

# AFGHANISTAN CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT

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## *INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE AFGHAN CIVIL SOCIETY (I-PACS)*

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The views and recommendations expressed in this report are solely those of the Counterpart Assessment Team and are not necessarily those of USAID.

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The electronic version of this document has dozens of external as well as internal hyperlinks, and is thus not only easier to read but contains considerably more information. The e-version of this document is downloadable from Counterpart's web site at [www.counterpart.org](http://www.counterpart.org); alternatively, a copy may be requested by e-mail from Counterpart's Anika Ayrapetyants at [Anika@counterpart.org](mailto:Anika@counterpart.org).

The text of the report or its parts may be freely used for the purposes of development, education, research and policy making, provided that the source is acknowledged in full.

## Acronyms used in this document

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ACSF	Afghan Civil Society Forum
ADA	Afghan Development Association
AHDAA	Agency for Humanitarian Development Assistance for Afghanistan
ANCB	Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau
ANSO	Afghan NGO Security Office
APEP	Afghanistan Primary Education Program
AREA	Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan
AREU	Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit
AWEC	Afghan Women’s Educational Center
AWN	Afghan Women’s Network
AYCA	Afghan Youth Coordination Agency
BIC	Bank Information Center
CAII	Creative Associates International, Inc.
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CAWC	Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee
CBO	community-based organization
CDC	(NSP) community development council
CHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance
CHR	Coordination of Humanitarian Relief
CPAU	Cooperation for Peace and Unity
CSO	civil society organization
CSSC	Civil Society Support Centers
D&G	democracy and governance
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (German Development Service)
DHSA	Development & Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan
DIHR	Danish Institute for Human Rights
ESAR	Engineering Services for Afghanistan Reconstruction
EU	European Union
FCCS	Foundation for Culture and Civil Society
FP	(NSP) facilitating partner
GRSP	Ghazni Rural Support Program
HRRAC	Human Rights Research & Advocacy Consortium
ICC	Islamic Coordination Council
ICNL	International Center for Not-for-Profit Law
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	internally-displaced person
I-PACS	Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISO	Intermediary Service Organizations
KRA	Kunduz Rehabilitation Agency
MoE	Ministry of Economics
MoIC	Ministry of Information & Culture
MoJ	Ministry of Justice

MoP	Ministry of Planning
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development
NGO	(Ministry of Planning-registered) non-governmental organization
NPP	National Priority Program
NSP	National Solidarity Program
ODA	official development assistance
PVO	private voluntary organization
RAFA	Reconstruction Authority for Afghanistan
REACH	Rural Expansion of Afghanistan's Community-Based Healthcare
RfA	(USAID) request for applications
RSSA	Reconstruction and Social Services for Afghanistan
SDC	Swiss Development Corporation
SDF	Sanayee Development Foundation
STAAR	Social and Technical Association for Afghanistan Rehabilitation
SWABAC	South-West Afghanistan Balochistan Association for Coordination
TAF	The Asia Foundation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VO	village organization

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Executive Summary

This Assessment of the current state of civil society in Afghanistan was conducted in response to the need for a better understanding of the composition and health of civil society across Afghanistan. The Assessment was carried out by [Counterpart International](#) under a cooperative agreement with the [United States Agency for International Development](#) (USAID), within the framework of the USAID-supported Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS). Its underlying aim is to ensure informed policy and equitable resource allocation decisions for civil society development in Afghanistan. It is designed to serve as a starting point for assistance provided under I-PACS and will be expanded and augmented as experience provides refined information about the most useful and effective approaches to civil society promotion.

The I-PACS Sector Assessment seeks to:

- Place the civil society sector in the context of Afghanistan;
- Define the nature and effectiveness of civil society in the country;
- Identify priority areas for capacity-building;
- Clarify realistic expectations about organizational maturity;
- Identify needs in the legal enabling environment;
- Explore the relationship between civil society and government;
- Understand the relationship of Afghan civil society to the media;
- Characterize the relationship among players in the sector.

It is anticipated that the Assessment will be of use not only to USAID-sponsored programs but to the larger universe of development providers in Afghanistan. To this end the Assessment will be published and disseminated widely in the development community. The Assessment found that in spite of a tumultuous history, there is a diverse and ever-growing civil society sector in Afghanistan. The key factors that will influence I-PACS in program implementation are:

- The constant proliferation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Afghanistan for project implementation purposes;
- The relatively low level of institutional maturity of the civil society sector;
- The large sums of money and responsibility that very immature organizations have available;
- The relatively higher credibility that traditional groups enjoy compared with the newer entities.
- CSOs play a vital role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, implementing infrastructure development projects and providing social services to communities throughout the country. In March 2005, the total number of projects being implemented by CSOs in Counterpart's sample of 678 was an impressive 3,428.

Within each of these factors there are of course pitfalls, but there also are opportunities for creative programming in a dynamic and vibrant environment. Assessment evidence suggests a strong commitment among the populace to participate in the process of nation-building. Though

in general, the overall level of institutional depth is low, the survey and case studies indicate a relatively sophisticated understanding of the purposes of civil society.

Other key findings with implications for the implementation of I-PACS are:

According to the key informant interviews, the institutional capacity of most CSOs is low but the Assessment suggests that most CSOs do not recognize most of their capacity-building needs, with the exception of fund-raising, which 56 percent of the survey sample cited. Other specific needs cited were communication in all its different permutations from the ability to travel easily to electronic communication. Respondents also identified advocacy as one of their main needs. Perhaps the biggest surprise is the relative unimportance of security as a constraint, compared to popular perceptions of the situation.

Needless to say, women's rights are one of the most difficult aspects of civil society development in Afghanistan and I-PACS must give constant and sensitive consideration to this question in a famously difficult environment. However, there were many indications in the Assessment of an awareness of the importance of the women's issue and of efforts to include women in the work of reconstruction.

A small number of relatively large, sophisticated Afghan organizations collectively expend the lion's share of the total budget presently available to Afghan CSOs. The legal enabling environment for civil society is still weak, with many areas of confusion and lack of clarity, exaggerated by the speed with which new organizations are being created by donors in the absence of a clear framework of typology.

## **B. Recommendations**

- Efforts to support civil society must take into account the diverse nature of Afghan CSOs and their varied needs, resulting in a flexible offering of capacity-building approaches;
- Despite their limitations as non-representative, mostly male bodies, *shuras and ulemas* should be fostered because of their credibility with communities and the resulting potential for making important contributions to anchoring civil society as a force in Afghanistan;
- In identifying its target organizations, I-PACS should utilize Counterpart's decades of experience with institutional development and focus on organizations that appear likely to have the capacity for making long-term contributions to civil society in Afghanistan;
- The capacity-building strategy should introduce graduated grants—starting with small “learning grants” for new organizations and building up to larger grants;
- Consideration also needs to be given to the extent to which registration is a requirement for receiving funds. At present the registration appears to be meaningless and perhaps not the best way of determining whether or not an organization should be eligible to receive funds;
- Support to the adoption and implementation of an NGO Law should remain a high priority as it is a critical element of a functioning civil society in any country;

- In devising training and capacity-building, I-PACS should respond to the needs identified in the Assessment, if only to demonstrate a willingness to listen. Real needs are unquestionably greater than respondents recognize;
- CSOs need to be more clearly linked to communities as a means of building a broad-based constituency and as a means of gaining credibility with the general public;
- Public awareness campaigns should maximize the use of media, especially radio, as a preferred medium of communication for the public at large; and
- Despite the problematic climate for women's issues in Afghanistan, there are openings for working with women, and these should be analyzed carefully so that the program can devise effective strategies for engaging women.

### C. Project Background

In January 2005 USAID awarded the three-year, \$15-million Initiative to Promote Afghan Civil Society (I-PACS) cooperative agreement to Counterpart International. The overarching goal of I-PACS is to increase the role and viability of civil society in Afghanistan by providing capacity building training and grants to civil society organizations showing potential to be sustainable, effective organizations. The I-PACS project goal has four core objectives:

**Objective 1:** Ensure informed policy and equitable resource allocation decisions concerning civil society and CSO development in Afghanistan.

**Objective 2:** Assist in the development and enforcement of a comprehensive legal framework and its enforcement that strengthens the CSO sector.

**Objective 3:** Build the capacity of CSOs to design, implement, manage, monitor and evaluate their activities effectively, and achieve organizational objectives, all with transparency and accountability.

**Objective 4:** Provide funding to CSOs to implement developmental and advocacy projects.

Counterpart's approach to I-PACS is to support the development of stronger Intermediary Service Organizations (ISOs) and Civil Society Support Centers (CSSCs) as integral components of a robust Afghan civil society infrastructure. Counterpart will engage CSOs to advocate for enactment of and monitor compliance with a new NGO legislative framework and build government capacity to implement legislation that regulates civil society. ISOs and CSSCs will be conduits through which Counterpart can access remote geographical regions of Afghanistan with capacity building for CSOs to ensure broad participation in civil society in a professional, transparent and accountable manner. A variety of grant-making mechanisms will provide much needed funding to NGOs to realize their developmental and advocacy objectives.

Counterpart's program includes two Afghan CSOs as partners: the [Afghan Civil Society Forum](#) (ACSF), a CSO founded jointly by 70 existing CSOs to enhance civil society's ability to engage in contemporary political processes; and the [Afghan Women's Educational Center](#) (AWEC), a

women's organization dedicated to the promotion of rights, self-sufficiency, empowerment and understanding among Afghan women and children through education, health, peace education and socio-economic development projects. Accordingly, this assessment involved a number of consultations with these organizations in particular. ACSF also played a major role in the design and implementation of the Assessment.

Counterpart's project also includes several other American implementing partners: The [International Center for Not-for-Profit Law](#) (ICNL) will provide assistance in creating an NGO law for Afghanistan and [Creative Associates International Inc.](#) (CAII) will provide logistics and media assistance in Kabul. Local and international consultants will be used to ensure that gender considerations are integrated in every program component.

#### **D. The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan**

Afghanistan, a mountainous country in Central Asia, is sandwiched between the former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan to the north, Iran to the west, and Pakistan to the south. Throughout much of recent history it has been buffeted by competing outside pressures. Most recently, nearly 25 years of shifting civil wars ended in November 2001 with an American-led assault that removed from power the Taliban, a religiously-based political force that had provided refuge to the terrorist group al-Qaeda.

The years of conflict have damaged the structures of state to a significant extent, so data such as population numbers are guesses at best, but the country's Central Statistical Office put the number in 2004 at about 21 million.<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan's eight geographic regions are divided into 34 provinces with an average of eleven districts each.

According to the most recent available data, the largest ethnic groups are the 63 percent Pashto-speaking Pashtuns in the south, the 12 percent Dari-speaking Tajiks in the north, the 9 percent Dari-speaking Hazaras in the west and the 6 percent Dari-speaking Uzbeks in the north. The remainder of the population is made up of Balooch, Turkmen, Aimaq and Pashayee peoples.<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan is deeply dependent on international aid, which makes up over 90 percent of the government budget.

The traditional form of self-governance in Afghanistan consists of councils (*shuras* in Arabic and Dari, *jirgas* in Pashto). These bodies—on village, district, province, and tribal levels—continue to exist in many parts of the country, although their influence is proportionally less as the degree of urbanization increases. Even so, they perform some functions considered to be the realm of modern governments—principally conflict resolution—and also fulfill some of the roles of CSOs, enabling groups of citizens to gather to accomplish goals.

One of the most significant events in 2005 will be the mid-September parliamentary elections, in preparation for which it is reasonable to expect election-related work, especially for the major US organizations that do electoral system capacity-building. They include the International

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<sup>1</sup> The [Afghan Information Management Service](#) (AIMS) provides a wealth of statistical data about the country and the many aid efforts underway.

<sup>2</sup> WAK – 1999, Norway

Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

## II. METHODOLOGY

Counterpart used four information-gathering tools to provide the basis for the I-PACS Sector Assessment:

- An overview of existing literature about Afghan civil society, including substantial internet-based research;
- More than 50 key-informant interviews;
- A survey of 678 CSOs;
- An examination of CSOs' work and its impact in eight provinces through a series of 24 focus groups with a total of 260 participants drawn from 73 *shuras*, 65 registered organizations and 69 beneficiary groups/communities.

Because political parties are the subject of other donor support projects they were not included in the Assessment. Likewise, although private educational institutions may be not-for-profit, they are generally considered a separate sector and also were not included.

### A. Key-informant interviews

Some 50 key-informant interviews with representatives of civil society, media, Afghan and foreign governments, intergovernmental organizations, and international donors in Kabul were conducted in January and April 2005. Appendix C contains a list of interviewees. Most interviews were about an hour in length and covered topics including:

- How to define civil society in the Afghan context;
- What CSOs do;
- Their resource base;
- Constraints on their activities.

The January interviews resulted in the design of the field survey tool and focus group questions. The April interviews gathered supplemental information that had not been fully provided in January. Although a number of the interviewees worked for organizations that had competed to implement I-PACS, almost all were unfailingly helpful, not only sharing information and documentation but making recommendations for other contacts.

