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**AFGHANISTAN**

# IMPROVING PROVINCIAL PLANNING IN AFGHANISTAN

AFGHANISTAN LOCAL GOVERNANCE ASSISTANCE PROJECT  
(ALGAP)

**APRIL 2005**

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## ACRONYMS

AL	Alternative livelihood
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
ASP	Afghanistan Stabilization Program
BME	Benefit monitoring and evaluation
CBO	Community-based organization
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DDS	District Development <i>Shura</i>
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
DAAH	Department of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
DOE	Department of Education
DOH	Department of Health
GOA	Government of Afghanistan
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HAVA	Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority
MAAH	Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Health
MOE	Ministry of Economy
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MRRD	Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSP	National Solidarity Program
O&M	Operation and maintenance
PAP	Provincial action plan
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
PDS	Provincial Development <i>Shura</i>
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSF	Provincial Stabilization Fund
RRD	Rural Development Department
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SOW	Scope of work
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAU	Vulnerability Assessment Unit
WFP	World Food Program

# I. PROVINCIAL PLANNING: COMPONENTS, PROCESSES, APPROACHES

## I.1 INTRODUCTION

This report is the product of a consultancy conducted under ARD, Inc.'s Afghanistan Local Governance Assistance Activity (Contract AEP-I-809-00-00016-00), at the request of USAID/Afghanistan. The impetus for the study in early 2005 was an accelerated emphasis by the government and USAID on:

- Reducing the production of opium poppy and replacing it as a major source of employment and income, with particular emphasis on the development of sustainable alternative livelihoods (AL) based on area-based planning.
- Developing workable provincial development plans within the Afghan context.
- Demonstrating that the central government and provincial and district officials can work collaboratively, with donor support, to develop and deliver services at the local level.

The purpose of the consultancy was to examine the plans and planning processes in Nangarhar, Badakhshan, and Helmand, to provide recommendations for strengthening the planning processes, and to help develop a draft provincial plan in each of the three provinces. This work plan was based on information received from USAID that significant progress was being made in the preparation of development plans in the three provinces.

- To help the provinces develop a draft provincial plan that identified activities and priority projects that could be initiated in the short run, and supported by the governors, the Ministry of Rehabilitation and Rural Development (MRRD), and the Ministry of Interior (MOI).

The achievement of these ambitious objectives did not prove to be feasible, owing to changes in the Afghan environment and within USAID. Specific changes were:

- The initiation of a planning and AL-related project by MRRD that introduced an organization, structure and tempo that appeared to obviate the need for the remainder of the project.
- The initiation in December 2004 and January 2005 of a large AL project by DAI in Nangarhar and Chemonics in Helmand.<sup>1</sup> These projects focused on short-term employment-generating possibilities that were not necessarily related to longer-term planning efforts or strategies.
- A recognition following field visits to Nangarhar and Helmand that the initial estimates of planning progress were overly optimistic with respect to planning progress and that a trip to Badakhshan was unlikely to add significantly to the consultancy.
- That contracts for more large-scale, multiyear projects were awarded by the middle of February for four-year AL programs for work in six major poppy producing provinces substantially changed the area-based planning landscape in Afghanistan.

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<sup>1</sup> DAI is Development Alternatives, Inc.; Chemonics is Chemonics International, Inc. Both are U.S. consulting firms with extensive experience in development project implementation, in Afghanistan, and in alternative, counter narcotics programs. A third project, to be implemented by PADCO in Badakhshan, had not yet begun at the time field work for this assessment took place.

This report reviews the current status of planning at the district and provincial levels within Afghanistan. At the outset we present a model of the components of an area-based plan and of a participatory provincial planning process. This model is used to examine planning activity in Nangahar and Helmand provinces. Finally, some recommendations and comments, based on the study findings, are presented for area-based system planning in Afghanistan, alternative livelihoods, and skills and knowledge that can help institutionalize the effective use information for planning.

## I.2 PROVINCIAL PLANNING

*“Who doesn’t know where to go will be surprised when he gets to the wrong place.”*  
— Mark Twain

Planning as used here refers to a process, within a geographic area, of identifying specific development goals and objectives and the actions and resources required to reach them. The process as presented involves assessing the existing economic realities, market relationships, natural and physical resource potential, land use and land tenure, the availability of skills and capital, and links to appropriate policy.

This discussion draws on lessons from international best practices. These include USAID programs in Pakistan with early opium eradication programs<sup>2</sup> and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC),<sup>3</sup> which provide a number of lessons about working with conservative people in isolated poppy growing areas. USAID’s lessons from projects in Bolivia and Peru and recent efforts in Colombia are useful and informative, as are other lessons from UN and government initiatives in Thailand. Experience with planning in Kazakhstan and indirectly of other central Asian countries provides some insights into the process in centralized former Soviet countries.

### Components of a Plan<sup>4</sup>

Three significant points regarding plans and the planning process need to be emphasized at the outset of this discussion. First, a written plan is needed, but it is a living document. A plan is meant to be a guide for the village, district, or province. For the plan to be useful it must be reviewed and revised on a regular basis to take into account progress and other changes in the respective areas.

Second, the process of developing a plan can be more highly participatory with citizens working in collaboration with the government, the business, and non-governmental organizations (NGO) sectors and private associations. This approach implies that throughout the planning and implementation process that the public is informed and involved. Their views, comments, and needs are sought and considered by the individuals and organizations leading the process. Some people argue that one of the most significant benefits of a planning process is the involvement of the people from all sectors of the city or area. In addition to benefiting from a variety of perspectives during the planning process, a participatory model can develop strong and valuable support for the final plan and its implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> North West Frontier Area Development Project with Gadoon-Amazai off and Kala Dhaka components, 1983–1992.

<sup>3</sup> Swat Amazai and Dir Development Projects, 1981–2005.

<sup>4</sup> Descriptions of the components of planning may be labeled with different terms than those presented here. The value is in the identification of what is included within a plan rather than the label or categories used. Thus the reader is encouraged to focus on the substance and interest of the components rather than on the labels.

Third, the plan only becomes valuable when it is implemented with the support of the different segments and sectors of the country and with active backing and support of the government. Until it is implemented, the plan is simply a static document.

A plan includes a number of discrete but linked components that can be presented and described in various ways. The following discussion is intended to incorporate the major components of and elements of an area-based plan.

## **Mission and Vision Statement**

For any geographic area – a village, district, municipality, or province – a helpful place to begin the planning process is with the consideration of three basic questions:

- “Where are we going?” If an area is unclear about its vision and mission, activities, and strategic goals and objectives, it becomes like a ship out of control.
- “Where are we now?” What is the current state or condition of the city: What are its strengths, weaknesses, resources, problems?
- “How can the area achieve its goal?” This is a question of preparing specific actions and projects that can enable the area to move toward the attainment of its vision.

As a planning process is initiated, it is helpful to gain some clarity and agreement on what is desired for the area in the future. This can be accomplished with the preparation of vision and mission statements.

Vision statements are brief yet comprehensive descriptions of what the area will be in the future. They are most useful when they include clearly defined and realistic opportunities and general priorities of all community sectors, focusing on economic structure and living conditions, including access to respective services, peace, safety, and equality.

By contrast, the mission statement is a general goal of the area with its basic values and principles. It is intended to be a clarification of what is important to the people in terms of their living area.

The preparation of these statements can stimulate interest, unite people, and enhance their activity and willingness to implement their own ideas. Ideally, the public should realize their ownership of the statements and adopt them as their own. Following are four examples of vision statements that were prepared in central Asian countries.

- “An open, environment-friendly, tourist, sport, and educational center with well-developed services and modern industries.”
- “A center of border trade, with a well-developed tourism industry, good environment for citizens, and advanced processing of agricultural produce.”
- “A satellite city near the oblast capital Taldykorgan, with well-developed production and social infrastructures and perspectives of professional education and tourism.”
- “A modern industrial and agricultural region with a well-developed mining industry, a stable and powerful budget, and comfortable living conditions.”

## **Area Profile**

The second component of an area plan is an area profile—a written description and analysis of a village, community, district, province. A profile presents major data about the area and a description of its natural

resources, labor and economic potential, economic structure, utilities, living and working conditions, and major problems in each sector of economy and community.

While area profiles can vary in terms of the exact content, they typically include:

- **Economic condition.** What is the economic base of the area's major conditions and characteristics of the economy, including changes that have been occurring within the economic activity of the area?
- **Business environment.** What types of businesses have developed or been lost in recent years, and what factors exist that either encourage or inhibit the expansion or development of businesses?
- **Employment.** What is the employment base within the area—(i.e., what do people do in terms of income generation and how many people are engaged in these activities)? How many people are unemployed or not able to obtain a living?
- **Government and political conditions.** What is the form of government and how effective is it in terms of helping to meet local demands and needs for goods and services?
- **Population.** What is the demographic composition of the area, and what changes have been or are being experienced?
- **Natural resources.** What resources are available, and what resources must be obtained from other parts of the country or from other countries? For villages or districts, the question may be more narrowly defined in terms of what may be imported from surrounding areas or from the center.
- **Social-cultural dimensions of the area,** including the quality of relations among different the tribal, ethnic, or other population segments within the area.
- **Environment.** What are the external factors that affect the area, including such factors as tensions, conflict, political system, or ethnic relations?

A well-developed area profile can be exceptionally valuable for the area in several ways. First, it can provide a clear statement of the condition and potential of the area. Second, it can provide the basis for developing an area marketing tool that can be used to attract private investment and, in the shorter run, development assistance that is targeted for specific needs and opportunities of the area. It is through the preparation of a thorough profile that the information base is developed that enables the preparation of an area plan that recognizes and addresses the diverse segments of the area.

**Preparing the Profile.** The preparation of the area profile requires the collection and analysis of a broad range of information and data. It is in this process of information collection and analysis that many areas encounter difficulty. The process of collection and analysis can be complex and affected by several key factors:

- *Lack of relevant data.* The data may not have been collected at all, or at least in a manner that makes them useful for planning purposes. Errors or distortion during the collection process can make specific data nearly useless for the systematic preparation of a plan.
- *Access to information or data.* In some cases data have been collected but may be unavailable for the planning process. Among the reasons for the lack of access to data experienced in various countries is that the data are located in an agency that refuses to make them available, or the data's existence is unknown to those working on the preparation of plan.
- *Capacity to collect and analyze information.* The organizations and individuals involved with the planning process may not have the knowledge, experience, or analytical capabilities required to collect and analyze a broad range of data.

