mechanical Maintenance

This training should help improve the capacity of skilled labor to fix farm equipment. Development organizations and construction companies often have difficulty finding skilled local labor and are compelled to hire laborers from other provinces. This has always caused issues with community ownership of projects. MISTI met with participants as they were receiving the training and most of them mentioned that they were optimistic the learned skills will translate into jobs and increased family income but were unsure they would learn all the taught skills as the training is considered too short. Job creation is likely to help the unemployed avoid addiction and reduce laboring in poppy fields, but it is still too early to measure success, especially since the applicability of the training cannot yet be observed.

Solar Fruit and Vegetable Drying

These trainings were just starting as MISTI was conducting fieldwork in Kandahar. It is therefore too early to measure effect or gauge participants' perceptions. This training should support new techniques for income generation and may have some positive impact in districts where infrastructure was not budgeted for.

Greenhouses

KFZ built large commercial greenhouses and then promised to link them to RADP-S's demonstration greenhouses in order to ensure that beneficiaries would be able to benefit from both types of trainings. While too early to measure effect, participants complained that greenhouses are ineffective if not adequately linked to irrigation.

Component 1: Capacity Building of the MCN

Under Component 1, KFZ conducted capacity building for the MCN and the Kandahar DCN. While these had no measurable effects on poppy cultivation under the period of performance, there are signs that capacity building trainings have improved the MCN's understanding of GIS, gender, and assessment tools used to identify drivers of poppy cultivation. These issues are discussed further in Question IR 1 which discusses capacity building at the MCN.

¹¹ These per diems were higher than the daily average wage of a farmer. While not verified, it is conceivable that some beneficiaries left poppy planting to attend the training, received a high per diem, and used a portion of the per diem to hire farm laborers in their stead. There is no certainty over whether those hired farmers planted or did not plant poppies. This should have been part of KFZ's M&E work and could have been included in the PMP as a metric to measure.

3. How did KFZ Integrate Results From CBPSA-PC into the Identification of Projects and the Execution and Management of Grants?

The KFZ Community Based Planning to Support Alternatives for Poppy Cultivation (CBPSA-PC) is based on existing, widely used, conflict and stability assessment tools that have been developed and applied across multiple international and national aid organizations (including the World Bank, the United Nations, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and USAID). Most recently, it has been used by the USAID Stability in Key Areas (SIKA) programs as the Stability Analysis Methodology (SAM) tool used to identify sources of instability endemic to project beneficiary communities. While the tool helps to identify sources of instability, it also helps to identify possible mitigation activities that can be funded through the donor agency.

CBPSA-PC is essentially a sector-based conflict/stability assessment. Previous applications of stability assessment methodologies have had a governance sector focus, and thus the stability criteria utilized are reflective of a hypothesis that stability is associated with the legitimacy of institutions of governance (the SIKA model). The underlying assumption of KFZ is that instability is causally linked to poppy cultivation, and the analysis of drivers of cultivation is similarly tailored.

Project Identification and Selection

KFZ used the CBPSA-PC as a community-based bottom approach to identify the root causes and drivers of poppy cultivation. A total of 44 CBPSA-PC sessions were conducted in the seven KFZ districts of Kandahar. Each of these sessions lasted for three days and included community elders, CDC/DDA members, and influential elders. During these sessions the participants were trained on the purpose of CBPSA-PC, how it helps them identify which community grievances drive poppy cultivation, and the role of poppy cultivation in overall district and provincial instability. Participants are also briefed about KFZ's scope and timeline (and often on budget limitations).

To identify the drivers and root causes of poppy cultivation a list of all community-expressed grievances is made and filtered by the three drivers of poppy cultivation:

- a. Does it encourage poppy cultivation?
- b. Does it discourage planting licit crops?
- c. Does it hinder diversification of livelihood opportunities?

If the grievance fulfills one or more of these criteria directly, it is identified as a driver of cultivation. As there are numerous drivers of cultivation in each village-cluster, KFZ then filters the drivers of cultivation through the source of instability criteria:

- a. An issue that undermines social cohesion and local governance?
- b. An issue that increases the influence of troublemakers (anti-government elements)?
- c. An issue that undermines the normal functioning of society?

Once a grievance is identified as both a driver of poppy cultivation and as a source of instability, KFZ analyzes the underlying root causes through its development hypothesis and through the realities inherent

to each district. Once root causes are analyzed, KFZ's engagement teams facilitate conversations with the village representatives to understand and rank the expressed grievances and root causes. Once grievances are ranked, activities are proposed to address the identified drivers. Each proposed activity is bound to a driver of poppy cultivation. KFZ's technical team reviews the feasibility of the proposed activity (if it's within the scope and budget of KFZ) and then prepares a concept note. This project concept note is then reviewed and approved by communities, the CDC/DDA, district governors, and the Kandahar governor before being sent to USAID for approval.

Execution and Management of Grants

While previous MRRD-led USAID stabilization programs like the SIKAs focused on ensuring community ownership through grants given directly to CDCs who participated in SAM trainings, KFZ used the CBPSA-PC only to identify and prioritize drivers of poppy cultivation. KFZ projects were awarded exclusively as in-kind grants through a subcontract. This was a prudent decision as funding CDCs directly on large-scale irrigation improvement projects would have been a waste of time and resources.

CBPSA-PC Limitations

While the CBPSA-PC is a suitably refined version of SAM, its limitations within KFZ programming must be noted.

The CBPSA-PC has shown itself to be a good tool for the identification of the root causes and drivers of poppy cultivation because it uses a logical filtering approach and strong community participation to understand which grievances are actually driving poppy cultivation. It has been used exceedingly well in each of KFZ's seven districts. Interviewed CBPSA-PC participants expressed high satisfaction with the process. Furthermore, participants also showed a clear understanding of their unique drivers of poppy cultivation, something they knew before but were unable to articulate and knowingly mitigate. The CBPSA-PC is not constrained by its application, but rather by KFZ's scope and budget.

Budget Limitations

Most of the drivers of poppy cultivation can be summarized as a lack of affordable water (poor condition or nonexistence of canals, underground canals (karezes), dams, drainages, culverts, and roads to market). Many farmers in each district use diesel water pumps to irrigate their fields as they are either far from canals or karezes or the existing irrigation infrastructure is in a poor condition. Diesel is expensive and farmers often have to plant poppies on part of their land in order to pay for diesel-powered water for their licit crops. In areas where canals exist (Panjwai and Zharai), farmers need them rehabilitated and extended. In areas with karezes (all other districts), farmers need the dams rehabilitated so that water can fill the karezes.

All of these infrastructure improvement projects require a large budget. KFZ did not have sufficient funding to build all of the identified infrastructure activities in each district. As a result, only two districts (Panjwai and Zharai) received irrigation infrastructure projects. The requested dam rehabilitations in Maiwand district were never programmed because costs exceeded USAID thresholds. These projects were denied despite the fact that Maiwand produces more opium than the other six KFZ districts

combined. Furthermore, in return for dam construction in Maiwand, communities committed to not growing poppies as those dams would increase the level of water in karezes, giving communities enough affordable water to grow licit crops. This was a missed opportunity.

While there is no evidence for any back-engineering of grievances, beneficiaries are well aware of donor limitations when it comes to funding infrastructure activities¹². MISTI has been told by KFZ staff in Kandahar, beneficiaries, and the DCN that communities don't always select the best possible project to address a driver of poppy cultivation because they know the limited budget and donor construction rules. They, therefore, might even not identify the real driver if they know that it can't be funded. This is a particular constraint of KFZ's design. While CBPSA-PC is a suitable tool to ascertain the root drivers of poppy cultivation, it does not always work when known budget constraints force communities to prioritize second tier drivers and projects.