### B. Survey tool

#### *B.1. Survey Tool*

The survey tool was designed to provide a quantitative look at the Afghan CSO sector, since existing literature contained very little of such data. Most studies of Afghan civil society were limited to Kabul. The two field research exercises of the present Assessment—the CSO survey and focus groups—were implemented by the research unit of [Coordination of Afghan Relief \(CoAR\)](#), an Afghan CSO with a network of freelancers around the country experienced in conducting surveys.

The survey tool was designed to provide quantitative information about groups that seemed, in the Afghan context, to have potential as CSOs. Counterpart partner ACSF subcontracted with CoAR to carry out the survey using a 52-point questionnaire, which was translated into Dari and Pashto. The questionnaire was pre-tested in Kabul and its peri-urban area by CoAR's most experienced interviewers. Following eighteen pre-test interviews, adjustments were made to the content and length of the questionnaire. The survey questionnaire is attached as [Appendix A](#). A CoAR interviewer from each province was brought to Kabul for a one-day training in survey interviewing techniques. Due to travel safety concerns and limited resources all 22 interviewers were men.

### *B.2. Sample*

Twenty-two provinces roughly representative of the country's geographic linguistic, ethnic, and economic diversity were selected for the survey. CoAR selected an urban and rural district in each of the 22 provinces based on accessibility and the likelihood of the district containing CSOs to survey. When CoAR interviewers reported that they could not find CSOs in their designated areas, six out of 22 initially selected districts were replaced by other districts in the same provinces. One district had to be replaced due to flooding during the survey period. Appendix E reflects the initially selected provinces and districts, and the districts that replaced some of them in the course of the survey.

Due to the lack of a country-wide register of all types of civil society organizations and initiative groups, snowball sampling was used for the purpose of the survey. Surveyors started by conducting interviews with organizations and *shuras* that were known to them. They then used those organizations to identify other civil society organizations and groups in the designated districts. CoAR charged each interviewer with administering the questionnaire to the leaders of as many CSOs as they could find in the two districts of their provinces during a three-week period in March 2005. The surveyors were instructed to survey the entire district, covering the entire range of civil society organizations (formal and informal) such as NGOs, social and cultural associations, *ulemas*, *shuras*, traditional *shuras* and those set up by NGOs, community based organizations, women's groups, youth groups, students groups, professional associations or unions, and media organizations.

The survey thus covered 44 districts—11 percent of the country's 388 districts—in two-thirds of Afghanistan's provinces. In the event, CoAR researchers completed 712 questionnaires. All the survey result data cited in this report, unless specifically noted, refers to the 678 respondents that identified themselves as non-commercial organizations.

Of the respondents, 91 percent were men and 9 percent women, which speaks to the gender representation (or lack thereof) in the leadership of CSOs. The interviews were in Pashto in 51 percent of cases and the rest in Dari, reflecting the linguistic breakdown of Afghanistan's population as a whole.

*B.3. Map: Survey Tool Provinces*



## C. Focus Groups

### C.1. Purpose

Focus groups, the second field assessment tool, were designed to provide qualitative information to help construct an illustrative picture of CSO activities throughout Afghanistan, to illuminate regional characteristics of Afghan civil society, and to capture CSO, local government/*shura* and community/client perspectives on activities in the eight regions of the country.

### C.2. Coverage

A capital province of each of the eight geographic zones of Afghanistan was selected for focus group interviews. The provinces are:

- Kunduz (Kunduz City)
- Balkh (Mazar-i-Sharif)
- Kandahar (Kandahar City)
- Herat (Herat City)
- Nangarhar (Jalalabad)
- Ghazni (Ghazni City)
- Logar (Pul e Alam)
- Bamiyan (Bamiyan City)

Focus groups were organized by CoAR local offices or ACSF and CoAR partner organizations. Eight focus group facilitators, including two women, were trained by Counterpart and ACSF in facilitating focus groups, participant selection, and reporting. Facilitators were given detailed guidelines on how to conduct the focus groups, how to report back, and what to include in the focus group report. All focus group supporting materials were translated into Dari and Pashto.

All told, 24 focus group sessions were held, three in each region, with a total of 260 participants drawn from 73 *shuras*, 65 registered organizations and 69 beneficiary groups/communities. Men comprised 83% of focus group participants. Each focus group lasted several hours and was facilitated by a CoAR facilitator assisted by a note taker.

In each region facilitators carried out three separate focus group interviews. They were with 1) representatives of NGOs, 2) representatives of *shura*-like CSOs (*shuras*, *ulemas*) and Village Organizations (VOs), and 3) CSO and *shura* beneficiaries. All groups responded to the same five questions designed to identify:

- Changes that had occurred in the last three years;
- Additional changes that the groups would like to address;
- Roles of beneficiaries, registered organizations and *shuras*;
- Resources available to each;
- How the work of each group is different from five years ago.

Generally the NGO meetings were held in CSO offices. The *shura* and client meetings were held in more 'traditional' meeting areas in the communities. Following completion of the fieldwork, ACSF convened the focus group facilitators in Kabul to receive general feedback and had the note-takers' output transcribed and translated into English.

C.3. Map: Focus Group Provinces



## D. Limitations of the Study

### D.1. Survey

The “snowball” method was chosen for the survey sample. This method is utilized when the study subjects are neither well-delimited nor well-enumerated. Because this non-random selection method was used, it reduced the likelihood that the survey sample consists of a representative cross section of CSOs in selected provinces/districts, thus introducing a bias.

Survey interviewers reported having difficulty in identifying organizations. In most rural areas, offices of NGOs and social and cultural organizations were closed, and only sign boards identified their presence in the area. In both rural and urban areas it was easy to find *shuras*. Finding NGOs and social and cultural organizations in urban areas was constrained by the lack of knowledge about them by local people. According to CoAR, “nobody had information about them.”

### D.2. Focus groups

The main purpose of focus group research is usually to draw upon participants’ attitudes, beliefs and experiences in a way which would not be feasible using other methods. Focus groups, however, are limited in their ability to generalize findings to the whole population, in this case to the entire CSO sector. This limitation is due to the small number of people who participate in focus groups and the likelihood that participants will not be a representative sample.

Focus groups can be empowering for many participants who are valued as experts and given a chance to work collaboratively with researchers. Indeed, CoAR facilitators reported that both *shuras* and beneficiaries seemed very grateful to be asked for their opinion. They seemed to feel that it was not common and hoped that they would be engaged in dialogues in the future. Also, focus groups participants took advantage of the group meetings to discuss other pertinent issues during the breaks.

#### D.2.1. Participant Selection Bias

As with the survey results, there was a distinct gender bias in the focus groups, with over 83 percent of participants being men. Reasons given for limited women’s participation were that “uneducated” women were not invited to attend meetings, women were otherwise occupied as a result of the proximity to the national women’s day holiday, women’s meetings had to be held in the community as opposed to an NGO office, and facilitators lacked knowledge of women’s organizations or *shuras* working in their regions. Taking into account that according to the survey, just under 40% of Afghan CSOs have women staff, it may be concluded that not enough effort was made by the focus group organizers to include women in the groups.

Although focus groups organizers and CoAR facilitators were instructed to invite NGOs and social and cultural organizations, in the end, only NGOs were invited to participate in the focus groups. Therefore, the data collected through the focus groups with registered organizations is only illustrative of the views of NGOs.

The study design envisaged participation of beneficiaries of the same organizations and *shuras* that participated in the two other focus groups in the district. However, beneficiaries did not represent clients of the same *shuras* and organizations that participated in the focus groups. Also, contrary to the design of the study, all focus group participants represented more than the district

selected for a particular focus group. Therefore, the data collected during focus groups does not illustrate perceptions of CSO activities of a particular district or province, but rather provides a general picture.

As is the case with many focus groups, there may well be a selection bias of beneficiary participants. As the organizers of the focus groups were NGOs, they may have invited only the clients/beneficiaries that have positive perceptions of NGOs.

### **III. THE LEGAL ENABLING ENVIRONMENT**

As part of their on-going efforts to strengthen the legal framework for Afghan CSOs, in 2002 ICNL conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Afghan laws governing CSO activities, concluding that “the current legal regime ... contains numerous deficiencies, both from the perspective of international norms and in terms of practical application under current conditions in the country:” These included:

- a) The terminology used to refer to ‘NGOs’ (non-governmental organizations) is inadequately defined, leading to confusion about what is being regulated. Without a clear understanding of what in fact is to be regulated, laws purporting to regulate the sector can be subject to abuse, both by the regulating authorities and those purporting to be operating ‘NGOs.’ Even the requirement that earnings not be distributed to those engaged in the NGO operations is lacking.
- b) Registration criteria are not clear and subject to administrative discretion, without time limits for final action, or the right to administrative or judicial review.
- c) Internal governance rules are not prescribed, even by title, and no requirements exist for internal accountability or responsibility.
- d) Reporting and public accountability rules are draconian in form, but are frequently not enforced, a practice leading to lack of clarity and potential arbitrary action by the authorities and evasion by the sector.
- e) Termination provisions are lacking, and liquidation provisions are inadequate. Indeed, upon liquidation, NGOs must transfer material assets to the government, free of charge, or sell them to the government.

Each for its own reasons, the NGO community and the government have for several years supported the adoption of a comprehensive NGO law. Development organizations feel that a law which enhances the transparency and accountability of NGOs would protect the integrity of the sector and provide much-needed clarity in registration, reporting and supervision procedures, which would improve relations between the sectors. The government, as is true in many countries, is jealous of the level of resources that flow from international financing sources to NGOs in Afghanistan, and is at least equally interested in a law that ensures increased NGO accountability.

Furthermore, criticisms of the reconstruction effort seem to have focused particularly on the civil society sector, rather than on government. The government itself has contributed to the distrust, and internal pressures have been building for government to adopt a more controlling stance toward NGOs for some time. Given the overall political context, it is unlikely the government would risk offending donors with too extreme measures, but it is probably reasonable to expect more government oversight than in the past.

Afghan CSOs would be wise to take a more proactive stance to collectively respond to the government's criticisms of the sector. The [Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief \(ACBAR\)](#) has spearheaded one such effort by preparing a code of conduct which would bind participating organizations to a rigorous set of standards for operations in Afghanistan. The code is to be launched in May 2005.

In an effort to improve the legal framework for NGOs, ICNL worked closely with the Ministry of Planning (MoP), other government ministries, ACBAR and the [Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau \(ANCB\)](#) through a cross-sectoral working group in 2002/2003. Formed with the full support of the Ministry of Planning, the working group was tasked with developing a comprehensive new draft law governing NGOs. The result of this participatory process was a draft law that largely complied with international good regulatory practice; the draft law was submitted to the Afghan Transitional Government in July 2003.

Unfortunately, the draft law was never enacted. Minister of Planning Mohaqeq resigned to compete in the Presidential elections. His replacement, Ramazan Bashardost, initiated a strong critique of the civil society sector in 2004. The media widely reported his belief that NGOs' expenditure of donors' money produced little of benefit for the country. He ultimately froze the Ministry of Planning registration process and as of May 2005 it remains frozen.

Earlier, in November 2002, the government had adopted a Law on social and cultural organizations that provides for CSO registration with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). Because of the freeze in NGO registrations, and to avoid the stigma which became attached to the term "NGO," most new CSOs have been registering themselves as social organizations. This law is considered reasonably progressive, and both CPI partner ACSF and the [Foundation for Culture and Civil Society \(FCCS\)](#), the two major Afghan civil society support organizations, are registered in this way. That said, the law is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the entire NGO community in Afghanistan. It applies simply to membership organizations organized for certain specified (and limited) purposes. It therefore remains critical that a comprehensive NGO law be enacted.

In November 2004, Minister of Planning Bashardost issued a regressive draft NGO law, but concerted opposition stalled it and it was never brought to the cabinet. A cabinet reshuffle in January 2005 resulted in the MoP being merged into a new Ministry of Economics (MoE)—to a collective sigh of relief from the NGO community. In an interview, the new Deputy Minister of Economics, in whose bailiwick the issue falls, expressed a strong desire to get the NGO law adoption process back on track, based "95 percent" on the 2003 ICNL-supported draft law.

The Ministry of Economics issued a new draft law in February 2005, based in part on the 2003 ICNL-supported draft, but with significant gaps and modifications, undermining the coherence of the law. Through the I-PACS project, and in close cooperation with ACBAR, ACSF and the Afghan NGO community, ICNL provided immediate technical assistance to improve the draft law. Based on this input, in late March 2005, the Afghan Cabinet issued a newly modified draft law. Although the law represented a significant improvement over the February version, immediate controversy erupted over a single provision, which contemplated excluding NGOs from participating in "bidding".

Due to this controversy, President Karzai formed a joint task force to prepare final recommendations on the draft law. The task force consisted of representatives from the international donor community (including representatives from USAID, the European Commission, UNAMA, Ambassadors from Germany and Japan, the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission and representatives from the Embassy of Canada) and government representatives (the Afghan ministers of Economics and Rural Development, Karzai's chief economic advisor and chief of staff). At UNAMA's and USAID's invitation, ICNL provided assistance to the joint task force.