One question that confronts individuals and organizations with respect to the collection and analysis of data is how much information is needed and how accurate it must be. Extended data acquisition, and the associated high costs, may be inappropriate when compared to the need for information. This condition prompted Robert Chambers<sup>5</sup> (and others) to elaborate an approach to planning that emphasizes the effective need, and quality of information for design, rather than the techniques for gaining objective certainty. Chambers has described this calculus of social and economic understanding as defining information requirements in terms of “optimal ignorance” and “appropriate imprecision” to emphasize the practical limitations on information collection in terms of expense and immediate need.

## Action Plan

An action plan, the third component, provides clear definitions of specific objectives, the actions required to achieve those objectives, the resources required for the actions, and a schedule and process for reviewing and revising, if necessary, the entire area plan. An effective and valuable action plan will need to include at a minimum the following elements.

**Objectives.** On the basis of mission and vision statements and the area profile, it is necessary to develop specific objectives to be achieved within a specified period of time. Thus an action plan will include sets of objectives—for example, for economic development, employment, education, or other social services. To be of maximum value, objectives will be specific and include a realistic time frame.

**Actions.** What actions will be required to achieve the objectives also must be developed and specified. With respect to the actions several elements should be addressed: What is the time frame for the specific actions? How much time is realistically available for the actions? What factors may or will affect the actions?

Since there are likely to be multiple sets of objectives, there also will be sets of activities associated with each set. At this point it is also necessary to specify what organizations, institutions, or levels of government or administration will undertake or supervise actions.

**Resources.** The linking of actions with resources is often overlooked or avoided. Yet failing to link actions and resources will seriously jeopardize the implementation of a plan. To identify what resources are needed requires that the actions have been thoroughly examined and specified and that costs, both in terms of time and money, are clear. The other dimension of the resource issue is that of determining sources and amounts of funds and other assistance required. In this respect it is helpful and realistic to ask what resources can be contributed from the area itself. This is an often overlooked dimension that fosters dependency on others and can delay the implementation of projects that could be largely undertaken through local action and support.

The type and amount of resources required for a set of objectives and actions are likely to vary. In some instances it is simply a question of money. In other instances, however, such resources as time may be vital, particularly, for example, if weather is major factor affecting the undertaking of the actions and achieving a set of objectives.

The question of resources becomes most vivid as the actions are translated into budgets. A budget is a monetary depiction of the desired objectives and actions. In its most basic sense, a budget is the transformation of the plans into money. It is at this point that priorities can become most clear.

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, *Shortcut Methods of Gathering Social Information for Rural Development Projects*, by Robert Chambers (in Michael Cernea (ed.), *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, The World Bank, 1985, pp. 399–415), as well as the discussion in *Project Monitoring and Evaluation in Agriculture* (Casley and Kumar, 1987) for more on the value of carefully contrived assessment and how it differs both from social research and unstructured observation.

**Priorities.** Given limitations on resources, it is usually necessary to select priorities and to determine the degree of on the actions that will be undertaken within a specified period of time. This setting of priorities can be quite difficult. Needed for this decision process is some agreement on the criteria that will be used.

**Review and Revision.** A frequently overlooked element of action plans is specifying a set of procedures for reviewing the progress of the a plan; providing for the time, money, and other resources required to evaluate the progress; and incorporating a time and process for revising plans in light of changing circumstances or needs.

## **Approach to Planning**

How an area-based plan is developed, implemented, reviewed, and revised is a critical consideration. In effect this is a question of who will lead and be involved in the development of an area-based plan. In more specific terms, this is a question of the role of government and the extent to which citizens and other non-governmental actors assume an active role throughout the planning and implementation process.

As we stated at the beginning of this study, the assumption is that a participatory approach can be established in Afghanistan with great benefit for all. Note that in many transitional and post-conflict countries there is a strong tradition of government control of all planning-related activities. Citizens and other non-governmental actors traditionally have a marginal, if any, formal role in developing and implementing an area-based plan. This is simply a continuation of an approach that has been used for years.

While this approach remains common in many transitional countries, there is a slow but perceptible change, often with external encouragement, to incorporate and encourage non-governmental participation throughout the planning and implementation process. Participation can be defined to include all stakeholders—that is, those who will be affected by a planning process and those who can contribute to the successful preparation and implementation of a plan: the private sector, NGOs, and other citizen groups and professional associations.

The implication of this approach is that government and non-governmental actors will collaborate to prepare an effective implementation of an area-development plan. The process will not be dominated by the government or some other body. In Afghanistan there appears to be some growing recognition of the value of a more open and participatory approach to planning. The Government of Afghanistan (GOA) has expressed an interest in and commitment to citizen participation.

A major value of this approach is that the public develop a commitment to and support for the resulting plan. This commitment can be particularly valuable as decisions are made and scarce resources are allocated; public support can contribute to the acceptance of unpopular decisions.

Participation of course can take many forms and must be adapted to a country's specific circumstances. A broad range of forms of participation can be found in Afghanistan's neighboring countries. These include local versions of public forums and hearings, joint administration–public working groups, and emerging information programs and activities.

In Afghanistan such tradition-based mechanisms as *shuras* can facilitate some degree of participation in planning-related activities and processes. In addition, participation is being encouraged at the village level through the establishment of community development councils. Somewhat similar processes are being explored and tested at the district and provincial levels. The extent to which these and other forms of participation can and will occur remains to be seen. There will probably continue to be a merging of traditional and nontraditional participatory processes in Afghanistan.

We note that resistance to increased non-governmental participation in planning and other activities is not uncommon. Often the resistance stems from a fear of the loss of power and control by government officials or other traditional leaders or a lack of belief in the ability of the public to responsibly participate in the process.

## 2. PLANS AND PLANNING: NANGARHAR AND HELMAND

This section is an examination of the planning situation in Nangarhar and Helmand utilizing the broad approach presented above.

### 2.1 AREA PLANS

As the consulting team started its work it had been informed that nascent plans were being developed in the target provinces; that projects were being defined that could form the basis for the development of a provincial plan that would incorporate substantial attention to alternative livelihoods.

The experience in the two provinces did not support these initial assumptions and assertions. The study did find, however, emerging processes that might contribute to the development of a systematic planning process.

#### Plans and Projects

Plans that included the components and characteristics mentioned above were not found. In neither Nangarhar nor Helmand province were vision or mission statements, elaborated, long term action plans articulated that related objectives with specific actions and the required resources.

Rather, in both Nangarhar and Helmand there were lists of discrete projects. In Nangarhar slightly more than 3,000 projects had been identified with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), NGOs, UN agencies, and government departments and compiled into a provincial list. In Helmand there was also a compiled list of projects from throughout the province.

The projects were not linked to changing or improving either livelihoods or broader long-term development goals or objectives. Nowhere was a statement of consequences or expected benefits from the multitude of projects evident. The projects were primarily infrastructure and range from small buildings to large multimillion dollar irrigation and road-building projects.

Given the level of immediate needs in Afghanistan, the discrete projects are understandable. They provide immediate solutions to a wide range of problems: inadequate water supply, inadequate sanitary facilities, few or only very low income producing opportunities.

From a planning perspective, however, the isolated project approach has the effect of placing the focus, for example, on schools rather than education; on health centers rather than health; on roads rather than efficient transport.

#### Planning and Project Development

**Conflicting Goals.** The emphasis on projects in Nangarhar and Helmand reflect a difficult reality in Afghanistan. There is a basic conflict or incompatibility among three competing needs and desires:

1. An urgent need to address immediate local problems. These are the types of situations that are conducive to support by donors.
2. A desire by the government and donors to demonstrate that they are responding to the immediate needs. This requires immediate fast action, which is translated into a variety of short-term projects.

3. The donor and government's desire to establish long-term planning for development. For such planning to be effective, a broad range of government and private participants, donors, and other NGOs needs to be involved and supportive. Effecting this type of planning simply requires time and other resources.

The challenge for the government, the donors, and others is to develop and implement the two pronged approach: one prong focusing on immediate short-term projects and needs, the second focusing on the longer-term planning and implementation process.

## **2.2 ANALYSIS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

As noted earlier, planning requires substantial analysis. As we examined the two provinces it was clear that the type of analysis associated with planning was used. The projects had been selected on the basis of factors that would contribute to sustained development, to contribute to the alleviation of chronic problems, or to the development of alternative livelihoods.

In both provinces local leaders conducted needs assessments that placed emphasis on the immediate and very visible needs of the population. In Helmand there were at least two lists—one of which had been prepared at the initiative of the governor and the other by the provincial Rural Development Department (RRD). In Nangarhar the projects identified reportedly reflected the recommendations of elders who were nominated by government officials to define their needs.

The significant point is that in the formulation of the projects there was little or no use of formal data. It seems reasonable to assume that local leaders would have some idea of immediate needs and desires, and would use this information in defining and selecting projects.

Furthermore, the availability and use of data to support the planning process were severely limited in two ways. First, it appears that the participants in the selection process were largely unaware of the availability of at least some data that could be used in assessing needs and making long-term considerations. At least there was no indication at the provincial level that attempts had been made to obtain more formal and reliable and objective information on which to base the decisions.

A source of apparently unused data was the USAID contractor DAI. DAI has done much work to develop provincial databases and to apply specific selection criteria to projects. At another level there was data available within MRRD in the VAU. Demands or requests for this data collection were, reportedly non-existent at the time of the study.

A formal needs assessment or analysis requires individuals and organizations who are familiar with and skilled in the use of a variety of analytical methods. In both provinces it appeared that there were neither extensive individual nor organizational capacities to undertake the needed analysis. This was in part reflected in the ongoing need to train individuals in analytical approaches and to use outside consultants or advisors.

In Nangarhar in the development-related provincial departments, RRD, the Ministry of Economics (MOE), and the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Health (MAAH), there is very little government capacity to organize, analyze, and use data for decision making. More specifically, there is limited staff experience for collecting and analyzing solid data or information required for rigorous planning. This observation was reinforced by the fact that government departments expressed the need for training and capacity building in the use of data. In Helmand, the departments of the RRD and the Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority (HAVA) are understaffed, under-resourced, and lack the technical capacity to undertake a broad planning exercise without significant external support.