Scope

While KFZ conducted CBPSA-PC sessions in all seven districts, only two districts received infrastructure grants due to KFZ's funding limitations¹³. This left communities in the five other districts with no option but to choose soft alternative livelihoods trainings. These were ineffective as they were not tied to irrigation activities. Beneficiaries of alternative livelihood projects in those districts noted how none of them would have an effect on poppy cultivation. For example, projects such as stone masonry and farm machinery maintenance trainings were too short and inapplicable. On the other hand, in Panjwai and Zharai, those who received stone masonry training were then hired on to apply their new skills in the canal rehabilitation projects.

While beneficiaries did not prioritize vocational trainings they accepted them nonetheless. This is a common fault of CBPSA-PC type assessment tools as beneficiaries are often forced to choose projects that rank fifth or sixth on the priorities grievance list due to a program's inability to afford higher priority mitigation activities. It should also be noted that many beneficiaries reported satisfaction with the vocational trainings not because they addressed a driver of poppy cultivation, but because they received per-diems.

IR 3: How Has the KFZ Approach Improved Community Social Capital in Identifying Sources of Instability and Drivers of Poppy Cultivation?

Under its alternative livelihoods component, KFZ is required to improve social capital in targeted communities by:

1. Designing and employing an evidence-based approach to strengthen and diversify rural licit livelihoods by identifying and addressing the root causes of instability the lead to poppy cultivation.

¹² Back-engineering of projects in the CBPSA-PC is the process by which a community knows the project it wants and then "engineers" the drivers of poppy cultivation to best fit the desired project.

¹³ KFZ planned to construct/rehabilitate irrigation infrastructure in all seven districts. However, its limited budget forced it to program infrastructure in two prioritized districts only. This left the other five districts with only vocational trainings that were supposed to be tied to follow-on canal rehabilitation work, but were not.

2. Empowering communities by building their capacity to use the community-based planning approach.
3. Partnering with communities to design activities that address drivers of poppy cultivation.

Overall, the program has accomplished this through successful CBPSA-PC sessions that involved partnering with and empowering communities to understand which of their grievances is a driver of poppy cultivation. While KFZ did partner with communities to design activities, this partnership was limited to vocational trainings in five out of seven districts, thus falling short of adequately addressing drivers of poppy cultivation. All three subcomponents of improving social capital are discussed in the preceding section.

4. To What Extent Do Stakeholders See the MCN as an Effective Government Institution in Counter-narcotics to Deliver Services?

MISTI was unable to answer this particular question because the MCN does not deliver services. It is a planning and policy ministry that serves as the coordinating ministry on counter-narcotics within the Afghan government. It has neither an implementation role nor a programming budget. Therefore, MISTI answered whether “stakeholders see the MCN as an effective government institution in counter-narcotics”, excluding the delivering services aspect.

Overall, stakeholders do not see the MCN as an effective government institution. A lack of capable and properly trained staff, lack of executive authority, and a lack of a programming budget were the most commonly cited reasons. While the most pertinent national-level issue is the lack of political will on the part of the Afghan government to implement agreed-upon counter-narcotics strategies, the biggest issue for KFZ is MCN staff’s low capacity. Furthermore, as the MCN is only a policy and planning ministry, its ability to effectively deliver on counter-narcotics strategy is limited to policy development, coordination meetings, and, most importantly, its ability to convince other ministries to implement the Afghan counter-narcotics strategy. These limitations make the MCN an “unimportant” ministry according to Afghan government officials. Furthermore, there is often resentment from essential ministries (e.g., Defense, Interior, MAIL) when MCN tries to push its agenda.

Lack of Capacity¹⁴

There is limited capacity to manage counter-narcotics programming. Staff is focused on policy and planning. Most are busy with documentation, coordination meetings, and with the UNODC annual survey. As there is no implementation or programming, stakeholders see the staff at the MCN as collators of information rather than as effective counter-narcotics strategists. Furthermore, interviews with MCN and DCN staff members have shown that while they received capacity building in the past, they are not often able to exercise newly taught skills. For example, MCN received GIS training to create community maps and identify areas with high poppy cultivation, but lacks software and sufficient practice. KFZ complained about MCN’s human resources. According to KFZ, many of the staff are not educated enough to understand capacity building trainings. Staff are very basic and impossible to train within the focus, resources, and timing KFZ has.

¹⁴ The next question discusses capacity and capacity building at the MCN.

No Executive Authority

MCN has no implementation authority and must rely on other ministries to implement the counter-narcotics strategy. For example, eradication is controlled by provincial governors, demand reduction is done through the Ministry of Public Health, and alternative livelihoods programming is coordinated through the alternative livelihoods department at MAIL. MCN is not an active government institution that can manage counter-narcotics on its own. There are three full time staff members at the DCN office in Kandahar. These include the director, communications manager, and administration and finance manager. Three other staff members come in as needed (demand reduction, alternative livelihoods, and public awareness managers). The DCN only serves a coordinating role with other line ministries and the UNODC annual opium survey. It also serves as the rubberstamp for programming related to all four MCN pillars. For example, Sayara Strategies created public awareness campaigns in Kabul that needed to be approved by the DCN. These were rubberstamped without DCN input into the process.

Lack of Budget

As it's not an implementer, the MCN-KFZ does not have a budget for any of its four pillars. It is therefore unable to implement its own policy to address poppy cultivation. A recent assessment of the MCN's financial management capabilities was negative, showing an inability to accept on budget programming¹⁵.

The MCN is also not very effective at assuring government approval of planning documents. The sectorial director in the Kandahar provincial governor's office told MISTI that he had yet to receive the MCN poppy eradication plan for 2015. The Kandahar governor is assigned to eradicate 6,250 hectares of poppies and this needs to happen in February/March (optimal time for eradication)¹⁶. MISTI was in Kandahar conducting interviews for this performance evaluation in early February and was told that there was still no approved eradication budget. Also, the tractors used for eradication are broken down and have not yet been repaired. The MCN acknowledged the delay, but blamed the Afghan Security Council for delaying the eradication plan's approval.

IR 1: To What Extent Was the Capacity of MCN Improved to Better Manage its Programs?

As mentioned in the previous finding, MCN does not implement programs because it is only a policy and planning ministry. It also does not manage programming, instead serving as a coordination partner. For example, alternative livelihood programming is managed by implementing partners (KFZ) and other ministries such as MAIL and MRRD. Under its first component, KFZ is required to build the capacity of MCN's Alternative Livelihood Directorate. While KFZ programmed nine modules in the MCN "6 Month Training Plan", only three were conducted under the period of performance. It is yet unclear if and how MCN's capacity improved as the full training program was not finished under the period of performance.

KFZ conducted an assessment of the MCN's Alternative Livelihoods Directorate by:

¹⁵ INL recently conducted a financial management assessment of the MCN. The findings were largely negative.

¹⁶ This is according to the DCN interviewed in Kandahar in February 2015. Eradication was reported to have begun by early March 2015, but MISTI was unable to verify if this was accurate.