The result of this process was that in early May 2005 a new draft of a comprehensive NGO law was submitted to President Karzai. If approved, this latest version should go a long way to providing local and international CSOs with a supportive legal framework, including regulations for registration, governance and reporting. However, it does include a prohibition on "bidding," which would essentially ban the government from contracting with CSOs for the delivery of education, health, infrastructure, and other services, a reaction to the government's perception that too much of the resources going towards the development of Afghanistan are routed through NGOs. The final version of the law is expected to be signed by President Karzai in June.

#### **IV. THE CSO UNIVERSE IN AFGHANISTAN**

##### **A. Definitions**

The term civil society has been interpreted variously. One commonly accepted definition is "the sphere of institutions, organizations, and individuals located between the family, the state, and the market in which people associate voluntarily to advance common interests."<sup>3</sup> The civil society sector is usually understood to embrace organizations, defined as loosely as possible—unregistered as well as registered—that have united in taking actions to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals.

Particularly in countries with weak or imperfect political mechanisms, civil society is often seen as an important means for self-determination and self-expression, providing citizens the opportunity to engage more fully in political and economic decision-making. Most civil society-strengthening efforts focus on building management and technical capacity through training and other capacity-building efforts coupled with financial support for the work of achieving the organization's mission.

In any country, the local context—religious, geographical, cultural, economic— influences how civil society expresses itself. It is sometimes not easy to draw a clear line around organizations that should be considered part of civil society. Because war has so decimated the institutions of state in Afghanistan, it is especially difficult to distinguish among types of CSOs and their functions. In addition, beginning in the 1990s and at an accelerated pace in the 2000s, international organizations have created local development committees or councils to serve as project implementers, further clouding distinctions among types and functions of organizations and their relationship to traditional institutional structures.

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<sup>3</sup> From Helmut Anheier's 2004 [\*Civil Society: Measurement, Evaluation, Policy\*](#).

In truth, there are few official statistics on CSOs in Afghanistan and in some cases the same or similar organizations are registered with more than one Ministry. NGOs, for instance, refers merely to organizations with a registration certificate from the MoE, which subsumed the former MoP in January 2005. Separately, the Ministry of Justice maintains a registry of “social and cultural organizations,” although functionally there is little difference among them.

Perhaps the most distinctive features of the Afghan civil society landscape are varied and ever-increasing numbers and types of organizations being created to assist donors in implementing their activities, and the changing perceptions and functions of some traditional groups. Of the former, groups variously called Community Development Councils (CDC) or Village Organizations (VO), but sometimes with variations, are the major category.

*Shuras*—or *jirgas* in Pashto—as well as *ulemas* are more traditional groups of elders, almost exclusively male, that can be said to have more cultural legitimacy than the CDC/VO organizations. But in the urgency of reconstruction in Afghanistan, most distinctions, and definitions, blur. New kinds of *shuras* are created with new purposes; CDCs and VOs tend sometimes to encroach on what once would have been seen as the province of more traditional organizations.

It is estimated that as many as 20,000 CDCs and VOs and their variants will have been created over the next year or so to assist in the reconstruction effort. They will implement the government’s National Priority Plans, particularly the National Solidarity Plan which is a mechanism intended to provide block grants to communities for infrastructure projects. Others will implement a range of donor-funded activities, mostly with sectoral focuses. Thus, the relatively small number of organizations now registered with government bodies, totaling perhaps 2500 in all, is relatively insignificant.

The real task for I-PACS will be to identify which organizations demonstrate potential for providing civil society leadership in Afghanistan and to devise effective ways to foster and build their capacity. It is likely that CDCs and VOs will emerge as one important target group, if only because they will have financial resources at their disposal, arising from their role in implementing a range of projects, including the NPP.

At the same time, the Counterpart survey repeatedly found that the traditional bodies—*shuras* and their variants—enjoy a unique level of trust and legitimacy, particularly in rural communities. As such, they are an important resource for reconstruction and the strengthening of civil society and should not be overlooked, despite that they usually are not elected and tend to have only male membership.

## **B. Organizational Typology**

There are, broadly speaking, perhaps three significant kinds of Civil Society Organizations in Afghanistan, although there are as many as a dozen different names for them depending mainly on historical accident. From the three will likely come the core of civil society in Afghanistan that I-PACS is charged with building. They are:

- Village Organizations (VOs) are local aid committees formed in ever-increasing numbers by donors to advise or oversee the administration of a particular form of

assistance. These include education committees, Community Development Councils (CDCs), also known as development councils and confusingly sometimes called “new *shuras*”;

- *Shuras/jirgas* are traditional local councils that villages or tribes establish themselves, usually for the purposes of self-government but also to represent a community’s interests to other parts of society. This type also includes *ulemas*, well-respected local scholars’ boards that provide religious guidance to the community;
- Approximately 2500 organizations, which includes NGOs and social and cultural Organizations that have, over time, registered with government bodies, some of which play important roles in the reconstruction effort and some of which no longer exist.

Depending on with what body they registered, they will be called by different names. In general: organizations registered by the Ministry of Economics are called NGOs and those registered by the Ministry of Justice are called social and cultural organizations. But in the absence of a functioning NGO law and the proliferation of new groups, the distinctions are not particularly meaningful and organizations should be assessed on the basis of their track record and potential, not whether they are registered or what they are called.

#### *B.1. VOs*

In the Counterpart sample VOs include CDCs, educational committees or other development committees. Among the 138 VOs for which questionnaires were returned, two-thirds have fewer than 10 members; the rest have from 10 to 25. Eighty percent have from one to three “projects,” while the rest have none. Half have no budget; the budget of one-third does not exceed US \$10,000, while the other 17 percent have a budget of from US \$10,000 to US \$100,000. Over half of the 138 VOs in the survey that provided membership information disaggregated by gender reported at least one woman member, a higher proportion than for any other type of organization.

Early in the post-Taliban period, the Afghan government began to express a strong desire that, ostensibly for purposes of coordination, prioritization, and nation-building, international aid monies be channeled through state structures. This pressure continues. The government, in consultation with international donors, defined eight National Priority Programs (NPP) for the country’s development.

The flagship NPP is the National Solidarity Program (NSP), a mechanism intended to provide a block grant of up to \$200 per family to communities for infrastructure-related community improvement projects. Applications for the block grant must come from CDCs, each representing 25 to 300 families. Lacking the capacity to build the CDCs, the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the “line ministry” for the NSP, contracted with about 20 Facilitating Partners (FPs)—two-thirds of them international NGOs, the rest Afghan NGOs—to take responsibility for creating CDCs in one or more provinces.

More than 5,000 of the eventual 20,000 CDCs have been created, with 800 more per month reportedly being added. In some places women’s CDCs have been elected since, when women are elected to the “regular” CDC, they often do not participate in its work. Key-informant interviewees agree that some of the CDCs have characteristics of CSOs, depending on the participants’ initiative. Each has from five to 15 members. Some of the FPs teach fundraising in

general, not just how to relate to the MRRD's block grant application process. Additionally, the CDCs receive registration certificates from the MRRD upon being properly constituted, giving credence to the claims of groups that they are "registered," though not necessarily with the MoE or MoJ. On the basis of their status, they open bank accounts through which they expend their block grant's resources.

Several donors use CDCs for their own program implementation as in the case of USAID's Literacy and Community Empowerment Program (LCEP) to implement literacy activities in 200 communities. Others, usually US-financed, include:

- Creative Associates International Inc: US \$88 million Afghanistan Primary Education Project (APEP) is advised by local community education committees (CECs), of which over 3000 have been created in 17 provinces;
- Management Sciences for Health: US \$128 million Rural Expansion of Afghanistan's Community-Based Healthcare ([REACH](#)) is advised by Provincial Health Coordinating Committees (PHCCs) in 16 provinces;
- Chemonics: Some parts of the US \$132 million Rebuilding Agricultural Markets Program ([RAMP](#)) are implemented in conjunction with local development committees created for project purposes;
- International Rescue Committee: Creates province-level NSP advisory boards, as well as district-level religious advisory committees, the Special Action Committees or Religious Affairs (SACRAs) to engage religious scholars and *madrassas* in the NSP process.
- An Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit paper notes that 2005 is seeing the creation of "provincial development *shuras*" and "district development *shuras*" within the context of USAID-funded alternative livelihood projects.

### *B.2. Shuras/Jirgas*

A 2003 national survey commissioned by the [Human Rights Research & Advocacy Consortium](#) (HRRAC) described Afghans' opinions of various authorities. In most parts of the country *shuras* are seen as functioning local decision-making mechanisms. Though many observers believe *shuras* are in a sense the most basic building block of civil society in the less urban areas of the country, there is doubt about how representative they can be considered. Some communities are said to have both women's and men's *shuras*, but on balance there is agreement that the vast majority of the collective membership of Afghanistan's *shuras* is male. While it is difficult to measure *shura* membership because the institution is in most places relatively informal, the group of men who gather to meet from time to time generally consists of the village elders. As such, *shuras* are likely to under-represent the younger portion of the population, the "alternative thinkers," and the less-well-to-do, who consequently carry less respect among the community leadership. In addition, of course, they are not elected bodies.

Until international organizations started looking for ways to deliver assistance to thousands of small, geographically dispersed villages in the early 1990s, the institution of *shuras* was thought

to have been atrophying. The decline was attributed to the destruction of social structures caused by Soviet invasion and the resulting dislocation, and the loss of human capital and replacement of traditional structures by warlords who could provide protection.

Of the 36 organizations surveyed that identified themselves as *shuras*, half said they had fewer than 10 members and another third said they had 10 to 25. Ninety-two percent said they had no budget. One claimed a budget up to US \$10,000 and one said it had a budget above US \$10,000. Just over 80 percent reported exclusively male membership.

Conventional donors that support or implement aid projects through CSOs usually require an Afghan government recognition of legal status. Thus, any *shura* that wants to become eligible for a grant becomes an NGO or social and cultural organization.

Focus group participants identified the following as the key functions of *shuras*:

- to govern locally;
- to identify and represent the needs of the people;
- to provide a link between communities and organizations;
- to attract resources and organizations;
- to mobilize and educate their public;
- to disseminate information;
- to reach vulnerable populations;
- to conduct project maintenance and support national government initiatives at the local level including anti-corruption, solidarity, and security.

### *B.3. NGOs*

#### *B.3.1. Local NGOs*

The NGO Registration Department of the MoE maintains a list of registered Afghan NGOs; the list comprised 2017 NGOs in February 2005. An internal ACBAR survey of known NGOs in 2000 revealed that a “large proportion” of them were either construction organizations which did not really fit any conventional definition of a CSO, or were inactive “storefronts” or “briefcase NGOs.” Key-informant interviewees concur with this and current estimates of the number of “real” CSOs among registered NGOs run from 150 to 400. The upper number would represent about 20 percent of the 2017 NGOs registered with the MoE.

#### *B.3.2. International NGOs*

In addition to this group, the MoE has a separate registry of international NGOs working in Afghanistan. In November 2004 it included 333. Since new applications of international NGOs in 2005 have been met with delaying tactics in expectation of the new NGO law, this number has probably not changed.

#### B.4. Social and Cultural Organizations

The ACSF translated into English a list of 242 organizations registered with the MoJ. The list includes about 60 political parties as well as associations, unions, and tribal *shuras* and a smaller number of what appear to be more typical project-based CSOs. Because this class of CSOs is relatively young, organizations which have used the MoJ to register have not generally had the time to gain the wider experience of the larger NGOs.

Additionally, it emerged during identification of CSO focus group participants that organizations such as youth groups or associations are not targeted by civil society support organizations and are lacking office space and professional contacts. They are often left out of information gathering and networking activities.

Social and cultural organizations are reported to be required by law to have at least ten members. More than 80 percent of the social and cultural organizations that provided membership data have more than 25 members, compared to only 17 percent of all organizations polled, but for other indicators such as distribution of budget size among simple categories, social and cultural organizations do not deviate significantly from the norm.

### C. Registration

There is little clarity or consistency in the registration process for CSOs. Furthermore, the relatively disorganized nature of the post-Taliban Afghan state structures has resulted in a lack of clarity and enforcement of rules governing what constitutes a not-for-profit company. Overall, given the rapidly proliferating numbers of CDC/VOs and related bodies, a relatively small proportion are in fact registered at all.