In both Nangarhar and Helmand, considerable attention has been directed to reinforcing local capacity for project preparation, but not necessarily for planning. At the provincial level, Nangarhar's RRD supplemented existing staff resources by importing advisors from other provinces to increase the technical knowledge of the Jalalabad RRD office for a short project generation period during December and January. Within the RRD,

attention is also being given to identifying skills deficits and training needs of provincial staff. In parallel, GTZ is undertaking a series of studies, including a study of local government. As noted above, the governor and his office and the provincial reconstruction team (PRT) have devoted considerable attention to resolving coordination issues. In Helmand, the RRD office had undertaken several workshops last year, mostly for training and project development. At the same time, however, within government offices there was no evidence of systematic effort to review the human, natural resource, physical, or financial resources available.

## **2.3 PARTICIPATORY PLANNING**

In terms of public involvement it appears that this was minimal or none. In both provinces, as noted above, the selection of the provincial list of projects was made primarily by the governor and/or donors, with some comment by district elders.

In Nangarhar the development of a master list of projects was undertaken with the guidance of DAI/RRD facilitation teams. The teams were given a basic one-day training and were sent to each district, where<sup>6</sup> the district administrators assembled a group of area elders. During the workshops these representatives identified the development needs of their areas. The identified needs were prioritized, and all the lists were consolidated into one document that was presented to the Provincial Development Committee (PDC). The PDC, chaired by the governor and with membership drawn from the provincial government departments, selected a number of projects from this list for immediate implementation by the DAI project.

In Helmand, as in Nangarhar, there were at least two project lists, and perhaps more. One was prepared under the initiative of the governor, and the other by the provincial RRD. The governor's provincial plan, which was still in draft form, comprised a list of mostly infrastructure projects that ranged from the renovation of a government office to the construction of a new canal system to irrigate 150,000 acres of land.

The RRD plan consisted of broad policy statements without any specific direction or guidelines. The governor's plan had been prepared by HAVA with no indication of consultation with community representatives. A glance through the draft copy of the plan showed that a significant number of the larger projects were in the governor's home district.

The RRD plan was prepared by the RRD staff during a series of workshops, which included some NGOs and government officials. The governor pointed out that a kind of master plan for the development of the Helmand Valley exists from the 1970s, when USAID supported the operations of HAVA and recommended that that plan serve as the basis for future planning and implementation.

The selection approach used was a short-term expedient. From a participatory perspective it was limited and, because of the selection process for representatives, is likely to have strong representation of the wealthy, influential, and usually the land-owning sections of rural society. The weakest and resource-poor sections of society (e.g., women, landless, or sharecroppers) are not normally represented in these committees.

## **2.4 ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY FOR PLANNING**

Any planning process will require leadership and some organizational capacity. The development, implementation, and monitoring of development plans do not occur spontaneously.

A major requirement for effective planning is that of the ability of different organizations citizen groups and others to collaborate and to engage in cooperative efforts. As the question of the development of projects

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<sup>6</sup> A second planning exercise was undertaken by MRRD, with collaboration from MOI and other agencies at the end of February and beginning of March, in part to improve the selection methodology and follow the just developed development structure of MRRD.

was pursued, we also examined the level and type of coordination and cooperation that were present within the province.

There are numerous actors engaged in a variety of development activities within the provinces of Afghanistan. These can include the governor's provincial administrators or line agencies, the provincial reconstruction of teams, a variety of NGOs, other bilateral or multilateral donors or funding agencies, and a variety of international donors and funding organizations. Such organizations include USAID, the Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and such multinational efforts as the PRT for provincial reconstruction teams.

**Existing Coordinating Processes.** Reportedly in each province there are likely to be some efforts at coordination of donors and government actions. In Nangahar, for example, regular coordination meetings of the departments with offices in the province are held. These are chaired by the governor and enable the departments to discuss and sequence their activities and avoid unnecessary overlap. Yet the effective coordinating function of the meetings is limited, since the department heads are directly responsible to their ministries, not the governor. Therefore, decisions reached during the coordinating meetings are recommendations and are not binding on departments.

In Helmand, the governor chairs a fortnightly meeting of department heads where attempts are made to sequence activities and to avoid overlap. Department heads, however, are not bound by decisions taken during these meetings; they follow instructions or guidelines issued by their respective ministries.

The PDC exists in Helmand that brings together government departments, donors, and implementing partners. In principle this PDC could provide an avenue for both planning activities and for coordinating assistance. Unfortunately, the PDC meets sporadically (it last met in June 2004). Moreover, the PDC does not have real decision-making and enforcement authority. In general it appears that in various provinces that whatever coordination there is is largely informal and takes place between agencies and implementing partners that meet to avoid duplication and overlapping of program activities.

Coordination among international donors is similarly constrained. Each donor, for example, is bound by its own timeline's budget and program priorities and deadlines. The local or provincial representatives of donors typically do not have freedom to establish or even honor locally-developed priorities and programs. Flexibility to adapt program activities and coordinate, sequence, and time their activities is limited. Indeed, discussions with a variety of development agencies reveal that the provincial meetings are viewed by them more as an information-sharing exercise than as coordination meetings.

**No Authoritative Provincial Planning Base.** With respect to planning at the provincial level a fundamental difficulty is that there is currently no authoritative base for planning—no leadership. Rather, there is a broad range of stakeholders who can and are in a position to influence positively a planning process at the provincial level.

**Governors.** Governors are centrally appointed and have a nominal role as provincial chief executive officers under the direct supervision of the MOI. The key role of the governor is to oversee security, ensure proper functioning of the courts, and provide effective administrative support to government operations. The governor represents provincial concerns to the government and communicates central government needs back to the province. Governors have a senior and important advisory role to government departments—in particular, as chairmen of the PDCs. Yet the scope of their authority is highly circumscribed. In discussions with government officials at the provincial level, we noted some frustration about the lack of authority to do effective planning.

Significantly, governors do not have a mandate for provincial planning, nor do they have formal authority to do so. With respect to planning, the role of governors at this time is largely one of coordination and information sharing. Much of their influence is exercised through direct contact with decision makers in Kabul; of course not all governors have the same amount of influence. At the provincial level, the ability of the gover-

nors to affect planning rests primarily on their personal powers and their ability to get the cooperation of various actors from the province (e.g., the collaboration even of the representatives of line ministries).

**Provincial Administrators.** In principle, representatives of the departments of central ministries work under the authority of the governor. In practice their operational procedures, administration, and budgets are managed through their respective central ministries. Government and donor resources flow from the central ministries. At the district level, the sub-governor's office exists and may be supported by a security presence and some service infrastructure like schools and health units. Districts are sparsely equipped.

The administrators of line ministries perceive that their efforts carry little weight in Kabul, and that planning activities beyond everyday coordination are of limited utility. Planning is centered in the central line ministries, where the authority to allocate and expend funds resides. The function of provincial departments seems to be to formulate lists of requirements for operations and to make requests for development budgets but without great expectations that these will materialize.

**Provincial Reconstruction Teams.** PRTs are active in any part of each province, and thus can be considered as one of the actors that can and does exert some influence with respect to coordination and planning. It is well beyond the scope of the present assessment to review the role or performance of PRTs,<sup>7</sup> but some comment on them relative to planning is appropriate.

PRTs dominate security and development in most provinces, with programs that are quite comprehensive but necessarily focused on one- to three-year time horizons. As security issues are resolved, or the ability of the GOA to deal with them becomes stronger, PRT composition and operation will change or phase out. PRTs have a strong tie to donor policy in such fields as food security, alternative livelihoods, construction or reconstruction of infrastructure, and health. They are quite capable of driving the short-term agenda for rehabilitation and reform, but the longer-term impact on approaches to planning and project implementation is unclear. PRT operations are based on managing funding well beyond what will be available to provincial governments in the future.

The fact that so many government and UN agencies are functioning in provinces alongside NGOs and the PRTs has resulted in some salutary successes in one form of planning: coordination. PRTs in Nangarhar and Kandahar have instigated regional consultations and planning exercises. This is an important development, as it addresses the inevitable resource constraints that will arise in supporting planning and program implementation in 34 provinces.

A fundamental difficulty with respect to planning is that there is no real leading department. Even where governors and PDCs agree on integrated programs based on local perceptions of need, there is no administrative department, lead agency, or functionary with clear responsibility for the plan within the province or even within the national system.

**Participatory Planning.** An ideal participatory planning system would use community-generated assessments of needs and opportunities and guide specific project-level interventions consistent with provincial policies and technical capabilities housed within government offices. As yet, there are very few communities with a sustainable participatory structure, while provincial departments are unable to provide much guidance or technical assistance to districts or communities and will need assistance if they are to provide adequate technical support to local government in the near future. District-level organizations such as district *shuras*,

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<sup>7</sup> PRTs are joint civilian and military teams that focus on immediate needs within provinces and regions. They bring funds, skilled human resources, and a welcome security presence to areas where normal government or NGO operations have ceased or cannot continue. The U.S. military was in charge of Jalalabad and Helmand PRTs, and both had USAID representatives attached.

which are formed by government, NGOs, and donors have not worked well, partly because they have no real basis in rural society or in governance.<sup>8</sup>

**Provincial Development Budget.** An additional impediment to effective provincial planning is that provinces do not develop budgets. What funding is available at the provincial level is for established for normal operating costs. The governor who could have a coordinating and planning role has no formal or direct role in preparing department budgets and in articulating province- and district-level conditions to the central government. At best the governor receives information from department heads on the amount they have received from the center for use in their respective sectors.

## 2.5 CONSTRAINTS ON PLANNING: SUMMARY

Planning at the provincial level in Afghanistan faces a number of constraints and difficulties. The key ones that have been identified during the study can be summarized as follows:

- Provinces do not have delegated authority from the central government to prepare provincial plans and budgets.
- Planning capacity at the provincial level is weak. Provincial departments are understaffed and under-resourced. The Department of Economy, which might be the logical place for planning activities, is not present in most provinces, and where it is present, it is almost nonfunctional.
- There is incomplete information on financial commitments by donors, particularly UN agencies. That said, preparing cost estimates for the prioritized development lists would help the Afghan government, donors, and assistance providers in budgeting and targeting specific areas and sectors for their activities.
- Coordination between departments and with NGOs and donors remains inadequate, despite growing efforts at establish coordinating bodies (PDCs).
- Databases are nonexistent, outdated, or unorganized. Data on poverty, livelihood strategies, and population, to the extent it exists, are located in Kabul and have not been disseminated to the provinces, where the ability to use them would be weak in any case. As a consequence, there is no clear correlation between projects and population, poverty, land use, or access to health and education services. Some basic data are available within the Afghan government, particularly with the MRRD (Vulnerability Assessment Unit in Kabul) and with the Ministry of Economy (MOE) (Central Statistics Office [CSO]), and its effective dissemination and use at the provincial level would help in targeting, prioritizing, and sequencing community development needs and donor inputs.
- An effective system for tracking projects on a provincial level does not yet appear to exist, although DAI in Nangarhar appears to be designing such a database.
- There have been no initial assessments of provincial resources to guide planning, although it appears that such an assessment will be an initial priority of AL program contractors.
- Clear authority for planning leadership is lacking.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix A for more on Afghanistan's *shuras*.

