



Afghanistan PEACE Project

Reducing Risk for the Kuchi People

Recommendations for Drafting a Conflict Resolution Strategy

Prepared for the Independent Department of Kuchi (IDK) and the
Afghanistan PEACE Project



Igor Naumovski
Conflict Resolution Consultant
Afghanistan PEACE Project
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Executive Summary:

- This report was produced by the Afghanistan PEACE Project, with the purpose of providing concrete recommendations to the IDK (Independent Department of Kuchi) for drafting a long-term conflict resolution strategy. The report was not commissioned by the IDK, but rather it is intended to serve as a guide to the IDK in developing a strategic plan.
- The recommendations in this paper are specifically designed for developing a conflict resolution strategy. However, when drafting a conflict resolution strategy, the IDK is advised to take into consideration other pressing development needs of the Kuchi. Conflict resolution and development are closely interlinked, therefore developing a conflict resolution strategy as part of an overall development strategy is strongly advised.
- There are serious intractable conflicts between Kuchi and sedentary communities in Afghanistan. The majority of these conflicts are over access to rangelands, and they are inter-ethnic and economically-driven in nature. These conflicts can be classified into two categories: conflicts over refusal of access rangelands, and in cases where access is granted, conflicts over access rights.
- As the primary government department dealing with Kuchi issues, the IDK is responsible for assisting in the peaceful resolution of conflicts and facilitating assistance in a variety of developmental areas for Kuchi communities. The IDK does not have a formal strategy to address these needs. As cooperating partner, the Afghanistan PEACE Project can assist the IDK in prioritizing and planning for the development of a long-term conflict resolution strategy.
- The following are recommendations for the IDK:
 1. ***Focus on institutional capacity building***; this includes providing training for IDK staff and provincial Kuchi leaders in conflict resolution;
 2. ***“Mapping” of conflicts and other development needs***; by conducting a conflict and needs assessment survey of Kuchi communities, the IDK will have province-specific (and even community-specific) data on the types of conflict and developmental needs. Once these needs are identified, the next phase is to prioritizing the needs and developing response strategy.
 3. ***Increasing the “visibility” of the IDK***: this includes active and strong advocacy in the drafting phase of the Rangeland Law, which will have a significant and lasting impact on Kuchi; and creating a “developmental web” of organizations that can assist the IDK in providing much-needed social services to Kuchi communities.
- The following are recommendations for the PEACE Project, to support the above activities to the IDK:
 1. ***Actively support the institutional capacity building of the IDK***; includes organizing conflict resolution trainings for IDK staff and provincial Kuchi leaders.

2. *Continue to support the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms;* includes continued financial support to Kuchi shuras across Afghanistan, and identifying regional Kuchi leaders willing to serve as conflict resolution trainers in their communities.
 3. *Continued advocacy for Kuchi land issues;* includes involvement in the discussion during the drafting phase of the Rangeland Law, developing a comprehensive database outlining the conflicts and other developmental needs of the Kuchi, and conducting a market survey that will determine the impact of the pastoralist economy on the overall national economy. The market survey analysis should help the IDK build a strong case with the Afghan government and the international community to obtaining the much-needed assistance to address the myriad of conflicts and social issues facing the Kuchi.
- The IDK is strongly advised to adopt these recommendations in order to develop a comprehensive conflict resolution strategy. However, regardless of the IDK's decision to adopt these recommendations, the PEACE Project will continue to work with the IDK and provincial Kuchi leaders by providing conflict resolution training and assistance for resolving conflicts over rangelands.

Conflict Resolution and Development:

In order to address conflict issues, the basic social needs of Kuchi must be addressed concurrently. Conflict is not an isolated sphere, but rather it should be integrated into the larger developmental context of Afghanistan. The lack of basic human services – water, available health care, adequate housing, educational opportunities, and veterinary care – play a major role in the overall goal of increasing livestock production in Afghanistan. For example, while interviewing Kuchi leaders from Kunduz, it became apparent that resolving conflicts over access to rangelands was not their only priority. In fact, their primary concern was not having enough water for their families and animals, and the difficulty in providing water to remote Kuchi communities. These Kuchi leaders agreed that during drought years, there was no mechanism in place to provide water to Kuchi communities, and no assistance was provided by the IDK. The Kunduz Kuchi also described other needs, such as health clinics and veterinary care for their animals. Conflict is interlinked with these development needs because even if conflicts over rangelands were solved, the Kuchi still need to be properly informed of the benefits of regular veterinary care, have access to mobile veterinary clinics, have adequate supply of water, access to health clinics, and other social services. Otherwise, while many Kuchi continue to live in abject poverty, livestock production will suffer. Therefore, any long-term conflict resolution strategy must be incorporated into an overall development strategy. Otherwise, without a holistic approach to conflict resolution and development, any individual successes in resolving local conflicts will not have a lasting impact without a systematic approach to reduce the overall risks of raising livestock for Kuchi communities.