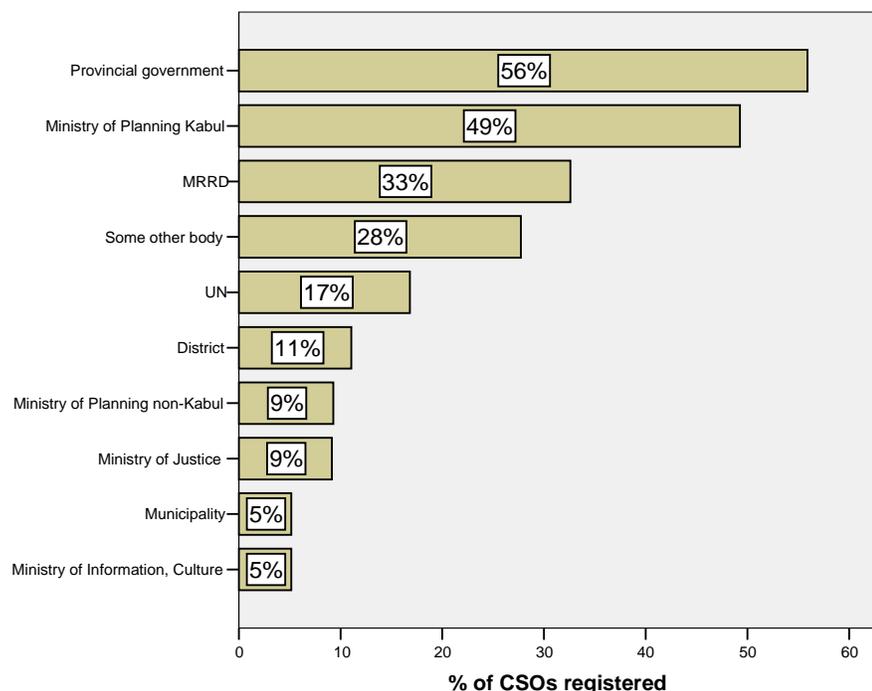


Figure 1: CSO registration body

Of those surveyed, 70 percent had registered with the MoE, MoJ or the MRRD. Only seven percent said they were not registered. The Ministry of Economy's NGO registration, the MoJ's social and cultural organization registration, and now the MRRD's CDC registration are the only mechanisms that have a legal basis. Thus, nearly a quarter of respondents considered themselves registered but did not necessarily have legal standing. Of the 70 percent that are legitimately registered, all reported some additional kind of registration on the level of a local branch of a federal ministry or a province or district or village government. Many of these listed registrations

with entities like the German technical assistance organization GTZ or a PRT, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams of the coalition forces.

When asked for more precision with respect to provincial government, the most frequently cited sources of registration, were provincial rural planning, development, education, or public health entities. In the category “other,” answers ranged from other central ministries through international organizations, particularly in the case of CDCs and VOs, which tended to list the organization responsible for their creation.

This suggests that Afghan CSOs are inventive in identifying sources of legitimacy where it matters for their work. It also appears true that there is little real incentive at present for organizations to register formally unless registration is a requirement of their participation in some programmatic activity. When the new NGO law is passed, the situation should regularize itself.

In addition, the Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) reported maintaining a registry of cultural organizations, groups which it recognizes as partners in implementing its work. CSOs in the Counterpart survey reported having gained entry into similar registries at the Ministries of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Foreign Affairs, Higher Education, Interior, Irrigation, Public Health, Women’s Affairs and Youth.

Muddying the picture further, some CSOs reported registration with exclusively local authorities. The registration department of the MoP in Kabul said it knows nothing about local registrations, but nine percent of respondents said they had registered with a MoP office not in Kabul. A slightly larger percentage said they had registered on the district level.

Finally, one type of CSO which seems never to be registered, perhaps connected to the youth organizations, is literary circles at universities. They are usually led by professors and gather on a weekly basis to discuss a particular book, philosophical principle or political event.

#### **D. Major Players**

Another significant feature of the CSO landscape is a group of relatively well-established and influential organizations. From the point of view of financing flows, the active NGO sector in Afghanistan is dominated by a small number of relatively large organizations, many of which were founded in the 1990s in exile from bases in Pakistan and function to a large extent as providers of services in the fields of education, health and hygiene, and rural development. Chief among these are:

- The five local implementers of APEP: Afghan Development Association (ADA), AWEC, Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (CHA), CoAR and Development and Humanitarian Services for Afghanistan (DHSA);
- The seven local implementers of RAMP: Agency for Rehabilitation and Energy Conservation in Afghanistan (AREA), Engineering Services for Afghanistan Reconstruction (ESAR), [Ghazni Rural Support Program](#) (GRSP), Kunduz Rehabilitation Agency (KRA), Reconstruction Authority for Afghanistan (RAFA), Reconstruction and Social Services for Afghanistan (RSSA), and Social and Technical Association for Afghanistan Rehabilitation (STAAR);

- The local implementer of Rural Expansion of Afghanistan’s Community-Based Healthcare (REACH): Coordination of Humanitarian Relief (CHR) and others to be selected;
- The five Afghan NGOs among the NSP’s Facilitating Partners: AREA, ADA, [CHA](#), GRSP, and Sanayee Development Foundation (SDF);
- Oxfam’s partners: Ibn Sina, CHA, AREA, and ADA;
- Norwegian Church Aid’s partners: ADA, CoAR, SDF, Cooperation for Peace and Unity ([CPAU](#)), Anti-Tuberculosis Association (ATA), [GRSP](#), Central Afghanistan Welfare Committee (CAWC), and Najat Center;
- Christian Aid’s partners: Agency for Humanitarian Development Assistance for Afghanistan (AHDAA), AREA, and CHA;
- EuropeAid’s grantees: ADA, CHA, AREA.

Each has hundreds of employees spread across a number of provinces and annual budgets between US \$1 million and US \$10 million.

In addition to this group of larger NGOs, a certain group of CSOs, some of them social and cultural organizations rather than NGOs, tends to be more active in civil society-organizing activities. They include the Human Rights Research & Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC), a group of 12 organizations. The six Afghan members are ADA, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), AREA, Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and the [Cooperation for Peace and Unity](#) (CPAU). Another is the Irish Trócaire group, of which the Afghan members are CPAU, SDF, ACSF, AEP (of the BBC), Afghan Youth Coordination Agency and AREA.

### **E. Coordinating Bodies**

Beginning in the early 1980s, several NGO coordinating bodies were formed by groups of international and Afghan NGOs. Their purpose was to provide a forum for their work in Afghanistan and to enable organizations to speak in a collective voice with respect to their relationship to donors and the various entities governing part or all of Afghanistan.

The most active of these currently are ACBAR and ANCB. ACBAR represents primarily international organizations and the larger Afghan CSOs, with 92 members. The ANCB’s membership of 340 consists only of Afghan CSOs.

International organizations are active participants and supporters of ACBAR’s work; ANCB, by comparison, has a somewhat lower profile. Other coordination players are the [Islamic Coordination Council](#) (ICC) and South-west Afghanistan Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC), but there is little evidence these groups are perceived as significant players by the groups that participated in the Counterpart Assessment. The [Afghanistan NGO Security Office](#) (ANSO) furnishes security briefings, which many organizations in Afghanistan deem a needed service.

## F. CSO geography

The majority of the country’s registered organizations are based in Kabul, both for reasons of access to resources and because it is the country’s dominant city. For example, over 80 percent of 242 social and cultural organizations gave Kabul addresses for their registration. Most of the rest are spread out fairly predictably over Afghanistan’s 14 other urban centers with populations more than 20,000.

The NSP’s 5000-plus CDCs are reported to have been developed in some one-third of the country’s villages, beginning in three districts in each of the country’s 32 provinces. CAII’s 3000-plus CECs, the second-largest discrete group of VOs, are in 115 districts in 17 provinces.

## G. The media

The extremes of Taliban rule eliminated virtually all mass media in Afghanistan. Since 2001, donor resources have been the principle driver in reconstituting television, radio, and the press. With a literacy rate considered to be under 15 percent and unstable electricity in many parts of the country, radio is the medium of choice for most information distribution. According to a June 2004 study, the average urbanite has access to at least four radio stations and the average rural dweller to 2.3.

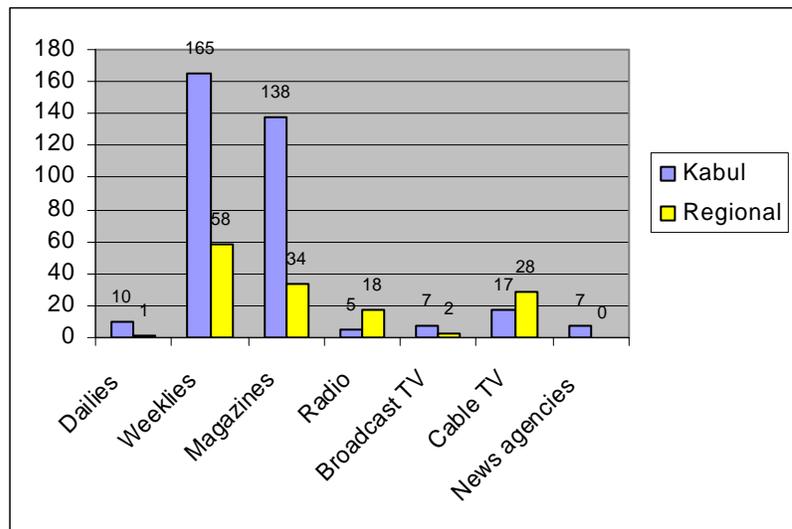


Figure 2: Registered Afghan media

In the last year, the German government, Internews, BBC and Altai Consulting all conducted studies of Afghan media. Altai’s monumental early-2005 *Afghanistan Media Consumption Research* concluded that radio is regularly heard by more than 90 percent of the population. Cable television is quickly picking up subscribers. Many urban households can find a bouquet of channels pulled from satellite for US \$3 per month. But while 83 percent of Altai’s sample owns a radio, only 37 percent have television.

By comparison, there is relatively little print media, even in Kabul. According to the Altai study, use of broadcast media differs little between men and women, but women’s newspaper use was less than two-thirds of men’s, reflecting their lower literacy level. Altai reported that “media have a strong positive image through the country and are seen as a reliable source of information that brings new and good ideas”.

All media must secure licenses from the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC). Broadcast media, in addition, must apply to the Ministry for frequency licenses. The MoIC’s registration department lists included, in January 2005, 403 print media and 32 broadcasters

(Figure 2), but it is unreliable at best. The number of community radio broadcasters supported by international organizations is known to exceed 25, while the MoIC's logs listed only 23 radio stations. The Altai study found that in places where the local community stations had coverage, their listenership rate exceeded that of any of the other radio sources. The number of registered print media is considered to vastly exceed the number actually regularly publishing.

The Afghanistan Media Monitor project produces a quarterly bulletin addressing issues such as media legislation, women and the media, and journalists' security, as well as a guide to the country's media and journalists. Together, organizations like [Internews](#), Sayara, and IMPACS as well as those created with assistance from UNESCO, support about 30 independent radio stations. They probably are the best way for local CSOs to reach their local populations, since all these broadcasters consider their mission to be primarily serving their community rather than producing profit, although half of them are already financially sustainable. For national reach, there are two options:

- Radio Afghanistan, the national AM state radio, reaching 91 percent of the population;
- The national network of local radio stations, [Tanin](#), which reaches 50 percent of the population.

Tanin was created principally to provide assistance-related programming to the population and currently delivers via a live satellite feed several hours per day of programs relating to current events, agriculture, health, and gender. Tanin has also prepared a rate card to make it possible for those who want to ensure their content is rebroadcast to "buy time" on the network. The BBC, Azadi (Radio Liberty), and Voice of America also run repeater networks.

### *G.1. Internet*

The internet is not yet widely used. In the Counterpart survey, 15 percent of respondents were able to provide an e-mail address. The Altai study said that two percent of its respondents had internet access. In addition, the lack of a reliable terrestrial telephone network means that most connectivity is through common access points such as offices or internet cafés. There are public internet access points in the country's five largest urban centers, where 17 percent of the country lives. Most of the two dozen or so dominant CSOs in Afghanistan lack web sites.

### *G.2. Communication with the Media*

The survey asked CSOs about their communication with media. While those who had contact with media found their information used, the majority had no contact with the media. It would appear there is much room for improvement for CSO-media contact for the purposes of education and bolstering public support for work undertaken by CSOs.

## **H. CSOs' Relationships with Other Sectors**

### *H.1. The Public*

Unsurprisingly, given the scale of their role in the reconstruction effort, coupled with the need and popular expectations, opinions are mixed about CSOs. A December 2004 ACBAR-commissioned study of public perceptions found a significant degree of distrust. Among the reasons cited in the study were:

- “No one knows the meaning of the letters ‘N,’ ‘G,’ and ‘O’
- Lack of knowledge and understanding about the nature of NGOs; (“ISAF are saying what they are doing but other NGOs we don’t know”)
- Lack of knowledge and understanding about financial processes (“they spend 70 percent for houses, car and big salary and 30 percent for the project. NGOs represent a second government in our country”)
- Lack of knowledge and understanding about what NGOs are actually responsible for (“some of their goals, we don’t know. They might be here for gathering intelligence”)
- Perception of an urban—rural divide (“most of the help has been done in big cities but nothing in villages”)
- Lack of interaction between the Afghan population and NGOs (“NGOs are not open to the public. Nobody dares to step in NGOs. Some big stones are in front to avoid bombs and suicide attacks. I can’t trust NGOs”)
- The ‘positive’ act of criticizing in a nascent democratic environment (“now that our government is democratic, we have the right to criticize NGOs”)
- Afghans’ disappointment at international promises (“we are aware about the total amount that our country is supposed to receive from the international community but we don’t know where it goes”).