### 3. PROPOSED STRUCTURAL APPROACHES TO PLANNING

To address some of the planning difficulties several approaches are being discussed among government agencies and with the donors. A central theme in these discussions appears to be the necessity of having a lead agency or ministry for planning. Which ministry or department can or will assume this role is yet to be determined. Frequently mentioned have been MRRD, the MOE and planning, MOI through the governor, and possibly the Ministry of Finance.

Regardless of which ministry emerges as the lead, it is clear that it will be necessary for it to have the organizational and analytical capacity to lead an effective planning process. At present these capabilities are not adequately developed within any of the agency's mentioned above.

First, with respect to capabilities, none of the actors currently possesses well-developed and comprehensive planning capacities. Regardless of which government agency or department might assume a leadership role, it would be necessary to develop and support the technical capacities required in a thorough and ongoing planning process.

We must note, however, that the success of a *lead ministry* model of provincial development planning depends on a clear and prominent capability within that agency.

#### 3.1 PROVINCIAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL:

A planning coordination approach that has been suggested by MRRD calls for the provincial governor to chair a *PDC*. The PDC would assume a coordinating role with regard to all development initiatives in the province, including the formulations of provincial development plans and budgets.<sup>9</sup> The adoption of this approach would significantly strengthen the role of the provincial governor. However, it is unclear to what extent there is support for this or other approaches that are being discussed within the government.

Arguments for several of the line ministries to assume a planning leadership role have been and are being put forward. It is beyond the scope of the study to adequately assess the technical and political factors that might affect any of the proposed leadership agency or ministry.

#### 3.2 INTERIM PROVINCIAL PLANNING STRUCTURES

Until a set of permanent structures or processes is established to promote and guide provincial and or regional planning some interim proposals have been put forth. These structures—or some of them—might form a basis for a participatory approach to planning. These include, in various forms, community development councils, district planning *shuras*, and PDCs.

Under a recent initiative, a plan was promoted to establish nominated development *shuras* at the district and provincial levels. Technical support to these *shuras* is to be provided by provincial and district representatives of government departments.

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<sup>9</sup> On the MRRD proposals, please refer to MRRD, "National Implementation Strategy for Alternative Livelihoods," and "Draft Terms of Reference for Provincial Development Committee" (MRRD, 2 February, 2005).

The interim provincial planning bodies proposed and under discussion during the time of this consultancy were to include a three-tiered structure comprising district development *shura* (DDS), a provincial development *shura* (PDS), and a PDC. The DDS and PDS would receive support from line departments. This has been largely an initiative of MRRD, and the participation of other ministries within this structure was not clear during this consultancy.

**District Development Shura.** Districts where the National Solidarity Program (NSP) is operating “clusters” of communities, usually comprising 3–4 villages, will elect one representative each to the district *shuras*, which will be composed of around 20–25 members. These *shuras* may also include two or three loya jirga members and possibly a few religious leaders of the districts. These members are to have a number of ongoing, short- and long-term responsibilities that primarily relate to community resource mobilization; identifying development priorities, education, information, and advocacy; as well as helping government departments and implementing agencies identify, plan, and implement projects. These *shuras* will also be helping to design long-term district development plans.

In non-NSP districts, the DDS will be made up of the members of the “traditional” *shura*, loya jirga members, and some religious leaders—usually the wealthy and land-owning class. They are either nominees of the district administration or are, in effect, project committees formed by a variety of assistance providers and donors.

**Provincial Development Shura.** One member from each district *shura* will be elected to represent the district in the PDS. This body will be tasked with providing assistance and guidance to the PDC. It will review and advise on provincial development plans and on the development activities of various assistance providers, government departments, and National Priority programs. It also has a responsibility in advocacy, information sharing, and sharing of best practices between districts. The responsibilities of the PDS have also been divided into ongoing, short, medium, and long term.

**Provincial Development Committee.** This body is to be chaired by the governor, and made up of heads of all relevant line departments and some donor representatives. It is the final decision-making body (albeit, decisions are advisory and the PDC has no direct authority over resources) on development issues in the province. It selects, prioritizes, and sequences all development activities. This body plays a pivotal role in provincial development planning, budget coordination, oversight, and monitoring of development activities in the province. It is responsible for the coordination of all development activities in the province and of all development assistance providers and implementation agencies.

The level of popular support for giving a strong development role to traditional or newly created *shuras* in setting needs and priorities is unclear. The creation of structures made up of “development interlocutors” at the provincial and district levels responds to the short-term needs of Kabul-based administrators and donors, but the recent history of such structures in Afghanistan—since the 1990s—calls into question their use as anything but very temporary bodies.

The risk is that these interim bodies lack meaningful vertical or horizontal linkages to existing government structures, elected councils, or existing community-based decision-making and consensus-building bodies.<sup>10</sup> There is no indication of how and when these interim structures will phase out once new structures come into existence following the election of provincial and district councils mandated by the constitution. The issue of ownership by the elected councils of development plans/priorities determined by the interim structures is also unclear. A number of recent documents address these issues and more.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix A for a more extended discussion of *shuras* and their meaning in Afghan rural life.

<sup>11</sup> See AREU Briefing Paper: *Caught in Confusion: Local Governance Structures in Afghanistan*, AREU, Kabul, March 2005. The Asia Foundation has also provided a number of documents describing the functions of the proposed local governance structures.

Setting up nominated bodies capable of influencing the allocation of significant development resources appears to give enormous influence to administrators and members of local elite structures. This is particularly troubling in light of the indefinite postponement of planned district council elections, originally planned to coincide with national assembly and provincial council elections later this year (2005). The accuracy of the apparent assumption that the nominated leaders will become elected members of district or provincial councils remains to be seen. Regardless of political outcomes and administrative decisions, planning conducted through a rapidly imposed structure with no linkage to community organizations is very likely to be seen by local residents not among the local elite as artificial, unrepresentative, and not in their interest. This could have negative implications for the democratic process.

### 3.3 CONCERNS ABOUT INTERIM STRUCTURES

During the course of our discussions with a number of provincial departmental heads, MRRD staff, and staff of development projects, it was apparent that not much thought had been given to how the interim structures currently being put into place will fit in with the constitutionally mandated structures scheduled to come into existence after the elections. The issues and questions that arise are the following:

- Elected provincial governments are likely to want to play a role in determining the scope and nature of plans. The PDC will be a useful forum for government technical department coordination, but in the near term, they will have to accommodate to elected representatives and their policies and priorities. Significant changes will take place and appropriate training for government staff and elected representatives should be in place early to assist deliberations and decision making.
- Setting up district- and provincial-level bodies, mirroring those to be elected, raises the potential for conflict and tension among and within communities. The political process in post-conflict situations is fraught with tension. Creating interest groups, even if they are perceived as “interim” bodies, could lead to rivalry and competition between these and the elected councils, which have a constitutionally mandated role in local governance and development.
- The terms of reference of the interim *shuras* give them a mainly advisory role, and they are primarily seen as a facilitator and assistance provider to the government departments and implementing agencies. Spending substantial resources on creating and supporting what are in effect “toothless” bodies raises questions of the costs versus the benefits, as they are unlikely to become effective prior to elections. Some among the AL donors doubt they will ever be effective.
- The governance and development-related roles of the elected district and provincial councils have not been specified. Presumably, this process will be carried out by the elected parliament. This role is not within the mandate of the MRRD or the other development related ministries in Kabul. Therefore, preparing terms of reference for the interim bodies, with the expectation that these will be used as guidelines for developing terms of reference for the elected councils, may be superfluous.
- Given the experience in neighboring countries—specifically in Pakistan, where new, local government elections took place in 2002—and in view of the political and ethnic polarization as witnessed during the recent presidential elections, it is quite likely that these new elected bodies will not accept a basically advisory role as a facilitator to the centrally appointed provincial and district authorities. It is also very unlikely that they will have much patience with government departments that represent the views, policies, strategies, and processes of a central government. Their terms of reference may very well be what they decide is appropriate.

In the period after the newly elected district and provincial councils emerge, the delegation of some fiscal and planning authority to the local level seems likely. This raises the need for a training program for provincial and district representatives that will clarify their responsibilities and appropriate procedures. Virtually none of

the elected members will have experience with democratic processes. Men and women familiar only with tribal and military power cannot be expected to be immediately conversant with democratic norms and procedures.

## 4. PROVINCIAL PLANNING: RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of our assessment of planning and project development processes and structures in a Nangarhar and Helmand provinces, and our exploration of planning-related resources and processes at the central level, we provide the following recommendations.

### 4.1 DEVELOPMENT OF AREA PROFILES

The central component of effective, area-based plans is the area profiles mentioned in the first section of this paper. It was noted there that such profiles are the result of or based on its significant research and assessment of the different sectors and segments of the respective areas. The current lack of such an assessment and analysis and the resulting profiles constitutes a major impediment to long-term planning throughout Afghanistan. Therefore we strongly recommend that the government, in collaboration with the donors, NGOs, and the private sector, move quickly to develop an effective and appropriate process for developing area-based profiles.

This will entail at a minimum ensuring that there are organizational and individual capacities to undertake the guidance of the preparation of the profiles. It will further require that a process be established and supported that results in the collection of relevant information and data with respect to the status of the province's and of the country.

The development of these capabilities must be based on a recognition that the collection and analysis of the required information involves much more than conducting selected interviews within the district's and provinces.

They should contain structured information from agencies like the census, other surveys such as vulnerability assessments, and specific information about district characteristics. A problem with relying on interviews to establish district profiles is the difficulty in guaranteeing that socioeconomic issues have the same weight and balance across all districts. This is necessary to present the range of variation within the province, which is critical in programming funds. Properly formulated, district profiles form a basis for a subsequent step in relating proposed activities over time, between sectors, and by priorities for the entire province. The provincial plan is most useful when it is more than a budgeting process for distributing resources, but presents a picture of dynamic, economic growth relationships with clear specification of how government, donors, and beneficiaries can facilitate beneficial change.