1. Analyzing the MCN's legal framework
2. Analyzing the process relationships between Alternative Livelihoods and other directorates
3. Analyzing two surveys related to leadership, management change, and organizational climate
4. Analyzing the IT infrastructure
5. Analyzing the types of reports the Alternative Livelihoods Directorate produces
6. Conducting a SWOT analysis with representatives from MCN and line ministries

The above six were assessed to identify areas requiring KFZ capacity building assistance and to design the subject matter, length, and target audiences. KFZ assessed that there are significant differences in the knowledge and educational background of the Alternative Livelihoods Directorate staff, making it difficult to implement the curriculum appropriate for staff with such wide ranging backgrounds. Furthermore, the lack of financial resources within MCN limits the ministry's ability to improve its human resources, infrastructure, and processes. There was also an expectation that the newly elected Afghan government would change the structure and staff within the MCN, causing disruption to KFZ implementation of both Components 1 and 2. While this change has not occurred yet, it is likely to happen before KFZ's scheduled closeout in July 2015. Currently there is only an acting minister while the Afghan government decides on a new minister¹⁷.

Under the period of performance, KFZ finished three training modules. Their merits and potential impact are discussed below:

GIS Training¹⁸ – November 2014 (one out of several GIS modules)

This training included (1) cartographic design for monitoring and evaluation, (2) remote sensing fundamentals, and (3) spatial data processing, management, and best practices. Participants included the MCN alternative livelihoods department, the MCN Survey, IT, GIS, and M&E Departments. MISTI found that the training taught participants new skills that can be applied to ongoing poppy cultivation survey and M&E work. However, as this training was one part of several GIS trainings, it is too early to measure whether any capacity improvement occurred. Furthermore, GIS is generally used by the MCN for work on the annual UNODC opium survey (total hectares under cultivation, eradication figures, and market prices). As the MCN Alternative Livelihoods Directorate has such limited capacity, it is yet unclear how these taught GIS skills will translate into improvements in that directorate. KFZ does anticipate that follow on GIS modules will address the capacity gap.

CBPSA-PC Trainings – Dec 28, 2013 - Jan 5, 2014 For MCN and Line Ministries

These trainings were conducted to demonstrate to the MCN how CBPSA-PC can be used as a tool to assess drivers of poppy cultivation. MISTI found that it increased MCN staff's capacity to identify root causes of poppy cultivation among community grievances, as well as how to find solutions that address the root causes. The Kandahar DCN assisted KFZ in CBPSA-PC sessions in all targeted districts. While

¹⁷ The fact that a minister for MCN was not proposed during the first cabinet nominations made in January 2015 goes to show the relatively low significance MCN has within the government structure.

¹⁸ KFZ spent considerable time and effort on developing the Shamal System for the MCN. This is an IT platform to share and maintain critical information related to Alternative Livelihoods, research mapping, analysis, and monitoring and evaluation for decision-making purposes. The system intends to provide networked exchange between MCN and its 34 provincial offices, USAID, MISTI, INL, other implementing partners, and with Afghan line ministries. The system was built to provide counternarcotics data collection, storage, and analysis capabilities for the MCN. However, MISTI was not tasked with evaluating the Shamal System which is why it is briefly mentioned here. Moreover, GIS capacity building was not finished under the period of performance, making it difficult to measure effectiveness.

CBPSA-PC training was necessitated through the MCN-KFZ partnership, it is unclear yet whether MCN can apply the CBPSA-PC on its own in other parts of Afghanistan.

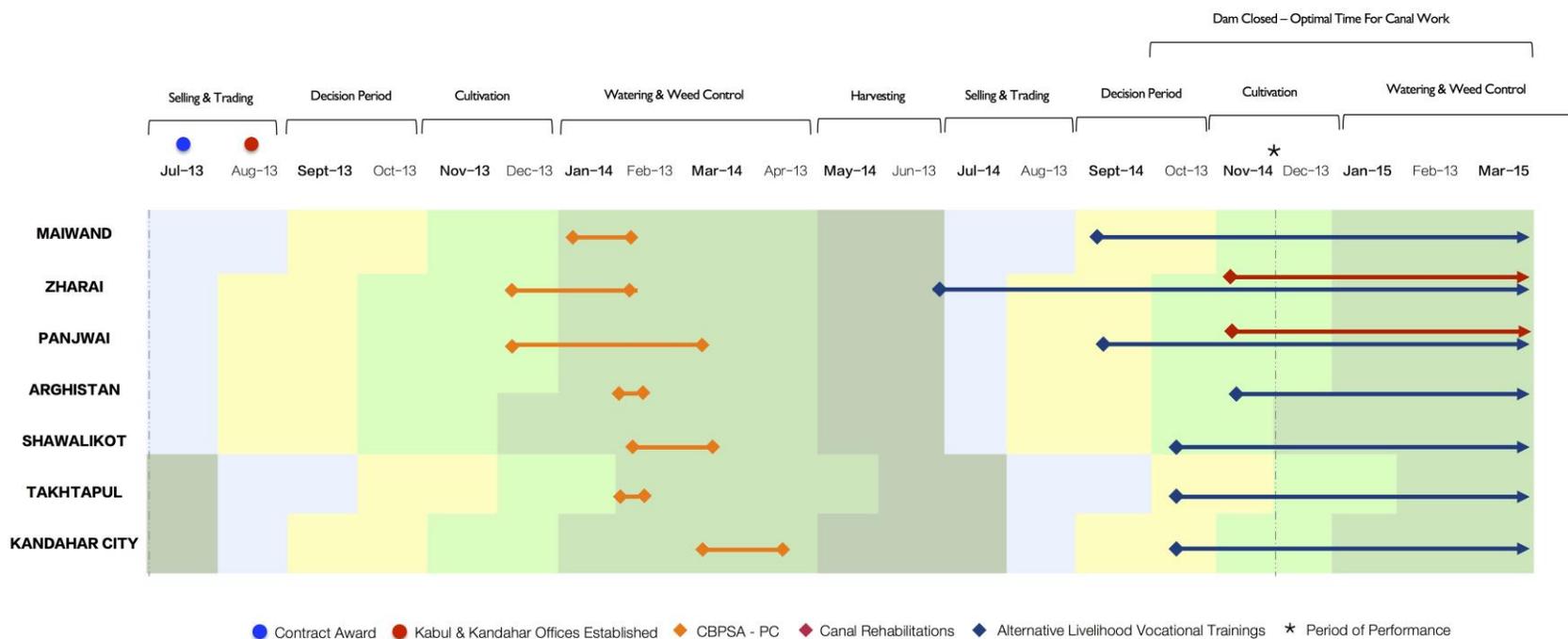
Gender Mainstreaming and Gender in the Workplace – July and October 2014

Two gender mainstreaming workshops were conducted by KFZ. The aim of these workshops was to enhance the capacity of the MCN Alternative Livelihoods Directorate and partner ministry representatives to mainstream gender equality principles into their policies and services. The training also aimed to increase the participants' knowledge and skills in conducting gender analysis, integrating gender equality practices into project design, and integrating the perspectives, needs, and interests of women and men into policy development.

As a result of this training, the DCN says that it is now capable of incorporating women into counter-narcotics projects and will push other line ministries to do the same. The gender training taught MCN/DCN staff how to include women in policy planning. Before the training, the staff at the DCN said they were unaware of the need for gender programming, but are now well informed. MISTI was unable to find any new policies or proposals that included gender after the DCN's capacity building, but that's likely because the training was recent. Nonetheless, if accurate, gender mainstreaming training may considerably improve the DCN's ability to reduce poppy cultivation and harvesting by women in Kandahar.

IR 2: To What Extent Were Activities Implemented in a Timely Manner (According to the Pre-Planting Decisions for Poppy and Planting/Harvesting for Poppy, etc.)?