Developing a Conflict Resolution Strategy:

In order to develop a comprehensive conflict resolution strategy, several factors must be taken into account: the current conflicts involving the Kuchi, the available conflict resolution mechanisms, and the role of the IDK in resolving conflicts. Based on an analysis of these factors, the following recommendations should be considered by the IDK for drafting a comprehensive conflict resolution strategy:

Recommendations for the IDK:

1. *Institutional Capacity Building:*

- The Director of IDK should identify five (5) IDK staff members to serve as the department's ad-hoc conflict resolution team. They should subsequently be trained in conflict resolution and negotiation. Their role will be to cooperate with Kuchi provincial directors and serve as negotiators and mediators during future disputes. For example, they could serve as representatives and negotiators of the IDK during the current crisis in Maidan Wardak, and negotiate the creation of safe passage corridors with local officials in Kunduz, Takhar, and Badakshan. This conflict resolution team will strengthen the IDK's planning and response processes of dealing with conflicts in the future.
- Additional training for Kuchi provincial directors is necessary. The Afghanistan PEACE Project sponsored and organized a basic conflict resolution training for 25 provincial directors in November 2007. In recent follow-up with participants of this workshop, several of them indicated that they already used some of the skills that they learned during the workshop to resolve local conflicts. They also requested more advanced training in conflict resolution and negotiation.
- Establish advisory committees responsible for individual social issues, such as health care and veterinary care, education, water access, and others. These committees would be responsible for developing a network of partner organizations that will provide assistance to Kuchi communities in each of these spheres. They will actively network with donors and NGOs and proactively seek out assistance for specific developmental needs. The creation of this "development web" of partner organizations will in effect support the overall development strategy of the IDK.
- Secure long-term, sustainable funding for provincial shuras. Currently the provincial directors are given a paltry monthly budget to organize lot of activities in their provinces. This budget is not enough to organize monthly shura meetings and invite Kuchi leaders from across the province. Therefore, starting in June 2008 the Afghanistan PEACE Project is helping facilitate monthly shuras starting with 12 provinces, by providing funding for transportation and a small lunch for shura participants. However, for this project to be sustainable, the IDK must secure funding to continue supporting provincial shuras.

2. *"Mapping" of Conflicts and Other Developmental Needs:*

- Adopt a targeted, proactive approach to resolving conflicts. Currently the IDK's approach is to react to conflicts as they occur. For example, there was a clear indication by both Kuchi and Hazara that last year's violent conflicts in Maidan Wardak over access to rangelands in Bamyan could be repeated this year, if the government did not help facilitate a resolution of the conflict before the start of the traditional spring migration by the Kuchi. Even with the advance warning and the possibility of the same conflict re-occurring this year, the government of Afghanistan, the international community, and the IDK did not take adequate measures to facilitate the resolution of this conflict. As a result, they were forced to react to the situation on the ground when (predictably) the conflict re-occurred earlier this month, with deadlier consequences than last year. The IDK should prioritize and plan responses to potential conflicts in advance, to prevent the re-occurrence and escalation of conflicts.
- Establish a database of conflicts and other basic social needs that will assist in the process of mapping, prioritizing, and responding to conflicts - on the provincial and even the district level. Currently the PEACE Project is collecting data from surveys completed by Kuchi shura members across Afghanistan. The surveys provide information about the types of conflicts and developmental needs of different Kuchi communities. When it is completed, the database will be shared with the IDK, to help initiate the department's prioritizing and planning process.

3. Proactive Advocacy and Increasing the "visibility" of the IDK:

- Proactive, strong advocacy during the drafting of the Rangeland Law must be the top priority of the IDK. The new law will have significant and lasting effect on the lives of the Kuchi, from the management of rangelands to dispute resolution with local communities. Therefore, the Kuchi interests must be represented in the national consultation process of this law. The IDK must be at the forefront of this discussion, to ensure that the law fairly represents the Kuchi interests and establishes positive precedents for future relationships between the Kuchi and sedentary communities.
- The IDK must increase its visibility and standing within the government (national and provincial), and the international community (donors and the NGO sector). Currently there is a lack of strong representation of Kuchi interests. The IDK can increase its visibility by creating systematic plans for dealing with conflicts and other social issues, and by presenting a stronger case about the importance of the Kuchi to the national economy.