Because of the sheer scale and number of settlements, it is difficult to build viable plans for facilitating economic growth and addressing needs on a purely village-by-village (or community-by-community) basis, yet planning at more aggregate scales loses immediacy and effectiveness. Good planning involves clustering communities on the basis of selected characteristics of settlements such as contiguity, social relationships, or economic interests. Techniques for doing this include taking entire watersheds as a planning sub-unit, or sections of an irrigation system, or possibly areas within similar ecosystems or economies.

Government and donor plans in different sectors can address community interests, watersheds, or communication routes or other variables that link groups of settlements into aggregates large enough to justify the provision of services. In creating a comprehensive, integrated planning framework, the provincial plan provides a common basis for planning across all needs and services (agriculture, health, infrastructure) so that they can be linked and related more readily, with common requirements better identified regardless of the administrative distinctions between sectors.

The technical planning capability of government staff in the provinces is not high at the moment. Government agencies that form part of the very important PDC, including MRRD, have certain deficits in planning their work and gaining the confidence of rural communities. In this regard, there are skills that can and should be the basis of practical training. They include skills in:

- Setting criteria for use of resources
- Record keeping to guarantee transparency
- Processing requests in a timely and effective manner
- Gather and use relevant information
- Monitoring implementation.

## 4.2 INFORMATION SOURCES

Currently, there are few information sources that are relevant and appropriate for provincial planning within Afghanistan. As noted previously in the study there is little indication that government staff at the provincial level are aware of available material or versed in its use. To help alleviate the situation, existing and planned data sources should be inventoried with the results broadly disseminated throughout the country and the inventory updated on a regular basis to ensure its continuing relevance for planning. Currently available data or information sources include:

- MRRD's Vulnerability Assessment Unit (VAU) is a good source of data through the various vulnerability assessments initiated originally by the World Food Program (WFP). These provide indicative, "proxy" measures of poverty through estimates of household food consumption. These are valuable as indicators of areas with poor food availability, even though they sometimes produce inaccurate estimates at the district or subdistrict level, since they depend on self-reporting by respondents who may be understating their true situation, and on estimates of local food availability by surveyors. Nonetheless, such data are useful, *in concert with field confirmation*, in identifying poorer districts. The VAU is now housed at MRRD, but will soon move to the CSO at the MOE. The vulnerability assessments and similar data sets<sup>12</sup> available are useful for national planning and are the source of a number of cabinet-level documents on drought and food availability. There has been little use of them for purposes of provincial profiles, for clarification of district-by-district population and poverty differences, or other agricultural or non-agricultural characteristics.
- UNODC does a yearly opium poppy survey, with district-level statistics available through 2004. The CSO at the MOE is performing a much needed census, which will be available in 2005, with a more comprehensive survey planned for 2006. Household listings of some areas of the 2004 census, available in draft, reveal a startling number of children in each area under the age of 18, surely a matter of concern for future planners.
- Other data sets include those under development by the MAAH (with the Food and Agricultural Organization [FAO]) for crop production and livestock.
- The Ministry of Health surveys that have been repaired and conducted as well as additional planned studies.

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<sup>12</sup> See for example: NRVA Food Insecurity 2004 Updates, Vulnerability Assessment Unit, MRRD; Draft HH Listing Database 24 Jan 2005, Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Economy

- Ministry of Urban Development and Housing previously completed vulnerability mapping. This mapping effort might be restarted and a value to the broad planning capacity-building efforts that will be required in the future.
- CSO is conducting a pre-census survey, and the upcoming census will prove invaluable.
- It is also possible that at a provincial level, separate sources or bodies of data may exist either within the government or other agencies such as a university or an NGO. To the extent possible, the existence of such resources should be identified and shared with others both within the respective provinces and throughout the country.

**Analytical Capabilities.** As noted earlier in the study, the ability to analyze and interpret data is limited within Afghanistan. There are, for example, few statistically trained analysts. Consequently, it is difficult for the government and other organizations to make maximum benefit of the available data.

Policy makers and program planners often do not have what they need for making decisions, and comparisons of data sets and manipulation of the figures for specific purposes requires some time, skill, and ability to confirm the accuracy of assumptions and interpretations. This impediment requires the analyst to have knowledge of the kinds of questions that are answerable by analysis, and the kinds of issues someone in decision-making authority might want to understand better through data.

**Establishment of a Project Database.** The rapid expansion of proposed projects requires immediate establishment of a projects database for archiving requests, tracking decisions regarding proposed projects, and the rate and level of implementation at any given time. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of clear and updated data for what will rapidly become thousands of projects affecting millions of people in Afghanistan.

Expansion of surveys of districts should continue based on a participatory appraisal process that makes community members and surveyors partners in determining community needs and goals. Support to community organizations, their growth and development, and implementation of planning and construction programs all require careful monitoring for effective management of plan implementation.

Technical upgrades in appropriate skills, such as participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and other rapid survey skills, as well as the structure and format for common and comparable surveys, are important for provincial field staff and a key element in development planning.

**Alternative Livelihoods Expansion.** Throughout the study period, increasing attention was directed toward alternative livelihoods. Yet the full implication of AL approaches and its relationship to area-based planning has yet to be fully explored and articulated within Afghanistan. Alternative livelihoods remain for many people a separate process and related to area-based planning. The linkage between general area-based planning and alternative livelihoods should be explored, articulated, and incorporated into future planning activities.

AL programs led by MCI, GTZ, and Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) are in progress. These efforts constitute a valuable source of information and experience that can be shared as appropriate throughout Afghanistan.

The many rural communities have been made to undergo the process of formulating a list of development needs more than once, and there exists a certain survey fatigue amongst some respondents who continue to provide information and never see a program response. These lists are all available with different agencies and departments in the regions. The need to carry out another similar exercise with a much higher profile will raise greater expectations. Current surveys conducted by MRRD or ALP contractors should consider the existence of previous consultations and the expectations raised during those, and put some effort into consolidating existing lists, and updating them in the light of development activities already completed in any particular area.

By combining available data, studies, and needs, it is possible to determine and prioritize actions and interventions required to support rural communities in developing sustainable alternative livelihoods. This process should be considered but brief.

A second need that is particularly relevant at the present is that of making greater use of the substantial AL experience and literature. There is a considerable body of literature<sup>13</sup> in Afghanistan providing insight into the meaning and significance of livelihoods-based activities. The reports point up several aspects of Afghan rural livelihoods that should form the core of any approach to shift rural economic practices away from growing illicit crops to better, licit activities, including not only alternative crops but other economic practices. A livelihoods base to program planning addresses the range of household strategies in an area. Major issues to include in building an AL strategy include:

- Agriculture provides a basis for the rural economy, but many rural residents have little direct access to production, since they do not own the land they farm or do not have access to enough land and actually purchase grain for household consumption.
- Land tenure is a significant issue in much of the country, as many rural people are tenants or landless workers with no security of access to land or production.
- Markets for alternative crops and employment are limited on account of poor roads, inadequate storage practices, and lack of information.
- With respect to livelihoods diversity, most rural households practice a range of income-generating activities that include farm and off-farm income.
- Non-farm labor is a major component of household income strategies for the very poor, with clear implications in terms of their need for skills.
- Labor migration is a critical income strategy for over a quarter of households, and is a fundamental part of the way families adapt and cope with changing opportunities and stresses.
- Indebtedness is a significant feature of rural life and reduces the ability of the poor to accumulate assets of any kind; assistance to rural people should include attention to credit needs and use.
- Gender considerations should be included in AL programs, since women form a significant portion of the economically active population but are limited in the alternative economic strategies they can pursue.
- Health is a major expenditure, and a major concern of rural people, with poor health acting as a brake on increased household income or asset accumulation.
- With respect to youth, for Afghanistan as a whole the population below the age of 18 is almost half the total. In provinces like Nangarhar it is closer to 55%, and in some localities it exceeds 65%. These statistics should have clear implications for donor resource allocation. Training of youth for sustainable employment, together with creating enabling structures for increased economic activity and employment (roads, credit, encouragement of expanding small and medium enterprises) will focus investment on an important portion of the population.

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit has produced a series of reports defining and analyzing rural livelihoods. These could provide an effective aid to AL program planning. DFID, AKDN, and GTZ also have explicit livelihoods orientations.

### **4.3 INCORPORATING LIVELIHOODS INTO PLANNING ACTIVITIES**

Serious attention to livelihoods, whether defined through the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) or another structured consideration of peoples' survival strategies, could be easily integrated into a planning framework. The existing AL program, with its very short-term focus, appears almost entirely centered on infrastructure in the form of schools, irrigation systems, and roads, with little attention to other community livelihoods needs for credit, skills training, or other "soft" projects or activities. That situation may change in the medium to long term, and that should be a task undertaken by the AL contractors in Helmand and Nangarhar, but the existing project generation process centers on delivery of small-scale projects, within a brief time frame, that provide an appearance of the maximum distribution of benefits through the employment of local people. It is not too soon to examine how that approach might make the transition toward medium-term strategies for sustainably improving livelihoods.

### **4.4 COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING**

Government policy favors participatory approaches, but centralization and weak local government continue to favor decision making from above. Even if this situation changes, participation by community members requires some investment in enhancing their ability to manage many local concerns. The process whereby communities become increasingly responsible for identifying, planning, and implementing development activities requires practical training for community leaders in management and administration, including basic accounting and literacy. An ancillary result of such training is to prepare community members for dialogue with government and NGO administrators over specific program requirements and available resources, thus avoiding the confusion and sometimes conflict where needs are identified locally but resources are allocated through national programs. Useful capabilities for community leaders and members include:

- PRA and planning—including basic mapping, prioritizing, and assessment skills for project development. PRA is a popular tool with development agencies and NGOs, but it does not require initiation by them once community members learn the basic requirements and skills. In fact, a good deal of basic survey work can be accomplished by community members (e.g., in providing detailed information on numbers of beneficiaries in a watershed area, women and children among the village population, agricultural potential of the area as indicated by past histories of production, etc.).
- Illiteracy is common in Afghan communities. Basic literacy and numeracy skills are invaluable in enhancing the degree of communication between villages and with assistance agencies, and in increasing the levels of mutual confidence. Basic accounting is a key requirement for sustainability within community-based organizations (CBOs).
- Organizational, meeting management, and conflict resolution skills.
- Project management, reporting, and monitoring.
- Developing community capacity to participate in a planning effort can benefit from, and will require, external technical assistance and training. The development of such capacity can take a number of forms, or involve and benefit from well-guided interventions and support.
- An initial effort that could bear fruit in this respect would be the training of trainers who could work with community, district, and provincial groups in obtaining and using substantial information regarding the area, analyzing it, and determining how it can be interpreted and used as the basis for the development of an area plan.