To some degree the discontent is a self-fueling public relations cycle perpetuated by government, jealous of the resources controlled by CSOs. It also is likely that the sectors of society that receive the greatest benefit from reconstruction efforts—the less-advantaged—have the least voice and their support therefore is less likely to be heard.

A 2003 public opinion poll conducted by the Human Rights Research and Advocacy Forum included a question asking to whom foreign governments’ aid money should be given. Respondents’ answers were roughly split, with 38 percent selecting the Afghan government, 40 percent selecting the UN and NGOs and 12 percent selecting the Afghan Government, UN and NGOs together, suggesting a reasonable level of trust in CSOs.

In the Counterpart Assessment, most client and *shura* focus groups participants had ongoing working relationships with registered organizations and were by and large positive about CSOs. But it was also evident in all eight regions where focus groups were conducted that, in the words of one facilitator, “if we could have invited common people there definitely would be opposite views.” By common people was meant those who do not see direct benefit from development programs.

In the 24 focus groups conducted for this Assessment, when asked what changes had taken place in the communities over the past three years, all participants agreed that positive changes had taken place but disagreed on who was primarily responsible for them – answers included *shuras*, government, and registered organizations. Both *shuras* and client communities had issues with NGOs, but it was also clear that each of the three groups have specific, non-overlapping roles, common across the country, and that their activity has resulted in positive changes.

In the Herat focus groups, all three groups believed that change has occurred and the reason behind this change is that the *shuras* and NGOs have functioned and the common people are aware of their activities and have seen the result of their projects.

### *H.2. The Government*

Although many key-informant interviewees expressed reservations about the government's willingness to cooperate with CSOs, mid-to-high-level bureaucrats in several ministries indicated a desire to maximize their contact with CSOs, citing a lack of resources of their own and the need to take advantage of every possible opportunity. The Ministry of Finance even conducted a seminar for CSO representatives to help them understand government budgeting and financial management procedures.

The [United Nations Development Program](#) (UNDP) has expressed interest in strengthening civil society and is considering an effort to build bridges between governmental bodies and CSOs by supporting civil society liaison offices in ministries and agencies. At the same time, that the national government shares some of the public's concern about CSOs' use of resources is evident not only from former Minister Bashardost's crusade against NGOs but even from President's Karzai himself. In a May 2004 press release he said: "the current situation requires a differentiation between real NGOs, who are non-profit organizations serving the public good, and those who use the NGO name but do not serve the people."

On the eve of the third international donors' conference in Kabul in April 2005, President Karzai again expressed concern about how aid agencies spend money the Afghan government considers belongs to the nation, and appointed a task force, including representatives of donor countries, to report back on the situation within a month.

The study showed a relatively positive relationship between the government and CSOs. In the Counterpart survey, answering questions about interactions with local and national government, 98 percent and 93 percent of respondents respectively, said the government was helpful while only 1.2 percent and 0.4 percent felt that it was unhelpful, the rest indicating "no contact." While respondents could be reporting what they thought they were supposed to say, these figures would seem to indicate a generally good relationship between civil society and the government which was seconded in all of the CSO focus groups.

### *H.3. The Market*

At present, there seems little interaction among Afghan CSOs and the private sector. There are few domestic sources of philanthropy. Only two percent of survey respondents reported having received any resources from for-profit businesses. In the focus groups *shura* participants were more likely than CSOs to mention inputs from the business community, but these inputs were couched as requests for the business to invest in local economic development as opposed to contributing to CSO-led projects.

The Islamic practice of *zakat*, alms, is considered to be a tool for the realization of equality, welfare and justice in society and is regarded as one of the most important religious duties. It is held that *zakat* can mobilize resources to alleviate poverty and break the association between wealth and political power. Though there are no survey figures available, it is believed that there exists a practice of giving *zakat* at the individual level. Realizing the importance of establishing a successful social welfare system in Afghanistan, institutionalization of *zakat* can provide a

platform from which to combine elements of the traditional Islamic welfare institution with those of a modern public welfare system.

One key informant reported the existence of small trade associations, which did not otherwise surface in the survey process. An example is a street in Kabul where there are many barbershops. The barbers may collectively appeal to the city government to provide them with an electricity feed in the evening, since that is when their businesses most critically depend on power.

The two major cell phone providers are reported to cooperate with respect to lobbying the government to maintain a business-friendly telecommunications market. Fostering such trade association relationships offers a step toward CSOs assuming an advocacy role.

## V. CSO SECTOR ANALYSIS

Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the self-categorization by function of the 44-district Counterpart survey (Q14). It is notable that 35 percent of all surveyed CSOs identified themselves as *shuras* or VOs. In the eight focus group regions there were actually more *shuras* (73) represented in the focus groups than registered organizations (65), indicating a noteworthy level of activity and coverage already attained by traditional *shuras* and the new VOs.

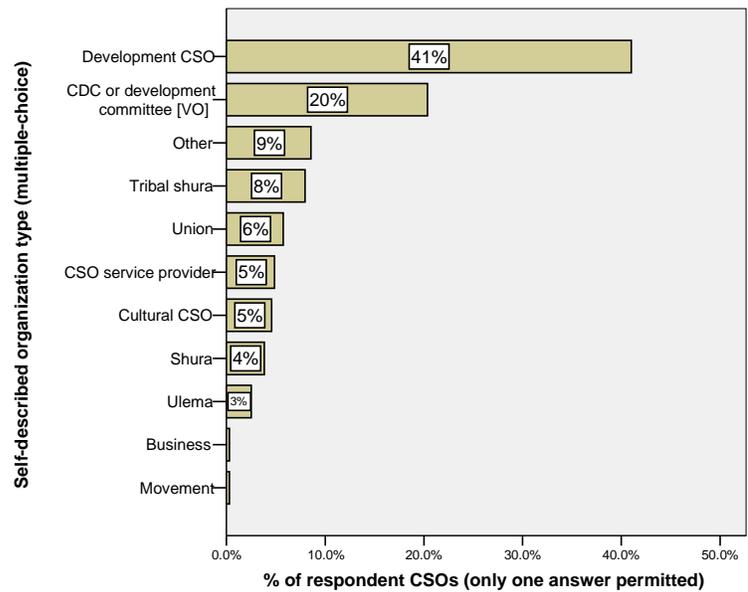


Figure 3: Types of CSOs surveyed

Nearly half the surveyed CSOs said they implemented activities in other districts, and a quarter in other provinces (Q32). Half said they were their CSO's only office; another 10 percent were the head office of a network and the rest were CSO branch offices (Q28). These numbers indicate a fairly dramatic level of affiliate creation and activity outside the "home" area, as CSOs have found themselves opening branches to implement projects over geographically dispersed areas. The CSOs in the Counterpart surveyed group are members of networks that total 2638 offices (Q29).

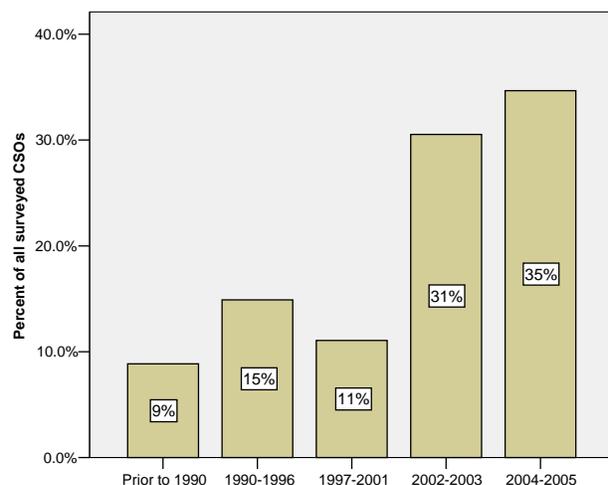


Figure 4: CSOs' year of establishment

Figure 4 demonstrates that most CSOs are relatively young, two-thirds having been created since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 (Q16). Clearly this is in part a result of the proliferating opportunities to participate in donor-sponsored reconstruction efforts.

## A. CSOs' Human and Material Resources

		Total	Average	%
Employees	Men	62	41,835	84%
	Women in implementation roles	11	7,231	15%
	Women in support roles	1	649	1%
Volunteers	Men	23	15,679	81%
	Women	5	3,616	19%

**Figure 5: Number of CSOs' staff**

Figure 5 gives statistics for staff and volunteers of surveyed organizations (Q40). While 84 percent of the staff are men, women play a significant role in the sample and

most women, 15 percent out of 16 percent of women-employees, are reported to be in positions of responsibility, such as managers, field workers, administrators, secretaries and translators. However, less than half of the organizations had women staff (Q41) and less than half reported using volunteers (Q42). The median number of staff was 16, so the large overall staff numbers are skewed by a number of relatively large employers. Five groups reported more than 1000 staff.

Of the 670 CSOs answering membership questions, 41 percent said they are membership organizations (Q25), 97 percent of whom served individual members and 3 percent served organizations as members (Q26). Of the individual membership organizations, half had membership over 25, while 80 percent of CSO organizations and *shuras* and virtually all CDCs had membership under 25. Tribal *shuras* tended to be larger than non-tribal *shuras*. Among the 266 individual membership organizations that provided membership information (Q27):

- Total membership was 223,000 individuals;
- One Mazar-based CSO, Peace of Afghanistan, claimed 200,000 members;
- The rest had memberships up to 4000;
- Excluding Peace of Afghanistan, 73 percent of all members were men;
- Four CSOs had only women members; another 101 had both women and men, of which 21 had women in the majority; and the other 122 had only men members.

Do you ...	own?	rent or borrow?	not have?	other?
Office space	16 percent	55 percent	20 percent	9 percent
Computer	50 percent	1 percent	49 percent	0 percent
Motorized vehicle	38 percent	13 percent	49 percent	0 percent

**Figure 6: CSOs' resource ownership**

When we asked about their resources (Q30), 16 percent of all CSOs reported owning an office, one-third a motorized vehicle, and half a computer.

Almost 20 percent reported having no office, while two-thirds said they rented or borrowed and a number indicated they were provided space by a government agency. This illustrates that the government critique of the sector for possessing lavish resources is inaccurate.

The results in Figure 7 demonstrate that while half of the CSO sample has no budget, a significant number had substantial budgets (Q44). *Shuras*, tribal *shuras* and *ulemas* generally reported little or no budget. About half the CSOs surveyed had a budget of above zero but under US \$100,000. CSOs that listed building infrastructure as an activity tended to be in relatively higher budget categories, several saying they had budgets of more than US \$100,000.

Focus groups confirm the results of the survey. In all eight focus group areas, there was a distinct lack of financial or material resources available to *shuras*, and participants in only one of eight *shura* focus groups considered seeking their own funding independent of registered organizations. Clients and organizations added that, while *shuras* do not have many financial resources, they do bring to the table their existing connections with the people, government and organizations, their ability to organize, as well as expertise from newly appointed or elected professionals in their ranks.

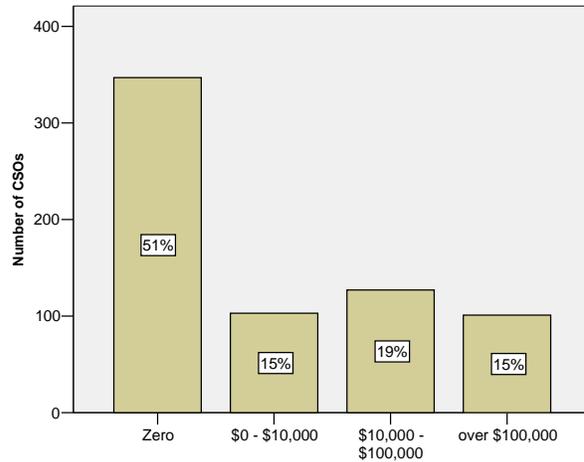


Figure 7: CSOs' 2004 budget

Nearly half the *shura* focus groups identified special councils, usually voluntary, as one of their greatest resources for accomplishing their mission. Recently established *shuras* or VOs, supported by CSOs, offered their new skills, including the ability to produce newsletters, as a resource. *Shura* focus group participants depended on the national government, organizations and local businesses for support.

### B. CSOs Institutional Development

Only about two-thirds of surveyed organizations have statutes (Q22) or prepared an annual financial report last year (Q43). Only 44 percent report having a board (Q23), which would be a requirement of the proposed NGO law.