Recommendations for the Afghanistan PEACE Project:

1. ***Actively support the institutional capacity building of the IDK***

- Organize advanced negotiation training for Kuchi provincial directors. Some participants from the November 2007 training have indicated that they already used the tools that they learned in the first training to resolve local conflicts, and requested additional, more advanced training. This is a great opportunity for the IDK and the PEACE Project to build the capacity of local Kuchi leaders, who deal firsthand with local conflicts.
- Organize conflict resolution and negotiation training for 5 IDK staff members. The participants would serve as the IDK's conflict resolution team, and would be working proactively with local Kuchi leaders and local communities to resolve conflicts over access to rangelands.

2. Strengthen traditional conflict resolution mechanisms

- Continue to financially support provincial shuras. From June 2008, the PEACE Project started supporting monthly shuras in 12 provinces (suggested by the IDK Director), by providing funds for transportation and light lunch for shura members. The shura is the traditional and primary conflict resolution mechanism in Afghanistan, not only among the Kuchi, but for all ethnic groups in the country. Currently the provincial Kuchi directors have meager monthly budgets provided by the IDK, and these budgets are not sufficient to organize monthly or twice-monthly shura meetings. In some provinces, the provincial directors have reported that up to 70-80 Kuchi community leaders came to attend shura meetings. By supporting these shuras, in effect providing the opportunity for the shuras to take place, the PEACE project is facilitating conflict resolution at the local level. The current plan is for the PEACE Project to continue supporting the shuras until December 2008, with possibly the increasing number of provinces. The PEACE Project is willing to assist the IDK in identifying future sustainable funding through international donors.
- Identify local Kuchi leaders to be conflict resolution trainers in their communities. The PEACE Project will organize Training of Trainers workshops that will be held at the local level, focused on conflict resolution and negotiation. The purpose of these workshops is for participants gain the necessary skills and to learn how to impart this knowledge to others in their community.

3. Advocacy for Kuchi issues

- Continue to provide input to the committee responsible for drafting the Rangeland Law. The PEACE Project has already provided valuable input, resulting in the re-drafting of certain sections of the law. It will continue to advocate for re-drafting of the section on dispute resolution with local communities, and that the overall interests of Kuchi in terms of accessing the rangelands are fairly represented in this law.
- Develop a database of the types of conflict over rangelands across Afghanistan, and other basic developmental needs of the Kuchi. Some surveys have already been received, and information has been added to the

- Conduct a market survey to determine what percentage of animals on the major markets is supplied by the Kuchi. The survey will take place in six major markets: Kabul, Jalalabad, Kunduz, Mazar, Herat and Helmand. The purpose of the survey is to provide accurate data about the importance of the pastoral economy to the overall national economy, and the role that the Kuchi play in supporting the national economy. The IDK should use this information to strongly advocate with the Afghan government and the international community for assistance in permanently resolving conflicts over rangelands and providing basic social services for Kuchi communities.

Conclusion:

The goal of the Afghanistan PEACE Project is to increase the livestock production in Afghanistan by providing information on the quality and quantity of forage to the government, NGOs, and the pastoral community. The project aims to assist the Kuchi, who are the main pastoralists in Afghanistan, by reducing the risks in the production of livestock. However, the Kuchi will not be able to fully utilize this information if they do not have access to rangelands.

The PEACE Project is working with the IDK to assist in the development of a long-term strategic plan to resolve conflicts over rangelands. The PEACE Project can assist the IDK in variety of ways, most notably by increasing the capacity for conflict resolution within the department, strengthening of provincial conflict resolution mechanisms, and on the macro level advocating for Kuchi issues – by providing valuable input during the drafting phase of the Rangeland Law.

However, the level of assistance and its effectiveness largely depends on the willingness of the IDK to adopt the recommendations outlined in this paper. Regardless of IDK's willingness to accept all or some of these recommendations, the PEACE Project will continue to work with provincial Kuchi leaders by supporting monthly shuras, and building their capacity for conflict resolution by providing opportunities for conflict resolution training at the local level.