- Common approach—what is being used by whom—would need to be determined. From a government perspective will help to have common messages or approaches, or at least a conscious awareness of differences among approaches to planning, and to project development and selection.
- Training of trainers may be provided in many ways, through NGOs or other agencies or through experience working with survey teams. Over time, commonality of approach and standardization of skills training for communities is crucial.

#### **4.5 PROMOTION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

A general problem in the country is the absence of skills, which basically leaves many rural communities with a choice between a very vulnerable existence, based on subsistence farming or low-paid unskilled labor. Seasonal and long-term out-migration and the remittances from such employment are an important part of the livelihood strategies in many rural areas, particularly in the more remote resource poor parts of the country. The shortage of skilled labor to feed the construction boom that the country is witnessing is being filled by migrant labor from Pakistan, with estimates of the number of Pakistanis employed in the construction in Afghanistan at around 20,000. Several large donor-funded infrastructure projects in the country are using foreign skilled workers.

Diversifying livelihood options in rural communities is particularly important, given the fact that almost 54% of the rural population nationally is under 18 years of age. Small landholdings are the norm in most of the country, and agriculture is not enough to provide sustainable livelihoods for the rural population. The assumption that rural people live off of agricultural production or wages is not correct, as evidenced by the livelihoods studies conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). It is important to create off-farm and non-farm income opportunities for the rural population in general and, in particular, for the youth who will soon be entering the job market.

Identifying skill requirements and opportunities and starting a skills training program that provides training to rural communities in marketable skills can be accomplished in a relatively short period. Effective training courses in construction-related skills such as masonry, plumbing, electricity, and welding can be designed for completion in six months, with the first set of graduates entering the labor market within one year of the start of the project. The National Rural Support Programme training courses taught in Islamabad provide a source for curriculum and method, as well as a training ground for vocational trainers. Training should be skills based, and not oriented toward lectures and theory courses.

To reduce costs the skills training can be provided in district center schools or offices in the afternoons when these buildings are not used. During the training period the trainees could be paid a basic stipend to cover their expenses and to fill the gap in household income. At the end of the training, they could receive either a lump sum to cover their costs while seeking work or a set of the tools for their skill.

There may be disinclination by some contractors to replace their experienced workforce with freshly trained graduates from these vocational training centers. This reluctance can be overcome by the following means:

- Under the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program, all infrastructure projects funded by the program have to employ 30% of their labor force from among the demobilized militiamen. Similar regulations for all donor-funded infrastructure projects would ensure that graduates of the skill training program find employment.
- Setting up employment exchanges in the provincial departments of the Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs can assist in finding employment for these skilled laborers.

In the longer term, a well-designed, established, and managed vocational training program can be extended to provide training in skills required for small- and medium-enterprise programs and to support the requirements of the growing private sector.

#### 4.6 DEFINE AND SUPPORT PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

As discussed above, it is very difficult to generate community needs on the basis of extensive participation without the long-term presence of something like the AKDN (Badakshan and Bamyan) community mobilization teams who do extensive PRA within communities. NGOs working with community *shuras* may come up with fairly accurate assessments and specification of needs in limited geographic areas, but the costs of scaling up to broad program coverage across provinces will remain a major budgetary and personnel hurdle for the foreseeable future. There seems little choice but to proceed with district consultations with as much community based interaction and involvement as feasible at this stage.

For provincial *shuras* and PDCs, just what criteria should form the basis for selection of projects? Virtually everything that is proposed now is some kind of construction, in a country in which infrastructure of all kinds is badly degraded. Under these circumstance, the “best guess, best fit” strategy is justified for the short term. Without a full needs assessment and ranking of proposals through selection criteria determined by community agreed-on priorities, there is little choice but to go along with apparent community consensus—or no objection—where there is reason to believe large numbers of people will benefit from employment on the project and the resultant facility itself.

It is possible to establish broad, general criteria for projects selected under the ALP:

- *Technical complexity.* Projects requiring complicated or extended engineering design and assessment are not appropriate for short, rapid implementation. Projects should be accomplished within a relatively short period of time for providing employment opportunities and credible, rapid impact.
- *Cost ceiling.* There is a point at which local-level development funds cannot be used effectively for major, costly construction (e.g., the rehabilitation of major, state operated irrigation schemes, or roads for major traffic).
- *Beneficiaries.* Significant numbers of the community should benefit from small project implementation. Distribution of benefits exclusively to a few powerful individuals is to be avoided, thus responsible surveyors must concern themselves with the numbers of people and the likely distribution of benefits within the command area of proposed projects.
- *Community commitment.* Communities should provide evidence of willingness to complete the project, and agree to maintain it. At a minimum, local *shuras* may provide this agreement, appointing responsible parties to ensure effective implementation and guarantee equitable opportunity for community members to be employed under the project. Clearly, where community *shuras* or other groups have been captured by special interests, projects are of questionable viability.
- *Village/area consultations and surveys.* Community participation and empowerment often requires extended periods of mutual preparation and learning between communities and the agencies providing resources for development. In the short run, the ideals of equitable participation by all community members is not possible. Short-term, immediate needs projects are but the beginning of a process. Regardless of the short-term needs and constraints, there are minimum expectations for the surveys and the process within communities. For example, the community’s members must be widely informed. Discussion within the community and with RRD/GOA/NGO surveyors should be as free as feasible, meaning discussion should not be disruptive and the cause of conflict, but must meet critical and immediate needs for large numbers of the community.

- *Women and the poor.* Ways of involving women and the poorer members of the community in project selection and implementation should be explored from the earliest involvement with the community. Initially, this may require significant cultural sensitivity, but their inclusiveness in the participatory process should be on the agenda from the beginning.
- *Defined contract mechanism.* The flow of funds, accountability for completion between communities, contractors, and RRD, and responsibilities for financial accounting should be clearly understood by all parties.

## 4.7 FACILITATOR TRAINING

Appendix A provides a brief overview of issues and techniques that might form part of a program of training for facilitators trying to help communities and district *shuras* organize for productive and sustainable, licit livelihoods. These facilitators may be staff from the departments of RRD, sub-governors, or other interested members of district and provincial *shuras*. Facilitators will strengthen the ability of district representatives to improve livelihoods in communities by identifying opportunities and prioritizing action plans for sustainable and productive economic activity. Appendix B provides a list of persons contacted in the preparation of this report.

This is not a full discussion of all one needs to know to work with communities. It is a summary of a few appropriate concepts and methods, based on experience in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Facilitators are key to planning for livelihood development in a process that depends on district and community decisions and mutual agreement on a plan of action. Progress in organizing and managing resources will differ considerably between one community and another. The needs, customs, and aspirations of people in different parts of Afghanistan are far too different to allow for rigid requirements or restrictions. In practicing their craft, facilitators must be patient and flexible, persistent but responsive.

MRRD facilitators will help communities to recognize their needs and opportunities and to organize themselves as CBOs with an effective voice in district and provincial *shuras*. They will assist district organizations and help communities better understand the potential of their natural and physical assets while identifying opportunities for change toward sustainable and productive livelihoods. They will work largely in the formation of effective and representative *shuras* at the district level.

AL development depends on constant cooperation and discussion between communities, government officials, NGOs, and those in the private sector. Specific activities undertaken depend on the judgment and intentions of facilitators and communities. Those who work with communities and district *shuras* will want to seek further training through MRRD on many of the activities and skills touched on only briefly here.

Key planning tools discussed in Appendix A include:

- Initiating community meetings
- Applying for project assistance
- Visiting other AL districts
- Inventory and monitoring of district resources
- PRA for livelihoods approaches
- District priority setting
- Negotiation.

## APPENDICES

Table 3 is a data table for Nangarhar made up from various data sets collected by different agencies for different purposes. It is only an example, does not include new districts or urban areas, and is illustrative but not a basis for programming. The table points toward what further data analysis could accomplish. Review of the figures raises policy and planning issues of at least initial interest to planners, including:

- (Column 1) District populations vary from under 14,000 to almost 200,000. Clearly, providing the same personnel, organizational, and development assistance to each district is inappropriate.
- (Column 2) Consultation with and organization of “communities” is part of government policy. The number of inhabited “areas” recorded by census workers (over 1,300) includes some settlements that together form contiguous, single communities, and others that would stand alone as a community (Column 3 shows average population of areas within a district). The total number of communities (even if made up of more than one area) must be high—a major challenge for participatory organization. Scaling up to support that many communities in just this one province is a monumental task.
- (Column 5) The number of people per hectare of poppy cultivation (Population divided by hectares in poppy) provides a gross indicator of the intensity of opium cultivation in an area, during the year surveyed. The measure of fewer people per hectare of poppy cultivation indicates a larger extent of cultivation relative to population, and so the relative economic dependence on illicit cultivation is higher. The implication of this statistic is indicative, useful in the context of other observations, such as the extent of other cultivation or the existence of alternative employment opportunities.
- (Column 6) The January 2005 survey of proposed projects indicates that the method used did not allow for district population size.
- (Column 8) The NRVA data for people living on less than 1,680 calories per day is possibly a proxy measure for poverty. Until household income surveys become available, this is the best available measure, although it should be used with caution as it is subject to bias and collection error.
- (Column 9) The population-under-18 figure indicates a high proportion of young people in the population, and should guide policy makers and development planners to consider ways to work with that very important segment of the population. Where there is a high poverty level and a high dependency ratio (children under 18), there are major social welfare concerns. Education, skills training, and creation of non-farm income opportunities might be reviewed in the context of these figures.