### C. CSOs Activities

The survey asked two questions about CSOs' activities. Figure 8 shows that when asked about their field of activity (Q33), nearly half identified education and health, reflecting the large proportion

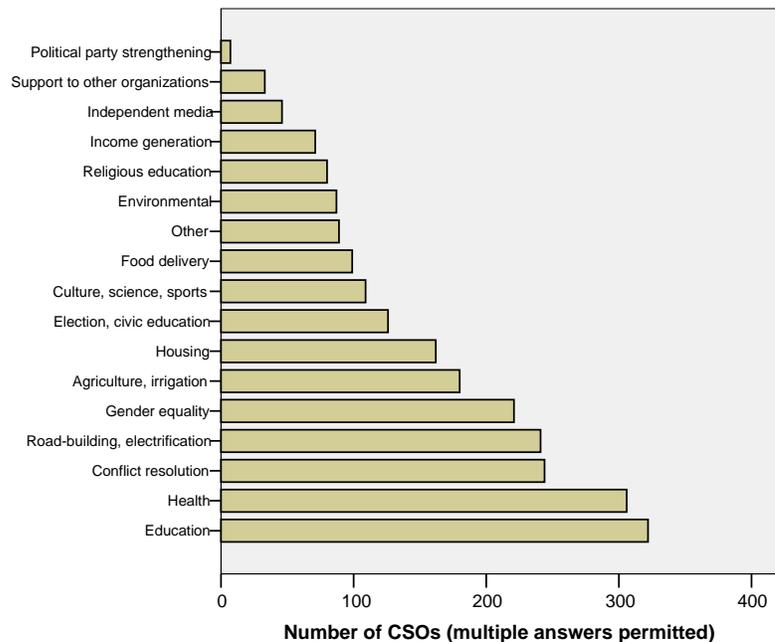


Figure 8: CSOs' activity areas

of the health and education service delivery in the country that is carried out by the CSO sector. These findings were confirmed by the focus groups in which clients identified physical CSO outputs, such as school reconstruction in seven out of eight regions, and clinic, road, bridge and water improvements in five regions, and to a lesser extent shelter construction for returnees or displaced persons.

In addition, *shura* focus groups and NGO focus groups identified themselves as having been involved in health education, getting women and girls into work and schools and developing new institutions.

Gender equality scored surprisingly high, with one-third of survey respondents identifying women’s rights as one of their activity areas. Achievements for women—in rights, training programs or access to education and work—was overwhelmingly mentioned by *shura* and NGO focus groups but in only three of eight studied regions mentioned by clients.

It was apparent from the focus group discussions that it was the initiative of CSOs—and presumably donors and the Afghan national government—to get women and girls into the workplace and school. The increasingly dire plight of women during the Taliban period led to many CSOs concentrating their efforts on gender-specific projects. The [Afghan Women’s Network](#) (AWN), for instance, unites 30 women’s NGOs focused on basic education for women and on encouraging them to more actively exercise their political rights.

Conflict resolution, peace building and increased solidarity was mentioned as an achievement by focus groups in three regions while agriculture development, free speech, community mobilization for elections and DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) were mentioned in one region each out of eight regions studied.

Counterpart survey respondents said that half of polled CSOs implement one to three projects, and another third have no projects (Q35). These are predominantly the *shuras* and the CDCs that have not yet received their block grants. Only a few groups are implementing more than 10 projects, but the median is two projects. In all, 3428 projects are being implemented by the survey respondents.

Fifty-seven percent said that community mobilization was part of their arsenal, with training, advocacy, and organizing events not far behind (Q34). Twenty percent named spreading religion as one of their methods. The proposed draft NGO law prohibits NGOs—but not unregistered *shuras*—from engaging in religious activities.

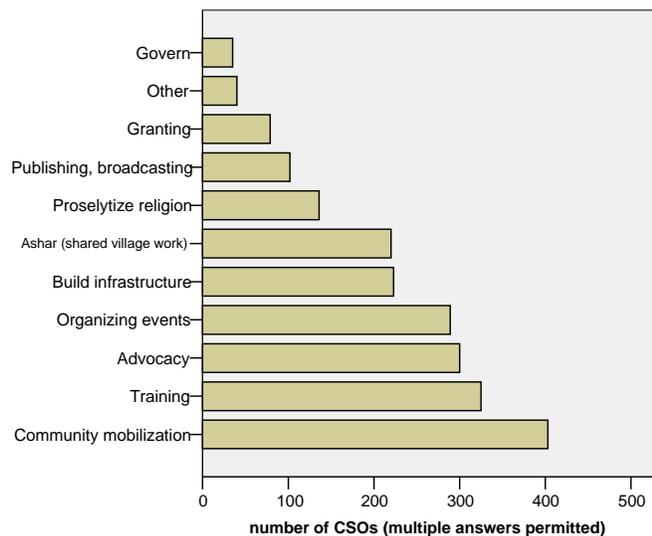


Figure 9: CSOs' methods (all surveyed CSOs)

All focus groups agreed that the most striking changes in the recent past have been improved security, access to work and education for women and girls, as well as improved education or literacy overall. Over the past five years new *shuras* have been created, in some cases replacing older or inactive bodies. The majority of clients interviewed felt that *shuras* are more trustworthy than five years ago and that they generally work for the benefit of the community. Client focus groups were more aware of the work of *shuras* and other organizations and noted better cooperation between the three groups than in the past.

### *C.1. New CSO Priorities*

The focus groups included two questions about the future of reconstruction activities. Respondents were asked what additional improvements they would like to achieve in their lives and their communities and the nature of support they required to do so. The responses were of three sorts:

- Reprioritization of development objectives from the last three years;
- Need to provide same services to new clients;
- Need to retool services provided in the last three years to meet more advanced needs.

School construction dropped in priority, replaced by agricultural and husbandry support in seven out of eight regions. After agricultural support, the most requested intervention was livelihoods (vocational training/job creation/business investment) in six out of eight regions. Schools, water, roads and bridges remained mid- to high-level priorities in five of eight regions.

Assistance with poppy eradication is a new priority in Nangarhar and Lowgar provinces, while improving general security was mentioned in Nangarhar and Kandahar. Institutional development was only identified in three regions as a priority and conflict resolution, shelter and health education in only two regions. There was a steep drop in health facility construction as a priority.

While the nature of priorities remained the same in many cases, participants made useful refinements in the specifics of how and where it is provided. For instance, three groups suggested refocusing girls' or women's education and employment support from urban areas to more remote areas. They also suggested targeting literacy and education or school building to reach the poorest non-urban populations, broadening the types of job creation, training or investment opportunities, and developing specific opportunities for youth, men, and poppy eradication areas. *Shuras* were the only group to mention election preparation as an upcoming need, with a particular focus on parliamentary elections.

Focus groups mentioned additional women-specific activities in five out of eight regions including preparing women for participation in parliamentary elections, garnering support for longer-term women's projects, education for women in remote or non-urban areas, and women-specific job creation. Organizations and NGOs and *shuras* were more concerned with women-focused activities than the client focus groups.

### *C.2. Gender Summary*

Nine percent of all CSOs in the Counterpart sample said their director was a woman (Q24). Just under 40 percent said they had women staff (Q41), and just under 30 percent said that increasing women's participation in the organization's work is an important priority (Q50). About 12 percent of CSOs said that on aggregate about 3500 volunteer women helped implement their activities, while about 34 percent used over 15,000 volunteer men (Q42). One-third of the

surveyed CSOs said their activities included gender equality work (Q33). Nearly 20 percent of all surveyed CSOs listed women as a specific category of beneficiary (Q36).

The statistics support initial assumptions that women are not adequately represented in the management, decision making or focus of Afghan CSOs. However, indications are that donor's prioritization of gender equity are having a positive impact with an increasing number of women directing or being employed by CSOs that either focus on women and gender issues, or include these in their overall goal and/or mission.

#### **D. NGOs, CDCs, and *Shuras*' Roles**

In all 24 focus groups there was a general consensus on the respective roles of NGOs and social and cultural organizations, *shuras* and their clients. The various participations of organizations, *shuras*, and clients also was reflected in the amount of detail focus groups provided, with client focus groups speaking mostly of tangible outputs and impacts—better crops, new schools—and *shura* focus groups able to provide more detail on the purposes behind NGO activity and also referring most often to national issues such as peace, conflict and solidarity.

Based on survey data and focus group responses, it appears that *shuras* perform an important intermediary role in implementation of development activities. This may suggest a greater level of popular trust for *shuras* than for the newer, less familiar CDCs and VOs that owe their origins more to donors than to the community.

Community mobilization and public awareness is clearly delegated to *shuras*, CDCs and VOs. As the focus groups described the roles of each group it was evident that registered organizations have limited direct contact with communities other than through *shuras* or other village organizations. There seems to be a strong link between the beneficiaries and identification of problems organizations address.

Client focus groups generally ascribed fundraising to the registered organizations, who themselves expanded their role to include bringing in funding, technical expertise, equipment and management to meet the community's needs. In all regions the general consensus was that “activities have been done by the organizations with the help of the *shuras*.”

Local registered organizations are seen, by client and *shura* participants, as external to the communities and their primary contact is with *shuras*. According to the responses of the NGO participants very little interaction with community beneficiaries is envisioned by registered organizations. Clients were concerned that organizations—even local Afghan organizations—should respect local religious and cultural traditions. One client focus group stated that they need support to oversee organizations so that the organizations' work is for the public good.

##### *D.1. Role of Beneficiaries*

The focus groups revealed that in general clients work with *shuras* in identifying needs, supplying material, financial or in kind assistance, supporting the goals of the projects and protecting or maintaining the projects following completion. Only one group of clients mentioned their right to choose their councils or *shuras*, and therefore exert more influence over the larger process, while nearly all *shuras* and organizations said it was the role of the clients to “cooperate”.

Interestingly, over a third of the CSOs reported that the beneficiaries contribute resources to their projects. All 24 focus groups stated that clients or communities contribute in kind labor, financial resources, professional skills, community solidarity and the commitment to maintain projects. Nearly one-third of surveyed CSOs said that resources are contributed by government, confirming again the reasonably good relations with government (Q45).

### E. Beneficiaries of CSOs' Activities

Many Afghan organizations use a distinction between direct and indirect beneficiaries to distinguish among project implementers, which are viewed as direct beneficiaries, and those who benefit from the project itself. For instance, 25 laborers who worked on construction of a school building will be considered its direct beneficiaries, because they received cash or in-kind payment for their work, while schoolchildren and teachers will be considered indirect beneficiaries.

Using this approach, Figure 10 provides the number of direct (Q36) and indirect (Q37) beneficiaries of the Counterpart survey sample. Women numbered 37 percent of all direct beneficiaries in the two-thirds of CSOs that provided specific numbers, while the median was 35. For the 49 CSOs that provided numbers of female beneficiaries greater than the number of men, the median was 75.

Direct Beneficiaries	Women	162,858
	Men	272,432
Indirect Beneficiaries	People	1,625,428
	Villages	1579
	Districts	757
	Provinces	410

Figure 10: Number of CSOs' beneficiaries

When asked what segment of the population benefits from their work, 82 percent said their work benefited entire communities.

### F. CSOs' Constraints

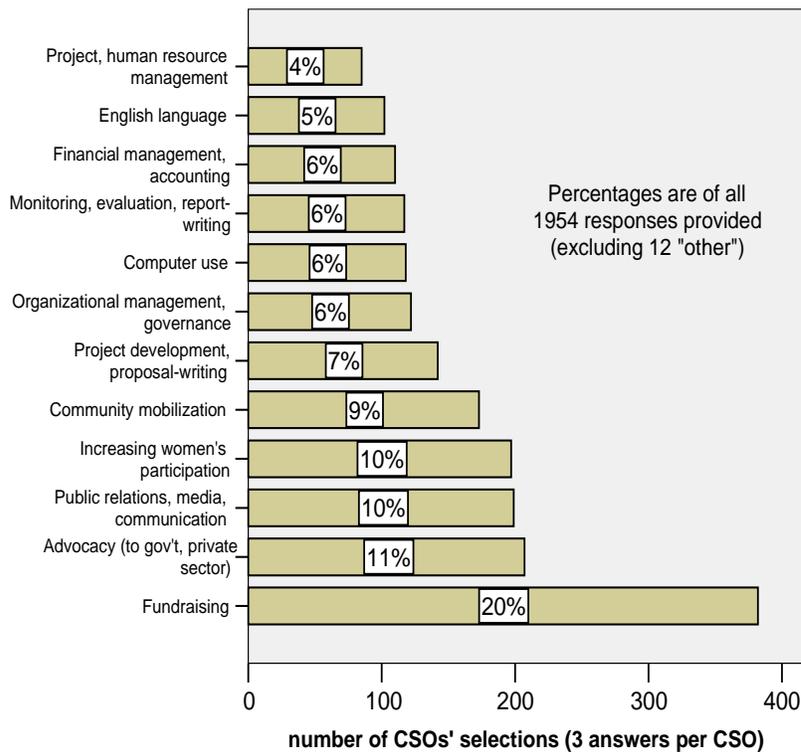
In response to questions about constraints to successful operation (Q49), 58 percent said communication was a significant constraint. Registered organizations in each focus group stated a need for increased funding, additional technical skills, qualified staff and updated equipment. The survey results are shown in Figure 11. Given the recent report by ANSO and CARE which found 44% of respondent NGOs “curtailing or modifying projects due to security concerns over the past year” perhaps the biggest surprise is the unimportance of security as a constraint, relative to other factors.<sup>4</sup> In addition to poor communications, lack of transportation and a physical office were cited as constraints by at least three-quarters of respondents. Still, two-thirds of the sample was able to provide a contact telephone number. Tellingly, lack of skills was considered very or somewhat important to only half of the polled CSOs.

