

# Mobilizing Rural Institutions for Sustainable Livelihoods and Equitable Development: Afghanistan Country Study

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# Overview

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- Investigator: AREU
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# Purpose

- Assess and build on the potential of rural institutions to augment the rural poor's access to public and private services in Afghanistan and improve sustainable livelihoods outcomes.

# Investigator: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)

- AREU ([www.areu.org.af](http://www.areu.org.af)) is an independent, Afghanistan-based research organization. Its primary purpose is to conduct high quality research that informs and influences policy and practice in order to increase the efficacy and impact of aid-related programs in Afghanistan, and to improve Afghan lives. AREU's current major research areas include:
  - Governance
  - Political Economy
  - Urban and Rural Livelihoods
  - Gender
  - Natural Resource Management
  - Health
  - Education

# Research Objectives

- Objective 1: Understanding better the universe of Rural Local Institutions (RLIs) through mapping and categorization
- Objective 2: Assessing the prospects of these RLIs to improve rural sustainable livelihoods and contribute to future national innovation systems

# Conceptual Framework (1)

- **Objective 1** (*better understanding the universe of RLIs through mapping and categorization*) draws on Uphoff and Buck (2006), Perrin et al. (2006) and Parto (2005) to employ a notion of institutions as formal and informal structures which effectively organize a community.
  - **Relative permanency and longevity** (Hodgson 1988; Parto 2005; Uphoff and Buck 2006)
  - Continuous spectrum consisting of **formal, tangible** entities at one end (e.g., banks, government, agencies, courts) and less **formal, intangible** phenomena (e.g., customs, norms, values) at the other.

Formal, tangible (e.g., banks, govt, courts)

informal, intangible (e.g., customs, values)

# Conceptual Framework (2)

- **Objective 2** (*assessing prospects of RLIs to improve rural sustainable livelihoods and contribute to future national innovation systems*) draws on an **innovation systems** approach:
  - Emphasizes the importance of **relationships and networks** among institutions in public, private and civil society spheres;
  - Innovation conceptualized as an **evolutionary, social process** (Edquist 2004) stimulated and influenced by many actors and factors, both internal and external to the innovating entity (e.g., firm, farm);
  - Characterized by **cooperation** between enterprises and knowledge-creating and diffusing organizations (e.g., universities, training organizations, R&D institutes, development aid agencies, etc.);
  - Innovation-supportive, **locally specific factors** collectively support a **symbiotic relationship** between the enterprises and knowledge-creating organizations.

# Methodological Approach

- 1. Compile a typology of institutions (behaviorial, cognitive, associative, regulative, constitutive) based on available data from AREU's ongoing work and other sources
- 2. Integrate and adapt the innovation system framework to AREU's ongoing work relevant to RLIs and other available information on RLIs
- 3. Describe and categorize relationships among RLIs, using the innovation system framework and focusing on the role of networks, policies, and other context-specific factors
- 4. Based on consultation with key informants and through interactive settings, highlight entry points for policy intervention to increase innovative activity in sustainable rural production systems and livelihoods.

# Deliverables

- Concept paper outlining the analytical framework for the study and presenting a template for the compilation of data on RLIs
- Country Case Study of Afghanistan's RLIs in format of five-country study, focusing on their potential to augment access to public, private services to the rural poor and improve sustainable livelihoods outcomes
- Briefing paper (in AREU format) with recommendations for Afghanistan
- Dissemination meeting to present results and discuss with key local-level and national-level actors who have roles in rural innovation systems.

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THANK YOU!

Questions?

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Comments?