FIGURE 3: KFZ ACTIVITIES DURING THE POPPY CULTIVATION CALENDAR



One of KFZ’s major design flaws is its short duration. While MCN requested at least a three year program to ensure that it would cover at least two poppy cultivation cycles, USAID, for unknown reasons, made KFZ a two year program and awarded the contract at the wrong time. This limited KFZ’s ability to program in its first year as the poppy planting decision period for 2013 started around the time of contract award, making it nearly impossible to conduct CBPSA-PC sessions and award grants at the beginning of the poppy cultivation cycle. KFZ, therefore, had to wait until 2014 to program activities so they would coincide with the period farmers spend cultivating. KFZ did its best to implement in a timely manner. If USAID awarded the contract between February and March of any year, the above timeline of activities would have been more compact and KFZ would have been able to program over two poppy cultivation cycles instead of just one. Awarding in late Winter would give an alternative livelihoods program enough time to affect poppy cultivation decisions by October (when cultivation generally begins in Kandahar).

5. Will the Scope, Timeframe, and Funding of KFZ Bring About the Desired Changes in Poppy Cultivation Levels in the Targeted Districts?

It is too early to measure whether any KFZ activities resulted in decreases in poppy cultivation. All activities occurred between the latter half of 2014 and early 2015, essentially during the poppy planting and harvesting cycle. In order to ascertain whether KFZ had any effect on poppy cultivation levels, MISTI will require UNODC 2015 data that will show levels of cultivation by district. This report does not come out until November 2015. KFZ's own mapping and estimates of poppy cultivation levels will not include 2015 data until May 2015 at the earliest. Therefore, MISTI cannot accurately assess the desired changes in poppy cultivation, but can offer predictions for cultivation levels based on evidence from the field.

Scope

Panjwai and Zharai should experience a moderate drop in cultivation levels as a result of irrigation projects, but this will only be seen in the 2015/2016 poppy planting cycle as the canals are scheduled for completion in March 2015. No discernable drop is predicted for the 2014/2015 cycle. The same is true for the other districts where only vocational trainings occurred during the 2014/2015 poppy planting cycle.

Issues with scope, timeframe, and funding

- MCN capacity building tied to implementation rather than policy and planning. Alternative livelihoods trainings not tied to irrigation improvements are wasteful.
- KFZ program duration is too short and only covers one poppy planting cycle. Not enough time. Not consistent with other alternative livelihood programs.
- Lack of sufficient funding prevented necessary programming in each district, particularly in Maiwand which required dam construction that went over budget.

It should be noted that under “Component 1: MCN Capacity Building”, KFZ under the period of performance only conducted GIS, CBPSA-PC, and gender policy implementation. These three trainings were well received, but there is no discernable connection between capacity building and poppy cultivation levels at this time. This is further complicated because MCN is a policy and planning ministry and does not implement programming. Therefore training the ministry on implementation techniques is misdirected.

Under “Component 2: Alternative Livelihoods”, irrigation projects should provide more affordable water for farmers in poppy producing areas. This should decrease poppy cultivation so long as communities stay true to their social contract with the government¹⁹. Vocational trainings in Panjwai and Zharai were tied to canal construction and have an already measurable positive effect on beneficiaries. However, it is too early to tell whether this effect will translate into lower levels of poppy cultivation in those two districts. Vocational trainings in the other five districts were not tied to irrigation projects.

KFZ timed all of its programming to coincide with the poppy cultivation, weeding, and harvesting months (October – April). This is done intentionally to divert farmers away from poppy cultivation and into

¹⁹ KFZ introduced the idea of a social contract between poppy growing farmers, the program, and the local government. In return for irrigation projects, communities promised not to grow poppies. This social contract is likely to only work in Panjwai and Zharai, where KFZ built canals.

training courses and jobs. While such a diversion was well thought out and timely, it affected a minority of active poppy growers in Kandahar.

Timeframe

A two-year program designed to decrease poppy cultivation while constrained by a seasonal farming calendar cannot be measured a success or failure. KFZ began in July 2013. It takes at least three months to setup offices, hire staff, develop trainings, and engage with stakeholders in coordination meetings (such as with the provincial governor and the MCN). Poppy planting normally starts in October. This timeframe, even in the most optimistic of circumstances, made it impossible for KFZ to conduct any meaningful programming within its scope during the 2013/2014 poppy planting season. As a result, KFZ's programming in the following (2014/2015) poppy planting season will only see tangible results in October 2015 (when poppies are planted again) and more so in November 2015 when the UNODC report comes out with total poppy cultivation levels for 2015.

Considerable literature on counter-narcotics and alternative development programming says that alternative livelihood programs need to be multi-year and multi-agency efforts in order to ensure that enough illicit crop planting and harvesting cycles occur so that programming can affect behavior change from illicit to licit livelihoods²⁰. KFZ is not a multi-year program, nor is it truly tied to a multi-agency effort as there is almost no collaboration with INL, which funds the three other MCN pillars.

It is unclear why USAID designed KFZ as only a two year program when an abundance of counter-narcotics literature both in Afghanistan and abroad says that short term programming has generally been wasteful²¹. By making this a two year program operating in one of the most insecure and difficult to work in provinces in Afghanistan, USAID, in essence, designed this program to, at best, have limited measurable impact.

Funding

KFZ's budget allowed it to program irrigation improvement projects in only two districts. Not programming infrastructure mitigation activities against identified drivers of poppy cultivation in the other five districts presents a major fault of the program. This was particularly shortsighted given that by 2012 (the time of program design at USAID), the Mission should have already known that a lack of affordable water was a priority grievance in Kandahar and that mitigating it through canal rehabilitations throughout the Arghandab River Basin would require a substantial investment²².

²⁰ David Mansfield's extensive publication list for the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), UK Government, World Bank, and GTZ provides the most comprehensive coverage of poppy cultivation and alternative development in Afghanistan.

²¹ David Mansfield's work has touched upon this issue in several publications. MCN also discussed this at length in its "National Alternative Livelihood Policy" paper, which was a joint initiative of the Agriculture and Rural Development Cluster led by the MCN.

²² By 2012, a number of USAID projects had already operated in Kandahar. Much of the program documents, audits, and evaluations discuss lack of affordable water/irrigation as a priority grievance. See: Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture (AVIPA) and the Community Development Program (CDP). The Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team run by the military had grievance lists as well, but many of these remain unnecessarily classified. USAID should have had access to those lists.

6. To What Extent Are the MCN-KFZ Pillars Working Together and Supporting Each Other to Achieve the Same Goal? If There are Limitations, Could this Approach Still Make a Success if Expanded in Scope?

MCN-KFZ has four pillars to ensure the success of its Kandahar Alternative Livelihoods program. These four pillars are (1) the Kandahar Food Zone, (2) Governor Led Eradication, (3) Counter-narcotics Public Information, and (4) Demand Reduction. KFZ is sponsored by USAID and the other three are sponsored by INL. While the pillars are designed to work together and support each other to achieve reductions in poppy cultivation, this has not been the case. There is minimal communication and coordination between the pillars and eradication is almost nonexistent²³. For example, KFZ found out about 2015 eradication from the media and not INL or the MCN. This makes alternative livelihoods programming inherently difficult as it is supposed to follow an eradication campaign. Therefore, as each pillar has considerable limitations, the MCN-KFZ approach is unlikely to make a success if expanded in scope at this time and with current INL constraints. It should also be noted, that without adequate political will on the part of the Afghan government, multi-pillar programs are unlikely to succeed in reducing poppy cultivation.