Constraint	Importance		
	A lot	Some	Not at all
Communications	58%	28%	14%
Transportation	53%	26%	21%
Lack of physical office	27%	46%	28%
Lack of staff	14%	30%	56%
Security	15%	18%	67%
Limited staff skills	11%	41%	48%

Figure 11: CSOs' organizational constraints

<sup>4</sup> *NGO Insecurity in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan NGO Safety Office and CARE, May 2005.

Anticipating the I-PACS plan to provide training to CSOs and their staff, the survey queried, from among twelve categories of capacities, what improved skills respondents felt their offices



needed (Q50). In general, other than fund-raising, which 56 percent of the sample cited, capacity-building needs were rather diffuse. This suggests the need for other mechanisms to identify the core capacity-building needs of the CSO community in Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, there is general agreement among key-informant interviewees that with the exception of the 20 or so biggest Afghan NGOs, staff skill levels are limited. This is partly attributed to the “brain drain” in which many years of conflict have resulted; with as many as six million

**Figure 12: CSOs' capacity-building needs**

displaced Afghans at any given time. Another oft-cited factor is the higher salaries from UN agencies and other donors. A third factor, not unique to Afghanistan, is the relative instability of a job with a CSO compared to, for instance, a government position.

## VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In spite of a tumultuous history, there is a diverse and ever-growing civil society sector in Afghanistan. The key factors that will influence I-PACS or other similar efforts in program implementation are:

- The constant proliferation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Afghanistan for project implementation purposes;
- The relatively low level of institutional maturity of the civil society sector;
- The large sums of money and responsibility that very immature organizations have available;
- The relatively higher credibility that traditional groups enjoy compared with the newer entities.
- CSOs play a vital role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, implementing infrastructure development projects and providing social services to communities throughout the country. In March 2005, the total number of projects being implemented by CSOs in the Counterpart sample of 678 was an impressive 3,428.

Within each of these factors there are of course pitfalls, but there also are opportunities for creative programming in a dynamic and vibrant environment. Assessment evidence suggests a strong commitment among the populace to participate in the process of nation-building. Though in general, the overall level of institutional depth is low, the survey and focus groups indicate a rather sophisticated understanding of the purposes of civil society.

Other key findings and conclusions with implications for the implementation of I-PACS include the following:

- While institutional capacity is clearly low, there is only a limited recognition by the CSO sector of their capacity building needs, with the exception of the need to develop fund-raising skills which was identified by 56 percent of the survey respondents. This is not universally uncommon—fledgling organizations identifying their lack of funds as the reason of their inability to be more effective. However, experience has shown throughout the developing world, that while funding (and the skills required for accessing it) does come into play, the effectiveness of CSOs is usually limited by much more basic organizational and project-related skills. These often include skills in developing a constituency, using participatory approaches to identify and prioritize problems and plan solutions to them, as well as skills in sound resource management.
- A small number of relatively large, sophisticated Afghan organizations collectively expend the lion's share of the total budget presently available to Afghan CSOs. These are largely Kabul-based organizations that have gained the respect of the international donor community. There seems to be a huge gulf in capacity between these organizations and the rest of the CSOs. This speaks to the need to develop the capacity of, at a minimum, a second tier of CSOs—smaller, province-based organizations that are closer to the communities which they serve. New development programs should also take into consideration how they will work with affiliate offices in the provinces as opposed to provincial single office CSOs, whether this entails different training and technical assistance or upfront negotiations with the CSOs' head offices in Kabul.
- The CSO sector's development is hindered by the legal enabling environment in which it operates. This enabling environment is still weak with many areas of confusion and lack of clarity, exaggerated by the speed with which new organizations are being created by donors in the absence of a clear framework of typology.
- The survey results showed that, contrary to assertions by the Afghan government, the vast majority of Afghan CSOs have very limited material resources.
- It is clear from this study that the three major players—registered organizations, *shuras* and the clients—have played distinct and complementary roles in identifying and solving problems in the communities. Each brings a different set of skills or resources to solving community problems and this must be recognized and built upon in future development efforts in the country.
- Perhaps one of the biggest surprises emerging from this Assessment is the relative unimportance that CSOs place on security as a constraint to their work. This seems to imply

that the CSOs have not been hindered in their ability to function by security and either points to a misperception on the part of the international community with regard to security or strengthens the case for developing the capacity of these more local organizations, which may be better able to work in communities and improve the quality of life of rural inhabitants.

- Women’s rights are one of the most difficult aspects of civil society development in Afghanistan. That said, there were many indications in the Assessment of an awareness of the importance of the women’s issue and of efforts to include women in the work of reconstruction, providing a solid building block on which to introduce further advances in this sphere.
- Registered organizations, *shuras* and clients have all identified the need for development players to: reprioritize development objectives; provide the same services to new clients; and to retool the services provided over the last three years to meet more advanced needs. In other words, there is an overwhelming need *not* to continue to provide more of the same, but reassess the context and develop new strategies, while widening outreach.
- An unusually high portion of local and international NGOs have created broad networks of local affiliate offices outside of their head offices in Kabul. This proliferation is donor-driven in an effort to create the necessary infrastructure outside the capital to facilitate project implementation.

### **Major Recommendations**

The recommendations listed below pertain to the I-PACS program, but may also be useful for other organizations working in development in Afghanistan.

1. Given the diverse nature of the Afghan CSOs, it is important that the organizations are not all treated as the same. Serious thought will need to be given to which types of organizations are and are not to be supported in this program—and which type of support should be provided to which type of organization.
2. As part of the above recommendation, it is strongly recommended that *shuras* and *ulemas* be considered as significant players in this program. Despite their limitations as non-representative, mostly male bodies, they should be provided with opportunities to strengthen their capacities as they are highly credible with the communities and have important contributions to make in anchoring civil society as a force in Afghanistan. The I-PACS program may also want to consider if and how these groups might be eligible for receiving grants.
3. Given the proliferation of CSOs, there will be a need to find ways to identify organizations on which to focus. A key consideration should be the extent to which organizations appear likely to have or be able to develop the capacity for making long-term contributions to civil society in Afghanistan. This should be part of a detailed plan that lays out strategic targeting for CSO clients, modifies targets as the program progresses and not only identifies individual CSOs by name but names sectoral and geographic targets in which to find CSO clients.
4. In part as a response to Recommendation 3 and also because it is an effective approach, the capacity-building strategy should introduce graduated grants—starting with small “learning

grants” for new organizations and building up to larger grants for organizations that have successfully implemented proposed activities and for organizations with a proven track record.

5. Consideration also needs to be given to the extent to which registration is a requirement for receiving funds. At present the registration appears to be meaningless and perhaps not the best way of determining whether or not an organization should be eligible to receive funds.
6. Despite the above recommendation, support to the adoption and implementation of an NGO Law should remain a high priority as it is a critical element of a functioning civil society in any country. Follow-on activities could include: grandfathering-in or modifying existing registrations to meet the new legislation; and database development and maintenance support to the respective Ministry that will house CSO registration and activity information.
7. In devising training and capacity-building, the program should respond to the needs identified in the Assessment, if only to demonstrate a willingness to listen. Real needs are greater than respondents recognize and I-PACS technical assistance should seek to prioritize them, drawing on Counterpart’s range of institutional development assessment tools.
8. CSOs need to be more clearly linked to communities as a means of building a broad-based constituency and as a means of gaining credibility with the general public. An important capacity-building effort will be helping Afghan CSOs learn to enhance their credibility with government and citizenry and broaden their skills with the media. Support to designing and providing technical assistance to help CSOs meet a national CSO code of conduct could also improve their credibility;
9. Public awareness campaigns should maximize the use of media as a preferred medium of communication for the public at large. I-PACS should consider using national and community radio stations to reach out to CSOs and their constituencies.
10. Despite the problematic climate for women’s issues in Afghanistan there are openings, as evidenced by the Assessment results, and these should be analyzed carefully so that the program can devise effective strategies for engaging women as fully as possible within the cultural context of Afghan tradition.

## Appendix A Survey Tool Questionnaire

### ONLY INTERVIEW A SENIOR MANGEMENT OR GOVERNANCE PERSON IN THE ORGANIZATION

#### [INTERVIEWER READS TO RESPONDENT]

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am an interviewer from an Afghan organization CoAR, Coordination of Afghan Relief. We are conducting a nation-wide study of local organizations in Afghanistan such as NGOs, social & cultural organizations, religious organizations, informal community-based organizations, various kinds of *shuras*, and more. Answering the questions in our survey will take about an hour. The summary of this information will be shared with other Afghan organizations and donors. The more accurate the information we collect, the better our report can be used for understanding the capacity and development needs of Afghan organization. If you don't understand the question or don't know the answer, please say so. Before we begin, do you have any questions?

#### [INTERVIEWER FILLS OUT]

1. Interviewer's name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Province \_\_\_\_\_
3. District \_\_\_\_\_
4. City/town/village \_\_\_\_\_
5. Street or location \_\_\_\_\_
6. Date of interview| \_\_\_\_\_
7. Exact time of start of interview \_\_\_\_\_

#### [BEGIN ASKING RESPONDENT]

8. Your name and role in organization \_\_\_\_\_
9. Respondent's gender \_\_\_\_\_
10. Contact person phone number \_\_\_\_\_  not available
11. Office e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_  not available
12. What is the organization's full name? \_\_\_\_\_  not available
13. If it has an acronym or other name by which it's known, what is it? \_\_\_\_\_  no acronym
14. What best describes the type of organization? (select **one**)  
**[SHOW CARD]**
  - a.  unions (teachers' unions, student unions, trade unions and other)
  - b.  an organization doing development work with individuals or communities
  - c.  an organization providing services to NGOs or social organizations
  - d.  shura
  - e.  tribal shura
  - f.  ulema
  - g.  CDC, education committee, or other development committee
  - h.  cultural shura or organization concentrating on cultural activities
  - i.  business
  - j.  movement
  - k.  other (**LIST**) \_\_\_\_\_
  - l.  DK/NR

15. Please describe the organization's mission, in three sentences or less? (**free-form**)

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16. What year was the organization established? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Is the organization registered?

- a.  yes .
- b.  no **IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 20**

18. If the organization is registered, where is it registered? (select **all that apply**)

- a.  Ministry of Planning (now Ministry of Economics) in Kabul
- b.  Ministry of Planning not in Kabul
- c.  Ministry of Justice
- d.  Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development (MRRD)
- e.  Ministry of Information & Culture
- f.  provincial government (agency name, location) \_\_\_\_\_
- g.  municipality
- h.  district
- i.  UN, UNAMA
- j.  other (**LIST**) \_\_\_\_\_
- k.  DK/NR

19. If the organization is registered, in what way has the registration aided the organization? (select **all that apply**)

**[SHOW CARD]**

- a.  The registration hasn't helped
- b.  The registration gives us access to more resources
- c.  The registration gives us recognition with other organizations, government and/or clients
- d.  The registration gives us legal protection and rights (i.e. deduction in taxes)
- e.  Other (**LIST**) \_\_\_\_\_
- f.  DK/NR

20. If the organization is not registered, what is the main reason why? (select **one**)

**[SHOW CARD]**

- a.  Don't know how
- b.  Don't see any need
- c.  Too complex
- d.  Too expensive
- e.  We don't qualify
- f.  Did not want to attract attention
- g.  Other (**LIST**) \_\_\_\_\_
- h.  DK/NR

21. Is the organization for-profit or not-for-profit?

**[READ DEFINITIONS]**

**For-profit means** the organization earns more money than it spends in order to do the projects for which it's been paid, and that additional money it earns is distributed among the organization's founders or owners.

**Not-for-profit** is an organization that is organized for an educational, charitable, cultural, religious, social, or athletic purpose. A nonprofit organization can be in business and make money, but any profits must be used for the organization's objectives and not for distribution to members. (select **one**)

- a.  for-profit
- b.  not-for-profit? **IF "FOR PROFIT," THANK RESPONDENT AND STOP HERE**

22. Does the organization have written rules describing why it exists and how it's governed (statutes, bylaws)?

- a.  yes
- b.  no

23. Does the organization have an external governing committee or board?

- a.  yes
- b.  no
- c.  DK/NR

24. Is the organization's director or chairperson a (select **one**)

- a.  man
- b.  woman?