<b>Table 3. NANGAHARA PROVINCE DATA*</b>									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>NRVA District Name</b>	<b>District population CSO</b>	<b>Areas recorded in HH listing database (CSO)</b>	<b>Average population per area</b>	<b>Estimated poppy ha 2003 (UNODC)</b>	<b>Population/ha of opium production 2003</b>	<b>Nangarhar projects proposed (DAI/RRD)</b>	<b>People per project proposed (based on district population)</b>	<b>Percent population with less than 1,680 calories (NRVA)</b>	<b>Percent population aged under 18 (CSO)</b>
Surkh Rod	91,548	114	803.1	118	775.8	63	1453.1	18.3	54.0
Hisarak	28,376	95	298.7	1,016	27.9	239	118.7	46.1	57.5
Sherzad	63,177	111	569.2	1,641	38.5	126	501.4	15.2	53.6
Khogyani	108,040	50	2160.8	2,986	36.2	55	1964.4	49.3	56.5
Chaparhar	57,339	55	1042.5	1,169	34.3	173	331.4	22.1	53.8
Pacher Wa Agam	40,050	57	702.6	1,142	35.1	70	572.2	28.0	54.7
Dih Bala	33,294	59	564.3	927	35.9	87	382.7	32.9	56.8
Rodat	63,347	37	1712.1	3,313	19.1	201	315.2	71.4	50.7
Achin	190,936	312	612.0	2,131	89.6	191	999.7	79.7	54.9
Nazyzn	16,328	32	510.3	98	166.6	123	132.7	63.3	58.6
Doorbaba	13,479	42	320.9	31	434.8	135	99.8	80.4	54.1
Shinwar	64,804	36	1800.1	1,616	40.1	115	563.5	63.3	56.3
Muhmand Dara	42,103	39	1079.6	19	2,215.9	146	288.4	17.5	60.5
Lal Pur	19,257	20	962.9	1	19,257.0	148	130.1	3.8	58.3
Goshta	31,130	50	622.6	13	2,394.0	60	518.8	0.0	57.2
Bati Kot	70,738	51	1387.0	1,994	35.5	200	353.7	62.9	56.8
Kama	52,527	70	750.4	558	94.1	86	610.8	10.7	52.4
Shiwa	42,823	53	808.0	102	419.8	156	274.5	18.6	55.9
Dara-I-Nur	28,102	43	653.5	24	1,170.9	166	169.3	57.8	51.7
Rodat (Kot)	52,154	53	984.0	3,313	15.7	93	560.8	65.1	53.2

\* Data for Illustrative purposes only, not for citation. Table does not include urban areas or newly formed Districts. Sources: Draft CSO Household Listings Database, NRVA 2004 Food Insecurity Estimates Update, UNODC Poppy Survey 2003, Results of the Nangarhar Participatory District Workshops (January 2005).

## APPENDIX A: PLANNING TOOLS

### A.1 INITIATING COMMUNITY MEETINGS

#### **Activity:**

Community meetings to create awareness and interest in community mobilization and support to establishing district *shuras* for identification of needs, creation of awareness, and determining an appropriate plan of action.

**Purpose of the Activity.** This activity is intended to start the process of mobilization for development of local communities. Communities will discuss the resources, opportunities, and needs of their area and agree to local and government actions that will generate benefits for both the community and individual/household.

**Who Is Involved.** The community, government officials, private sector consultants, NGOs, and district officials. Any interested party can initiate the process.

**Action.** Organize and hold community meetings so that people interested in sustainable improvement of their communities can discuss the concept, and discuss why it would be of benefit to them. Meetings should include (but not be limited to) *shuras*, and to the extent possible and culturally acceptable, the views and contributions of women should be included. Existing CDCs, development *shuras* (project committees), local teachers, or health workers may assist with initial meetings.

**Expertise Required.** Good oral communication skills, command of the local language, and cultural sensitivity are important. If possible, facilitators should also be familiar with the experiences of other communities and should encourage interaction between them.

**Recommendations.** Involve as many people in the planning process at the community level as early as possible. This will build collective knowledge and memory and provide representatives to the district *shura* with direct community input and the force of consensus from the start.

- Limit printed material to one-page flyers or posters that have simple messages about AL. Graphic posters would be more useful in many areas.
- Announcements of meeting should be made early and clearly so that as many community members as possible are informed.
- If feasible, one meeting of the district *shura* could include a tour so that everyone becomes familiar with the location of villages, their boundaries, natural resources, and immediate needs, as well as other important features of the district such as small industries, successful alternative crops, market, and communications issues. Participants may be familiar with the area but may never have really “seen” its potential in terms of local products and potential strengths on which to build. District *shura* members will have relatively little experience in thinking about multicommunity benefits and the need for broad economic progress.

**Remember:**

- Schedule meetings for a time and place convenient to most community members.
- Publicize meetings according to community customs and practices.
- Ensure that community members know and agree to any guests that will be participating in a meeting.

**A.2 APPLYING FOR PROJECT ASSISTANCE****Activity**

If external funds are needed for district development, apply for AL trust funds or ALP assistance and other sources of support through the provincial *shura* and PDC.

**Purpose of the Activity.** A successful application for funds or subproject support will enable the community acquire assistance and carry out activities.

**Who Is Involved.** Community *shuras* should supply ideas and proposed assistance through their representative to the district *shura*. Communities may seek assistance from district officials, NGOs, or private consultants who have experience with needs assessment and project identification. District *shuras* will agree on priorities and sequencing and recommend these to PDS for consideration by the PDC.

**Action.** Community enlists the assistance of one or more of the above parties as facilitators.

The facilitators should conduct a needs assessment workshop to gather and discuss the district's needs, point of view, and willingness to support the activity.

**Recommendations.** At present, communities, RRD staff and district administrators, and NGOs have limited capacity to carry out this activity. Facilitators will benefit from attending further technical workshops sponsored by MRRD.

Other workshops should be carried out to assist community members and district *shura* representatives to prepare proposals and apply for projects, including registering the application within the MRRD database.

**A.3 VISITING OTHER AL DISTRICTS****Activity**

Visits to other districts involved in AL development.

**Purpose of the Activity.** Before undertaking projects of their own, community members or district *shuras* should see other established community projects and speak to the people in these areas. This enables discussion and stimulates ideas. At this point, it is often difficult or impractical to arrange such visits.

**Who Is Involved.** Communities and district *shura* member or councilors, with assistance from "sponsors," district administration, RRD staff, NGOs, or contractors.

**Action:**

- Communities should select community members to participate in visits. Facilitators can help identify places to visit and arrange schedules.

- Selection should allow for gender and age representation (which may mean separate trips for men and women).
- Transport and per diem or other support for visitors should be arranged.
- Communities to be visited should be contacted well beforehand, so they can prepare to host visitors.

#### **A.4 INVENTORY AND MONITORING OF DISTRICT RESOURCES**

##### **Activity**

District resources inventory.

**Purpose of Activity.** The inventory of district resources, including villages, population, economic activities, major transportation routes, educational and health institutions, significant enterprises, as well as a definition of local livelihood characteristics is the first step toward assessing the diversity and potential for sustainable development under the ALP.

**Who Would Be Involved.** The district government staff, provincial technical officers of MRRD, MAAH, district administrators, and/or other appropriate experts from the district/provincial offices, contractors, NSP trainers, and so on.

**Action.** This inventory is done either before or soon after a district forms a development *shura*. The objective of this inventory is for the community to gain an initial understanding of the resources and sustainable management potential of its area.

**Recommendations.** MRRD should organize workshops to help district *shuras* and communities identify resources, potentials, and needs. This should include specification of criteria for selecting priority projects within the district.

#### **A.5 PRA FOR LIVELIHOODS APPROACHES**

Planning must strike an appropriate and practical balance between data collection, interpretation, and analysis, and the identification and selection of potential entry points for eventual intervention design.

**Activity.** Rural communities appraise their own environments. This activity, conducted with the participation of *District shura* members, provides a basis for discussion and priority setting within the *shura*.

**Purpose of Activity.** PRAs help the community to solicit and organize information from community residents in order to develop their own priorities.

PRAs can be used to:

- Determine the priorities and options and siting of community projects.
- Determine the types of economic practices that could be improved (water use, indebtedness, keeping children from school).
- Determine the skills and knowledge of residents that can form the basis for community and district plans.

##### **Action:**

- District *shura* and/or district officers propose a PRA to address a specific set of issues in communities and identify a PRA expert to carry out the exercise.

- PRA expert works with community leaders and district officers to prepare a PRA exercise to target the issues.
- PRA expert leads PRA exercise and prepares recommendations.

**Expertise Required.** Government officers and NGOs need to develop PRA skills, perhaps with MRRD assistance or through USAID contractors.

**Recommendations.** PRA brings together knowledge and needs defined by *shura* and community members with the resources and technical skills of government, donor agencies, and NGOs. In so doing, it integrates local knowledge with external technical concepts.

## A.6 Brief Summary of PRA Techniques

PRA techniques, on which RRD staff should be well trained, can provide good information about the relative importance of issues within communities. These data collection techniques, usually based on rank ordering and other such non-parametric measures, can be very cost effective. They are especially useful where poverty problems are reasonably clear, the need is great, and where there is a dearth of good statistics.

Two fundamental themes run through rural development planning. One is the need to involve beneficiaries in identification and understanding of the nature of their problems and opportunities. A second is the need for cost-effective ways of generating appropriate information for project designs, implementation and management, monitoring, and evaluation with all that requires for interaction, communication, and partnership between those who design, those who implement, and those who benefit from development interventions.

PRA techniques engage potential project beneficiaries in all aspects of project development—from participatory needs assessments to identification of specific interventions, natural resource degradation, and monitoring and evaluation. The inappropriateness of the extended time and high costs of objective data collection and analysis, when compared with the usefulness of information, prompted elaboration of an approach to planning that emphasizes the effective need and quality of information for design, rather than the techniques for gaining objective certainty. This calculus of social and economic understanding defines information requirements in terms of “optimal ignorance” and “appropriate imprecision.” Data collection has a cost, and information itself needs to be used for program design when it is most effective; thus information requirements must be tailored to the need for effective resource allocations over the course of relatively short funding cycles.

It is the need for accurate information for specific purposes at particular locations within limited time frames and for purposes of public policy and direct intervention that marks the overall approach and framework that makes up the various sustainable livelihood approaches. There are a number of key principles, which might be embodied in the MRRD-led government approach to AL. These are:

- *Livelihoods approaches are people centered.* External support must focus on what matters to people; it must understand the differences between and within groups of people; and must work with them, in line with their needs, social environment, and abilities to adapt.
- *Livelihoods approaches should be responsive and participatory.* Rural people must identify and address the priorities; outsiders must find ways of listening to their needs, not imposing inappropriate investments based on programs designed far from where they are realized but helping community members identify a range of practical and realizable opportunities.
- *Livelihoods approaches include multiple levels.* The elimination of illicit production and the related but much larger issue of poverty alleviation are massive tasks. They will be achieved only by ensuring that all levels of activity—from the grass roots to the policy level—are addressed at the same time and with the same aims.
- A livelihood approach must be conducted in partnership, with both public and private sectors.

- *Programs of intervention into rural livelihoods must result in sustainability*—with a balance between economic, institutional, social, and environmental factors.
- *Livelihoods are dynamic.* People’s approaches to their livelihoods change over time in adaptation to the physical, natural, and economic environment; support programs must recognize this and develop long-term strategies where necessary.