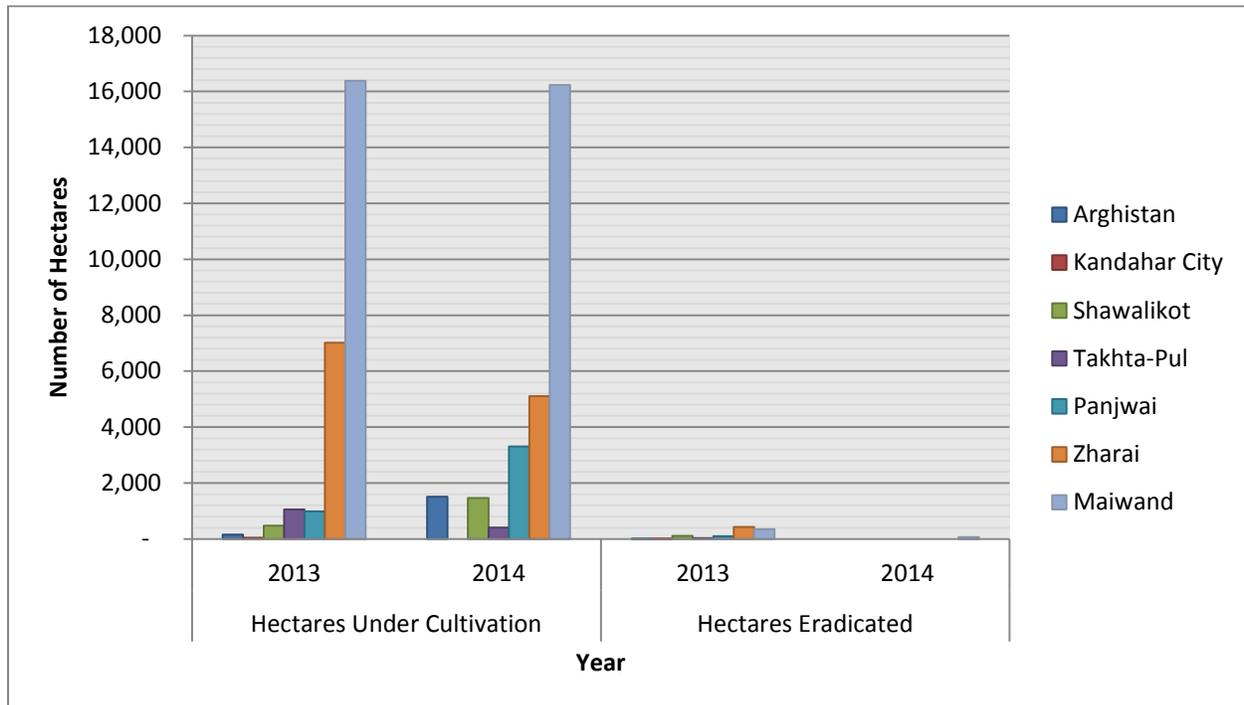
Governor Led Eradication – INL-Funded

As part of INL's drug-reduction activities, INL funds the Governor Led Eradication (GLE) program. The GLE eradicates poppies with tractors or manually, using sticks, blades, or hand uprooting. These eradications are conducted through the governor's office in coordination with security forces and the MCN. This makes eradication possible only if there is political will from the governor.

MCN, in partnership with the UNDOC, is responsible for verifying poppy cultivation and eradication levels in Kandahar. Poppy cultivation has consistently increased from 2012 (inception of KFZ) to 2013 (KFZ start) and to 2014 (first year of KFZ programming). Combined with an increase in poppy cultivation, eradication levels have also steadily decreased from 2013-2014. This can be seen in Figure 4 below. MISTI saw no plans for eradication while conducting fieldwork in Kandahar in February 2015 (the optimal time for poppy eradication). However, by the time of writing (March 2015), MISTI was informed that eradication began in early March with Maiwand, Zharai, and Panjwai prioritized. This was not confirmed.

²³ There is a monthly coordination meeting at MCN for each pillar. This is the extent of the partnership. KFZ pushed for eradication and public information programming in KFZ's districts, but this received pushback from INL until November 2014 when leadership changed.

FIGURE 4: 2013 AND 2014 UNODC DATA FOR CULTIVATION AND ERADICATION LEVELS



During the 2014 GLE in the seven KFZ targeted districts, just 68 hectares were eradicated. In particular, zero hectares were eradicated in Panjwai and Zharai, the two districts with the most KFZ investment. MISTI was told by KFZ, the MCN, and by INL that timid eradication in 2014 was due to the presidential election and lack of political will. Since KFZ began there appears to be a lack of interest from political entities for a more aggressive eradication program. This clearly hinders KFZ programming as alternative livelihoods work generally follows eradication. The point is to eradicate poppies in February or March, leaving farmers with enough time to plant something else for the year. This is the point at which an alternative livelihoods option is presented. Without eradication, alternative livelihoods become much less effective²⁴.

Counter-narcotics Public Information – INL-Funded

INL funds the Counter-narcotics Community Engagement (CNCE) Program, which uses communication and outreach campaigns to combat production, trafficking, and use of opium in Afghanistan. CNCE is implemented by Sayara Media Communications. CNCE is scheduled to end in May 2015, with MCN taking over responsibility for counter-narcotics media and public information campaigns.

Sayara distributed publications and posters at community events in all targeted Kandahar districts except Arghistan²⁵. They broadcast radio plays that can be heard by anyone with an FM radio in Kandahar. Sayara said that they conduct monthly media monitoring assessments to ensure their counter-narcotics media have the intended effects on public awareness. MISTI found through interviews with the DCN and

²⁴ Eradication in 2015 began in early March in Kandahar. While the timeline is appropriate, it is too early to measure effect on KFZ.

²⁵ Due to security constraints, Sayara was unable to hold a community event in Arghistan district.

beneficiaries that Sayara's posters, booklets, and brochures are not effective as they are not culturally appropriate to the Kandahar landscape. MISTI was told by beneficiaries that instead of reading the brochures, people are burning them for heat.

Most of Sayara's communications materials are designed at the Kabul level without sufficient coordination with the Kandahar DCN, leading to a top-down communications strategy that is not always appropriate at the community level (i.e. too complicated, not culturally relevant, wrong messages). For example, MISTI was told by beneficiaries and the DCN that messages based on Afghan Sharia would be most effective in encouraging farmers to abandon poppy cultivation. However, the CNCE program minimized messaging on the un-Islamic nature of poppy cultivation, choosing instead to focus on security, health, and illegality.

A lack of sufficient coordination between Sayara and the Kandahar DCN as well as a lack of available staff at the provincial level have hindered the effectiveness of CNCE in Kandahar. Furthermore, KFZ wanted to conduct its own counter-narcotics public information communications in its targeted districts to maximize awareness of alternative livelihoods programming and combat poppy cultivation through messaging on the social contract it developed with beneficiary communities. Unfortunately, communications work is not part of KFZ's contract or budget.

Drug Demand Reduction – INL-Funded

KFZ and this MCN-KFZ pillar did not work together.

INL works with the MCN and the MoPH to administer the drug demand reduction program. INL supports 76 drug-treatment programs while also funding the training of clinical staff, treatment services, and outpatient and village-based demand reduction programs. There is an ongoing plan to transfer 13 of the 76 drug treatment programs to the MoPH. This is part of a gradual transition to Afghan control as INL support to programs decreases over the coming years. Local Afghan consumption of opiates accounts for roughly 5% of total output. High levels of drug use are commonplace in Kandahar where opiates are readily and cheaply available.