25. Are you a membership organization ?

- a.  yes
- b.  no **IF NO, GO TO QUESTION 27**

26. If YES, are organization's members individuals or organizations? (select **one**)

- a.  organizations **IF ORGANIZATIONS, GO TO QUESTION 27**
- b.  individuals
- c.  DK/NR

27. If the organization has individual members, how many of the organization's members are

- a. men? number \_\_\_\_\_ or percentage \_\_\_\_\_
- b. women? number \_\_\_\_\_ or percentage \_\_\_\_\_

28. Are you a site office or the main office? (select **one**)

- a.  main office
- b.  provincial office
- c.  district office

29. How many offices, including main and site offices does the organization have?

**[WRITE THE NUMBER]** \_\_\_\_\_

30. Which of the following does your office ... (select **one column** for each row)

**[READ ONE BY ONE AND MARK THE RESPONSE]**

	Own?	rent or borrow?	Not have?	Other
a. office space	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. motorised vehicle (car, motorcycle)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

31. Have you conducted any activity or project in collaboration with another organization (non-donor)?

- a.  yes. If yes, please name them \_\_\_\_\_
- b.  no

32. Where are this office's activities implemented? (select **all that apply**)

- a.  the same city/town/village where this office is located
- b.  in other villages
- c.  in other districts in this province
- d.  other provinces (**LIST**):

Province name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

DK/NR \_\_\_\_\_

33. In which fields of activity does this office organization engage? (select **all that apply**)

[SHOW CARD]

- a.  elections, constitution, civic education
- b.  gender equality (women's rights)
- c.  strengthening independent media
- d.  religious education
- e.  political party development
- f.  strengthening other organizations
- g.  environment, ecology
- h.  education (schools, teachers)
- i.  health, sanitation, drinking water
- j.  housing
- k.  road-building, electrification
- l.  food delivery
- m.  agriculture, irrigation
- n.  alternative livelihood development, income generation, microcredit
- o.  conflict resolution
- p.  promotion of culture, science, history, sports, arts
- q.  other (LIST) \_\_\_\_\_
- r.  DK/NR

34. What methods does this office use in order to achieve its goals? (select **all that apply**)

[SHOW CARD]

- a.  advocacy (defending or representing a group's rights or interests)
- b.  community mobilization (organizing communities to solve their own problems)
- c.  ashar
- d.  training
- e.  making information available (library; publishing, producing, or distributing written materials or radio or TV programs)
- f.  giving resources to others (grants or other resources)
- g.  organizing events (concerts, readings, sports)
- h.  infrastructure, construction (roads, schools, hospitals, etc.)
- i.  proselytizing, teaching religion
- j.  governance/administration of a population or territory
- k.  other (LIST) \_\_\_\_\_
- l.  DK/NR

35. How many projects or activities is this office **currently** implementing? \_\_\_\_\_

36. How many of the people **directly** benefiting from or are served by the this office's **on-going** projects or activities are

- a. men? number \_\_\_\_\_ or percentage \_\_\_\_\_
- b. women? number \_\_\_\_\_ or percentage \_\_\_\_\_

37. How many people benefit **indirectly**?

[FILL IN ONLY ONE]

- a. People \_\_\_\_\_ or
- b. villages \_\_\_\_\_ or
- c. districts \_\_\_\_\_ or
- d. provinces \_\_\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

38. Who benefits from this office's current activities or projects? (select **all that apply**)

[SHOW CARD]

- a.  members of the organization
- b.  youth
- c.  the elderly
- d.  women
- e.  the poor
- f.  veterans
- g.  disabled
- h.  returnees, IDPs (internally displaced persons)
- i.  government employees
- j.  whole communities
- k.  others (LIST) \_\_\_\_\_

39. In implementing this office's projects and activities, who ... (select **all that apply**)

[READ ONE BY ONE AND MARK THE RESPONSE]

	staff	clients	government	donors	DK/NR
a. identifies the problems to be addressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. plans how to address the problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
c. contributes resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
d. manages projects and activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
e. checks or evaluates the results?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

40. How many people did this office pay to do something in the last payment (staff and laborers)? \_\_\_\_\_

41. How many of those were **women** who

- a. are working in activity implementation (such as managers, administrators, field workers, secretaries, translators)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. fill supporting roles (such as cooks, cleaners) \_\_\_\_\_

42. How many people who did something for this office in the course of the last 30 days without being paid (volunteers) were

- a. men? **WRITE NUMBER** \_\_\_\_\_
- b. women? **WRITE NUMBER** \_\_\_\_\_

The next several questions are about financial sustainability of this office...

43. Did this office prepare an annual financial report for 2004? (select **one**)

- a.  yes
- b.  no

44. How much money did this office expend in 2004?

**WRITE NUMBER** \_\_\_\_\_ dollars

45. In 2004, did this office receive resources (cash or in-kind) from ...

[READ ONE BY ONE AND MARK THE RESPONSE]

	yes	no
a. Afghan national, provincial, city, or local government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. contributions from individual members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. contributions from individual non-members, businessmen, or communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. for-profit businesses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. NGOs If YES, name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. international donors If YES, name _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. fees for services (e.g. courses)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. other (LIST)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now I'll ask a few questions about external relations.

46. In the last 30 days, how would you describe this office's contact with mass media (newspapers, radio, TV)? (select **all that apply**)

[SHOW CARD]

- a.  no contact
- b.  they contacted us
- c.  we contacted them
- d.  they used information from the organization
- e.  they didn't use information from the organization
- f.  DK/NR

47. How would you describe this office's relationship with the Afghan (national) government? (select **one**)

- a.  helpful
- b.  no contact
- c.  unhelpful (creates problems)
- d.  DK/NR

48. How would you describe this office's relationship with local government? (select **one**)

- a.  helpful
- b.  no contact
- c.  unhelpful (creates problems)
- d.  DK/NR

49. How much do the following organizational constraints limit this office's effectiveness? (select **one column** for each row)

[READ ONE BY ONE AND MARK THE RESPONSE]

	not at all	some	a lot	DK/NR
a. physical office (size, facilities, equipment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. number of people working on the organization's activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. skills of the people working on the organization's activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. communications (phone, fax, e-mail, post)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. other (LIST)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

50. Which **three** does this office need to have increased **the most**? (MARK ONLY THREE )  
 [SHOW CARD]

a. organization management, governance, strategy, planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. project development, proposal-writing	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. fundraising	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. project, human resource (staff) management	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. financial management, accounting	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. activity monitoring, evaluation, report-writing	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. advocacy (to the government, private sector)	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. community mobilization or working with the community	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. public relations, communication, using the media to educate the public	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. increasing women's participation in the organization's projects & activities	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. computer use	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. English language	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. other (LIST)	<input type="checkbox"/>

[INTERVIEWER READS TO RESPONDENT] Thank you very much for your time. It's been a pleasure having a chance to talk with you. Good luck in your future activities!

[DO NOT ASK RESPONDENT]

51. Exact time of end of interview \_\_\_\_\_

52. Language of interview

- a.  Dari
- b.  Pashto

## Appendix B Focus Group Questions

### I. Questions for focus group 1: Registered Organizations

1. What are the three most important changes that registered organizations such as yours have been able to achieve in this district or province in the past three years?
2. What three additional changes should registered organizations address next in this district?  

Note to Facilitator: If there is consensus, then list those items that are agreed upon. However, consensus is not crucial and if there are differing opinions just list out all of the items identified.
3. What should be the roles of the beneficiaries, the *shuras* and the registered organizations in solving these problems?  

Note to Facilitator: Be sure to clearly distinguish the roles of beneficiaries, the *shuras* and the registered organizations, rather than lumping them all together. The recorder should also record the answers in such a way that the roles for each of these three groups are clear.
4. A) What type of resources do organizations such as yours have to help solve these problems?  
B) What types of support do you need in solving these problems?  
C) And from where might you get this support?  

Note to Facilitator: These three questions are linked together and are intended to help guide the discussion. Start by asking A. Then follow with B and C.  
Also, “resources” refer to more than just money. Other resources might be skills, authority, information, knowledge of the communities and so on. Try to take the discussion beyond money. The same refers to “support”—try to get beyond money.
5. How are registered organizations such as yours working differently now as compared to five years ago?

### II. Questions for focus group 2: Shuras

1. What are the three most important changes that *shuras* such as yours have been able to achieve in this district or province in the past three years?
2. What three additional changes should *shuras* address next in this district?  

Note to Facilitator: If there is consensus, then list those items that are agreed upon. However, consensus is not crucial and if there are differing opinions just list out all of the items identified.
3. What should be the role of the beneficiaries, *shuras* and registered organizations in solving these problems?  

Note to Facilitator: Be sure to clearly distinguish the roles of beneficiaries, the *shuras* and the registered organizations, rather than lumping them all together. The recorder should also record the answers in such a way that the roles for each of these three groups are clear
4. A). What type of resources do *shuras* such as yours have to help solve these problems?  
B) What types of support do you need in solving these problems?  
C) And from where might you get this support?  

Note to Facilitator: These three questions are linked together and are intended to help guide the discussion. Start by asking A. Then follow with B and C.  
Also, “resources” refer to more than just money. Other resources might be skills, authority, information, knowledge of the communities and so on. Try to take the discussion beyond money. The same refers to “support”—try to get beyond money.

5. How are *shuras* such as yours working differently now as compared to five years ago?

**III. Questions for focus group 3: Clients**

1. What are the three most important changes that have occurred in your communities in the past three years?

2. What three additional changes would you like to see addressed next in your communities?

Note to Facilitator: If there is consensus, then list those items that are agreed upon. However, consensus is not crucial and if there are differing opinions just list out all of the items identified.

3. What should be the role of the registered groups and *shuras* in solving these problems?

Note to Facilitator: Be sure to clearly distinguish the roles of beneficiaries, the *shuras* and the registered organizations, rather than lumping them all together. The recorder should also record the answers in such a way that the roles for each of these three groups are clear

4. A) What type of resources do communities such as yours have to help solve these problems?

B) What types of support do you need in solving these problems?

C) And from where might you get this support?

Note to Facilitator: These three questions are linked together and are intended to help guide the discussion. Start by asking A. Then follow with B and C.

Also, “resources” refer to more than just money. Other resources might be skills, authority, information, knowledge of the communities and so on. Try to take the discussion beyond money. The same refers to “support”—try to get beyond money.

5. How are registered organizations and *shuras* working differently now as compared to five years ago?

## Appendix C Key-Informant Interviewee List

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81) USAID. Fatah Mamnoon (Project Management Specialist, Civil Society); +93 (70) 23-42-30, [fmamnoon@usaid.gov](mailto:fmamnoon@usaid.gov)

82) Women's Edge Coalition. Nora O'Connell (Legislative Director); [noconnell@womensedge.org](mailto:noconnell@womensedge.org)

**Appendix D Ministry of Economics' NGO Quarterly Reporting Form**

[Translation of Dari-language form provided by the MoE in January 2005.]

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan  
Ministry of Economics  
NGOs Supervision and Evaluation Department

No.....

Date.....

To ( ) honorable organization,

Please provide the following information about your organization:

1. Date of establishment
2. Executive members of the organization
3. CVs of both national and international staff
4. Family relations of the staff
5. Salary of national and international staff
6. Implemented projects
7. Projects received
8. Donors
9. Amount of fund received
10. Rent of the house, exact address and complete description of rooms and the requirement
11. Cook and his/her salary
12. Number of vehicles, model and price
13. Staff formation of each project
14. List of equipment
15. Evaluation of each implemented project effectiveness
16. Change of "M" plate to "temporary" plate in Dari or Pashto
17. Copy of the proposal forwarded to donors
18. Municipality confirmation of the location of the office building in the concerned district

Appendix E Survey Geographic Coverage

Region	Province	Urban District/Area Surveyed	Rural District/Area Surveyed	Rural District/Area Initially Planned
Kabul Area	Kabul	Kabul	Qarabagh	
	Lowgar	Pul e Alam	Mohammadagha	
	Wardak	Miranshah	Sayedabad	Jalrez
	Parvan	Charikar	Jabulsaraj	
	Kapisa	Mahmood Raqi	Kohistan	Jamalagha
East	Nangarhar	Jalalabad	Kama	
	Konar	Asad Abad	Chawki	
	Laghman	Mehtar Lam	Qarghaee	
South East	Paktia	Gardez	Sayed Karam	
	Khost	Khost	Nadersha Kot	
	Ghazni	Ghazni	Khwaja Omary	
South	Kandahar	Kandahar	Arghandab	Maiwand
	Helmand	Lashkargah	Grishk	
West	Herat	Herat	Anjeel	Karukh
Central Highlands	Bamiyan	Bamiyan	Yakawlang	
North East	Baghlan	Baghlan	Pulekhomri	
	Kunduz	Kunduz	Khanabad	Aliabad
	Takhar	Taloqan	Dasht Qala	
North	Balkh	Mazar i Sharif	Balkh	
	Jowzjan	Sheberghan	Khwaja Dokuh	Jarqodoq
	Sar-e Pol	Sar-e Pol	Sayad	Sayedabad
	Samangan	Aybak	Hazrat Sultan	Khulm