A variety of participatory techniques help to initiate and sustain community participation. These focus on helping communities to present their needs for district and provincial *shura* prioritization and PDC evaluation.

The potential of a community may be masked by lack of experience, education, and skills. For that reason, in early stages of community organization, participatory techniques generally make use of outside facilitators whose role is to help communities to work together, focus dialogue on development issues, and suggest constructive ways of raising sensitive issues and addressing conflicts. By promoting dialogue and transparency within the community, as part of a process of problem identification and strategy development, these techniques can help build confidence in leadership structures.

PRA is a systematic, semi-structured data-gathering activity carried out by a multidisciplinary team that might include MRRD engineers, contractor technical advisers, and community members. PRA is designed to combine the experience of outside professionals with detailed knowledge held by members of the community. This information is the basis for rural development planning for the district, and provides local, focused information for use by DDS, PDS, and PDC. Since community members are an integral part of PRA and are involved in guiding the way the information is collected and analyzed, the process is more likely to be accomplished in a manner that is socially acceptable and economically viable and leads to decisions that focus on sustainable development.

PRA helps communities to mobilize their human and natural resources, define problems, consider previous successes and failures, evaluate local institutional capacities, prioritize opportunities, and communicate these to the DDS. This is a starting point for a community to demonstrate its commitment to adopting and implement actions which address sustainable, licit economic growth.

The pillars of the PRA methodology are:

- *Local Leadership.* Rural communities form the active foundation for planning appropriate and sustainable development in their areas. Committed local leaders, some of whom will be members of the DDS, are integral to this planning method.
- *Local Knowledge.* Local knowledge is often very useful and accurate but not gathered together systematically as the basis for decisions. Community members often have locally based ways to solve problems. PRA methods provide rural residents with an opportunity to systemize what they know in order to:
  - Rank problems
  - Seek solutions
  - Sensitize community groups to take action
  - Attract technical and financial assistance.
- *Community Institutions.* Communities with current or potential opportunities, or needs may be unaware of how to take effective action. PRA helps local institutions and leaders mobilize themselves and recognize that community capabilities are important resources for development. PRA helps local groups

to rely on themselves in combining their own potential with external opportunities to structure a solution to problems they identify.

- *Attracting Outside Help*

Communication of PRA results to through district *shura* members is the starting point for assessment and possible approval by provincial *shuras*, which will be communicated to the PDCs for technical evaluation.

PRA methods can be divided into seven broad steps:

1. *Initiation:*

- Site selection
- Composition of PRA team

2. *Preliminary site visits:*

- Informal data gathering
- Community review meetings
- Planning meetings

3. *Data gathering:*

- Spatial data (mapping of the area and its resources)
- Temporal (time-related/dependent) data (e.g., timing of crops, needs for irrigation water, dry and wet seasons)
- Social data
- Technical data

4. *Data synthesis and analysis:*

- Identification of the problems and their causes
- Ranking of the problems
- Identification of the opportunities
- Ranking the opportunities

5. *Preparation of community needs*

6. *Consensus within the community on priority needs, communicated to shura member and district shura.*

7. *Periodic review of achievements and revision of the plan.*

## A.7 DISTRICT PRIORITY SETTING

### Activity

Develop a district priority plan for sustainable improvement of livelihoods.

**Purpose of the Activity.** Developing a district priority plan allows district *shuras* to monitor implementation of integrated activities agreed on by the PDC, and provides information back to the PDC on the rate and appropriateness of selected activities in the district.

**Who Is Involved.** District *shura* members with facilitators (could be the inventory or PRA team).

**Action.** Use data from inventory or PRA plus AL goals and objectives determined by the provincial development *shura*.

Assemble planning team. Let communities in general know that this activity is going forward; several community meetings should seek consensus and agreement. Plans should be widely shared and clearly communicated.

**Expertise Required.** A plan can be developed with assistance from facilitators as part of the planning team.

Planning team should have capacity to develop recommendations, but the district *shura* may need assistance in determining priorities and sequencing of proposed projects.

**Recommendations.** Creation of a district development plan is a continuing activity as each should be updated regularly by the PDC on the basis of close monitoring of the plan.

## A.8 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FACILITATION SKILLS: NEGOTIATION

Much of the work of establishing a community organization and determining its mandate, purpose, and method involves negotiation, sometimes in quite conflictive situations in places where suspicion and outright hostility are strong. Parties to these discussions have varying agendas with significant differences on their clarity over what they need, what they want, and what they can get. In determining community needs, and the focus for local-level development, there are many opportunities and many choices for community members to make. It is unlikely that all will agree immediately on one way of operating or one purpose for the organization. Development planning for communities, districts, or provinces is a process that does not take place all at once. It is important that dialogue and discussion continue. For that reason argument and conflict should be minimized while encouraging constructive debate. This is easily said but sometimes difficult to attain. Here are some general tips and advice for facilitators derived from professional negotiators in many fields and used in a number of community based programs.

1. **Attack the problem, not the person.** It is better to be tough on the problem and respectful of the person. When talking about a problem, try sitting side by side instead of across from each other. A head-on position may look like a confrontation.
2. **Work together to solve a problem, not win a contest with a competitor or opponent.** If you assume that you are in a contest, another person might conclude that there will be a winner and a loser. Try to make sure that your negotiation ends with all parties thinking or knowing that they have won something: this is “win-win” negotiating and it is very effective because it attempts to accommodate different needs.
3. **Remain open, not closed to ideas.** If you consider only one solution—yours—you might find yourself closed to others, even others that might be better than your original solution. You also risk resentment by other parties. Make sure that others feel they are helping to define the final results.

4. **Explore interests, avoid taking early positions.** If you establish a position too early or try a settlement too quickly, you close your mind and options too and may fail to bring everyone closer to agreement or solution. Focus on interests, and see what the other party(ies) is (are) thinking and why.
5. **Don't try to break the other party's will, make them willing players.** Spending time and energy on "negative" activities is not productive. Look for external, objective criteria on which to focus discussion and exploration. Maintaining arbitrary positions will not guarantee success.
6. **Try to improve your outcome without seriously worsening that of others.** Search for the most agreeable and effective solution, so even at worst everyone comes away with something more or better than nothing.
7. **Be flexible.** If someone does not like your idea, pushing harder to convince that person probably will not change his/her mind. Explore other options for getting the same result.
8. **Try, try again.** Be prepared to have more than one opportunity at achieving what you want. You might have to let the matter rest for a while, but if it is important, come back to it another time using a new approach.
9. **Let people save face.** Nobody likes to be seen as having been forced or beaten in a negotiation. Allow the others to come out of the negotiation with something they can offer their side as a win.
10. **Look to the long-term outcome.** Sometimes you may have to give up more than you had hoped in the short term to ensure that you end up with a reasonable result in the longer term.
11. **Make "yes" easy to say.** Help the other person to be able and willing to say *yes* to your idea. Think about what the implications are for that person if he/she does agree with you. What steps will be necessary to implement the decision? How can you help that person do this? Show him/her that you have thought through the implications.
12. **Accentuate the common ground.** Throughout the negotiation, keep reviewing things everyone agrees on. Discuss progress as well as problems.
13. **Use feedback to guide you.** Be aware of what the other person is saying and thinking. Keep alert for signals of tiredness, confusion, boredom, and irritation. Suggest breaks if necessary. Also, stay alert for signs of willingness to move. Don't miss opportunities for agreement.
14. **Take notes.** Many negotiations are long and involve large amounts of information. Take notes to as a reminder of agreements and guide for upcoming discussions. Don't rely on formal minutes of the meeting, if any; these will not necessarily be available to you when you need them and are not guaranteed to be accurate. You might also consider the use of audio or videotape recorders, in addition to recording notes by hand. Keep in mind that the use of electronic devices can be expensive if they are used continuously. You may choose to record electronically only milestones, decisions, and important agreements. Use these devices in the open and with full knowledge and permission of all participants. If others discover that you have been recording secretly and without their consent, you could seriously damage your chances of success.
15. **Re-frame problems and solutions.** Ask questions such as:
  - "Are there too many" or "are there too few"?
  - "Can it be done," "what would happen if we did"?
  - "Are there other ways for it to happen"?
  - "Is it possible," "if it is possible, what would it take"?

16. **Withdraw with dignity.** At any stage in the negotiation, you may discover that you are not going to get the minimum you decided would be acceptable, or that other community issues or resentments make discussions unproductive on a given day. If you can foresee a “lose” situation with no positive outcome, withdraw with dignity rather than going over the same disagreeable terms again and again. You will end up frustrating yourself even more and will irritate if not completely alienate the other participants. Maintain positive relations if possible so you can return to try again.



## **APPENDIX B: PERSONS INTERVIEWED**

1. **Andrew Wilder**, Director, AREU
2. **Sarah Lister**, Senior Researcher, AREU
3. **ASP staff**, including DDG, Jehangir and Fazal
4. **Ghulam Monawar**, AIMS
5. **Steve Mason**, Grant Manager, AKF
6. **Erick Zeballos**, Livelihoods Advisor DFID
7. **Heinrich Rogg**, GTZ, Project for Alternative Livelihoods, Jalalabad
8. **Steven Romanoff**, DAI chief of party, Afghanistan Immediate Needs Project, Jalalabad
9. **Haji Noman Arsala**, Director, Department of Economy, Jalalabad
10. **Abdul Hadi Asif**, PMA, MRRD Jalalabad
11. **Dr. Asif**, Deputy Governor Nangarhar
12. **Pete Spink**, Advisor, MRRD, Kabul
13. **Omar Zakhiwal**, Advisor, MRRD, Kabul
14. **Andrew Pinney**, National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Advisor, MRRD
15. **Michael Semple**, Deputy to European Union Special Representative
16. **Mr. Dawari**, Director of Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority (HAVA)
17. **Mr. Habibi**, Director Department of Agriculture, Helmand
18. **Shair Mohammad Akhundzada**, Governor Helmand
19. **Mohammad Omar**, Director Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Helmand
20. **Dr. Mohammad Akbar Shaheedi**, PMA/RRD. Helmand
21. **BRAC Staff**, Helmand
22. **Dr. Sardar**, Programme Manager, Mercy Corp International, Helmand
23. **Chemonics AIP staff**, Helmand 14–17 February
24. **Engr. Saleem Qayum**, Adviser to the Deputy Minister for Programs
25. **Anthony Fitzherbert**, Alternative Livelihoods Adviser, MRRD.

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