Overall, there is no real synergy between the pillars. While each pillar is supposed to complement the other three, the lack of adequate performance of each has hindered the overall KFZ approach. Furthermore, this approach cannot make a success if expanded in scope (or even maintained in its current form) if there is no political will from the Afghan government. These are all issues USAID and MCN should consider if the alternative livelihoods model is to be implemented again²⁶.

²⁶ The acting MCN minister told MISTI that he plans to expand the KFZ to 16 other provinces. This may be a premature decision as the model is neither proven nor able to work effectively given the constraints of the other three MCN-KFZ pillars.

7. How do KFZ and Other USAID Funded Projects Working in Kandahar Address the Poppy Cultivation Calendar Within Their Activities? Limitations?

The only other USAID programs working on agriculture and irrigation in Kandahar are the Regional Agricultural Development Program – South (RADP-S) and the Commercial Horticulture and Agricultural Marketing Program (CHAMP). RADP-S is designed to help farmers achieve more inclusive and sustainable economic growth through value chain improvements. CHAMP is designed to improve agricultural productivity and food security, provide market opportunities, and decrease poppy cultivation. CHAMP does this by helping shift farmers away from low-value crops such as wheat and corn to high value crops such as fruits and vegetables. KFZ has collaborated only with RADP-S. Since CHAMP was not involved in any KFZ activities, MISTI did not evaluate CHAMP's work in Kandahar.

Both RADP-S and KFZ have water management programs. These complement each other. While KFZ concentrates on primary sources such as division of water in the canals and improving the efficiency of water movement in the canals, RADP-S focuses mostly on improving the efficiency of on-farm water management.

Working along the poppy cultivation calendar requires implementers to program activities during the planting and weeding period (October to December) so that farmers taking part in activities are not also planting poppies. It also requires programming irrigation improvements from October to March, when the dams are closed and there is no water in the canals. KFZ has worked and continues to work along the poppy calendar very well. All the activities have been tied correctly to the calendar and appear to be having a positive effect on weaning participant farmers away from poppy cultivation. Its collaboration with RADP-S is unfortunately limited to two districts (Panjwai and Zharai) and only on greenhouse trainings.

The KFZ greenhouses are large commercial structures (9m x 24m) aimed at more progressive farmers whereas the RADP-S greenhouses are designed for demonstration and training purposes (6m x 20m). Both implementers collaborated by (1) sharing information of beneficiaries to avoid duplication, (2) RADP-S promising to provide facilitation to the KFZ beneficiaries once the KFZ program has ended, and (3) both providing demonstration (RADP-S) and commercial (KFZ) greenhouses so that beneficiaries can be trained on both.

RADP-S and KFZ also held monthly coordination meetings in Kandahar. The RADP-S COR stopped these meetings around November 2014.

8. How Has the Timeframe of KFZ Affected the Alternative Development of the Communities Benefited From the Infrastructure Projects?

KFZ programmed its infrastructure projects (canal rehabilitations in Panjwai and Zharai) to coincide with the dam closure and the poppy planting, weeding, and harvesting periods. This ensured that those farmers who received vocational trainings and were subsequently hired on as laborers on the canal projects did not participate in poppy cultivation. KFZ's focus on the alternative development of communities included improved irrigation systems, trainings on modern agricultural skills, potential for future job opportunities through vocational trainings, behavior change through the identification, selection, ownership, and maintenance of canals for the future use of communities. In particular, the CBPSA-PC process improved social cohesion through much-needed consultative discussions.

However, it is too early to measure the real effects of KFZ's alternative development impact on communities through its canal rehabilitations as construction began a month before the end of the period of performance²⁷. What MISTI did observe, when it conducted fieldwork in Kandahar in early February 2015, was how seriously farmers took their commitment to uphold their promise not to cultivate poppies in return for improved irrigation infrastructure. This was observed only in Panjwai and Zharai where an improved irrigation system and more water seems likely to persuade farmers to cultivate licit crops in the future. Furthermore, MISTI's field evaluators did not observe any poppy cultivation near the canal projects²⁸. Given the seriousness of farmer commitments to plant licit crops, it is very likely that these canal projects will reduce poppy cultivation, at least in the short term.

²⁷ MISTI was in Kandahar in early February 2015 and saw these canal projects. They are scheduled to be completed by March 2015. Therefore, it is too early to measure if and how the communities benefited.

²⁸ A common criticism of KFZ's canal projects is that they would just provide more water for poppy cultivation. This does not appear to be correct.

IR 4: To What Extent Were Output-Level Results Met? IR 5: What Were the Critical Factors in Meeting or Not Meeting targets for Year 1?

In Year 1, KFZ achieved 2/3 output targets tied to IR 1.1 (increased capacity within MCN), 1/2 output targets tied to IR 2.1 (identifying and addressing sources of instability and conflict), 1/5 output targets tied to IR 2.2 (improved community infrastructure that supports AL), and 1/2 output targets tied to IR 2.3 (increased economic activities). IR 1.1 output indicators are mostly met, but 1.1.2 was not achieved due to low personnel capacity at the MCN that has stalled agreement on the Alternative Livelihoods training modules. IRs 2.2 and 2.3 are mostly not achieved because of considerable approval delays from both the Kandahar Provincial Governor’s office and USAID’s Vetting Unit. KFZ has achieved 6/12 Year 2 output targets through December 2014. Results for each output and reasons for success or failure are shown in the table below.

TABLE 2: OUTPUT TARGETS

Output Indicators	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Actual	Year 2 Target	Year 2 Through Dec 2014*	To what extent were output-level results met? What were the critical factors in meeting or not meeting targets for Year 1?
1.1.1 Percentage increase in MCN AL Management Capacity Index.	N/A	0	Baseline +30	0	KFZ met Year 1 results because no percentage increase could be measured while training modules were being developed with the MCN. KFZ has not yet reported a percentage increase in the AL Management Capacity Index through December 2014 (Year 2 is through July 2015) because this cannot be measured until all training modules are completed. According to Ministry officials, the extensive nine-module MCN AL curriculum is being negotiated between KFZ and government representatives, but Ministry personnel capacity problems prevent finalization of the training. As of December 2014, only the GIS module had been approved and completed (gender and CPBSA-PC trainings are not included here).
1.1.2 Number of training person days provided to executive branch personnel with USG assistance.	540	371	540	120	As in output 1.1.1, delays in the finalizing the curriculum due to Ministry capacity problems contribute to the reduced number of trainings conducted.
1.1.3 Number of Afghans completing U.S. Government-led training courses or events.	100	125	100	26	KFZ exceeded its target by 25% in Year 1. The Year 1 target was achieved by conducting several Alternative Livelihood trainings across multiple districts. KFZ is on track to meet Year 2 targets.

Output Indicators	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Actual	Year 2 Target	Year 2 Through Dec 2014*	To what extent were output-level results met? What were the critical factors in meeting or not meeting targets for Year 1?
2.1.1 Number of CBPSA-PC sessions conducted for district entities.	7	7	N/A	N/A	KFZ conducted all seven CBPSA-PC sessions for district entities in Year 1. There are no sessions scheduled for Year 2. KFZ met this target by focusing project resources on identifying drivers of poppy cultivation. These sessions are necessary precursors to alternative livelihoods programming.
2.1.2 Number of persons participated in CBPSA-PC sessions.	840	782	N/A	N/A	KFZ in-depth interviews revealed that 840 people were scheduled to attend, but 58 canceled due to security and personal reasons. In Year 2, no CBPSA-PC sessions are scheduled or needed.
2.2.1 Number of activities with community contribution.	7	1	13	28	KFZ did not meet its Year 1 output target. One stone masonry training was completed in August 2014. In Year 2, KFZ has already exceeded its target by conducting 28 activities with a community contribution. According to both KFZ and the governor, the failure to meet Year 1 targets is due to disagreements about programming with the governor and USAID Vetting Unit delays. Additionally, KFZ's PMP notes that the purpose of IR 2.2 and 2.2 output indicators is to improve "community infrastructure that supports licit economic alternative development." Despite this IR's focus on infrastructure, KFZ included vocational trainings in calculations for all 2.2 output indicators.
2.2.2 Number of persons employed by stabilization program activities.	700	28	1,300	1,471	Year 1's failure to reach the output target is due to USAID Vetting Unit and Kandahar governor approval delays, which pushed back implementation of trainings and infrastructure projects. KFZ counted vocational trainings into its calculation of "number of persons employed" even though the IR clearly focuses on infrastructure activities only.
2.2.3 Number of person-days of employment created.	21,000	964	39,000	32,164	Like in output 2.2.2, Year 1's failure to reach the output target is attributable to Vetting Unit and Kandahar governor approval delays, which pushed back implementation of trainings and infrastructure projects. KFZ counted trainees into its calculation of "number of persons-days of employment created" even though the IR clearly focuses on infrastructure activities.

Output Indicators	Year 1 Target	Year 1 Actual	Year 2 Target	Year 2 Through Dec 2014*	To what extent were output-level results met? What were the critical factors in meeting or not meeting targets for Year 1?
2.2.4 Number of projects completed with community and GIRoA involvement.	7	0	13	13	KFZ met its output target in Year 2. No projects were completed in Year 1 due to approval delays.
2.2.5 Number of beneficiaries receiving improved infrastructure services due USG assistance	N/A	0	81,590	0	KFZ was not required to and did not complete infrastructure projects in Year 1. Thus far in Year 2, no infrastructure projects have been completed and no beneficiaries can derive benefit from them. PG and Vetting Unit approvals contributed to delays. KFZ notes that infrastructure projects are under construction and will be completed by March 2015. KFZ may still meet its Year 2 target of 81,590 beneficiaries receiving assistance, but this was unclear at the time of writing.
2.3.1 Number of households benefited by alternative development or alternative livelihood activities in USG-assisted areas.**	N/A	28	7,157	451	KFZ trained 28 households in alternative livelihood activities in Year 1, exceeding its output target because no households were expected to benefit from AL activities. KFZ counts trainees as both beneficiaries and "households benefited", and USAID and KFZ have not agreed on standard definitions for these terms. KFZ may still meet its Year 2 output target.
2.3.2 Number of activities targeted to increase opportunities for alternative licit livelihoods for women as a result of USG assistance.	10% of total activities	0	10% of total activities	3	In Year 1, KFZ completed no activities targeting women. KFZ failed to achieve this target because no projects were completed (see output 2.2.4). In Year 2, KFZ met its target of 10% women-oriented activities (3/28 trainings conducted were for women).

* The evaluation's period of performance is through November 2014. This column includes outputs through December 31, 2014 to account for the flurry of training activities taking place during this month.

** There is a discrepancy in the 2014 PMP (7,157 households benefited) and the 2014 M&E Annual Report (17,888 households benefited) for output 2.3.1, likely because "number of households" lacks a clear definition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above evaluation question findings, the evaluation team offers recommendations prioritized as follows:

1. The KFZ scope, timeframe, and funding should be changed to better reflect the realities on the ground, the work of the four MCN-KFZ pillars, and need to occur when there is adequate Afghan government political will to conduct counter-narcotics .

Scope – KFZ needs to be tied to a provincial poppy elimination strategy and an intense eradication plan, both voluntary and enforced. KFZ projects should overlap with eradications so that these projects can be considered as the answer to eradication, the answer to a shift to a licit economy, and as the answer to root causes of poppy cultivation. KFZ’s efforts will be most effective when combined with an eradication campaign.

Timeframe – KFZ should have been a multi-year program instead of its current duration of two years. Most alternative livelihoods programs are multi-year, multi-agency efforts in order to work through several seasonal planting cycles and observe whether the model works. KFZ was limited to programming during one poppy cultivation seasonal cycle and USAID may not see any impact on poppy cultivation levels until several months after the program closes out.

Funding – KFZ targeted seven districts in Kandahar but was not adequately funded to address drivers of poppy cultivation in each district. Now that the main drivers of poppy cultivation have been identified through KFZ’s CBPSA-PC, it is clear that a lack of affordable irrigation water is the main driver. This necessitates irrigation improvement work that can be costly. KFZ’s limited budget forced it to program irrigation improvement work in only two out of seven districts. While the impact of such irrigation improvement projects has not been evaluated yet, should it be positive, USAID needs to consider funding future alternative livelihoods programs in Kandahar that can conduct irrigation improvement work in all targeted districts. A more thorough cost analysis during the project design process can contribute to a more realistic budget.

Political Will – alternative livelihoods cannot achieve success without eradication. The Afghan government needs to actually conduct counter-narcotics /eradication if it promises to do so. Without the political will to enforce counter-narcotics /eradication, the success of any alternative livelihoods program will be extremely limited.

2. Alternative livelihood programs need to be multi-year and multi-agency efforts in order to ensure that enough illicit crop planting and harvesting cycles occur so that programming can affect behavior change from illicit to licit livelihoods. KFZ is not a multi-year program, nor is it truly tied to a multi-agency effort as there is almost no collaboration with INL, which funds the other three MCN pillars. Designing KFZ as a two year experiment was shortsighted. Future attempts at alternative livelihoods need to be designed for a longer duration (minimum of five years) to achieve better results as short duration programs like KFZ cannot achieve proper goals and objectives.

3. Under Component 1 (Capacity Building), KFZ was tasked with building the capacity of MCN's Alternative Livelihoods Directorate. This was misdirected. While well-intentioned and mandated by its contract with USAID, these trainings were conducted in a ministry that does not program (it only works on policy and planning), does not have a budget or promises of a budget for behavior change programming, nor has the capacity to implement such programming at this time. MAIL and MRRD work on similar programming, serve as implementers, and can implement MCN policy. It would have been better if the task order asked KFZ to ensure capacity for alternative livelihoods programming in all three ministries instead of just the MCN.
4. There is a need for a program like KFZ to have a strategic communications component instead of relying exclusively on INL's counter-narcotics public information work (which wasn't conducted in every KFZ district). Component 2 of the contract should be adjusted to reflect this need with sufficient funds added by USAID. Strategic communications will allow KFZ to sensitize farmers on the negative consequences of poppy cultivation at the family, provincial, and national levels. This would also allow KFZ to tie sensitization with alternative livelihoods programming.
5. Lack of access to sustainable and affordable sources of water for irrigation is one of the key drivers of poppy cultivation. There is an undeniable need for improved and efficient irrigation systems. Given this fact, future USAID counter-narcotics /alternative livelihoods/development programming should be designed around this particular driver of poppy cultivation in order to maximize impact. This would involve larger scale infrastructure improvements rather than just small grants and cash for work programming.
6. USAID should not encourage programming in districts for which an adequate budget does not exist. Given its limited budget, KFZ realized that it would be best to not program anything in Arghistan, Kandahar City, Maiwand, Takhtar-Pul, and Shawalikot districts as none of the vocational trainings without grants for irrigation infrastructure improvement would adequately address drivers of poppy cultivation. USAID forced KFZ to program in all districts even though the wasteful nature of such programming was identified by KFZ leadership.
7. The KFZ model may see higher returns/greater impact if it wasn't so spread out. A limited scope, such as working in only two high risk districts per year, subsequently tied to alternative livelihoods programming and the MCN-KFZ pillars should see better gains over time rather than short duration and ambitious programming spread over multiple districts. A staggered and highly targeted approach would make most sense if the KFZ model is to be continued as a multi-year program.
8. Experience has shown that spending funds on short-term classroom type training courses and workshops have been largely unproductive. In KFZ's case they are even more unproductive as in five out of seven districts they are not tied to increases in affordable irrigation water – a major driver of poppy cultivation. KFZ conducted these vocational training courses because it needed to program something in those five districts. This was wasteful. Such trainings should not occur if it is clear that they will not adequately address a driver of poppy cultivation.
9. Continue the appropriately timed programming to divert farmers away from poppy cultivation. KFZ times all of its programming to coincide with the poppy cultivation, weeding, and harvesting months

(October – April). This is done intentionally to divert farmers away from poppy cultivation and into training courses and jobs. Such diversions are well thought out and timely.

10. USAID should award future contracts of this type in Kandahar in February/March of any year to best fit within the poppy planting calendar. This would allow the program enough time to conduct assessments, conceptualize alternative livelihoods programming, receive grant approvals, and conduct the necessary coordination with the Afghan government before that year's first poppy planting begins. As KFZ was awarded in July and poppy planting in Kandahar begins in October, the program did not have enough time to address poppy cultivation in its first year.
11. USAID should ensure that KFZ is better integrated with other USAID programs operating in Kandahar. While KFZ did work with RADP-S, this was limited to greenhouse trainings. More could have been done to integrate alternative livelihoods assistance, especially with vocational trainings. Coordination fostered at the Mission by the CORs is important so as to maximize impact and avoid duplication.
12. According to KFZ's contract and USAID's MoU with the MCN, KFZ's design was based on the Helmand Food Zone program, which by 2011 had resulted in an increase in poppy cultivation within Helmand and the surrounding areas. There is strong evidence that suppression of poppy cultivation and large-scale distributions of wheat and fertilizer within the Helmand Food Zone contributed to the relocation and intensification of cultivation. USAID should base future alternative development programming linked to counternarcotics on proven models rather than on those that had counterproductive impacts.
13. KFZ and USAID need to share the drivers of poppy cultivation and all analyses of CBPSA-PC sessions with other donors and related line departments in order to assist them in designing, funding, and implementing projects that will already have an analytical foundation to work on.
14. There is often a lack of consultation with farmers and farmer cooperatives when designing projects. Programs are typically designed by expatriate staff who can be ignorant of what has worked or not worked in Afghanistan in the last decade. There must be effective and real participation by farming communities in the design of rural development projects tied to alternative livelihoods. CBPSA-PC is the present day best consultative tool and should be used in future programming. This will ensure projects are an accurate reflection of beneficiary needs. Furthermore, USAID should consider contracting out CBPSA-PC before it awards future alternative development/livelihood projects in order to understand the drivers of poppy cultivation in targeted zones, which will then help in the design of impactful programs.

CONCLUSION

KFZ met its contractual obligations and has programmed as best it could given existing constraints. In particular, KFZ's senior leadership has previous experience working on alternative development and this was effectively applied in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, KFZ was poorly designed and this limited the program's ability to conduct meaningful alternative livelihoods programming. Should USAID choose to conduct alternative development programming in the future, it is imperative that more attention be paid to

ensuring realistic, durable, and sustainable successes within a larger counter-narcotics strategy. This will involve a reworked scope, budget, and a more realistic timeframe.

As it stands, KFZ is an unproven model and will likely remain unproven once it closes out in July 2015. This will afford USAID a lengthy list of lessons learned, but not a proven methodology that it can scale up with the MCN.

ANNEX A: COMPLETE LIST OF PROJECT SITES VISITED IN KANDAHAR

No	Province	District	Project ID	Project Name	Project Status ²⁹
1	Kandahar	Zhari	KAN-ZAH-001	Irrigation Canal Sangi-Hissar	Ongoing
2	Kandahar	Zhari	KAN-ZAH-002	Irrigation Canal Kulk and Salughay	Ongoing
3	Kandahar	Zhari	KAN-ZAH-003	Irrigation Canal Sanzary	Ongoing
4	Kandahar	Zhari	KAN-ZAH-004	Irrigation Canal Nalgham	Ongoing
5	Kandahar	Zhari	KAN-ZAH-005	Irrigation Canal Pasab	Ongoing
6	Kandahar	Zhari	KAN-ZHA-AL-001	Vocational Training Masonry	Completed
7	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-001	Irrigation Canal Do Ab	Ongoing
8	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-002	Irrigation Canal Kanize	Ongoing
9	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-003	Irrigation Canal Mushan	Ongoing
10	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-004	Irrigation Canal Tolukan	Ongoing
11	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-005	Irrigation Canal Zang-i-Abad	Ongoing
12	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-006	Irrigation Canal Speed Rawan	Ongoing
13	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-AL001	Vocational Training Masonry	Completed
14	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-AL002	Women's Vegetable Production and Processing Project	Ongoing
15	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-AL003	Vocational Training in Mechanical Maintenance	Ongoing
16	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-AL004	Pre and post Harvest Marketing & Water Management Training	Ongoing
17	Kandahar	Panjwayi	KAN-PAN-AL005	Establishment of Green House and Farmers CB PHASE I	Ongoing

²⁹ Status under the period of performance (to November 2014).

18	Kandahar	Takhta Pul	KAN-TA-AL-001	Vocational Training in Mechanical Maintenance	Ongoing
19	Kandahar	Takhta Pul	KAN-TA-AL-002	Pre and Post Harvest Marketing & Water Management Training	Ongoing
20	Kandahar	Maiwand	KAN-MAI-AL001	Vocational Training Masonry	Completed
21	Kandahar	Shahwali Kot	KAN-SHA-AL-002	Pre and Post Harvest Marketing & Water Management Training	Ongoing
22	Kandahar	Shahwali Kot	KAN-SHA-AL005	Vocational Training in Mechanical Maintenance	Ongoing
23	Kandahar	Kandahar City	KAN-KAN-AL-001	Women's Vegetable Production and Processing Project	Completed
24	Kandahar	Kandahar City	KAN-KAN-AL-002	Pre and Post Harvest Marketing & Water Management Training	Ongoing
25	Kandahar	Kandahar City	KAN-KAN-AL004	Vocational Training in Mechanical Maintenance	Ongoing
26	Kandahar	Arghistan	KAN-ARG-AL-001	Solar Drying Mechanism for Fruit and Vegetable	Completed
27	Kandahar	Arghistan	KAN-ARG-AL-002	Pre and Post Harvest Marketing & Water Management	Ongoing
28	Kandahar	Arghistan	KAN-ARG-AL-003	Establishment of Green House and Farmers CB PHASE I	Completed

ANNEX B: NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS

Area	USAID	KFZ	The Government	District Entities	Beneficiaries	Others	TOTAL
National	1	9	7				17
Maiwand			1	5	10		16
Zhari			1	6	40		47
Pajwayi			1	4	30		35
Shawali Kot			2	5	15		22
Arghistan			1	4	10		15
Takhta Pul			1	4	10		15
Kandahar City		12	11		15	3	41
Total	1	21	25	28	130	3	208